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Vehicle Profile: The 2012 Volkswagen GTI

The original hatch keeps it hot for 2012.

When a car lands on both the *Car and Driver* "10 Best" list and the *Automobile* magazine "All Stars" list five years in a row, you know it's a pure driving enthusiasts' machine. That the 2012 Volkswagen GTI can deliver the performance needed to make those lists at an affordable price tag underscores the brand's penchant for delivering outstanding value.



Among all fun-to-drive performance cars, there's one car that *Car and Driver* described as "the car that every enthusiast should own at least once in his or her lifetime." That's the Volkswagen GTI (MSRP just \$23,695). Many of the car's fans weren't even born when Volkswagen launched the first GTI model 35 years ago in Europe and 28 years ago in the United States. The idea was to create a light, sporty and affordable hatchback that could do double duty as a daily commuter and a weekend fun car, and even an autocross competitor.

Automotive media called the first GTI a "hot hatch," and the term stuck. Along the way, other brands have offered would-be competitors, but many proved to be flashes in the pan. Those cars could never capture that just-right blend of performance, style and value.



Conceptually, the 2012 Volkswagen GTI carries on the flame of the original model. In execution, it's a different animal, chockfull of today's high-performance engineering, safety, comfort and infotainment technology. What has not changed is the car's spirit as a light, quick, fun machine that also makes a splendid daily commuter. And, since the GTI comes in both two-door and versatile four-door hatch models, it can serve as a family compact, too.

The heart of the 2012 Volkswagen GTI remains the award-winning 2.0-liter turbocharged and intercooled four-cylinder engine with TSI[®] fuel injection. With 200 hp, this engine can spur the GTI from zero-to-60 mph in 6.8 seconds, yet it's the character of the engine's power that will leave the strongest impression. The GTI engine produces 207 lb/ft of torque from just 1,800 rpm to 5,000 rpm, making the car's performance accessible in all kinds of driving, not just at higher engine speeds. The Volkswagen GTI always feels on its game.

There's a technology sweeping through performance car ranks called the dual-clutch automatic transmission. You'll find it in most Ferraris and it's now available in Porsche sports cars, too. In

the Volkswagen GTI, the six-speed DSG[®] transmission offers quicker shifting performance than even an expertly shifted six-speed manual, translating into quicker acceleration. You can shift manually with steering wheel paddleshifters or the floor shifter, or just leave it in automatic mode. In any case, the transmission executes perfect, rapid-fire upshifts in just four-hundredths of a second. A human eye blink, in comparison, takes up to four tenths of a second.

The only thing missing in the “dual clutch” transmission is the clutch pedal; the transmission’s electrohydraulic controls take care of that. There’s a major side benefit to the DSG transmission, and that’s fuel economy. A Volkswagen GTI with this transmission delivers an EPA-estimated 24 mpg city/33 mpg highway, compared to 21/31 mpg with the standard six-speed manual. There’s yet another benefit to equipping your GTI with the DSG transmission: The Launch Control program. Engage it, and the engine will build revs before the first-gear clutch engages. You get a perfect launch with just the right amount of controlled wheelspin for optimal traction.

The VW GTI delivers a well-controlled and comfortable every day ride, and its four-wheel independent, European-tuned suspension and standard 18-inch alloy wheels ensure that you’ll happily seek out the curviest roads you can find. Whether accelerating or charging through corners, the standard XDS[®] cross-differential (limited-slip) system electronically transfers extra torque to the front wheel with the most traction.

Inside, the GTI presents a true driver’s environment, highlighted by the trademark plaid seat covering – on all models up to the GTI Autobahn, (which features standard leather seating) – and a flat-bottom steering wheel. Standard features include heated front seats, a 60/40-split/folding rear seat with pass through, Bluetooth[®] connectivity and an eight-speaker sound system with CD player, AM/FM/SiriusXM[™] Satellite Radio, an iPod[®] adapter and an auxiliary input jack.

A new-for-2012 GTI with Convenience and Sunroof trim line combines the most popular stand-alone options into one package including a power tilt/slide sunroof, leather-trimmed multifunction steering wheel and the Premium VIII touchscreen stereo with in-dash CD changer.

Come in and see the must-have hot hatch, the car that started that whole genre, the 2012 Volkswagen GTI.

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