

VW POLO – MODEL HISTORY

Audi 50

Many people today, do not realise that the Volkswagen Polo's success can be attributed to a small Audi. On August 30 1974, the Audi 50 was launched, a three-door hatchback designed and developed by Audi engineers at the firm's headquarters at Ingolstadt. Following on from the Audi 80s launch in 1972 and the on-sale 100 and 200 models, it too showcased much modern technology. The VW Golf, Passat and Scirocco also appeared in 1974, but the new small VW was still a year from release. These cars used Audi technology too, with engines and drivetrains being commonly shared. The new small Audi first appeared at the Paris AutoSalon in the Autumn of this year and was on sale not long thereafter.



Audi 50 was forerunner of the VW Polo and was launched in 1974. It was only sold on the continent and was a three-door hatchback, smaller than the VW Golf.

Interior of the Audi 50 was well-equipped and designed, and had many new features. Large rear hatch made loading luggage easy.



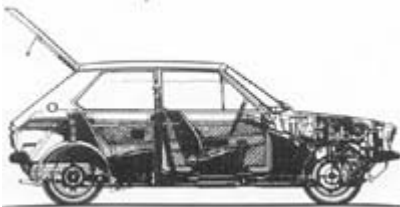
Development of the car began in 1971 and development power units and suspension were fitted to modified NSF 1200s. Fifty prototype cars then covered 100,000 kilometres each, while the power units and suspension assemblies underwent serious bench and rig testing. Volkswagen's Ehra-Lessien test track was utilised for a further 250 kilometres of high-speed testing.

The engine was transversely-mounted and there were two options, both of which had a cubic capacity of 1093cc. The engines produced 50 and 60 bhp (higher compression unit), with the more powerful unit producing a claimed top speed of approximately 100 mph! The engines were developed by the Audi engineers and featured a cross-flow cylinder head and direct camshaft drive to the distributor and fuel pump. A new type of carburettor had been developed with the automatic choke being heated electrically while the engine was cold, and then by the coolant as it warmed up.

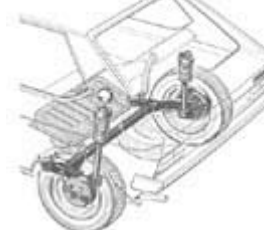
The suspension utilised McPherson struts up the front and a torsion beam at the rear, with the trailing arms placed nearer the wheel hubs. This meant that when under cornering, the car rolls, the rear wheels stay no longer parallel, with the outer one assuming a position of negative camber. The 50 was also the first car to get the new seating design, that was used in the following year in the VW range.

The design of the car was that of a three-door hatchback, very similar to the Golf. Whereas the Golf was designed by Guigaro's Italian studios, the 50 was a completely Audi design. Another Italian stylist, Bertone, was consulted at the final stage however. He pronounced it good and added a few last-minute touches, like the upsweep of the plated strip on the rear end waistline body side.

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Audi 50 featured many new technical features. The packaging was good for a car of its size. Technical highlights included an all-new torsion beam twist rear axle with negative-offset steering geometry upfront.

Basic details

The 50 was available in two trim levels: LS and GL. Both models had the 1093cc engine, with the LS developing 50 bhp, while the GL boasted 60 bhp. The pair of cars done without the optional rear wash/wipe system costing £26 and a brake servo, but otherwise equipment levels were comprehensive.

The LS featured full carpeting, full instrumentation, electric clock, temperature gauge and quality was found to be superior to other cars in the class. Steering column switches for main lighting and hazard lights were on stalks and were a feature that soon saw service in the 80, 100 and 200. The car also boasted chromed bumpers and a heated rear window.

The GL built on these features that were standard on the LS, and added: more attractive trim panels and of course,

that more powerful engine. At launch, the Audi 50 LS cost about £145 more than the recently-launched Polo. To this end though, the car had a more attractive appearance than the sparsely-trimmed VW.

Two models were available. The LS was the entry car, while the GL was the range-topper and was more luxurious and better-equipped.



50 vs Polo

The Polo version of the Audi 50 appeared in 1975 and was fundamentally cheaper than its more luxurious cousin. Although less comprehensively-equipped and ultimately less prestigious, the Polo was the one that sold better out of the two cars. The Audi had a good following in continental Europe, but it was never imported into the UK. The Polo had its UK release in mid-1976 and by then, the end of the 50 was nigh. In 1978, the 50 was discontinued from the Audi range, the Polo being left to carry the mantle as the smallest Volkswagen Group passenger car. If it had not been for those engineers at Audi though, would the Polo have even been born and gone to become the success that it undoubtedly has become over the last 25 years?



Audi 50 and Polo were the same car, but 50 was plusher. Polo was a success, so Audi discontinued the 50 in 1978.

Series 1 Polo and Derby

The Polo was initially introduced to the UK market in February 1976 (Autumn 1975 on the continent) in two trim levels. The N was the 'no frills' base model and featured rubber matting, a single speed fan and wipers and a lack of external brightwork. The more luxurious L range-topper boasted full carpeting, dual speed fan and wipers, grab handles, reversing lights, anti-dazzle rear view mirror and chrome bumpers, rather than the painted steel versions of the N. The car also had external chrome brightwork on the waistline, door handles and window rubbers. Both cars had 135SR 13 tyres on 4.5J x 13" rims, front disc brakes, folding rear seat, luggage compartment cover and electric screen washers. Prices started at £1,798 for the N, rising to the L costing £2,110.



Polo N was the basic Polo model and had painted bumpers and no external brightwork.

Polo L was the introductory range-topper and had chromed bumpers and brightwork and upgraded spec.



Debuting at the 1976 Motor Show, the range-topping LS model was introduced, costing £2,699. Borrowing the

larger Golf's 1093cc 60 bhp engine, the car was also better specified. Larger 145SR 13 tyres were fitted in addition to rubber bumper buffing strips, parking lights, front intermittent windscreen wipers, a rear wash/wipe system and swiveling driver's sun visor.

1977

August 1977 saw equipment levels realigned for the 1978 model year. The N model now boasted an intermittent setting for the front wipers, while both this car and the L now gained the much-needed rear wash/wipe system of the LS. This realignment wasn't the only major change introduced for 1978 however.

