



GTI | 50



Golf III GTI



Golf I GTI



Golf II GTI



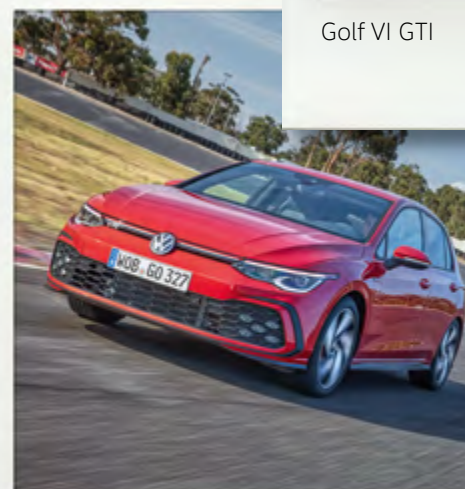
Golf IV GTI



Golf V GTI



Golf VI GTI



Golf VIII GTI¹



Golf VIII GTI EDITION 50²



Golf VII GTI

1. Golf GTI – combined fuel consumption: 7.3–7.0 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 166–160 g/km; CO₂ class: F
2. Golf GTI EDITION 50 – combined fuel consumption: 7.9–7.6 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 179–173 g/km; CO₂ class: G–F

50 YEARS OF GTI

"GTI is a way of life."

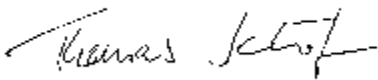
Dear readers,

50 years of GTI – what an anniversary! Those three letters stand for a way of life – a blend of sportiness, coolness and understatement. This feeling has matured over the decades – just like the technologies on board every vehicle bearing the "GTI" badge: from the very first Golf GTI with its red stripe on the radiator grille and 110 PS to our anniversary model, the Golf GTI EDITION 50¹ featuring adaptive chassis control, differential lock and, for the first time, 239 kW (325 PS).

GTI is a legend, regardless of the type of drive. It is a phenomenon that, in all its facets, is part of Volkswagen's DNA. So it goes without saying that we will continue the story of golf ball gear knobs, Clark seat covers and more – with all the charming characteristics that make fans all over the world love these three letters.

In 2026, we will unveil the ID. Polo GTI² – our first all-electric GTI. I can assure you: this car will seamlessly match the performance of its predecessors in terms of driving pleasure, emotion and innovative strength. It will be the GTI icing on the cake in a jubilee year that we at Volkswagen will celebrate extensively – together with our fantastic GTI fan community all around the globe.

Enjoy reading!



Thomas Schäfer



Thomas Schäfer, Member of the Board of Management of Volkswagen AG, Head of Brand Group Core and CEO of the Volkswagen brand

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THE INVENTION OF THE GTI

Secret operation "Sport Golf"

Wolfsburg in the 1970s: While Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd dominate the charts and stadiums, a small, rebellious team at Volkswagen is working on something big in technical terms. Their goal? To build a consistently sporty Golf. Pure dynamics at a cool price. Code name: "Sport Golf".



Mission accomplished: media presentation of the Golf GTI in June 1976 at the Hockenheimring.

The "Sport Golf" team includes engineer Alfons Löwenberg, chassis expert Herbert Horntrich, Head of Development Hermann Hablitzel, marketing specialist Horst-Dieter Schwittlinsky and Head of Press Anton Konrad. The five Volkswagen employees meet in a private flat and quickly agree: they want to create a fascinatingly powerful Golf that is affordable, fast and approved by the top motorsport authority, the FIA. As a first step, they build a prototype based on the equally new Scirocco, which shares many components with the Golf, featuring 74 kW (100 PS) and an infernally loud exhaust system. A roaring beast. The team soon designs a more realistic version and presents it to Volkswagen's Head of Development, Professor Ernst Fiala. His verdict: "You're crazy."

Undeterred, the "Sport Golf" team continues – still undercover, still based on the Scirocco. Every detail is questioned and improved. The tests are elaborate and take time. In spring 1975, the team presents the updated Sport Golf in Scirocco guise to the Board at Volkswagen's Ehra-Lessien test track. Now even Fiala is impressed.

At the end of May, the official development order follows. The project gathers momentum. Six initial prototypes are built. One of them appears as a pace car at the Nürburgring in summer 1975, turning heads among spectators in the Eifel. How can a Golf be so fast?

In September 1975, the time had come: At the IAA, the very first Golf GTI made its debut – featuring 81 kW (110 PS), a red radiator grille and sports seats in tartan design. Visitors were thrilled. Market launch followed in 1976. Demand skyrocketed – instead of the planned 5,000 units, tens of thousands were sold in the first year. No surprise, as the car was highly dynamic, affordable and economical at the same time. Today, five decades later, the 239 kW (325 PS) Golf GTI EDITION 50¹ is ready to usher in the next 50 years of GTI.

1. Golf GTI EDITION 50 – combined fuel consumption: 7.9–7.6 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 179–173 g/km; CO₂ class: G–F



Volkswagen engineer Löwenberg, Golf I GTI



Golf I GTI prototype as pace car at Nürburgring (1975)

GOLF I GTI

Origin and Icon

HERITAGE

The story of the Golf GTI begins at the Nürburgring. In the summer of 1975, a prototype of the sports car is used as a pace car, and spectators wonder why this Volkswagen is driving so incredibly fast. “GOLF” is written on the doors, but the name GTI is still a secret. However, the later characteristic black stripes along the side skirts are already there.

A few weeks later, Volkswagen reveals the secret of the model and presents a study of the Golf GTI at the International Motor Show (IAA) in Frankfurt as a world premiere – a car capable of 182 km/h. Demand is enormous – everyone wants this compact sports car. By June 1976, the 81 kW (110 PS) Golf GTI is launched at a price of 13,850 Deutschmarks, first in Germany and then worldwide. Initially, 5,000 vehicles of the special series are planned to at least recoup development costs. But things turn out differently: instead of 5,000, a total of 461,700 Golf GTI models of the first generation are built, culminating in the special edition “Golf GTI Special Model” – also known as the “Pirelli GTI” – with 82 kW (112 PS).

