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A guide to buying a VW Mk1 Golf Cabriolet

Issue 6 - 08 June 2010

Revised / additional text and illustrations are highlighted in yellow / bold / italic

This guide concentrates on the additional points to be aware of when buying a Mk1 Cabriolet. It may also be useful when preparing / checking your car for sale.

Reference should also be made to the other guides available for buying a Mk1, as all points with regard to body, engine, running gear and interior apply.

If you find this guide useful, please consider making a donation to the Mk1 Golf Owners' Club (www.vwgolfmk1.org.uk)

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History



The successor to the Beetle Convertible was presented at the 1979 Geneva Automobile Salon: a Series 1 convertible with a roll bar, based on the VW Golf. 388,522 Golf convertibles were produced. On June 24th, 1991, the Golf Convertible became the world's most sold convertible, setting a new world record.

KARMANN Osnabruck
www.karmann.com

Some figures

As can be seen by the chart below, the Sportline, Rivage GTI and Rivage Leather are fairly rare and sought after, and there have been some really nice, low mileage 'finds' lately, but at a price!

Not sure what the 1.6 model is – it may very well be the Mk2.

The accuracy of these figures is not guaranteed.

	GLI	GL	GLS	1.6	GTI Cabriolet	Clipper	Sportline	Rivage GTI	Rivage LTH	
1980	719	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	UK TOTAL
1981	631	33	187	-	-	-	-	-	-	
1982	507	524	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	
1983	279	307	-	-	490	-	-	-	-	
1984	450	229	-	-	491	-	-	-	-	
1985	14	294	-	-	737	9	-	-	-	
1986	-	175	-	36	748	468	-	-	-	
1987	-	2	-	210	840	608	-	-	-	
1988	-	-	-	1	1052	710	-	-	-	
1989	-	-	-	-	1138	1427	-	-	-	
1990	-	-	-	-	1136	1253	-	-	-	
1991	-	-	-	-	337	977	156	133	127	
1992	-	-	-	-	38	522	149	211	99	
1993	-	-	-	-	-	217	143	126	25	
1994	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	1	
1995	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	
Total	2600	1564	191	247	7007	6196	449	470	252	

These figures DO NOT include personal imports by members of the British Forces stationed in Germany.

List compiled from data kindly supplied by VAG (UK) Ltd

Versions

Basic models:

GLS / GL - Series 1 and 2 - 1500cc, then later 1600cc carburettor, 4 speed (automatic option) – later to be known as Clipper Cabriolet with 1800cc carb, 5 speed / automatic option

Gli – Series 1 and 2 - 1600cc injection, 4 and later 5 speed (later badged GTI)

GTI – Series 2 – 1600cc then 1800cc injection, 5 speed

Below are some pics of a selection of later model variants:

Clipper

An '89 model.

1.8 litre carburettor, 5 speed manual or automatic (optional)

Note the large bumpers (Clipper kit) and side skirts.

These were also fitted to GTI's from '88. The 'facelift' Mk2 style grille was also fitted with the Clipper kit (see below).



GTI

An '87 model.

1.8 litre injection, 5 speed manual.

This car should have colour coded bumpers, but these have been replaced by earlier all black ones (because a black bumper came with the tow bar, and I liked it).

The 'Clipper kit' should have been introduced for this year, but was delayed till late '88.

Note the small 'one piece' spoiler fitted to Cabriolets prior to the Clipper kit.



Sportline

Note the black centred BBS wheels and the 'Sportline' graphic just in front of the rear wheel.....



.....and the interior.....not sure if the steering wheel is correct.



Rivage (Photo's courtesy of 'Walt' – Owners' Club Member)

A superb example – this one was 'found' with only 10,000 miles on the clock!!

Electric windows, powered roof and heated seats were standard.



Note the polished 15" wheels and the 'Rivage' graphic just in front of the rear wheel.



A limited number (252 imported by VAG U.K.) had full leather interiors (Rivage LTH). **These were fitted with Catalytic Converters, which reduce power slightly to 95 bhp instead of 112.**



Other versions - All White, All Black, Quartet, Genesis, CC (Christmas Collection...**NOTE:** sometimes this is incorrectly referred to as the 'Coco Chanel') and other 'Limited editions'. There may be other 'mixtures' as British Forces members in Germany could order RHD vehicles to their own specifications, and personally import them into the UK.

Weights

Don't expect the Cabriolet to keep up with the 'tin top'! It's a bit heavier due to the extra strengthening built in by Karmann after they cut the roof off! These weights are approximate, but give you the idea.

	Hatchback	GTI Cabriolet	Clipper
Kerb (unladen) weight	800 - 840 kg	966 kg	976 kg

Specifications

A number of brochures, including specifications, are available at:

http://www.vwgolfmk1.org.uk/modules.php?name=gallery2&q2_itemId=17667

Body Strengthening

This cutaway illustration shows the extra body strengthening built in by Karmann coloured in red.



Sills

These beams are not found on the Hatchback version.

On Clipper, Sportline and Rivage models these are covered by the side skirts, so any rot here will be hidden.



