

# *theVdubhub* TIMELINE OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE & BASIC VISUAL CHANGES

This basic timeline serves as a quick and simple reference guide that outlines critical events throughout the history of Volkswagen. But more importantly, it addresses some of the more “commonly” asked questions about when certain key visual design changes went into effect on the Type 1 beetle; from 1947 through 1967. This guide is not meant to address every minute detail change that occurred throughout the Volkswagen’s production history. This is a work-in-progress. We value your input and suggestions on what we can add to make this timeline more effective.

1932	1932- Project #12 (Type 12), Zündapp Volksauto, developed by Ferdinand Porsche for Zündapp.
1933	1933- Project #32 (Type 32), NSU air-cooled 1.5 liter engine, developed by Ferdinand Porsche for NSU.
1934	1934- Ferdinand Porsche is contracted by Adolf Hitler and discussions begin for the “People’s Car.” By 1938, the design is finalized. 1934- Development of the V1 series (Type 60, V for Versuch, or Experimental) 2-door Sedan. 1934- Development of the V2 series convertible.

1935	1935- Project #32 (Type 32) NSU air-cooled 1.5 liter engine.
1936	1936- V3 series flat four engine designed by Franz Reimspieß. 1936- 1-piece front roll-up windows on driver and passenger side doors, 1936 through April, 1950.

1937	1937- VW30 series prototype. 1937- Volkswagen is founded.
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1938	1938- VW30 series prototype with split rear window, which continues until March 1953, running boards which remain indefinitely on beetles. 1938- VW38 series (KdF-wagen Kraft durch Freude – “Strength Through Joy”) May 26, 1938- Work begins to construct Volkswagen’s first factory in Fallersleben.
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1939	September 1, 1939- World War II begins when Germany invades Poland. 1939- By this time, the factory had only produced a small number of cars. Versions of the car’s chassis are military vehicles, the Type 82 Kübelwagen (approximately 52,000 produced) and the amphibious Type 166 Schwimmwagen (approximately 14,000 produced).
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## THROUGHOUT THE WAR YEARS

1940	World War II forces a halt in the development of the KdF-Wagen as Germany redirects it’s development strategy toward military based vehicles. Gasoline shortages meant that wartime “Holzbrenner” Beetles are fueled by wood. Hope that German families would one day own their own automobile for the affordable cost of 900 Reichmarks begins to diminish. The model village of Stadt des KdF-Wagens (City of KdF-Wagens) was erected near Fallersleben, in Lower Saxony, in 1938. Factory workers lived at the factory and contributed a portion of their salary (5 Reichmarks per week) toward the purchase of the first KdF-Wagens. Sadly, this never came to fruition.
1941	
1942	
1943	
1944	