GTI-INSIGNIA

Red in the black radiator grille – in 1976, designers manage with just a few clever individualisations to turn a Golf into a distinctive GTI. At the front, it is the red stripe framing the grille. This is also the case with the Golf II GTI. The third generation features the red stripe only on the bumper of the special model “20 Years GTI”, while all other Golf III GTI models dispense with it, as does the extremely cleanly designed Golf IV GTI. Only with the debut of the Golf V GTI does the red stripe in the grille become part of the GTI DNA forever. The current Golf GTI carries it above the grille. If equipped with IQ.LIGHT – LED matrix headlights, the stripe also extends across their housings.

GTI-PASSION

“Hotel California” is the soundtrack of 1976. The Eagles send a feeling of life around the globe with this song. Viewed objectively, “Hotel California” consists of just a few notes and words, and the first Golf GTI of only 780 kg of metal and plastic. Yet the composition of details turns both song and sports car into legends. For the Golf GTI, it is the interplay of a crisp chassis, agile engine, minimal weight, clean design and unmistakable GTI insignia: black wheel arch extensions, black double stripes along the side skirts, black bumpers, black-framed rear window, red radiator grille surround, tartan sports seats, a gear knob shaped like a golf ball and a cool steering wheel. That’s how icons are created.



4 cylinders, 8 valves
1.6 l and 1.8 l naturally aspirated engines
81 kW (110 PS) and 82 kW (112 PS)
top speed: 182 km/h to 186 km/h
461,700 vehicles produced



THE GTI DESIGN DNA

You can recognise a GTI instantly



In this interview, Volkswagen Chief Designer Andreas Mindt analyses the visual power of the GTI idea.

What should a GTI look like?

For me, a true GTI is something you can recognise from afar straight away. It doesn't need drama or aggression. It simply stands there – very self-assured, almost relaxed. You see the proportions, the wheels, the visual stability – the stance – and you know: this car is ready to go. A GTI should always look sporty, but never exaggerated. It is an everyday car with a very special aura.

What made the Golf I GTI an icon?

The Golf I GTI was successful because it never tried to be something exclusive. It was a car for people who loved driving, but still needed a car for everyday life. You could use it every day, take friends along, go shopping – and then, on a beautiful country road, it suddenly became something very emotional. This mix was new at the time, and that's exactly why people still talk about it today.

The red line in the radiator grille is typical GTI. The electric ID. Polo GTI¹ doesn't need a radiator grille. What happens to the red line?

The red line was never really about the radiator grille itself. It is a GTI signature, a visual underline. On an electric car, you can't just copy the old solution – that wouldn't be honest. So the question is: where does

this hallmark make sense today? The answer is not nostalgia, but a modern interpretation that still clearly and unmistakably says "GTI".

Did you already have the GTI in mind when sketching the new ID. Polo¹?

Absolutely. A GTI cannot be added at the end of the process. The base vehicle must have the right proportions and architecture from the outset. If you get that right early on, the GTI version feels completely natural – as if it had always been there.

Which historic Golf GTI do you personally find most visually appealing?

That's always a tough question. The first Golf GTI impresses with its simplicity and honesty. And the second generation deserves great respect for turning this idea into something enduring. Together, these two models truly define what GTI is all about.

1. ID. Polo GTI / ID. Polo – near-production concept car
2. Golf GTI EDITION 50 – combined fuel consumption: 7.9–7.6 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 179–173 g/km; CO₂ class: G–F



Andreas Mindt and the new Golf GTI EDITION 50²

GOLF II GTI

The evolution begins

HERITAGE

From 1984 onwards, the second Golf GTI seamlessly continued the philosophy of the sporty compact car. By the eighth year of GTI history, its typical hallmarks had already achieved cult status: black wheel arch extensions, black front spoiler, black-framed rear window, black headliner and the red surround on the radiator grille. Perfectly matched: the Mars Red paintwork and later Tornado Red as GTI colours. With 82 kW (112 PS), the new GTI initially offered the same power as its predecessor. From 1985, those opting for one of the first catalytic converters sacrificed 4 kW (5 PS). But more power was already on the horizon.

In 1986, Volkswagen added a technical innovation to the GTI power portfolio: a 16-valve engine. In the version without a catalytic converter, the four-valve unit delivered 102 kW (139 PS) and a top speed of 208 km/h. Even the Golf GTI 16V with catalytic converter – in this case 95 kW (129 PS) – was capable of 200 km/h from 1987 onwards. ABS was available as an option for the first time. In 1990, a G-Lader supercharger boosted output in the Golf GTI G60 with regulated catalytic converter to 118 kW (160 PS) and raised Vmax to 216 km/h. In November 1990, the Golf GTI smashed through the one-million mark in production, becoming the world's most successful compact sports car.

GTI-INSIGNIA

A steering wheel must feel perfect in the hand – just like in the first Golf GTI. Its three spokes and recessed Wolfsburg emblem in the centre also looked cool. The same applied to the facelift version of the Golf I with its four round horn buttons. The Golf II GTI continued this tradition seamlessly. With the third GTI, the red decorative stitching on the leather made its debut – a feature that has been indispensable on GTI steering wheels ever since. From the fifth generation onwards, every steering wheel also bears the GTI badge on the centre spoke.

GTI-PASSION

In 1984, Michael Jackson's "Thriller" was among the most successful albums – and remains the best-selling of all time. In the automotive world, the Golf GTI was now permanently in the charts. Even in its second generation, it was so successful because its balanced handling was virtually unbeatable. A GTI hallmark of the era: during load changes in tight, fast corners, the inside rear wheel would briefly lift. The GTI would then pivot into the bend, delivering performance that was exceptional for a compact car.



Golf II GTI, 4 cylinders, 8 and 16 valves
 1.8 l naturally aspirated engine with a supercharger
82 kW (112 PS) / 79 kW (107 PS) / 95 kW (129 PS)
102 kW (139 PS) / 118 kW (160 PS)
Top speed: 186 km/h to 219 km/h
 628,000 vehicles produced



THE GTI ENGINE

Revolution and evolution

When the first Golf GTI hit the road in 1976, it was nothing short of a small revolution: under the bonnet worked a 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine delivering 81 kW (110 PS) and 137 Nm of torque – light, feisty and ready to shake up the compact class. The secret? A sportily tuned engine that transformed the Golf from an everyday compact car into a compact sports car. Then as now, the GTI badge was a promise: dynamics for everyone.