....and on the inside....

Carpets are slightly different to those in the 'tin-top'...



Knee bar

This stretches full width across the car, under the dash behind the cover (black here, but some later models were colour coded).
There should be no holes drilled through this trim/panel.



Roll-over bar



In the boot:

1. Beam between rear turrets – check for any signs of damage / rust
 2. Vehicle data sticker
- (see Luggage Compartment (Boot) - opening



Doors, seat belts and interior trim

Side Trims

While we are looking at the doors.....

Check the 6 side trims (3 each side)...
....they should all match (there are various styles – all black, chrome inserts, smooth, grained....)

These are VERY hard to find!!

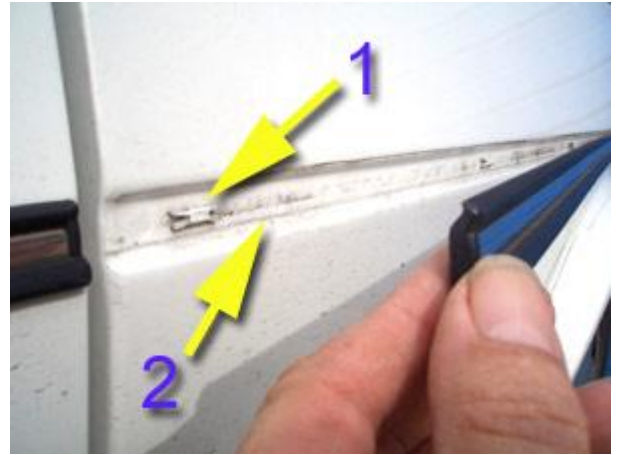
....they should all be held tightly by the clips (1) – these are available cheaply, and should be replaced regularly when the trims are removed for cleaning.

Lift the lower edge upwards and pull the top edge outwards gently - they should pop off.

A lot of dirt – and rust – can be hidden here...and on the rear $\frac{3}{4}$ panel there is a welded seam, which should be checked closely.

Look at these clips carefully – if the car has been re-sprayed chances are that these have been sprayed as well !!

Also check the trims on the sills (see the pic on a previous page – 'Sills').



Doors

1. This plastic trim needs replacing.
2. The seal should make contact with the header and frame seals.



The door seals are different from the tin top – a one-piece going up, over and down the 'B' pillar. This one is on it's way out.....



The upper door capping trims are prone to cracking.



Front seat belts

1. A spring loaded cover holds the front seat belt out of the way of passengers getting in and out of the back.
2. The front seat belt reel is protected by a cover which should be held firmly in place, and not restrict the movement of the belt through the slot.
3. There are two brackets with covers that hold the rear seat base in position.