1978

The Derby was launched in February 1978 and was a traditional saloon based on the Polo. Both cars were the same up until the C-pillar on the Polo. This is where the Derby's larger-capacity boot became the big differential between the two cars. An increase of fourteen inches over the Polo saw the Derby's luggage capacity rise to 18.2 cu ft from the paltry 6.2 of the Polo. Initially, the car was launched in one trim level, the LS. Priced at £2,850 the specification mirrored that of the Polo LS and featuring that car's 1093cc engine.



The 1978 Derby was a classically-styled saloon based on the Polo.

1979

In 1979 another range-topping trim level was introduced - the GLS. Superseding the LS in the Polo range and supplementing the LS in the Derby range, extra equipment included chrome headlight and grille surrounds, polished hubcaps, a quartz clock a trip mileage recorder and cigarette lighter. The factory-fitted steel sunroof was still an option on the Polo range, whilst the Derby GLS had this fitted as standard equipment. The Polo GLS still had the LS's 1093cc engine fitted, whilst the Derby had the honour of being fitted with a 1272cc 60 bhp engine, making it's debut in VW's smallest car range. The Derby cost only £250 more than the Derby GLS, making it good value at the time.

Both the Polo and the Derby shared engines, dashboard and interior fabrics. Only the specified trim levels marked the differences between them.



1980



In line with the rest of the Volkswagen range, both model ranges were facelifted for the 1980 model year. New, wraparound plastic ABS impact-resistant bumpers were now standard issue, along with a larger and bolder front grille. In order to distinguish the two models, the Derby now received square headlamps, while both cars gained new dashboards with instruments grouped together under a Golf-like housing.

The Polo range remained unchanged for 1980, while the Derby range grew to four variants with the S and CLS being introduced. The S model was the Polo N equivalent but was powered by the 1093cc engine. The S model was the Polo N equivalent but was powered by the 1093cc engine. The CLS was a special-edition model and was

only available in three metallic colours. Special coachline and C-pillar graphics were fitted to this model, while the bumpers had colour-matched inlays and the grille a 'Derby' badge fitted on the nearside. Special equipment included a rev-counter, door pockets, trip mileage recorder and special gear knob. The CLS also had the 1093cc engine as found in the S and LS.

1981

Volkswagen knew that both model ranges needed replacing and 1981 was to be the final year of Series 1 Polo/Derby production. A limited-edition 'run-out' model was introduced in September of that year. Called the 'LX', the car was only available in two metallic colours and featured a laminated windscreen, halogen headlamps and wider 155/70 tyres. The exterior of the car featured special waistline graphics and trim. Available on a limited number of LXs was a high compression 1093cc engine, 3+E gearing, fuel consumption indicator and change-up light. This was the first use of VW's new 'Formel E' system economy system, which was to spawn a whole range of models in the early 1980s. The Derby GLS gained a rev-counter and digital clock for the final year of production. Series 1 Polo production ended in October 1981, making way for the much-redesigned Series 2. By the end of its six-year production run, VW had sold over 86,000 examples in the UK.



Polo LX was a limited edition model, launched in autumn 1981.

Series 2 Polo Hatchback, Saloon & Coupe

A month after Series 1 Polo production ended, the Series 2 was launched. VW had given the new car a different look, the new model resembling a small estate car. Commonly referred to as a 'Squareback', it was introduced into the UK as a three-tier range. The C was the basic-spec model rising through the mid-range CL and topping off with the plush GL. The 895cc engine of the earlier model had been developed into a 1043cc unit producing 45 bhp. This powered the C, while the CL and GL had the 1093cc engine from the previous generation. Volkswagen also expanded on the Formel E fuel economy system first introduced on the LX run-out Series 1. Powered by the 1093cc high-compression engine, it was run on four-star petrol and developed 50 bhp and had a wide-ratio 3+E gearbox and fuel consumption indicator. At the UK launch the C model cost £3,799.



Series 2 Polos shared same basic dashboard and interior plus some engines. Cars were basically the same until the B-pillar and rear-end styling.

1983

The Hatch was joined by two complimentary models in 1983. The Saloon was launched first and was a Series 2 Derby equivalent (it was even called Derby in Germany at launch in 1982). The range mirrored that of the Polo Hatchback, but the C and CL models were powered by the 1093cc engine, while the GL was powered by a 60 bhp unit. The car had a different face to the Hatchback too, with two square headlamps, replacing the circular units. The Formel E had a rear spoiler (as did the Hatchback too, with two square headlamps, replacing the circular units). The GL versions of both the Hatchback and Classic boasted headlight washers, twin-tone horn and internally adjustable door mirrors. Prices for the Classic stated at £3,975 for the C, rising to £4,798 for the GL.

The special-edition 'CX' Hatchback was launched in this year and featured the 50 bhp engine and could count Pearl Silver bodywork, colour-matched alloy wheels and 'Glencheck' upholstery among its extra refinements.

Polo Saloon and Coupe were launched in 1983. The Saloon was the Derby equivalent, while the Coupe echoed the Series 1 Polo styling.



Following on from the Saloon's launch, the Coupe was released only a few months later. It's fastback styling was more of a progression from the Series 1's and although not a proper Coupe, it was thus labeled, as VW had already used the 'Hatchback' designation for the Squareback model. Initially available with the 1093cc engine, only one model was available, the 'Coupe'. It featured many sporty additions such as wheel-arch extensions a la Golf GTI, sports seat trim, rear window spoiler, rev-counter, 'sports' wheel trim centres and low-profile 165/65 13 tyres on steel pressed rims.