The key technical innovation in the first generation was the four-cylinder injection engine with a new Bosch K-Jetronic system, which not only provided more power but also improved efficiency and reduced emissions. With every GTI generation, the drive technology was consistently developed further – and with it, the output increased. From 81 kW (110 PS) to 110 kW (150 PS), then 147 kW (200 PS). Since 2004, all GTI models have relied on powerful four-cylinder turbo engines (up! GTI: three-cylinder turbo engine). Today, even the base version of the current Golf GTI¹ delivers an impressive 195 kW (265 PS) from a state-of-the-art 2.0-litre turbo engine. Direct injection and variable valve timing ensure

maximum efficiency, while a precise automatic direct-shift gearbox (DGS) enables lightning-fast gear changes. If desired, the driver can intervene manually using the shift paddles on the steering wheel.

Despite all the technical progress, the Golf GTI has always remained true to its original idea through countless evolutionary stages: with an agile front engine, always with front-wheel drive and as a model that cuts a fine figure on the way to the opera as well as on the Nürburg-ring. All this makes it the epitome of the sporty compact car. Only the Golf II GTI G60 syncro briefly ventured into all-wheel drive.

Today, three GTI models with different performance levels are available: the current Golf GTI¹ puts 195 kW (265 PS) and 370 Nm of torque on the road, sprints from 0 to 100 km/h in 5.9 seconds and reaches 250 km/h. Even sportier is the Golf GTI Clubsport² with 221 kW (300 PS) and 400 Nm, while the anniversary model, the Golf GTI EDITION 50³, sets a new performance benchmark with 239 kW (325 PS), 420 Nm and a top speed of 270 km/h. Incidentally, maximum torque has more than tripled in 50 years – and so the Golf GTI remains the sporty pace-setter of the compact class.



1. Golf GTI – combined fuel consumption: 7.3–7.0 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 166–160 g/km; CO₂ class: F
2. Golf GTI Clubsport – combined fuel consumption: 7.6–7.3 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 174–166 g/km; CO₂ class: F
3. Golf GTI EDITION 50 – combined fuel consumption: 7.9–7.6 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 179–173 g/km; CO₂ class: G–F



GOLF III GTI

The era of understatement

HERITAGE

The Golf III GTI, introduced in 1991, embodies a discreet yet dynamic design. Its GTI identity is revealed through black wheel arch and sill trims, black spoilers, alloy wheels in Le Mans or Monte Carlo design, and a twin-pipe exhaust. The sports suspension subtly lowers the body. A defining feature: the headlights. They reinterpret the twin-headlamp design of the first and second Golf GTI generations. This time, however, all light functions are integrated into a single headlamp housing – one of many aerodynamic measures that make the GTI more efficient and faster. The roof-edge spoiler also reduces turbulence at the rear.

In terms of performance, the Golf III GTI starts with 85 kW (115 PS), delivered by its 2.0-litre two-valve four-cylinder engine to the front axle. Thanks to refined aerodynamics, this output enables a top speed of 196 km/h. In 1993, the new Golf GTI 16V debuts with 110 kW (150 PS), reaching 215 km/h and accelerating from 0 to 100 km/h in just 8.7 seconds. In 1996, a turbo diesel with 81 kW (110 PS) expands the GTI range. That same year, Volkswagen launches the 20 Years of GTI edition – the first anniversary model in GTI history.

GTI-INSIGNIA

Perhaps the most famous gear knob in the world: the golf ball of the Golf I GTI. Depending on the version, it also appeared in the GTI Mark II. In the third Golf GTI, Volkswagen created one of the most beautiful golf-ball gear knobs for the 20 Years of GTI edition: the upper half in black leather, the lower in aluminium. The same concept was used for the 25 Years of GTI special model based on the Golf IV GTI, and in modified form for the anniversary models Edition 30 (Golf V GTI) and GTI Edition 35 (Golf VI GTI). But even icons evolve: today, the gear knob is much smaller, and the GTI gearbox operates with shift-by-wire technology – because it works faster than any hand could ever manage on a golf ball.



1. Golf GTI – combined fuel consumption: 7.3–7.0 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 166–160 g/km; CO₂ class: F

GTI-PASSION

Streaming was still a distant dream in 1991. Yet Bryan Adams' "(Everything I Do) I Do It For You" sold an incredible 15 million copies that year. Three years later, Volkswagen celebrated its 15-millionth Golf – more than one million of them GTIs. In 1996, as the Golf GTI turned 20, the Spice Girls were taking the world by storm. On board the 20 Years of GTI edition, they came via radio, cassette or CD changer. Visual hallmarks of the anniversary GTI: red stripes in the bumpers, red GTI lettering, tinted tail lights and indicators, 16-inch BBS wheels with red brake calipers behind them. Inside, sports seats featured red-silver-black checked centre panels with a red GTI logo. Also in red: the stitching on the steering wheel and gear lever surround, plus the GTI emblem on the iconic golf-ball gear knob. This attention to detail remains a defining GTI trait to this day.



Golf III GTI, Four cylinders, eight and sixteen valves
2.0-litre naturally aspirated engine, 1.9-litre turbo diesel
petrol: 85 kW (115 PS) / 110 kW (150 PS)
diesel: 81 kW (110 PS)
Top speed: 193 km/h to 215 km/h
327,000 vehicles produced



THE GTI CHASSIS

Agile high-tech performers

Since 1976, the Golf GTI has stood for pure driving pleasure – thanks in no small part to its chassis. Even the very first GTI put its power safely on the road when ABS and ESC were still a thing of the future. The combination of MacPherson front axle, lightweight torsion-beam rear axle, anti-roll bars, lowering and sporty tuning delivered agile yet well-controlled handling. This very performance – maximum agility and neutrality with optimum control – continues to define every GTI to this day.

With each generation, the GTI chassis reflected the latest state of technical progress: ABS, ESC, differential lock and modern control systems made the compact sports car ever better. Today, the Golf GTI¹ features a highly sophisticated multi-link rear axle, and in the Golf GTI EDITION 50² even a standard adaptive DCC chassis control system and smart driving profiles – including Nürburgring mode for true cornering enthusiasts in the Golf GTI Clubsport³ and EDITION 50. Just how outstanding the potential of the current Golf GTI is was underlined by Volkswagen test and development driver Benjamin Leuchter (D) in 2025 with a development prototype on the Nürburgring Nordschleife: in 07:46:125 minutes at the wheel of the GTI EDITION 50, Leuchter smashed every record ever set on the Nürburgring by a production Volkswagen.