Rear side panel cards

1. A small circular speaker lurks behind this panel.
2. Rear lap belt.



Roof

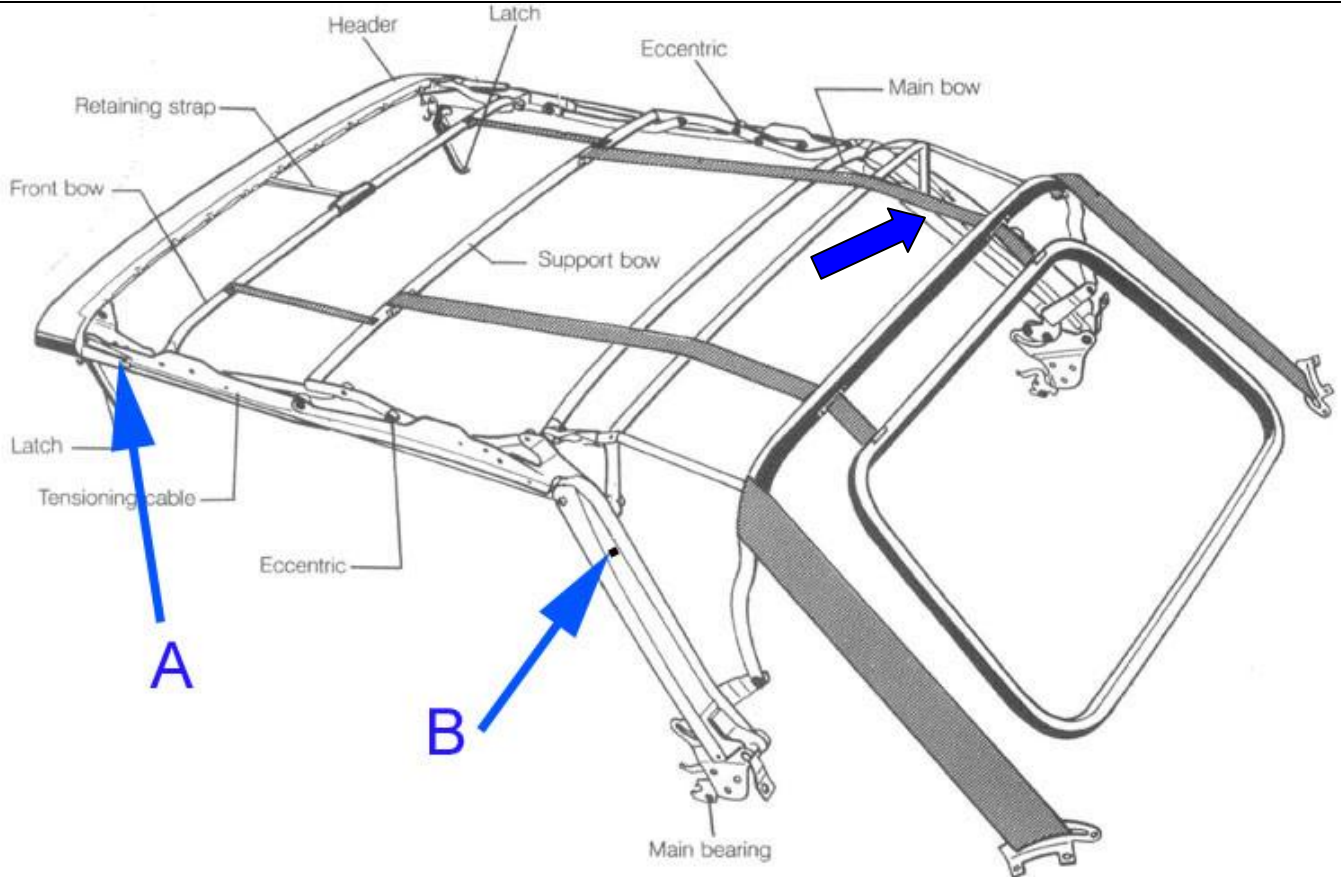


Fig. 8-1. Convertible top mounting frame. Top adjustment points are at front latches and left and right eccentrics.

The illustration above shows the manual roof frame. Only one of the gas struts is shown (plain arrow just below the 'Main bow' at top right).

Point 'A' is the location of the tensioning cable spring on later models, point 'B' that of earlier models (our '89 Clipper uses 'A' and our '87 GTI uses 'B')

The power hood does not have the gas struts, and has a different arrangement at the 'Main bearing', where hydraulic rams (mounted on brackets behind the rear wheel arches in the boot) are connected.

Outer skin

Vinyl is standard, in various colours. A fine grain and course grain effect were used, they can last for 10 to 12 years (depending on use / abuse / storage), and can go porous.

Mohair is often fitted as a replacement.

Check for rips / tears / cracks as shown here – this roof is on it's way out, and it WILL leak very soon, if not now. Check for water marks on the seats – remove seat covers if fitted !!!



Side tension cables

These are broken / missing.
Note how the roof bows upwards.

These cables can still be obtained, and are relatively easy to replace in situ – but a bargaining point !!



This is how the sides of the roof should look, they follow the frame / window line.
The top of the roof should be fairly smooth, with no noticeable hard bumps, lumps or sags (indicating that the inner horsehair insulation/padding layer and / or straps (see roof illustration page 10) are past their best).

The tension cable is in the seamed edge of the material. A spring, located at the rear frame upright (early models) or at the roof header (later models), holds the cable under tension (refer to the illustration on the previous page).



Rear tension cable

This cable sits outside the outer skin but up inside the rear lip, and should not be visible. It also holds the loops for the 'G' shaped hooks of the hood cover (see page 16).
The pic below shows what may be lurking on this lip hidden by the outer skin....mine when I bought it !!



Insulation layer and outer skin retaining strap

The strap (outlined in yellow) is important – if this is missing / broken the roof will not fold back correctly – as in the next pic.

The strap can be seen passing through the insulation layer, which is a horsehair mat sandwiched in a cotton 'bag' edged with vinyl.

This layer also provides padding between the frame and outer skin to provide a smooth roofline (if you can see the outline of the frame support and main bows clearly when the roof is closed then this layer is missing / worn).



When the roof is folded back it **MUST NOT** look like this! The hood bag / cover will not fit over this, and it will flap when driving at speed.

See item 2 of the last pic on page 15 for the correct fold.

This is caused by broken straps between the outer skin, insulation layer and the frame (see pic above).



Windows and window seals

Check how the windows sit against the upper (frame) seals and the 'B' pillar weather strips. There should be no gaps and the glass should lightly compress the seal rubber. Possible causes of incorrect seating are badly hung doors, incorrect window adjustment or twisted/damaged roof frame.

Check also that where the roof seals meet (at the frame joint – 1) they are in line and have no gap (there should be a small gasket in the joint).

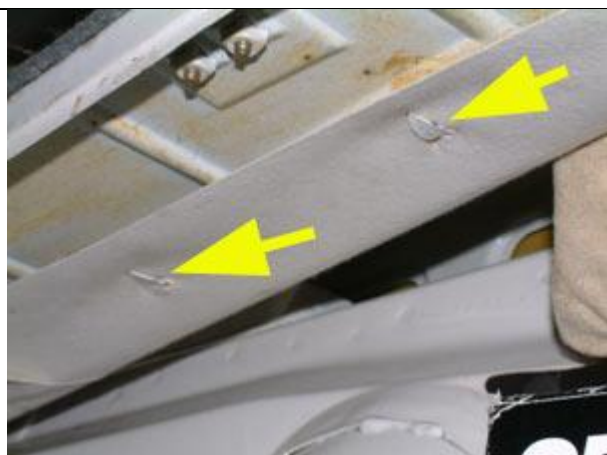


Roof lining - Check for rips, stains and sags. Can cost £100 to replace.

