

Volkswagen Polo GTI: Old vs new

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To demonstrate the differences between the all-new Volkswagen Polo GTI and its predecessor, we sourced a previous-generation model and compared them head-to-head. Here are some key changes between the 2015 Volkswagen Polo GTI and the new 2018 Volkswagen Polo GTI.



The Volkswagen Polo GTI offers consumers a taste of hallmark GTI performance at a cheaper-than-Golf price (and, of course, lower associated ownership costs) and the diminutive hot hatch has duly attracted a sizeable fan base.

The SA market never received the first-generation model, but the second-generation car, which had a 110kW/220Nm 1.8-litre 20-valve four-cylinder motor and could sprint to 100km/h in 8.2 seconds, arrived in 2007.

Upon its arrival in 2011, the third-generation Polo GTI represented a huge leap forward with its turbo-and-supercharged 1.4-litre engine with 132kW and 250Nm. Paired with a quick-shifting dual-clutch gearbox, that Polo GTI was claimed to sprint from 0 to 100km/h in a quite-brisk 6.9 seconds.



What you need to know about the new Polo GTI and Polo Vivo Maxx

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For 2015, the fourth-generation Polo GTI adopted a 1.8-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine. The car was offered in both manual and (dual-clutch) automatic guises, each of which had specific torque outputs. Both developed 141kW, but the DSG version had peak torque of 250Nm, whereas the three-pedal version had 320Nm.

Interestingly, the cars' claimed performance figures were identical (a 0-100km/h sprint time of 6.7 seconds).

Now (in 2018), the fifth-generation Polo GTI marks a big leap forward for the model. What are the key changes between it and the outgoing model?

Dimensions

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From this image, you can see the new Volkswagen Polo GTI (right) is wider than the outgoing model.

The all-new Volkswagen Polo has changed dramatically, mainly thanks to the adoption of a new platform.

The newcomer is built on the MQB architecture, that versatile piece of modular engineering that forms the basis of the Polo's siblings: the Golf, Tiguan, Passat as well as its cousin, the Audi A3, for example.

MQB has a reputation for comfort and refinement, and even in sporty GTI application, the new Polo's ride comfort is fair.

The bigger platform means that the new Polo GTI has grown up and expanded in all dimensions.

The (once-pint-sized) hot hatchback's overall length has grown by 81mm, it's now 69mm wider and, despite its overall height reduction (by 8mm), headroom has increased. The associated enlargement of the cabin is most apparent at the back, where legroom is now tolerable for adults.

The luggage bay's capacity has increased too.

Engines

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The EA888 1.8-litre turbo has been replaced by the EA888 2.0-litre turbo and power has been increased to 147 kW

The previous model also used the EA888 turbocharged four-cylinder motor, but it was resized to 1.8-litres in capacity.

This time around, Volkswagen has not held back and given the new Polo GTI the full-blown 2.0-litre EA888 from none other than the Golf GTI. Outputs are up to 147kW and 320Nm (from 141kW and 250Nm/320Nm), but while these differences may seem small, the switch from a seven-speed dual-clutch 'box to six-speed dual-clutch unit has seen a reduction in sprint times, with fuel efficiency being increased, albeit fractionally (from 6.0l/100km to 5.9l/100km).

Performance

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With a bigger 2.0-litre engine, the new Polo GTI is fractionally faster than its predecessor.

Volkswagen claims the switch from the 1.8-litre to 2.0-litre unit has resulted in a broader spread of accessible performance.

It sounds sweeter as well... there's a sharp induction rasp and, if you come off the throttle in Sport mode, the exhaust emits a barrage of staccato pops, which is reminiscent of the Mini Cooper S – not a bad thing at all.

The 2018 Polo GTI will dash from 0-100km/h in a claimed 6.6 seconds, which is very close to its Golf GTI bigger brother. Also new for the 2018 Volkswagen Polo GTI is the debut of the XDS differential, which sharpens up the handling.

Cabin

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The cabin of the new GTI (and Polo as a whole) has been elevated to new heights. The Active Info Display is available as an optional extra.

The 2018 Polo GTI interior benefits from notable improvements in quality and prestige. Much like the standard Polo incorporates upgrades in terms of features and fittings, the new GTI sets the benchmark for supermini hot hatch cabin quality.

It's a massive leap forward for the Polo GTI model and coincides with the introduction of nice-to-have features such as the digital Active Info Display dashboard (which is, regrettably, optional).

Furthermore, an all-new infotainment system, in the form of the Composition Media with its eight-inch touchscreen display, makes its debut and two USB ports are standard.

The technology and safety features have also been improved. There are tyre pressure monitors, the car is able to park itself in a parallel situation automatically and blind spot detection with rear traffic alert is additionally available as an extra-cost item.

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The 2015 Volkswagen Polo GTI cabin is still fresh and modern, but comprehensively outgunned by its replacement...

Final Thoughts

The 2018 Volkswagen Polo GTI makes a compelling argument for itself. Compared with the outgoing model, it's fractionally faster, but critically, more spacious and offers a broader array of talents.

Also, thanks to the production of the small GTI being shifted to South Africa, the asking price has come down (R387,500 to R375,900), which is great news, but, as always, with VW Group products, be mindful of some of those costly options.

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