Three features are key to the chassis of all current Golf GTI models: progressive steering for even greater dynamics, a front-axle differential lock for optimum traction and the Vehicle Dynamics Manager, which intelligently networks all systems. The result? A driving experience that sets benchmarks – and is otherwise offered only by significantly more expensive sports cars. In half a century, one of the most sophisticated sports chassis in the world has emerged. As the editorial team of “Gute Fahrt” magazine summed up back in 1982 – and it still holds true today: “The handling of the compact car is completely unproblematic. This is undoubtedly one of the deeper secrets of the GTI’s success. Everyone gets on with the clear and agile Golf straight away. The weight distribution of the front-wheel-drive car and the precise, direct steering result in accurate driving that is fun.”

1. Golf GTI – combined fuel consumption: 7.3–7.0 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 166–160 g/km; CO₂ class: F
2. Golf GTI EDITION 50 – combined fuel consumption: 7.9–7.6 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 179–173 g/km; CO₂ class: G–F
3. Golf GTI Clubsport – combined fuel consumption: 7.6–7.3 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 174–166 g/km; CO₂ class: F



GOLF IV GTI

Style icon and turning point

HERITAGE

The Golf IV is rightly regarded as a style icon to this day. Hartmut Warkuß, long-standing Head of Design at the Volkswagen Group, shaped the precise and purist design DNA that paved the stylistic way for Volkswagen models into the future. At the same time, the fourth Golf – and with it the fourth GTI – made a huge leap forward in terms of technology. This is evident in the exceptional body and interior quality.

High-tech also characterised the new GTI engines: customers could choose between a 1.8-litre turbo petrol engine delivering 110 kW (150 PS) and a 2.3-litre five-cylinder engine with the same output of 110 kW (150 PS). With both engines, the Golf IV GTI reached a top speed of 218 km/h. In 2000, the output of the V5 engine increased to 125 kW (170 PS), raising the top speed to 224 km/h. A turbo diesel was also available again, initially producing 81 kW (110 PS), then 85 kW (115 PS), 96 kW (130 PS) and finally 110 kW (150 PS). The pinnacle of Golf IV GTI performance came in 2001 with the 132 kW (180 PS) turbo petrol engine in the special edition 25 years of GTI – a turning point in GTI history, as it definitively ushered in the era of turbocharged Golf GTI models.

GTI-INSIGNIA

In 1983, the Golf GTI special edition came onto the market – a Golf I GTI with the finest ingredients. One of these: a 14-inch alloy wheel with a rim embossed with letters, including the P for Pirelli. Fans immediately dubbed the special edition the Pirelli GTI. This sparked a tradition that has repeatedly produced new GTI wheel classics, such as the bolted BBS wheel of the 20 years of GTI and the polished BBS wheel of the 25 years of GTI. The horseshoe-shaped spokes of these two wheels were completely reinterpreted by the designers of the Golf V GTI in 2004, creating the legendary 18-inch alloy wheel Detroit. Successors to this iconic wheel have been produced for more than 20 years. The latest: the 19-inch Queenstown alloy wheel of the current Golf GTI.



1. Golf GTI – combined fuel consumption: 7.3–7.0 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 166–160 g/km; CO₂ class: F

GTI-PASSION

“Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone” and “The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring” were the most successful films of 2001. Among the most successful cars of the time was the Golf, which had already been built more than 20 million times. With the 25 years of GTI, Volkswagen presented an exclusive special edition of the global bestseller in 2001: limited to 3,000 vehicles, this edition – considered by many fans to be one of the most beautiful GTIs thanks to its clean design and highlights such as high-gloss polished 18-inch BBS alloy wheels – showcased with its torque-rich turbo engine and crisp chassis just how much potential the GTI still had after 25 years.



Golf IV GTI, 4 cylinders, 16 valves
5 cylinders with 10 and 20 valves
1.8-litre turbo petrol engine, 2.3-litre naturally aspirated engine, 1.9-litre turbo diesel
petrol engines: 110 kW (150 PS), 125 kW (170 PS), 132 kW (180 PS)
diesel engines: 81 kW (110 PS), 85 kW (115 PS), 96 kW (130 PS), 110 kW (150 PS)
Top speed: 193 km/h to 224 km/h
164,900 vehicles produced



THE GOLF GTI IN MOTORSPORT

Perfect for the racetrack

Hardly introduced, the first Golf GTI conquered not only the hearts of car enthusiasts but also the racetracks and rally stages of the world. The technology of the Golf GTI was already designed so that this Volkswagen could be homologated according to the international regulations of the FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile). On 1 November, 1976 the time had come: the Golf GTI was approved for motorsport by the FIA with the Test Sheet J of the International Automobile Sport Code for cars of Groups 1 to 5.

GTI in grassroots motorsport

As early as 1977, the Golf debuted in its own GTI one-make cup, which immediately became a crowd-puller. Both the cars and the drivers thrilled the audience. For example, Walter Struckmann from Hannover managed the feat of winning all 10 races in a row in the 1978 season. And Berthold Bermel from Krefeld can claim to have participated in every Golf GTI Cup race from the premiere on Sylt (Germany) in 1977 to the final cup race at the Nürburgring in 1982. At the same time, this racing series also ran in the USA under the name "Rabbit Cup." The very lightweight first-generation Golf GTI remains popular to this day in hill climb races around the world.



GTI I / GTI-Cup 1979



GTI I / Rallye Boucles de Spa, 1979



GTI I / Hunsrück Rally, 1981



GTI I / USA Rabbit Cup, 1979



GTI I / German Rally Championship, 1981

GTI in rallying

The Golf GTI also became a fixture in rallying. Cars such as the Golf GTI “Pierburg” of Group 4 impressed in the World Rally Championship in the 1980s. In addition, the German Rally Championship went to Alfons Stock and Paul Schmuck in 1981 in a grass-green first-generation Golf GTI. And with the Golf GTI 16V, Kenneth Eriksson and Peter Diekmann won the title in the FIA World Rally Championship for Group A cars in 1986.