Pics still required

Roof lining (in the boot)

The roof lining is held in position by lots of these (sharp) tabs under both parcel shelf support panels. This headliner has been replaced; the glue from the previous (original) is still visible.



Rear window seal and frame

Even if the roof has been renewed recently **CHECK THE REAR WINDOW FRAME!** *Some trimmers do not replace the frame, and also re-use the old seal.*

1. If necessary remove the parcel shelf, get in the boot, and check the frame for any signs of rust, particularly here. Peel back the seal.
2. Check that both bolts are present on both sides.
3. This hinge should be free but not loose.
4. Check the rear window heater cables (both sides) for damage.
5. Check the parcel shelf for rusty marks (outlined in lower pic)

If the roof is old this frame **will be very rusty, and it will leak.**

A new frame is £200 + !!!!

Replacing it **AFTER** a new roof skin has been fitted will be very difficult, probably requiring another new outer skin.



For details of our experiences with our roofs please visit

www.vwgolfmk1.co.uk/Main/hoods.htm

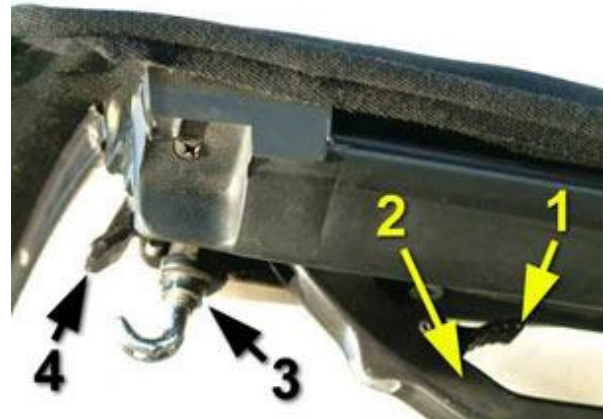
Manual Roof – Operation (for the power hood see Power (Hydraulic) Roof – page 16)

On the passenger side the release handle has a locking lever. This must be pressed before the handle can be pulled down, releasing the 'J' hook from the windscreen header. There is no locking lever on the driver's side. Both release handles should require only a **light** pressure to pull them downwards, and the same to lock them back up (make sure that the 'J' hook locates correctly first). Both handles should stay 'up' under spring action. There is a small spring just in front of the hooks, if this is broken or worn the handles will feel very loose, and rattle about.

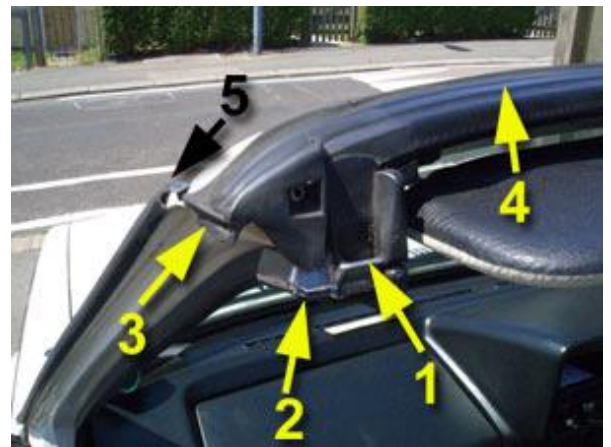
Passenger side release handle and latch mechanism

1. Locking lever
2. Release handle
3. 'J' hook and locking nut. This allows adjustment of the locking action. The roof should close down onto the header seal with a light pressure (equal on both sides), just enough to close gently against the ribs of the header seal (item 3 in the next pic), the handles snapping lightly into the fully locked position.
4. Locating peg

You may find a 'Rainguard' fitted between the seal and roof. This prevents water dripping onto your lap when getting in / out when it's raining hard.



1. Recess for locating peg. These are over-engineered and should last forever.
2. Locating recess for 'J' hook (underneath), again over-engineered.
3. Weather seal – part of the header seal – should not be damaged. Water should not get past this unless the door is badly aligned.
4. Header seal, the ribs should stand slightly proud. An accumulation of dirt etc. here can lead to water getting in.
5. Side trim – this one needs replacing!



Header seal

These splits, just in front of the sun visor, really need sorting – and a new header seal is about £60 !

