

# Motoring New Car Road Test

## Volkswagen's new Golf takes

**Jake Evans** finds out if the eighth generation of VW's popular hatchback is up to the mark

A NEW Golf is quite a big deal, don't you think? As one of the most popular cars around – not to mention a household name – Volkswagen's much-loved hatchback is often the go-to choice in the segment, which is why an all-new one has quite a lot of expectation levelled towards it.

Now in its eighth generation, the new Golf debuts a fresh face, brand-spanking new interior and a more efficient range of engines. But, more importantly, is it the all-rounder that previous Golf models have always been? Let's take a look.

### What's new?

Pretty much everything about this new Golf is new. We've got a whole new look on the outside, while the interior has been digitised beyond belief – it's almost entirely lacking in buttons, replaced instead by screens. More on that later.

Engine-wise, the Golf has been engineered with a hybrid future in mind, though bread-and-butter petrol and diesel versions remain, of course. Meanwhile crucial Golf traits – such as practicality and build quality – have been kept at the forefront for the new model.

### What's under the bonnet?

Our test car makes use of a 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol engine with 148bhp and 250Nm of torque. Driving power through the front wheels via a seven-speed DSG automatic gearbox, the engine's got enough grunt to push the Golf from 0–60mph in 8.2 seconds and onwards to a 139mph top speed.

The 1.5-litre unit also incorporates mild-hybrid technology for added economy points. The 48-volt system uses a battery and starter generator that replace an alternator and starter motor, helping to boost torque when pulling away. Cylinder deactivation is fitted too, only boosting the Golf's eco-credentials. It seems to have worked, too, with Volkswagen claiming 49.2mpg combined and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 130g/km – not bad for a relatively compact petrol engine.



■ The new Golf is noticeably different than its predecessor. Its wrap-around headlights give it a slightly more serious look

### What's it like to drive?

Off the bat, the Golf feels, well, like a Golf. That means it's easy to drive, easy to see out of and easy to get comfortable in too. The seven-speed auto 'box in our car shifts smoothly and with little hesitation, while there's only a small delay in acceleration under hard kick-down.

There's a touch more wind noise than we would've expected, and the initial bumps and smaller potholes in the road do get transferred into the cabin – despite the Golf riding on squidgy 16-inch tyres. That said, the seats – well-padded and adjustable – are impressively comfortable, while the large windscreen and windows help to keep the cabin feeling open and approachable. The Golf lacks any real fuss: just get

in, buckle up and drive away. In truth, that's just what you want from a hatchback of this type.

### How does it look?

Now looks are highly subjective, but we reckon that the new Golf looks pretty good indeed. It's noticeably different from the car it replaces, but it would've been a real shame if Volkswagen had produced a lookalike successor. The wraparound headlights give the Golf a slightly more 'serious' look, while the rear of the car exhibits far more 'Golf-like' styling traits – though it's not hard to work out which car it is, given the size of the model badging on the back.

The proportions remain spot-on too.

### What's it like inside?

As we mentioned earlier, Volkswagen has almost entirely digitised the interior of the Golf, giving it a much more uncluttered, cleaner look than the car which precedes it. We'll get to how successful this implementation has been in a practical sense shortly, but in terms of styling and fitment, the Golf's cabin is quite impressive. The materials are mostly good – there are some harder plastics here and there – but the overall perception of quality is spot on. Will the gloss 'piano' black plastics prove as hard-wearing as others in the future, though? Probably not.

There's a good amount of space up front, while those in the back are well catered for too. The large windows really do help



■ VW have managed to keep the proportions of the new Golf spot-on



■ Inside, the Golf has become fully digital

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## the fight to the competition

### Fast Facts

- Model: Volkswagen Golf
- Base price: £22,442 from Jacksons
- Model as tested: Golf Life
- Engine: 1.5-litre petrol
- Power: 148bhp
- Torque: 250Nm
- Max speed: 139mph
- 0–60mph: 8.2 seconds
- MPG: 49.2
- Emissions: 130g/km CO<sub>2</sub>

to make the cabin feel more spacious. The 380-litre boot is generous – if not class-leading – and you can fold the rear seats down to boost this up to 1,237 litres.

### What's the spec like?

'Our' Golf came in entry-level 'Life' trim. Standard equipment levels are good; a large ten-inch infotainment screen is the focal point of the cabin and it's backed up by a ten-inch active display which replaces the conventional dials.

Since all of the car's main functions such as satellite navigation, phone and media controls are all accessed via the system without the help of any buttons, it needed to be good.

Fortunately, it's easy to operate and smooth to respond. We had held some reservations about Volkswagen's decision to turn the Golf fully digital, but thankfully it has hit the nail on the head.



■ The rear of the car has more of a familiar Golf look to it

### Verdict

The Volkswagen Golf has always been the concrete, no-questions-asked recommenda-

tion in the hatchback segment. Though this latest one has been jam-packed with tech, Volkswagen has done well to maintain the core principles that cause people to flock to the Golf, with on-par boot space and a














roomy interior ensuring that it remains a great all-rounder. It can be a pricier option than it once was – we'll make no bones about that – but keep the costs low and the Golf remains a serious competitor.

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