GTI on the circuit

Finally, the GTI set standards on the circuit with numerous title wins. Example TCR: The TCR regulations introduced in 2015 combine top-class racing with production-based technology. Eligible are four- and five-door vehicles with 2.0-liter petrol or diesel engines, which are exclusively fielded by private teams. In addition to the globally contested “TCR International Series,” numerous national motorsport associations organize TCR racing series. The Golf GTI TCR ranks among the most successful touring cars ever: In the international TCR series, Stefano Comini (2016) and Jean-Karl Vernay (2017) each won the drivers’ title, with further title successes in TCR Asia (2016 & 2017) and TCR Middle East (2018). In 2019, Benjamin Leuchter and Johan Kristoffersson achieved two celebrated victories with the Golf GTI TCR on the Nürburgring Nordschleife in the FIA World Touring Car Cup (WTCR).



GTI VIII, 24-hour race Nürburgring, 2025

GTI at the 24-hour race on the Nürburgring

Time and again, the Golf GTI shines at the legendary 24-hour race on the Nürburgring. The statistics of this endurance classic show the Golf GTI as the most successful car in the two classes “Production Touring Cars Group 1” and “Touring Cars Group 2 up to 1,600 cc.” The successes on the Nürburgring continue to this day. Once again, it was Benjamin Leuchter who, together with Johan Kristoffersson, Heiko Hammel, and Nico Otto, delivered in 2025 and, with the 291 kW (397 PS) Golf GTI Clubsport 24h, claimed victory in the AT3 class for cars with alternative fuels for the second time after 2024. In the overall classification, the quartet achieved an excellent 24th place out of 135 participating cars, whetting the appetite for future 24-hour races with the Golf GTI.

GTI II 16V / World Championship Group A, 1986



GTI VII TCR / TCR-Series, 2017



GTI VIII Clubsport / 24-hour race, 2024



GTI VI 24 / 24-hour Nürburgring, 2011



GOLF V GTI

Comeback of the pure GTI

HERITAGE

In September 2004, Volkswagen presented the fifth Golf GTI at the Paris Motor Show, bringing the GTI idea back in a distinctly sportier form. Key features: sharpened design with a striking radiator grille in a new black honeycomb pattern framed by a red GTI surround, black front spoiler, black side skirts, a roof-edge spoiler in body colour, chrome twin tailpipes, new sports seats, high-end chassis and a new 147 kW turbocharged engine (200 PS). It packs a punch: the 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine accelerates the manual GTI to 100 km/h in 7.2 seconds; with DSG, it takes just 6.9 seconds. The GTI reaches its top speed at 235 km/h.

In 2006, to mark the 30th anniversary of the cult sports car, the Golf GTI Edition 30 debuted with an output of 169 kW (230 PS). The 230 PS are quickly explained: for every GTI year, there is one more PS compared to the 200 PS (147 kW) version. Visually striking: black 18-inch alloy wheels of the Detroit type. Alternatively, bright 18-inch alloy wheels in cross-spoke design (Rockingham) were available. The front spoiler, rear apron and side skirts were painted in body color, while the taillights were darkened. Exclusive part-leather sports seats with centre panels in the classic Interlagos tartan refined the interior. The equipment also included the gearshift or DSG knob styled like a golf ball. The fastest GTI to date reached 245 km/h and accelerated to 100 km/h in just 6.8 seconds.

GTI-INSIGNIA

They are legendary too: the sports seats in tartan check. In the fifth Golf GTI, the fabric is called Interlagos and covers the seat centre panels. This is a modern interpretation of the iconic sports seats of the first Golf GTI, which made the tartan pattern a cult classic. The second, third and fourth Golf GTI generations did not feature this pattern. From now on, it became a fixed part of the GTI DNA. In today's Golf GTI, the pattern is called Scale Paper – and, as 50 years ago, it is part of the standard equipment.



1. Golf GTI – combined fuel consumption: 7.3–7.0 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 166–160 g/km; CO₂ class: F

GTI-PASSION

In 2007, Captain Jack Sparrow, played by Johnny Depp, and Elizabeth Swann, portrayed by Keira Knightley, sailed to the end of the world in “Pirates of the Caribbean”. Around a year before production of the fifth Golf GTI ended, Volkswagen unveiled the new Golf GTI Pirelli at the legendary GTI Meeting at Lake Wörthersee. Visitors were thrilled – not least because this 169 kW (230 PS) special edition with its “Pirelli” wheels was a revival of the first Pirelli GTI. That model appeared in 1983 shortly before the first Golf GTI was discontinued and still enjoys cult status among fans today.



Golf V GTI, 4 cylinders, 16 valves
2.0 l turbocharged petrol engine
147 kW (200 PS), 169 kW (230 PS)
Top speed: 235 km/h to 245 km/h
181,000 vehicles produced



THE GTI CONCEPT CARS

Anything is possible

The GTI meetings in Reifnitz at Lake Wörthersee (Austria) were legendary. Among the highlights were the GTI concept studies created by Volkswagen especially for the event. Three of the most spectacular concept cars included the Golf GTI W12-650, the Golf Design Vision GTI and the GTI Roadster "Vision Gran Turismo". Each of these eye-catchers demonstrates the immense potential of the GTI idea.

Golf GTI W12-650

Daring to do something extraordinary, breaking conventions and igniting passion – these have been the roots of the GTI idea from the very beginning. Following this philosophy, Volkswagen presented a Golf from a parallel universe of the year 2050 at Lake Wörthersee in May 2007: the GTI W12-650. Never before had a Golf been more powerful, wider or faster. Its name said it all: W12 cylinders and 650 PS (477 kW). The development team installed its 6.0-litre biturbo engine longitudinally behind the driver and front passenger, transforming the GTI into a mid-engine sports car. A six-speed automatic gearbox transmitted the 750 Nm of torque to the rear axle. It catapulted the GTI from 0 to 100 km/h in just 3.7 seconds. The speedometer needle of the Golf GTI W12-650 only stopped climbing at 325 km/h.