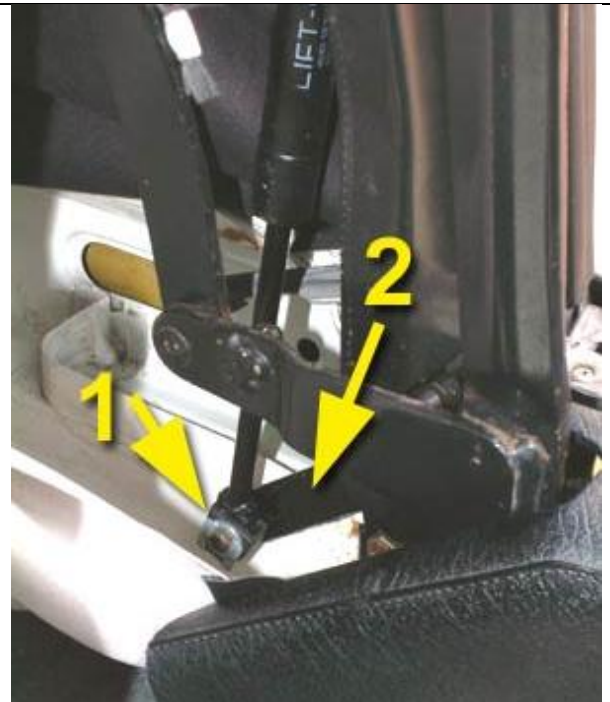


Frame and window / roof seals

The roof should fold back smoothly with little effort. A perfect example needs only one hand to open or close it. Any jerkiness/stiffness will indicate seized/worn hinges, seized/loose/broken gas struts or a distorted frame. Check all hinge points for rust/dryness – if well maintained they will have a very light coating of oil. Check also that the headliner folds neatly, as here, and does not come away from the frame. A good time also to check the condition of the insulating layer between headliner and outer skin. This is a horsehair mat sandwiched in a cotton bag, neatly edged with vinyl and it should not feel damp between the outer skin and the padding. Also check the condition of the plastic seals/deflectors (arrowed), which should be firmly riveted to the frame, and not broken, cracked or otherwise damaged.



While folding the roof back ease back the headlining at both sides. On manual roof models you will see these gas struts (one each side). Power hood models have a different . These should not have any side movement (1), and should operate smoothly. Also check that the linkages (2) are not bent.



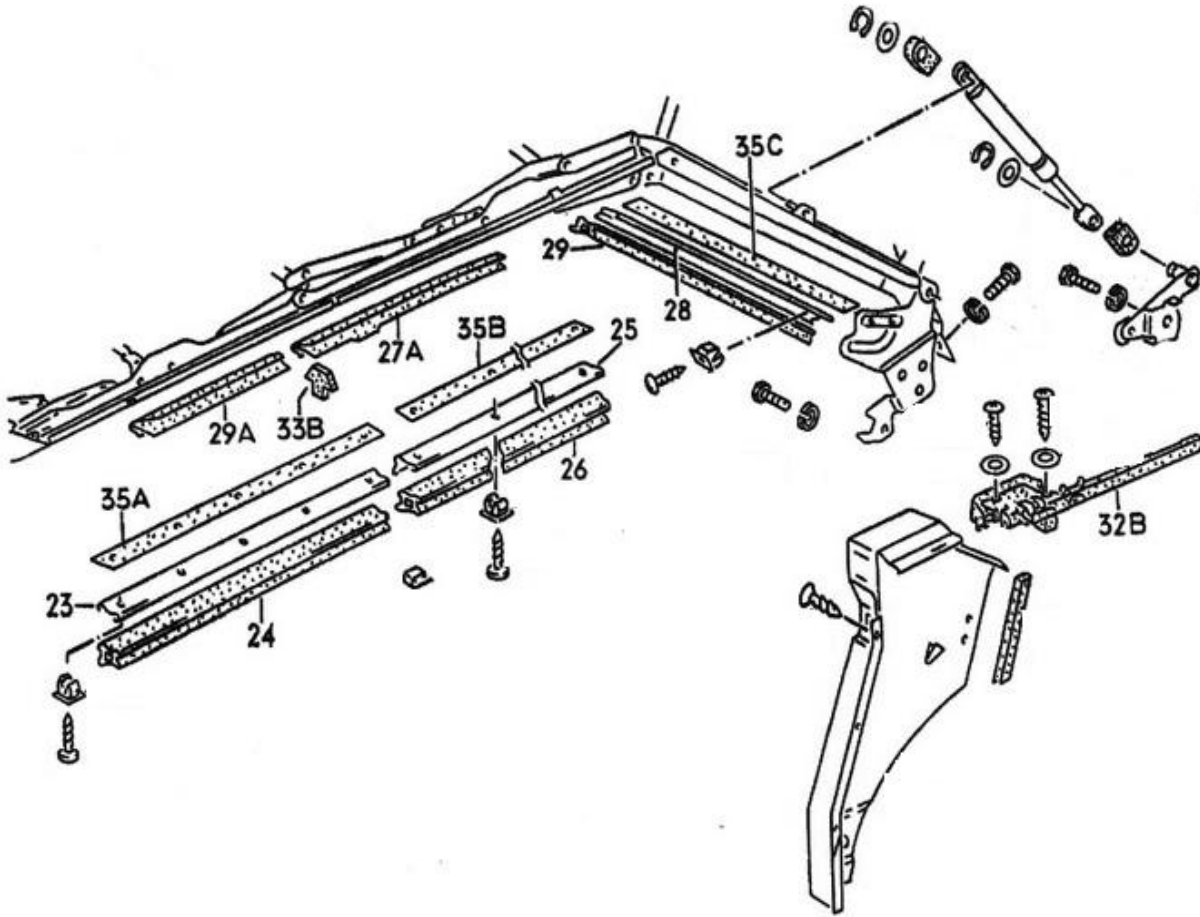
Just visible to the left of the '2' here you can just see a rubber strip, which is part of the drain / seal just visible on the far right, and shown in more detail (Part 32B) in the exploded diagram below. This should not hang down like this, or be perished, but should go along the top of the body panel.