1945	April 1945- The first six official civilian Volkswagens roll off the production line. By 1945, 2/3 of the factory is destroyed in a massive bombing. May 8, 1945- World War II ends with the invasion of Germany by the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. Americans hand over control of the Volkswagen factory to the British Army officer Major Ivan Hirst. May 25, 1945- The KdF automobile is renamed Wolfsburg in celebration of the rebirth of the company. For a brief time, the Volkswagen company is renamed Wolfsburg Motor Works.
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1946	1946- Type 11 engine increased from 985 cc to 1131 cc. April 1946- Crashbox transmission. April 1946 - 1951- Lever shock absorbers.
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1947	1947- The Volkswagen Type 1 Beetle officially becomes available to the general public. 1947- Semaphores continue to be offered on Standard and eventually Deluxe Beetles but discontinued on U.S. Export models in April, 1955. 1947- up to May, 1955- All models have a single exhaust pipe recess on the rear apron. 1941- through May, 1949- All Sedans utilize the same bumpers with outwardly curved bumper guards known as the Banana style. 1947 through October, 1952- The center decklid light (Popes nose) remains relatively unchanged and serves as a center, singular brake light as well as an illuminating light for the license plate. 1947- Glossy Nitrocellulose (Lacquer) paint replaces matte finish. Chrome plating is introduced on Deluxe models.
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1948	January 1, 1948- Heinz Nordhoff appointed director of the Volkswagen factory, production increased substantially over the following decade. 1948- Standard models lack any decorative body molding, hub caps and rims painted to match body color, 3-spoke steering wheel, partial headliner upholstery, handles on the exterior are painted to match body color or finished in blackish/gray treated steel.
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1949	(1949- Debut of the convertible Cabriolet is commissioned partnership with Hebmüller’s two seat model which ended in 1949 and Karmann 4 seat model. June 1949- Volkswagen introduces the Deluxe “Export Model” with the addition of chrome plated bumpers, hubcaps, interior and exterior handles. A new “Batwing” style steering wheel, body, front hood and running board accent trim along with other changes. 1949- Max Hoffman is granted exclusive rights to distribute and sell Volkswagen Beetles in the Eastern region of the United States. 1949- Early Cabriolet semaphores are positioned ahead of the front doors, on the front quarter panels. Later, in 1949, semaphores were repositioned behind the doors for Karmann models only. The lenses are orange. 1949- For Standard models only- the horn is mounted to the left bumper bracket, outside and in front of the driver’s side fender. 1949- The Deluxe model horn is mounted and concealed behind a round shaped grill on the driver’s side fenders. 1949-1959- Standard model front hoods do not have holes drilled for center trim strip, Wolfsburg crest or VW logo. May 1, 1949- Redesigned bumpers with channeled blade groove and restyled bumper guards. May 1949- Hub caps are redesigned with a smaller VW logo in the center. Standard model hub caps are painted gray, Deluxe and Cabriolet models receive chrome plated hub caps. September 1949- Solex carburetors become standard equipment. October 1949- starting crank handle no longer supplied, The crank hole, located on the rear apron, has been removed on Standard models.
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1950	January 1950- The Tatra is introduced for Police and Fire units. This fixed-roof Cabriolet is manufactured in a limited production of only 203 units until production discontinued in March 1953. March 1950- Brakes convert from mechanical to hydraulic except for Standards which continue with mechanical brakes through the 50’s. April 1950 - October 1952- A small notched cut-out is added to the 1-piece door window glass; allowing for better air ventilation. April 1950- First year introduction of the factory Sunroof for both Standard and Deluxe models. Early Sunroof models have five bows and four square corners; two corners at the front roof cover bow and two corners at the rear cover retainer (slat iron). The top cover is made of a rubberized type canvas and the entire mechanism is manufactured by Golde.
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1951	1951- Convertibles receive the first Wolfsburg crest mounted directly above the hood handle. January 1951- “Crotch Coolers”, Fresh air shutters, are only in production until October, 1952. April 1951- Telescoping shock absorbers replace lever shocks. April 1951- Hub caps are made available with two-tone wheel rim colors for Deluxe and Cabriolet models only. The outer rim retains the same color as the body and the inner hub is painted a contrasting color.
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1952	October 1952 through March 10, 1953- Zwitter model retains the rear split window configuration from previous years but includes the new dashboard design from next year 1953 model. October 1952- 15” rims now replace the 16” rims from all earlier models. 15” rims remain indefinitely throughout final production years. October 1952- Introduction of the 4-tab hood which makes allowance for the solid style VW hood logo. October 1952- Heavier, redesigned bumpers with larger bumper guards which have the “S” profile curve. The channeled blade groove is no longer present. October 1952 onward- Locking, independent and directional vent windows added to driver and passenger side doors for better air circulation. The notched door glass is eliminated. October 1952- Front fenders adopt the oval shaped horn grills which were previously round. October 1952- A complete new redesign for center decklid light incorporates a creased accent line from front to back. Brake light function from the previous year was dropped and the new design only illuminates the licence plate. October 1952- “Heart” tail lights introduced, integrating a second bulb that illuminates the heart shaped lens when the brakes are applied. October 1952- Deluxe and Cabriolet models are now upgraded with Synchronesh transmission for 2nd, 3rd and 4th gears.
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1953	March 1953- Newly designed rear oval window now replaces rear split window which had remained in production until February 1953.
1954	1954- Semaphores no longer show exposed rivets or ribs and now have a smooth cover. Plastic lens cover remains orange. 1954- Introduction of the 1129cc 30 BHP engine followed by the 1129cc 36 BHP in September and continued through 1960.