GTI W12-650



Design Vision GTI



GTI Roadster



GTI Roadster

Golf Design Vision GTI

In 2013, Volkswagen enchanted fans with a Golf GTI concept for motorsport: the Design Vision GTI with 370 kW (503 PS). The concept car was based on the Golf VII GTI. Visually striking were the C-pillars and side sills, which the design team pulled outwards as independent body elements to create space for widened tracks and 20-inch wheels. Under the bonnet worked a V6 engine with 3.0 litres of displacement and biturbo charging. The TSI developed a maximum torque of 560 Nm. This power was transmitted via DSG to the 4MOTION all-wheel drive. The GTI sprinted past the 100 km/h mark in just 3.9 seconds.

Golf GTI Roadster "Vision Gran Turismo"

In 2014, the virtual and real worlds merged: Volkswagen presented a show car that had originally been created purely digitally in bits and bytes for the Sony PlayStation®3 classic "Gran Turismo 6" ("GT6"): the GTI Roadster "Vision Gran Turismo". The virtual GTI turned out so breathtaking that Volkswagen decided to build this Golf as a real show car. The two-seater was powered by the 3.0-litre V6 biturbo engine from the Design Vision GTI: also delivering 370 kW (503 PS) and 560 Nm, it was coupled to a seven-speed DSG and 4MOTION all-wheel drive. Contact with the road was provided by 20-inch tyres. After just 3.6 seconds, the 1,420 kg lightweight super sports car reached 100 km/h. Top speed was 309 km/h.

GOLF VI GTI

Perfected front-wheel drive

HERITAGE

In 2009, the sixth Golf GTI made its debut. The fine-tuning of the set-up was carried out by racing legend Hans-Joachim Stuck. With the new generation came a GTI capable of 240 km/h, powered by a 154 kW (210 PS) turbocharged engine that delivered plenty of driving fun and accelerated from a standstill to 100 km/h in just 6.9 seconds. It was a GTI that offered audible dynamics thanks to a sound generator and a newly designed exhaust system (one tailpipe on each side).

For the first time, the new GTI also featured the electronic transverse differential lock XDS as standard. Thanks to XDS, handling became significantly more precise and neutral, now resembling an all-wheel drive vehicle rather than a front-wheel drive one. In 2011, the Edition 35 followed – the most powerful GTI to date with 173 kW (235 PS). From 2012 onwards, the Golf GTI was also available as a Cabriolet.

GTI-INSIGNIA

Three letters that need no explanation: GTI. At the beginning, however, it was not clear that the GTI would actually be called GTI. Golf TS and Golf GTS were also considered. But TS lacked the dynamism of a GT. And GTS had already made history in 1963 with a Porsche: the 904 GTS. So GTI it was – what a stroke of luck.

GTI-PASSION

In 2011, Adele's "Rolling in the Deep" was the world's most successful song and the highlight of her career. The highlight of the sixth GTI generation in the same year was the Golf GTI Edition 35. For the first time, this special model celebrating the compact sports car's 35th anniversary pushed a GTI close to the 250 km/h mark: exactly 247 km/h. With a power-to-weight ratio of six kilos/PS, the 173 kW (235 PS) Golf was more agile than any previous GTI and reached 100 km/h in just 6.6 seconds. Volkswagen also demonstrated with the Golf GTI Cabriolet that the GTI spirit works in an open-top format. Proof of this dynamism: 7.3 seconds for the classic sprint to 100 km/h and a top speed of 237 km/h (DSG: 235 km/h).



Golf VI GTI, 4 cylinders, 16 valves
2.0 I turbocharged petrol engine
154 kW (210 PS), 173 kW (235 PS)
Top speed: 237 km/h to 247 km/h
199,900 vehicles produced



THE RACERS

Passionate GTI Professionals

One female racer, two male racers, three generations – professionals with their very own GTI story: Claire Schönborn, born in 1999, a highly talented hill climb and rally junior driver. Benjamin Leuchter, born in 1987, Volkswagen test and development driver and endurance racing ace. Hans-Joachim Stuck, born in 1951, former Formula 1 driver, Le Mans and DTM legend.



Hans-Joachim Stuck

His name ranks among the greatest in motorsport: Hans-Joachim Stuck. For decades, he has repeatedly driven GTI: "When I was racing in Formula 1 with Clay Regazzoni for Shadow in 1978, I already had a Golf GTI. And Regazzoni had a Ferrari Daytona. When I drove into the paddock with my GTI, Clay said: 'Hans, I want to drive your car.' Everyone wanted to drive the GTI." The GTI never let Stuck go: "A few years ago, I bought another Golf I GTI, a '79 model." He particularly enjoys driving this lightweight sports car: "I also have a BMW 700 Sport from my father. That and the GTI are the two cars that turn the most heads. And the GTI – that's a car with character. That still applies today. There are two cars that have always retained their character: the Porsche 911 and the Golf GTI."

Claire Schönborn

In 2025, Claire Schönborn competed for the first time in the Junior World Rally Championship. But her life as a racing driver began years earlier with a Golf I GTI – her father's hill climb car. Claire Schönborn: "My father had an accident with the GTI in 2016 and wanted to sell it. But that was out of the question for me. So I kept nagging him until we rebuilt it." Her first races followed. With a rocket: "Our Golf GTI delivers 297 PS and 260 Newton metres of torque – from a naturally aspirated engine." An original Golf I GTI block with an Audi STW cylinder head for "Super Touring Cars." Power-to-weight ratio: 2.66 kg per PS! The engineer: "The GTI drives like a kart – very intuitive, very natural. It's a small force you have under you. But the Golf is tremendous fun."



Benjamin Leuchter

"To win on the toughest racetrack in the world and in the highest FIA touring car class – it doesn't get any better," says Benjamin Leuchter. For the Volkswagen test and development driver, this victory at the Nürburgring with the Golf GTI in the WTCR in 2019 was the most significant. But his GTI roots go back to childhood: "My mother had a Golf II GTI Fire & Ice, and my uncle had a Golf II GTI as a Rieger wide-body kit. He even went to the GTI meeting at Lake Wörthersee." In 2010 came his first own GTI: "That was a brand-new Golf VI GTI. It had exactly 350 kilometres in its original condition – from Wolfsburg to home. Then I already started changing things." His passion for fine-tuning the GTI is still evident today in his intensive involvement in the development of new models.