Behind this you should also see adjusting nuts on the ends of the rear tension cable.

1. Push straight down until the locks click. Should not have to slam it down.
2. Centre fold in correct position.
3. You may just see the slight indentations left by the windows.

While we are here, have a good look at the seals (refer to the diagram below). They sit in metal frames, with a gasket stuck between them and the main frame. All should be straight and in line with the main frame, with no kinks or damage.





23, 25 & 28 – channels for window seals

24, 26 & 29 – Window seals

35A, 35B & 35C – Gaskets between Frame and window seal channels (NOTE – These are usually the main culprits when investigating leaking roofs, particularly when water seems to drip from the locking handle area)

27A & 29A – Plastic guards

33B – gasket between channels /seals 23 / 24 & 25 / 26

32B – Rear window / body drain / seal

1. Press-stud fixing for the hood cover.
2. Front fixing – the press stud may be in this position – depending on the hood cover.
3. See 32B in diagram above. This seal should be in good condition. It extends rearwards over the panel lip, and fixings 1 and 2 go through it. **If this leaks you will get a boot full of water!**



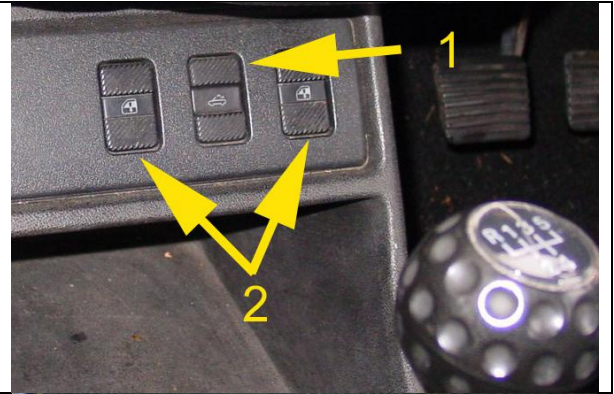
Power (Hydraulic) Roof

Switches

1. Roof operating switch
2. Electric windows

It should be obvious if the switches are standard fit (later models – Rivage and SportLine) and not a later 'add on'.

(pics courtesy of John 'rubjonny')



Located behind the nearside trim in the boot is this interlock switch, which allows the roof to be raised manually in the event of electrical / hydraulic failure. The hydraulic system should be checked for correct operation and leaks from the rams, motor, reservoir and all pipes (remove the side panels).



With the side panels off check the hydraulic ram lower mounting plates – do they look original, or have they been added later (look for new paint over the welds), which would indicate that the system is not original. Shown here is the correct layout of the components.



Hood cover

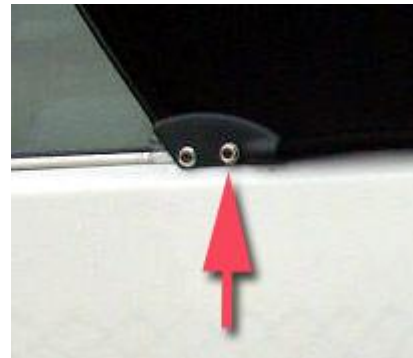
.....essential to protect the inner lining when the roof is down in 'summer mode'...
 ... and cover the frame components, including the (now) upwards facing 'J' hooks and release handles.....

This was (and I believe STILL is) a legal requirement on the Continent...



In the pic above:

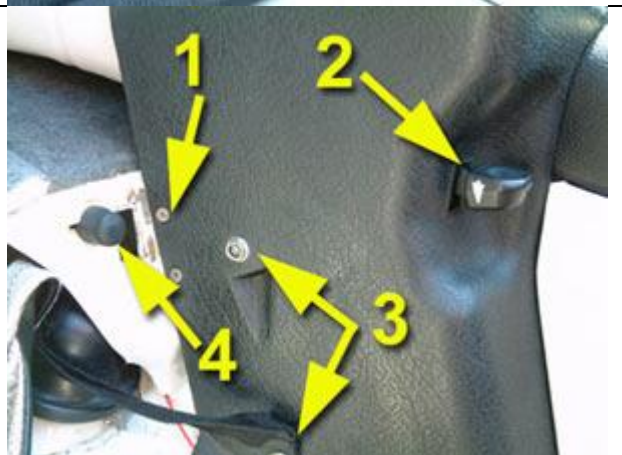
1. Press stud (fits on stud on the cover trim shown on the right – this can be in either position on the trim).
2. Plastic protective insert (sits over the release handles).
3. Press stud on elasticated trim – fits on the studs (3) in pic at bottom of this page). They do break often !!
4. Strap with Velcro pad (fits under parcel shelf).
5. 'G' hooks and strengthening plate.