1984

Model revisions took place in 1984. The Classic CL and GL had a new 1272cc, 55 bhp engine fitted, which also found new service in the Polo Coupe, replacing the previous 1093cc model. The Polo Coupe now cost £5,070. The special-edition Polo 'LX' Hatchback also had this new engine. Costing £4,598, this new model had low-profile tyres, rear hatch spoiler and twin colour-keyed door mirrors. Interior fitments included: a centre console, door pockets, three-spoke sports steering wheel and sports seats trimmed in 'Chintz' cotton/polyester fabric. The Hatchback range was to expand still, with the addition of the 'Standard' model. Named simply 'Polo', this new base-model car was to be found lacking the twin door mirrors, head restraints, luggage cover and additional items of extra equipment of the C. With the addition of this model, the range now started at £3,695. Finally for 1984, the mainstream range Hatchback and Saloon Formel E models now had the 1272cc 55 bhp engine and an automatic stop-start system fitted. This stopped the car when the car was in neutral, restarting when first or reverse was selected. Revised trim included flush-fitting quarter-light windows for extra fuel economy! Another special-edition model was released, the Coupe 'CX', costing £4,690. This model featured special 'Rallycheck' upholstery on padded seats, 1043cc engine, 155/70 13 tyres and full sports instrumentation.

1985

Model changes for 1985 included the upgrading of the C specification of the Polo Hatchback. It now gained the wraparound rear window spoiler of the Formel E, black-trimmed door pillars, 'Glencheck' upholstery, cigarette lighter and GL instrument panel featuring an analogue clock and trip mileage recorder. The Polo Classic was renamed the 'Polo Saloon' (the 'Derby' tag having been dropped in Germany) and now gained the circular headlamps of the Hatch and Coupe. Yet another special model was launched. The Polo Coupe Boulevard was an all white model of the Polo Coupe and featured colour-keyed bumpers, wheel-arch extensions, hubcaps and front/rear spoilers. Interior refinements included velour carpeting, tinted glass, sports steering wheel and height adjustable driver's seat. The Coupe range was also realigned. The Polo 'Coupe' was renamed the S. This car featured sports seats, twin-headlight grille (fitted with either driving lights or fog lamps), digital clock and a three-spoke sports steering wheel. Launch price was £5,654. A new model was made available below this car, the Polo 'Coupe' name having been re-used on a 1043cc powered base model. The specification was much that of the Polo C Hatchback.



The Coupe S was a 'sports' model based on the Polo Coupe. Powered by a 1272cc 55 bhp engine, it featured full 'GT' trim which included; sports seats, rev counter, twin-lamp grille, 3-spoke steering wheel and 'sports' styling.

1986

For 1986, the 1043cc and 1272cc engines were overhauled and now included new valvegear and a five-bearing

camshaft, hydraulic tappets and an automatic choke. The 1043cc unit was fitted into the Polo C Hatchback, the Saloon C and the Coupe Fox; the new trim which superseded the Polo 'Coupe'. This new base-model Coupe featured colour-keyed wheel trims, special 'Fox' decals, special upholstery and contrasting bumper piping. A new 4+E gearbox was now standard on the Polo Formel E models as was the addition of a standard radio. This gearbox was available as an option on the Coupe S, while the Polo GL Hatchback now had the 1272cc engine, 155/70 13 tyres and full-size flush wheel trims. In true VW tradition, another special value model was launched. Only 2000 Polo Rangers were to be imported. A UK-only model, it was based on the Polo C Hatchback, albeit fitted with the 1272cc 55 bhp engine. Extra equipment included: roof rails, sports seats, rev counter, digital clock, driver's seat height adjuster, three-spoke steering wheel, four-headlamp grille and black wheel trims. The Polo Saloon GL was dropped from the range, while in Germany VW experimented with the Polo Coupe GTG40. This car featured the 1272cc 55 bhp engine fitted with a supercharger, pushing output to 115 bhp. Special models of this car set several world speed records for their class, averaging 129 mph over 24 hours.

The Coupe GTG40 was powered by a supercharged 1272cc, 115 bhp engine. Engine pic: Tony Lo



1987

Changes to the Polo ranges were minimal for 1987. The Polo Ranger gained alloy wheels and became the range-topping Hatchback model priced at £5,979; the Polo CL Hatchback and Saloon were fitted with the 1272cc engine; the GL Hatchback was dropped from the range, while the Coupe S now had the new 4+E gearbox fitted as standard. Volkswagen also dropped the Formel E versions from all model ranges.



1988

1988 was a quiet year for the now seven year-old Series 2. All four-speed versions of the CL Hatchback, C Saloon and Coupe were dropped. Minor trim changes also followed. The Polo's prices now started at £4,929 for the Polo 'Standard' rising to £6,980 for the Coupe S. The Coupe S now had 'Hockenheim' alloy wheels as standard (also fitted to some Passats), while the Ranger also had alloys fitted as standard, being the earlier design previously offered on the CX Hatchback. Finally, 1988 saw the introduction of the Polo Twist and Polo Boulevard special models. The Twist was based on the Polo 'Standard' and featured full-size, flush, colour-keyed wheel trims, twin exterior mirrors, clock and carpeted rear parcel shelf. The Boulevard name was resurrected for the special Polo Coupe and featured colour-keyed bumpers and wheel trims, tinted glass, twin headlights, upgraded stereo and internally-adjustable door mirrors.

1989

The last full year of Series 2 Polo production was 1989. All models gained tinted glass, while the Fox name was introduced on the entry-level Polo Hatchback. Trimmed as the Coupe version, it replaced the Polo 'Standard'. The Polo Match was introduced, again, another special model and was similar in trim to the Twist of 1988.

1990

Production of the Series 2 Polo range was to be ended in September 1990 and this year saw model revisions aplenty. In an inspired and mould-breaking fashion, VW introduced the Polo Catalyst range. All 1043cc models of the range were fitted with a three-way Euro catalytic converter, which cut emissions from the engine. Trim was as the C-spec cars.

The final special models of the Series 2 range were launched, the Polo Country and the Polo Coupe Parade. The Country was a Hatchback model fitted with the 1043cc engine and trimmed with such luxuries as tinted glass, five metallic paint finishes, twin headlights, rear window spoiler, glass sunroof and special 'Country' rear side window decals.

The Parade was a Coupe-only model and was fitted with a choice of 1043/1272cc engines, the latter being available with a five-speed gearbox. This model boasted tinted glass, twin headlights, rubbing strips and special 'Parade' coachline graphics. Like the Boulevard of 1988, the bumpers and wheel-arch extensions were colour-keyed in red or white paint finishes, while the two blue colours available had the standard items of the mainstream models. In March 1990, 'VW Motoring' published first details and an artist's impression of what the 'new Polo' was to look like. It was to appear only seven months later.