THE GTI SPECTRUM

A wonderfully fast family

The history of GTI has never been just the story of the Golf. Even the very first Golf GTI had a counterpart in the Scirocco GTI. Further variations on this idea followed: the Lupo GTI, the up! GTI and the Polo GTI. As a foray into the world of one-offs, there was even a Passat GTI.

Scirocco GTI (1976 to 1981)

The first generation of the Volkswagen Scirocco was produced from June 1976, in parallel with the Golf I GTI. It was powered by a four-cylinder engine with K-Jetronic delivering 81 kW (110 PS). Like the Golf, the Scirocco GTI – with a top speed of 185 km/h – featured the legendary three-spoke sports steering wheel with recessed impact absorber. In 1981, the second generation of the Scirocco launched as a 110 PS GTI. In 1985, the Scirocco GTI debuted with a 16V engine producing up to 102 kW (139 PS).

Passat GTI (1976)

The Passat GTI presented in 1976 remained a one-off. Like the first Golf GTI, it was powered by a four-cylinder engine delivering 81 kW (110 PS). Visual hallmarks such as red trim stripes and extended wheel arch and sill mouldings identified it as a GTI. It was painted in Bahama Blue Metallic. The combination of Passat plus 110 PS engine only went into series production three years later – but as the comfort-oriented Passat GLi without the typical GTI insignia.



Scirocco I GTI



Passat I GTI



Lupo GTI



up! GTI

Polo GTI¹

Lupo GTI (2000 to 2005)

At the turn of the millennium, Volkswagen applied the GTI idea to the compact Lupo. The 16V engine in the Lupo GTI delivered 92 kW (125 PS) and 152 Nm, ensuring maximum dynamism. Objectively, the figures were impressive: 8.3 seconds for the sprint to 100 km/h and a top speed of 205 km/h. Subjectively, the driving experience was even more intense than the numbers suggested, as the Lupo GTI – weighing around 1,000 kg – handled like a go-kart.

up! GTI (2018 to 2023)

Introduced in 2018, the up! GTI – with 85 kW (115 PS) and an unladen weight of 1,070 kg – was something of a modern reinterpretation of the Golf I GTI. Hallmarks of the most powerful up!: compact dimensions, low weight, a punchy three-cylinder turbo engine,

sports suspension and typical GTI insignia such as the red stripe in the radiator grille and checked-pattern seat covers. With a top speed of 196 km/h and a sprint from 0 to 100 km/h in 8.8 seconds, it ranked among the most agile small cars of its time.

Polo GTI (1998 to 2025)

Initially limited to 3,000 units, the first Polo III GTI launched in 1998 with 88 kW (120 PS). Since then, every new Polo has also been offered as a GTI. The Polo IV GTI was powered for the first time with by turbo engines delivering 110 kW (150 PS) and 132 kW (180 PS). The Polo V GTI developed up to 141 kW (192 PS). In the current sixth generation of the Polo, output most recently rose to 152 kW (207 PS)¹.

1. This model is no longer available for sale

GOLF VII GTI

Pure Performance

HERITAGE

Volkswagen launched the seventh Golf GTI in 2013 in two versions: one with 162 kW (220 PS) and the GTI Performance with 169 kW (230 PS). Based on this, the Golf GTI Clubsport followed in early 2016 – a special model for the 40th anniversary of the Golf GTI – delivering 195 kW (265 PS) and, thanks to a boost function, temporarily even 213 kW (290 PS). It was also the first Golf GTI to break the six-second barrier, sprinting from 0 to 100 km/h in just 5.9 seconds and reaching an electronically limited top speed of 250 km/h. Both figures apply to the manual and DSG automatic versions.

Later that same year, the new Golf GTI Clubsport S pushed the boundaries of motorsport with its 228 kW (310 PS): Volkswagen test and development driver Benjamin Leuchter smashed the then front-wheel drive record on the Nürburgring Nordschleife in spring, clocking 07:49:21 minutes in the 265 km/h Clubsport S – a gift for the Golf GTI's 40th birthday. In 2017, the “regular” Golf GTI and the Golf GTI Performance also received more power: the new base version now delivered 169 kW (230 PS), while the new Golf GTI Performance offered 180 kW (245 PS). Another highlight of the seventh GTI generation followed in 2019: the Golf GTI TCR with 213 kW (290 PS), inspired by the 257 kW (350 PS) racing car from the international TCR series.

GTI-INSIGNIA

Fifty years of GTI also stand for the interplay of red and black. Black were the wheel arch extensions, bumpers and rear window surrounds of the first generations. Black is the radiator grille and red the signature GTI stripe. Black stripes along the side skirts adorned the Golf I GTI as well as the Golf VIII GTI EDITION 50. Inside, a GTI without a black headliner and red decorative stitching is unimaginable. In the EDITION 50, even the brake and accelerator pedals and the seat belts are finished in red. Also available at no extra cost: 19-inch Queenstown alloy wheels painted in black and red.



GTI-PASSION

In 2016, Usain Bolt made sporting history at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro by completing his “Triple-Triple” – three consecutive gold medals in the 100 m, 200 m and 4 x 100 m relay. Golf history was written the same year by the new GTI Clubsport S. Limited to 400 units – 10 cars for each GTI year – its key specs were: 228 kW (310 PS), 380 Nm and a DIN curb weight of just 1,286 kg. A world exclusive: a Nürburgring-specific setting selectable via the driving profile. The idea for the Golf GTI Clubsport S was born when the Volkswagen team responsible for the “regular” GTI tested the final version of the 2013 Golf GTI Performance on the Nordschleife. A small team – much like when the very first Golf GTI was created. This example shows that every GTI has always been, and will always be, born out of maximum passion.