1955	Actual production of the 1955 Beetle lasts only from January through August of 1955, in which at that time, Volkswagen adopts the model year production schedule. March 1955- Center decklid light remains relatively the same as the 1952 design. The accent line is almost completely removed and the rear center housing is rounded and smooth. The plastic light lens was flat and transparent with a slight pebble texture. April 1955- Bumpers change for American Export models, receiving larger bow type overrider bumpers and larger bumper guards. May 1955- Two exhaust pipe recesses are present on the rear apron and continue through final production. May 1955- Turn signal indicators “bullet style” officially appear on U.S. export Deluxe models until 1957. August 5, 1955- Beetle production reaches its first 1 Million.
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1956	<b>August 1955- The first official 1956 models begin production in August 1955, when Volkswagen adopted the model year production schedule.</b> August 1955- Door strikers are unique and produced for one year only on 1956 models. August, 1955- Gas tank is redesigned. The new “hump” style is produced in three different versions. Version 1- side walls are absent of any structural reinforcement pressings. Version 2- has two horizontal pressings that run the length of the tank’s side walls. Version 3- has four vertical pressings and remains in production until 1960. August 1955- Redesigned steering wheel with modified shape. Lower, offset spokes allow optimal view of speedometer and instruments. August 1955- Redesigned muffler with two exhaust pipes and connecting pipe for pre-heating tube. August 1955- Factory Sunroof models for the 1956 model now has a smaller opening (28.74 inches side-to-side X 27.17 inches front-to-back) and only three bows, two rounded corners at the front roof cover bow and two square corners at the rear cover retainer (slat iron). The chrome plated release handle no longer has a grooved styling line but a slightly peaked design. The escutcheon spacer above the handle remains chrome plated for earlier 1956 models. November, 1955- Factory Sunroof models for 1956 receive yet another slight modification. The earlier rubberized canvas is now replaced with a PVC or vinyl type material and all four corners of the Sunroof are rounded. 1955- Semaphores remain for European models only, plastic lenses are now yellow and continue this way until the end of 1960. July 1956- Tires that required inner tubes are now replaced with tubeless tires. Rims are slightly modified with a square raised lip to accommodate the new style valve stem opening. August 1956- The center logo hub caps is now painted black. Prior to August 1956, the center logo would have been painted to match body color or in a contrasting color.
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1957	August 1957- Rear decklid restyled for 1958 models. “W” style decklid now modified to accept license plate. August 1957 through 1959- Center decklid light is redesigned to include a new opaque plastic light lens that curves outward. The light positioning is moved to a higher location through 1959 models. August 1957- Front windshield enlarged upward and laterally. August 1957- Rear window is enlarged to a rectangular window that replaces the oval window. Rear cowl is modified to accommodate the larger window, causing the air intake slits to be reduced in size. August 1957- Turn signal indicators move to the top center of the front fenders on U.S. Export Sedans and continues this way indefinitely.
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1958	1958- Front windshield and back window enlarged.
1959	1959- Addition of anti-roll bar to front axle. August 1959- Door handles redesigned and become stationary, incorporating push button release.

1960	1960- Semaphores discontinued on all European Export models Sedans. 1960- Newly designed Dished steering wheel with semi-circular horn ring and single padded sunvisor replaces the green transparent type. 1960- Final year for hump style gas tanks which began on Oval-Window models, 1956.
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1961	1961- Horsepower increased from 36 hp to 40 hp.
1962	1962- Fuel tap lever now replaced with gas gauge.
1963	1963- Wolfsburg front hood crest is eliminated from production.
1964	1964- Introduction of the all steel Sunroof. 1964- Back window enlarged. 1964- Introduction of a widened cover for the light over the rear licence plate. 1964- Introduction of a curved windshield, allowing a more “panoramic” view.

1965	1965- B-pillars restyled thinner to make allowances for larger windows. August 1965- Last year for the official 36 hp Canadian Standard which later became the 40 hp Canadian Custom model.
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1966	1966- Introduction of 1300 (1.3 liter) 40 hp engine.
1967	1967- Introduction of newly designed 1500 (1.5 liter) 44 hp engine. 1967- Introduction of 12-volt electrical system.