Polo Country Hatchback and Parade Coupe were special edition 'run-out' models of the Series 2. Both had extra equipment over the regular versions.

Series 2F Polo Hatchback, Saloon & Coupe

Appearing at the Birmingham NEC Motor Show, the Series 2F Polo was launched in October 1990. Looking similar to the cars the new ranges replaced, the car had undergone major re-engineering. Although it was essentially a facelift of the Series 2, chassis, suspension and cosmetic/interior changes marked the coming of the new model. Launched in the three Series 2 variants - Hatchback, Saloon and Coupe - all models now had integrated, square headlamps; deeper remodeled plastic bumpers and chunkier rear end styling. The interior boasted a new, Passat-style dashboard, which was much more in keeping with the 'grown-up' image; new trims and fabrics and new full-size door cards that left no bare metal on display.

The engine options were carried over from the previous range, but all now had fuel-injection and catalytic converters - a first for the UK small-car market.

The range started with the 1043cc Polo Fox Hatchback/Coupe and topped off (until July 1991) with the Polo Hatchback/Coupe GT boasting a 1272cc 75 bhp engine. All of the new models also gained servo - assisted brakes answering criticism over the previous generation models. The Hatchback and Coupe models were also priced identically trim-for-trim, the first time in the two bodystyle's history.

The Polo Fox started the range, costing £6,500. This was available in Hatchback and Coupe guises and was fitted with the 1043cc 45 bhp engine fitted with Monomotronic single-point fuel injection. These were fitted with a four-speed gearbox. A three-spoke steering wheel was fitted along with what must be the most garish interior trim VW has ever produced - a combination of cerise, mint green and grey striping covering the door panels and seats! The CL was the next rung up the Polo ladder and, again, was available in Hatchback and Coupe guises. In addition to these, the Saloon was also available in this trim level, the only one in which it was to be released. Engine options were the 1043cc and 1272cc units, producing 45 and 55 bhp respectively, the 1272cc units being fitted with Digijet fuel injection. Additional exterior items over the Fox included rubbing strips and full-size wheel trims, which were designed to look like alloy wheels. Interior embellishments included a centre console, cigarette lighter, trip mileage recorder and a vanity mirror on the passenger sun visor. A 5 speed gearbox was an optional extra.



Series 3 Polos were facelifted Series 2 cars. All models featured cosmetic tweaks including deeper bumpers, square headlamps and new interiors.

The range-topping Polo until July 1991 was the GT. Available in Hatchback and Coupe bodystyles; this was the 'sports' model of the range. Powered by a 75 bhp version of the 1272cc unit, the car could reach 107 mph and featured a five-speed gearbox as standard. The engine featured Digifant multi-point fuel-injection as used on the Series 2 Golf GTI and was therefore smooth and extremely pokey. The GT featured many sporting accents as standard. Red piping in the bumpers, wheel arch extensions, rev-counter, sports seats, low-profile tyres (155/70 on Hatchback and 165/65 on Coupe), wheel trims with black centres, black 'VW' badging, 'GT' grille badge, driver's seat height adjustment and a three-spoke sports steering wheel were all to be found as standard equipment on the most sporty UK model yet. This was all to change though in July 1991.

The Polo G40 was introduced and immediately jumped feet first into the 'hot hatch' arena. This 'pocket rocket' was powered by the same 1272cc engine as in the Polo GT, but with the addition of a small supercharger, power was upped from 75 to 113 bhp. The car was a later version of the model produced in the mid-eighties and introduced in the continental Series 2 range. Acceleration was a claimed 0-60 mph in 8.6 seconds, with top speed being (where conditions permit of course!) around 120 mph Differences over the GT included 65 per cent harder front springs, 25 mm lowered suspension and balljoints replacing the standard rubber bushings on the trackrods and wishbones. The front anti-roll bar had 20 per cent harder mountings while the addition of a rear anti-roll bar added stability. Rolling stock was 5.5J X 13 BBS 'cross-spoke' alloy wheels with 175/60 13 tyres. Cosmetic additions over the GT included a roof-mounted Golf GTI-style 'bee sting' aerial and special badging. Interior refinements included different sports seats trimmed in 'Le Mans' cloth trim. Priced at £11,568 the G40 was not an especially cheap car, and was only a few hundred pounds less than the then run-out Series 2 Golf GTI.

Power came to the Polo in 1990, when the GT and Coupe G40 were introduced. GT boasted 75 bhp, while G40 had 113 bhp, courtesy of a small supercharger.



1991

The range was to stay unchanged until September 1991. Resurrecting the Boulevard name yet again, VW introduced the first UK special model. Costing £6948 and available in Caribbean Green or Cerise paint finishes, the car came with additions such as: upgraded Blaupunkt stereo, Polo G40 steering wheel, CL wheel trims, centre console, an analogue clock and special interior trim. It was powered by the 1043cc engine.

1992

The model revisions for 1992 saw the Fox gain a passenger sun visor, while this model and the 1043cc CL now had internally-adjustable door mirrors (the CL also getting a driver's seat height adjuster). The G40 had clear front indicators and partially darkened rear light clusters fitted to differentiate it from the other models in the range. March 1992 saw VW announce a ten-round racing series featuring the Polo G40. Called the 'Volkswagen Polo G40 Cup' it was to run for three seasons. But perhaps the most significant change for 1992 was that the Saloon was dropped from production. Never selling in the same volumes as the Hatchback or Coupe variants, Britain was one of the last markets to continue selling this slow-selling model. The GT Hatchback was also discontinued at this time.



Special Boulevard model was based on the Fox and had extra equipment. G40 racing series was campaigned first in 1992, using near-stock cars.

The range of new cars was as the Series 2 Polo line-up. Saloon only lived for two years, being discontinued in 1992. UK was one of the car's best markets.