Golf VII GTI, 4 cylinders, 16 valves, 2.0 l turbo petrol engine
**162 kW (220 PS), 169 kW (230 PS), 180 kW (245 PS),
 195 kW (265 PS), 213 kW (290 PS), 228 kW (310 PS)**
Top speed: 246 km/h to 265 km/h
 390,000 vehicles produced

1. Golf GTI EDITION 50 - combined fuel consumption: 7.9–7.6 l/100 km;
 combined CO₂ emissions: 179–173 g/km; CO₂ classes: G–F



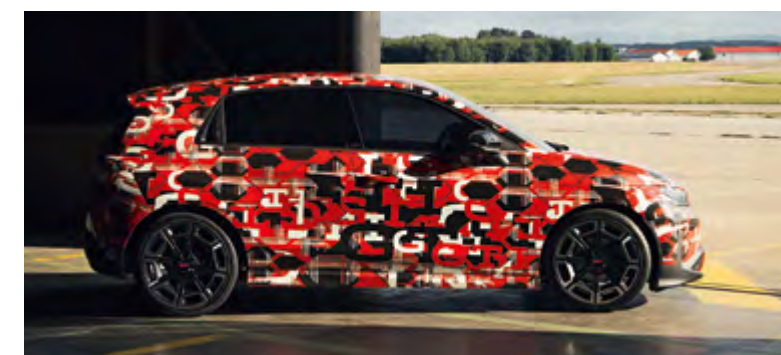
ID. POLO GTI

GTI of a new era

Half a century after the first Golf GTI, Volkswagen is bringing the GTI feeling into the age of electric mobility for the very first time: with the new ID. Polo GTI¹. This future dynamic compact model combines cutting-edge technologies and a crisp design, following in the footsteps of the original GTI from 1976.

Just like the first Golf back then, the new ID. Polo¹ is the perfect starting point for creating a GTI: with lightweight front-wheel drive, a powerful 166 kW (226 PS) electric motor, muscular proportions, an appealing design and full everyday practicality.

The ID. Polo GTI will deliver a fresh and powerful GTI feeling, as maximum output and torque are available instantly – typical of an electric vehicle. Naturally, the exterior and interior will also feature the classic GTI insignia – newly interpreted and further developed for the electric era. The ID. Polo GTI will celebrate its world premiere in early summer 2026.



1. ID. Polo GTI / ID. Polo – near-production concept car

GOLF VIII GTI

Perfection as a principle

HERITAGE

The eighth Golf GTI made its debut in 2020. Its 2.0-litre turbocharged engine delivers an output of 180 kW (245 PS) and up to 370 Nm of torque. For the first time, the Golf GTI – capable of 250 km/h and always equipped with a seven-speed DSG – features a newly developed Vehicle Dynamics Manager. This system coordinates the electronic differential lock (XDS+) and the lateral dynamics components of the optional Dynamic Chassis Control (DCC) as well as the electronically controlled front-axle differential lock. These sharpened dynamic characteristics create a new and pure driving experience.

To mark the 45th anniversary of the GTI, the 221 kW (300 PS) Clubsport 45 was launched in 2021. In 2024, Volkswagen perfected the Golf GTI with a hardware and software update, including new lighting, infotainment and operating systems. The output of the Golf GTI¹ increased from 180 kW (245 PS) to 195 kW (265 PS). The power of the Golf GTI Clubsport² remains unchanged at 221 kW (300 PS). All models stand out for their neutral chassis tuning and the performance of the front-axle differential lock. Another milestone in GTI history followed in 2025 when Volkswagen presented the new Golf GTI EDITION 50³ during the 24-hour race at the Nürburgring – in the anniversary year 2026, the most powerful Golf GTI to date with 239 kW (325 PS) will be delivered.

GTI-EDITIONS

They are cult classics – the Golf GTI anniversary models. The first was the 20 Years GTI in 1996 based on the third-generation GTI. Every five years, another collector's item followed: 2001 saw the 25 Years GTI (Generation IV), 2006 the Edition 30 (Generation V), 2011 the Edition 35 (Generation VI), 2016 the Clubsport and Clubsport S (Generation VII), 2021 the Edition 45 and finally, in 2026, the Golf GTI EDITION 50.

GTI-PASSION

The Golf GTI EDITION 50 is an extraordinary anniversary model. The engine from the Golf GTI Clubsport has been boosted by 18 kW (25 PS), and maximum torque has been increased by 20 to 420 Nm. When full power is unleashed, the Golf GTI EDITION 50 accelerates from a standstill to 100 km/h in just 5.3 seconds. Top speed is 270 km/h. DCC is standard in the Golf GTI EDITION 50. An exclusive feature is the optional "GTI Performance Package EDITION 50", which includes black 19-inch forged wheels of the Warmenau type, modified swivel bearings on the front axle with altered camber, an additional lowering of five millimetres thanks to stiffer springs (reducing body movement when steering), adapted chassis bearings (optimised response) and an especially lightweight exhaust system from Volkswagen R with titanium rear silencers. In addition, semi-slick tyres can be included at no extra cost for the Golf GTI EDITION 50. In Germany, these semi-slicks can also be ordered separately as an optional extra without the "GTI Performance package EDITION 50".



Golf VIII GTI, 4 cylinders, 16 valves, 2.0-litre turbo petrol engine
180 kW (245 PS), 195 kW (265 PS), 221 kW (300 PS), 239 kW (325 PS)
Top speed: 250 km/h to 270 km/h



1. Golf GTI – combined fuel consumption: 7.3–7.0 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 166–160 g/km; CO₂ class: F
2. Golf GTI Clubsport – combined fuel consumption: 7.6–7.3 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 174–166 g/km; CO₂ class: F
3. Golf GTI EDITION 50 – combined fuel consumption: 7.9–7.6 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 179–173 g/km; CO₂ class: G–F



COMMUNITY

Fans from all over the world celebrate GTI

GTI – behind these letters lies a sensational fan culture. Even the very first Golf GTI ignited a passion among fans to experience this Volkswagen together, especially at the Golf GTI Meeting at Lake Wörthersee in Austria. In 1982, it began modestly with around 80 participants. By 1984, there were already more than a thousand. Then the numbers skyrocketed: later, more than 100,000 GTI fans flocked to the Wörthersee meeting year after year.

In 2017 and 2018, Volkswagen invited fans to Wolfsburg. Thousands came again. After the pandemic, the celebrations continued in Wolfsburg in 2024. In 2025, the GTI community then got a first taste of the GTI anniversary year 2026 during the 24-hour race at the Nürburgring, with the world premiere of the Golf GTI EDITION 50¹. And it promises to be exciting. One of the highlights is already certain: the debut of the new ID. Polo GTI².

1. Golf GTI EDITION 50 – Combined fuel consumption: 7.9–7.6 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 179–173 g/km; CO₂ class: G–F
2. ID. Polo GTI – near-production concept car



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Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft
Volkswagen Product Communications
Berliner Ring 2
D-38440 Wolfsburg

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