Loop for the 'G' hook (5) above



Item 3 (can be 1 or 2 in any position) – locating studs for the elasticated press stud (3 in pic at top of this page)



Luggage Compartment (Boot)

Lock / Keys

The door / ignition key should also open the boot. Locks **CAN** be re-tumbled – but another bargaining point !

Boot lid

1. Cover for lock mechanism.
2. Boot lid strut. This should assist the boot opening from about halfway (watch your nose!!) and damp it before being fully opened. Check for looseness and any side play.
3. Release knob for rear seat backrest. This should pull out smoothly and click into a locked open position. If you close the boot lid it should be pushed back to the closed position.
4. Boot light switch.

Check all seams, the hinges and the edges of the boot lid for rust or damage.



Spare wheel

An emergency spare is provided (the spare wheel well is not as deep as the tin top car (which also means that a tow bar (if fitted) is **NOT** interchangeable between the two types, unless it is a 'Swan neck' type which uses the bumper mounting brackets).

1. Rear seat belt centre mounting point.
2. Remove the spare wheel. Check the spare wheel well, and all seams in the boot, for rust.

Any strange holes drilled in the wheel well and the lower rear panel in the boot indicates that a Witter style tow bar has been fitted in the past. Check the nearside rear light cluster wiring for damage where the tow bar electrics have been removed.

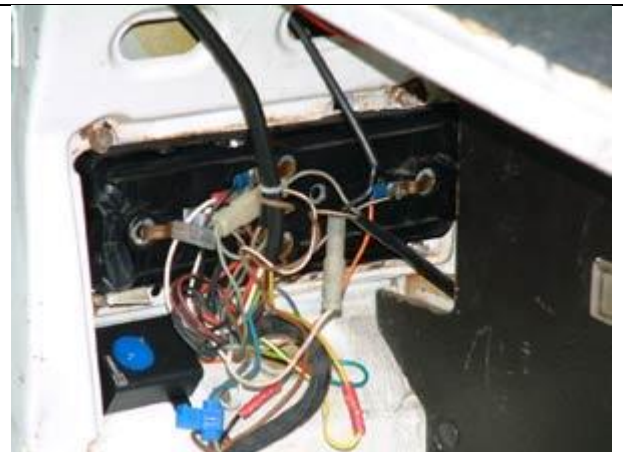
Note the original tool kit and scissor jack strapped on the spare wheel.



Check for evidence of water ingress and rust behind the rear lights (gasket broken / perished), and that the cover (missing here) for the rear lights is in good condition.

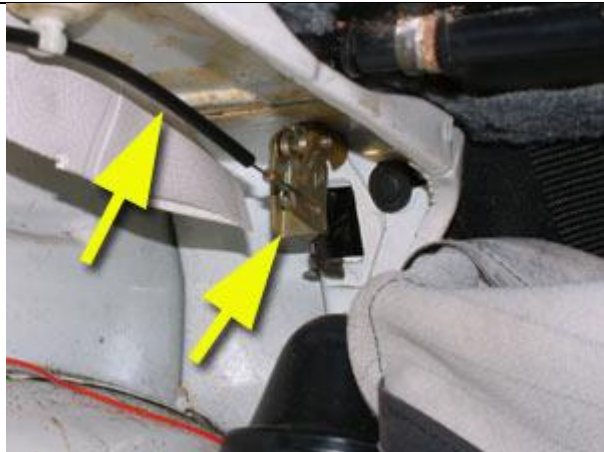
The light cluster is the same as the early Series 1 (small rear light) models.

This wiring is a MESS – and it's mine!!



Rear Seat Backrest

The rear seat backrest release cable should be clipped to the underside of the parcel shelf support panel. When the release knob is pulled out and locked in the open position the release mechanism should be held clear of the backrest catch. This catch is linked to a similar catch on the other side above the rear suspension strut. These catches are released by pulling a tab from inside the car (see next pic).



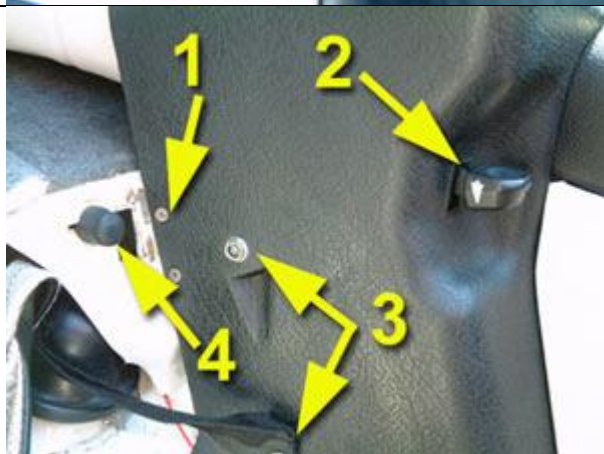
Seat release tab

Pic still required

1. The backrest is held on each side by, and pivoted on, a shouldered screw hidden here (looking directly down from just above the hood lock release (2)).