1993

Another special-edition model was launched in 1993. The Genesis was based on the Fox and was available in both Hatchback and Coupe variants. Engine choice was the same as the CL, with 1043 and 1272cc units being available. Extra equipment over the other models included: 'Modekaro' upholstery from the Scirocco GTII, rev counter, digital clock and sports steering wheel from the GT/G40, tinted glass, 155/70 tyres, removable upgraded stereo and a steel sliding sunroof. One minor omission on this model (and one that could trace its Fox roots) was the lack of a glovebox lid. Other detail model changes for the final full year of Series 3 production included new upholstery for the CL and GT ('Rainbow' and 'Triangle' respectively) and the addition of side impact beams mounted in the doors for all models, offering greater side-impact protection. The G40 was made special order only.



The penultimate Series 3 special model was the Boulevard (now in its fourth incarnation). Based on the Fox and priced at £6,995 (£500 more), the specification included the 1043cc engine, 'Jubilee' upholstery, special door pillar

trim, lidded glovebox, centre console, door pockets, height-adjustable driver's seat, passenger sun visor with vanity mirror, upgraded removable stereo and CL wheel trims. It was available in Hatchback and Coupe guises.

1994

The Series 3 was last produced in 1994, the much refined, mature and different Series 4 being presented to the press in August of that year. The range was trimmed considerably, with the Hatchback being available in Fox, Boulevard and CL trim levels - the Genesis having been discontinued. The Coupe was available in these guises, in addition to the previous Genesis, GT and G40 variants.

The final swansong for the Series 3 was the introduction of two 'run-out' models, both of which took names from earlier Series 2 Polo special models.

The 'Match' was priced at £5,766 and was based on the 1043cc Fox. Incorporating £640 of extras, the car was available in both Hatchback and Coupe bodystyles. The extras over the Fox included special 'Match' graphics, 'Sport Rader 1' alloy wheels, factory-fitted radio and a choice of two new colours.

The Polo 'Parade' differed from the Match, as it was based on the 1043cc Polo CL. Again, available in both bodystyles, the cost of this model was £6,267. Like the Match it included £520 of optional equipment and cost £430 less than the Boulevard. The car gained Sport Rader 1 alloy wheels, wider tyres, tinted glass, 'Parade' graphics, a choice of four new body colours and a Sony radio/cassette with removable front panel.

The last Series 3 Polos rolled off the Spanish production lines (where all Series 3s were built and some where some Series 2s had been manufactured since 1985) in August 1994.



Polo Match & Parade were last-of-the-line Series 3 special models. They featured 'Sport Rader' alloys, special graphics and extra equipment.

Series 3 Polo Hatchback, Saloon & Estate

The Series 3 Polo was presented to the European Press in Paris in August 1994 and launched in the UK after the NEC Birmingham Motor Show in the following November.

A completely new range from the ground-up, it owed nothing to the Series 1, 2 or 2F cars that preceded it. The car was launched initially in Hatchback form only, and was available in four trim levels - L, CL, GL and GLX. Engine options consisted of three variants; a 1043cc 45 bhp, 1272 cc 55 bhp and 1598cc 75 bhp units. For the first time in the Polo's history, it was made available with a choice of three or five-doors.

The underpinnings of the car had been widely reported as being those of the new SEAT Ibiza, launched in 1993. This was certainly true, with both cars sharing many common components, including such major items as interior dashboards and minor switchgear. Trim materials differed though, with the Polo being the more subtle of the two cars. The engine bay of the Polo was also smaller, and could not accept anything larger than a 1.6 litre unit, while the SEAT was later launched in 2.0 150 bhp 'Cupra Sport' guise.

The new model was well received by the Motoring Press, winning high on every group test or award it was participating in. Autocar and What Car? both awarded 'Car of the Year 1995' awards stating that it set new standards for small cars, particularly in the areas of ride, handling and refinement.



Series 3 Polo was completely new from the ground-up. Based on underpinnings from the SEAT Ibiza, it was a total new change in direction.

1995

The range of eighteen models for the beginning of 1995 was as the launch at the tail end of 1994. The 1.3 and 1.6 litre models came first, followed by the base 1.0 litre engine cars. The cars didn't start arriving until the December of that year, and so waiting lists were inevitable.

The L was available in 1.0 45 bhp, 1.3 55 bhp and 1.6 75 bhp guises. The CL was available with 1.3 and 1.6 engines. The GL and GLX were only available with the 1.6 75 bhp engine option. Cars were well-equipped, with all having electrically-heated and adjustable mirrors, while all except the 1.0 and 1.3 L had power-steering. A 1.9 64 bhp diesel unit arrived in Spring 1996 and was available in L and CL models.

Dashboard was shared with all models and the SEAT Ibiza/Cordoba ranges. Trim levels were more luxurious than before, the GLX being the range-topper.



The new Polo was comprehensively well-equipped. The L model boasted a height-adjustable steering column, a Sony radio/cassette with four speakers, rev counter, digital clock, colour-coded bumpers, heated and electrically-adjustable mirrors and a dust and pollen filter.

The CL added front seat height adjusters, rear head restraints, split folding rear seats, power steering, central locking, and front electric windows (the latter three, another Polo first).

The GL built on the additional features of the CL. These models gained ABS, a manual glass tilt/slide sunroof and 13" eight-spoke 'Interlagos' alloy wheels.

Finally, the range-topping GLX was distinguished from the Polo GL, by way of its deeper 'sports bumpers', front fog lamps, white front indicators, darkened rear light clusters and the addition of heated windscreen washer jets. The GLX also boasted many interior refinements which included: front sports seats, driver and passenger airbags and black 'Speed' upholstery. Prices for the new range began at £6950 for the 1.0 L three door, rising to £11,750 for the 1.6 five door GLX model.

At the 1995 London Motor Show, Volkswagen announced the first range revisions. Two new models were unveiled. The Polo Harlequin was a multi-coloured car with every panel being a different colour, but the car was always symmetrical. It had just gone on sale in Germany and had special interior trim fabrics and colourings. The purpose of the Motor Show UK debut was to see what potential customers thought of the striking and original painting of a production car.

The Polo Open Air was a much more sensible option. This version of the Polo featured a full-length, electrically-operated folding roof, similar to those fitted on Beetles or Citroen 2CVs many decades earlier. Also at the show, VW announced that the 1.3 litre engine in the Polo was to be replaced with a much better 1.4 litre 60 bhp unit that delivered its power at a much lower engine speed with sixteen percent more torque.



Harlequin and Open Air models were unveiled at the London Motor Show in 1995. Both were concepts, the Open Air being the more sensible option.

1996

The second year of new Polo production saw the first raft of major revisions. A new UK-only model, the SE was launched. Based on the 1.4 L, it gained extra equipment consisting of: 'Sport Rader 9' alloy wheels, GLX 'sports bumpers', darkened rear light clusters and white indicators. The interior also had unique 'Reflection' upholstery, rear head restraints, height-adjustable front seats and split-folding rear seats. Prices started at £9745 for the three door. The number of examples were limited to four thousand. Optional extras were as the L, and the car was available in the full compliment of the Polo's twelve body colours.

The Polo Harlequin was announced only a few weeks later. It came to the UK as it appeared at the London Motor Show only a few months earlier. Based on the 1.4 CL, the car now featured its own upholstery, driver's airbag, GLX 'sports bumpers', white indicators and darkened rear light clusters. The car was made in batches of four (Yellow, Pistachio Green, Chagall Blue and Flash Red were the colourways) and the customer could not specify a certain panel to be a certain colour - the colour combination that the car arrived in, would be a complete surprise. The price at launch (five door only) was £11,095. The GLX also now had new 14" 'Indianapolis' alloy wheels fitted, replacing the previous 13" versions. All models had a revised tailgate too, with a tiny lip 'spoiler' shaped out of the metal at the top of the rear window.

Again, only a few weeks later, VW launched another new Polo version. Now available as a four-speed automatic, the car was fitted with the 1.4 or 1.6 litre engines and spanned all four mainstream levels. But the big news of 1996, was probably the launch of the modern-day Derby.

The Polo Saloon (or 'Classic' in Germany) was released in April 1996. Basically a re-engineered SEAT Cordoba, the car was built on the same lines as the SEAT, but had differing front and rear styling. The rear styling treatment was like a truncated Audi A4, while the front was similar in style to the new Polo. Launched in five four-door versions, engine options were 1.6 75 bhp, 1.6 100 bhp and a new 1.9 64 bhp SDI diesel. The diesel unit was claimed to be the most economical Volkswagen to date, while the 1.6 featured new variable intake manifold technology. Other styling flourishes on the Saloon included colour-coded door handles and rubbing strips. The car was 423 mm longer than the Hatchback and had a 40 mm longer wheelbase.

The L and CL specifications made up the Saloon range with the L being made available with the 1.6 75 bhp or 1.9 64 bhp SDI engines. The CL was fitted with a choice of 1.6 75 bhp, 1.6 100 bhp or 1.9 64 bhp SDI units. Optional extras were priced the same as the Polo Hatchback range and in many cases, the actual cost of the cars were

priced identically too.

Another variation on the Hatchback theme was the Colour Concept, which was only made available on the Continent. Like the corresponding model in the Golf range, it featured 'Solitude' alloy wheels and a range of five body colours with co-ordinating coloured leather trim details inside the interior.

1997

More Polo range alterations were made in 1997. The 1.0 L now had a new 999cc, all-aluminium engine, developing 50 bhp. An increase of 5 bhp over the old unit wasn't the only benefit - torque figures rose and the car also accelerated faster and was more economical. The engine also boasted multi-point fuel injection, rather than the single-point system used on the earlier model.

The whole Polo range was rationalised at this time to make way for the most powerful new Polo - the 16V. The Polo GL three-door was made no longer available, the GL five-door, lost its anti-lock brakes and the GLX trim level was discontinued.

The Polo 16V was made available for the 1997 model year. The new car appeared identical in outward appearance to the deleted GLX, with the exception of the '16V' badge on the tailgate. Specifications and the interior was as the GLX too, but the one thing the car didn't share with its previous range-topping sister was its engine. A new 1.4 litre, 100 bhp 16V unit, it sprinted to 60 mph in 10.5 seconds and had a top speed of 117 mph. Using the same variable intake manifold geometry as the Polo Saloon's 1.6 100 bhp unit, it had a good torque figure. Costing £12,095 for the three door model, again, the options list was extensive. In mid-1996 the 'Open Air' sunroof was made a UK optional fitment on every model for £565. Other extras for the 16V included: air-conditioning, passenger airbag and anti-lock brakes.



Polo 16V was sportiest new model yet, replacing GLX. New Polo Saloon (aka 'Classic' in Germany) was the modern-day Derby equivalent.

1998

In 1998, the Polo was made more secure with the fitting of new locks on the doors and steering column, without changing the prices of the range. The locks were free-wheeling and were also fitted to the recently-introduced Passat. The steering lock too, also came from the larger VW. Other changes also saw the introduction of a new instrument panel, with the speedometer and rev counter flanking an inner warning light display; new dashboard outer air vents and an electrically-adjustable headlight beam. The colour range too, was updated, while some Polo models gained better-spec radio/cassette units.

1998 also saw the UK launch of yet another Polo variant - the new Estate. Like the Saloon, it was based on a SEAT (the Cordoba Vario) and was built alongside this car and the regular versions of the SEAT Cordoba and the Polo Saloon at Martorell, SEAT's modern car-making plant in Spain. Released in ten versions, the trim levels were the same as the Polo Saloon, with the addition of a new GL specification. The car was the same length as the Saloon, but offered more loadspace because of its deliberately 'squarebacked' tailgate.

The car was made available with the same engine options as the Polo Saloon and specification levels were also identical. The 1.6 75 bhp L started the range at £11,205 and included height-adjustable front seats. The L trim level was also available with the 1.9 64 bhp SDI diesel engine. The CL was released with the two 1.6s (75/100 bhp) and the SDI diesel unit. The range-topping GL was fitted with the larger 1.6 litre unit.

Shortly after the car's introduction, Volkswagen announced that this car and the Saloon would be available with a 1.9 litre, 90 bhp TDI engine. Fitted to the Saloon and Estate in GL trim, the Estate range now topped off at £13,550. Both cars were also available in this specification with the 1.6 100 bhp engine. The new GL specification included: 14" 'Solitude' alloy wheels, Polo 16V Hatchback interior trim with front sports seats. A further advantage that the Estate had over the Saloon was that the new TDI engine was fitted to the car in more lowly L and CL trim.

New Polo Estate was (like the Saloon) based on a SEAT, in this case, the Vario. The Polo range now mirrored (to a certain extent) the three-tier range of the 1980/90s.



The biggest news concerning the Polo was yet to come, however. The GTI was launched on the continent in Autumn 1998, 23 years after the Polo's introduction - long time coming! Launched in Germany in a limited run of 3000 cars and appearing at the Paris AutoSalon, the car was labeled with the famed 'GTI' moniker. It was seen as a spiritual successor to the Series 1 Golf GTI (their dimensions were almost identical), Volkswagen UK delayed plans to introduce the car into Britain until the range was revamped (Series 5 Polo) in mid-1999. The GTI then joined the European and UK ranges as a full-scale production model.

The car was available as a three or five-door and got interior tweaks which included: body-coloured door panel inserts and deeply padded front seats trimmed in upbeat new fabrics. The GTI also came with a leather-rimmed steering wheel, red floor mat edging and seatbelts, and VW's new trademark blue instrument lighting. Cosmetic exterior changes included the use of 'GTI' badges on the grille and tailgate and unique BBS 15" alloy wheels wrapped in 195/45 15 rubber. The car also had red plug leads and brake calipers.

The engine that powered the new sports model, was completely new. A 1.6 16V 120 bhp unit it was said that the car would sprint to 60 mph in 9.1 seconds, whilst top speed was a claimed 120 mph. Chassis modifications included the use of uprated suspension with modified McPherson struts, while the rear saw a modified torsion beam. The ride height had been lowered by 15 mm all round and the braking system was upgraded to cope with the extra power over the then top-flight 16V model. The front track was widened by 21 mm, the rear by 16 mm and ABS was fitted as standard, in addition to EBD (Electronic Brake Distribution) and EDL (Electronic Differential Lock) traction control. The car was sold in Germany for around the UK equivalent of £11,000.



Polo GTI finally came in late 1998. Boasting 120 bhp from a new 1.6 litre engine, it could reach 60 mph in 9.1 seconds and romp on to a top speed of 120 mph.

1999

The range remained much the same for the last year of Series 4 production. In the Spring the UK market saw the introduction of the 'Match' special edition. Based on the Polo L, it had a sprinkling of optional equipment, that on its own would have cost more to add to the cost of the base-model car. Available in 1.0 and 1.4 litre guises and with three or five-doors, this extra equipment included: Votex '5 Star Softline' alloy wheels and manual glass tilt/slide sunroof. The 1.4 also had power steering, tinted glass, central locking, electric windows, height adjustable front seats, rear head restraints and a split folding rear seat. This engine was also available with an automatic gearbox. Volkswagen also offered its '1999 Polo Summer Campaign' a few months later. It was a range of special offers to heighten the Polo's appeal. The 16V and GL were offered with manual air-conditioning in lieu of the sunroof that came as standard. The 'Open Air' electrically-operated sunroof module was offered to L and CL Hatchback drivers for £160 (normally costing £565), while any customer that ordered a Polo L or CL Hatchback, Saloon or Estate had a manual glass tilt/slide sunroof fitted free.

The first 'spy' photographs of the revamped model started to appear in early Autumn, and the new car was launched in Vienna in October 1999.

Polo Match was launched in 1999 offering extra equipment. Polo '1999 Summer Campaign' featured many special offers, including air-conditioning on 16V.



Series 3F Polo Hatchback, Saloon & Estate

Volkswagen's birthday present to itself to celebrate the Polo's quarter of a century, was the launch of another new model. Available in Britain from February 5 2000 (late 1999 on the continent), the new model was freshened up for the new Millennium.

The Hatchback model was the most revised, with the Saloon and Estate variants gaining revised trim and minor details. The Hatchback range grew to thirty-two models, ranging from the 1.0 E to the range-topping 1.6 GTI. Within this expanded range is a choice of seven engines, with new 1.4 TDI and 1.6 GTI units being available for the first time. The new model boasted a galvanised and stiffer bodyshell and sixty percent of the car's components were revised to improve the handling, ride and refinement of the car.



2000 Polo was a heavily facelifted Series 3 car, having many refinements over its predecessor. The exterior saw changes, while remaining neat.

Estate and Saloon were also revised, but the Hatchback featured most of the cosmetic work. These cars did however feature the same refinements.



The appearance of the new models was much as before. Clear-lensed lights and a revised bumper and grille were the most prominent changes at the front of the car, while the rear saw corresponding changes with red light clusters and a new bumper with numberplate recess. The interior boasts a Lupo-style dashboard with more comfortable seats and VW's now trademark blue backlighting. The interior quality was as good as the larger VW models such as the Golf (itself a benchmark), Bora and Passat.

The Hatchback (three and five-door) was available in five trim levels, while the Saloon and Estate ranges were expanded to three models with five engine options. All models included ABS and all-disc braking as standard, in addition to two front airbags.

Trim levels

E

The E was the base-model and is available with 1.0 50 bhp, 1.4 60 bhp (both Hatchback only), 1.4 75 bhp (Saloon and Estate only), 1.9 SDI 64 bhp and 1.9 TDI 90 bhp (Saloon and Estate) engines. Equipment included: power steering, tinted glass, split-folding rear seat, electrically-heated and adjustable door mirrors and rear head restraints. The base-model Hatchback cost £8290, the same price as the outgoing 1.0 L.



All models featured a new Lupo-esque interior. Hatchback featured a new 1.4 TDI unit developing 75 bhp and 144 lbs ft of torque!

S

The S trim level was the next rung up the Polo ladder. Available with 1.4 60 bhp (Hatchback only), 1.4 75 bhp, 1.6 100 bhp (Saloon and Estate only), 1.9 SDI 64 bhp and 1.9 TDI 90 bhp, extra equipment over the E included: anti-hijack central locking, cup-holder and electric front windows. Volkswagen announced that in May 2000, the S Hatchback will also be available with the revolutionary new 1.4 75 bhp TDI unit, that had until then, only seen service in the SE trim level.

SE

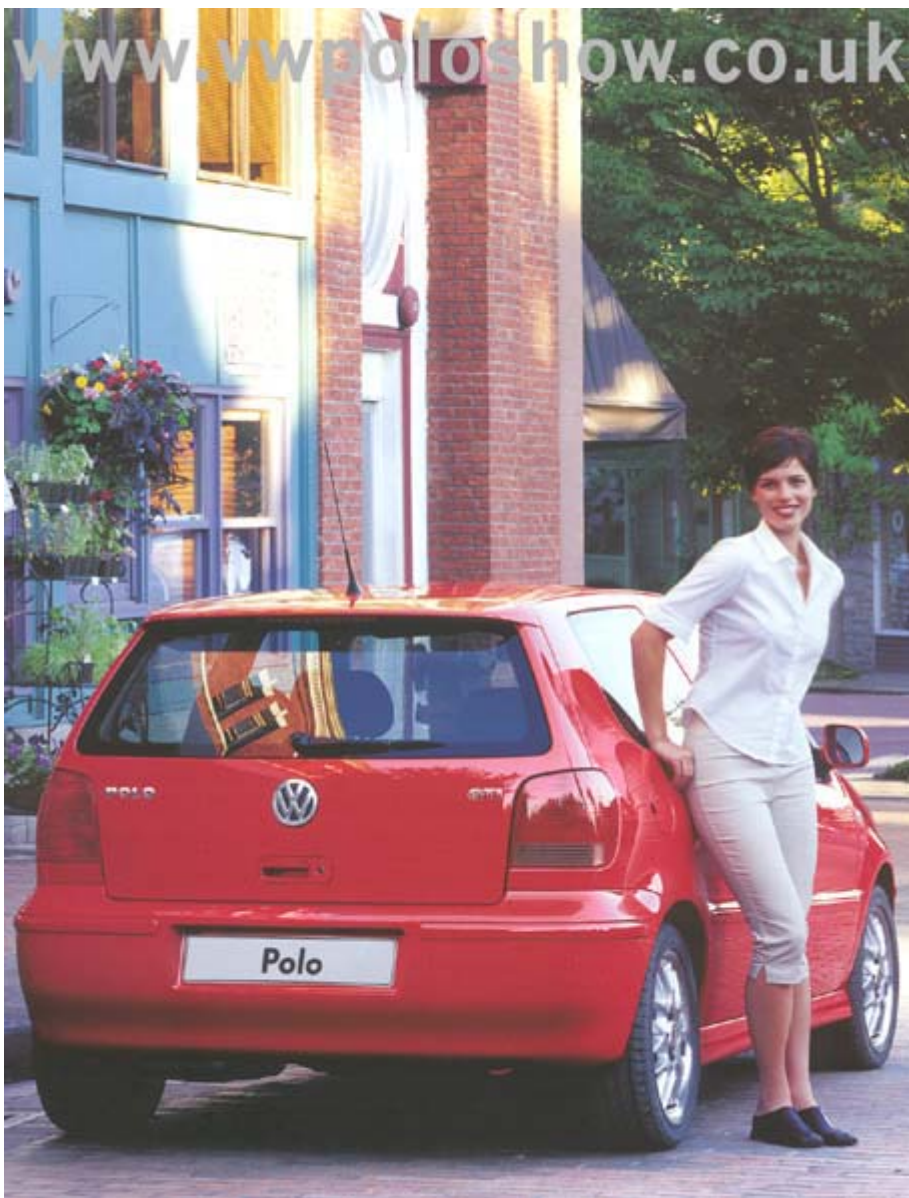
The SE was the plushiest 'non-sporting' Polo. Again, available in all three Polo variants, the engine choice was as wide as the E and S, with 1.4 60 bhp, 1.4 75 bhp (both Hatchback only), 1.6 100 bhp, 1.9 TDI 90 bhp and 1.9 TDI 110 bhp (all three engines, Saloon and Estate only).

The Hatchback was also available with the new 3 cylinder 1.4 litre TDI unit, developing 75 bhp. With a giant-killing 144 lbs ft of torque (surpassing that of the GTI), it featured the 'Pump Duse' (or PD) technology which provided class-leading fuel efficiency and very low emissions. An engine balancer shaft added to the smooth and quiet driving experience.

'Diesel Car' magazine awarded this car their 'Diesel Car of The Year 2000' award. Trim differences included the addition of an electric sunroof, front fog lamps and 14" 'Kyalami' alloy wheels. The final 2 trim levels on the new Polo were available in Hatchback form only.

16V

The 16V is the first 'sporting' model. It featured a 1.4 100 bhp engine with equipment levels boasting: manual air-conditioning, interwoven upholstery and 15" 'Spa' alloy wheels. This made it better value against the outgoing model, when specifications were equalised.



GTI

The range-topping Polo Hatchback model was the GTI. This model was available as a limited-edition on the continent in the Series 3 range, but it came to the UK as a full production model. It had a new 1.6 16V, 125 bhp engine and was the most powerful production Polo to date. It looked the part too, with its unique 'body kit' consisting of deeper bumpers with mesh inserts, mesh grille, tailgate spoiler, deeper sills and 15" BBS 'Spilt Rim' alloys, wearing 195/45 15 tyres. Extra equipment over the 16V included a 6-disc CD autochanger, Xenon gas-discharge headlights and electronic air-conditioning. The new model was also available in just three colours: red, black or silver as per the first Golf GTI of 1975. Prices for the three door model started at £13,995, rising to £14,460 for the five door version.

New Polo GTI featured 1.6 16V engine producing 125 bhp and revised exterior styling. Highlights included a mesh grille and front fog lamps.



Optional equipment levels were gargantuan, the Polo being available with the much-vaunted rain-sensitive wipers, optional in-car satellite-navigation system and leather upholstery. The owners of Polo SE models could also upgrade their cars to include air-conditioning in lieu of the electric sunroof. All models were also available with the option of seat side-mounted airbags.

An all-new Polo model was expected in 2002, based on the chassis of the Skoda Fabia. The new SEAT Ibiza will also share this same platform, and was also be released in 2002.