1. Fixing screws for rear trim. Some are hidden behind the side card and under the sides of the rear seat.
2. Roof lock and release knob (NOT on power hoods).
3. Press-studs for attaching the hood cover.
4. Rubber adjustable bump stop – adjusts to hold the rear seat backrest firmly.



Rear seat back panel

The panel should have all plastic pegs fitted, and the top and bottom should be tucked into the rear seat frame as shown.



Parcel shelf

Look for evidence of rust marks (rear window frame leaks).



The 2 supports underneath should be straight, and should clip into 4 plastic lugs (one side shown here).



Fuel tank and lift pump (later models)

The fuel tank holds 55 litres (12 galls) and is bolted directly to the underside of the body, as opposed to the tin top (45 litres and strapped as on). They are NOT interchangeable.

Later GTI cabs ('84 onwards) have a lift pump in the tank.

The filler neck is slightly different from the tin top version, and is rather difficult to find now. If it needs to be replaced the standard one will fit, but the cap will stand out at a slight angle to the body.

Note: This also applies to the Hatchback cars, but not really included in other guides.

Access to the tank sender unit (and lift pump if fitted) is under this plate beneath the rear seat base. (See seat details).

Ask to remove the rear seat base to check that this plate is present – fuel vapour will enter the cabin if the sender unit seal is perished. The fixing screws have been removed in this photo.



Running gear

Points to be aware of.

Later models used some parts from the Mk2 cars – UJ's, driveshafts and hubs.

Clipper kit

The original Clipper kit is heavy plastic, and fitted from early 1988. Many 'copies' are made of lightweight glass fibre.

Check the side skirts, wheel arch trims and bumper for correct alignment. Badly fitted parts can mean either it's a cheap aftermarket copy or the car has had an accident.

The trims can also hide a multitude of horrors!!



The front wheel arch lining, pop rivets and screw fixings to the bumper and wheel arch trim.

Feel under and behind the arches for any signs of rusty flakes. And check for rivets / screws missing.



The rear wheel arch lining, pop rivets and screw fixings to the bumper and wheel arch trim.



Roof racks

Roof rack (optional) and fittings.

You may see some strange mountings on the 'A' and 'B' (Roll-over bar) pillars. Hopefully the car comes with the roof rack itself, *and if it does it's RARE!*



Obviously the roof should not leak....

Water can get past the roof and into the interior for a number of reasons.....and the evidence can be (and is) quite often covered up by an unscrupulous seller!!!!

Look for staining on the front seats, particularly on the door-side bolsters, but bear in mind that the seat covers can be removed, with a little effort, and put in a washing machine! And stains are not always evidence of roof leaks – unfortunately the design of the roof enables water to fall into the car in the pouring rain via an open window or when the doors are opened.....'Rainguards' help to prevent this. If seat covers are fitted try to remove them...but also bear in mind that the owner may have sorted any leaks, cleaned the seat material and then covered them to keep them clean, though I would expect the seller would make a point of explaining this (I have a set of black leatherette covers on my front seats to keep them clean, and to prevent water soaking in when opening the doors in pouring rain). If the roof has not been recently replaced (average life about 15 years if looked after) it may be porous – nothing short of a complete replacement will cure this...at about £600 !!! Bargaining point. Apart from correct window and door alignment, the other main cause of leaks can be the gasket between the window seal channels and the roof frame (refer to the exploded diagram on page 16). Look for signs of excess silicone sealant or tape over these.

But the real test is to see for yourself.....ask the owner if you could sit in the car while they pour water over the roof for 5 mins, preferably with a hose (no need for high pressure, and no need to aim for the windows). If the seller is sure that there are no leaks they should agree to this....I would INSIST on doing this to either of our cars IF we ever sold them!!!!

Buying Check List

(UK version, based on Kam's Guide – <http://www.cabby-info.com/index.html> with her kind permission).

ADVICE

Keep in mind you're looking at an old car. Don't think that you'll be able to drive it home and have it be trouble-free for years to come. What mechanical work that hasn't been performed by the previous owner will need to be done by you eventually.

From personal experience.....your £1000 'bargain' will probably cost you another £2000 + to get into really good condition....

...on the other hand, paying £3000 + for a good-looking example with full history and all bills **should** buy a car that will not need anything doing to it for a few years.

For example, I paid just on £1k for the GTI, knowing that, although the engine and main bodyshell were good, it would need a LOT of work and money (about £3k), but now I consider it's money well spent as that's all I've paid now for 3 years + of motoring - it's retaining value – and a new car would have lost that in 1 year in depreciation alone!

The Clipper was £2.3k, still needed £1k spent on it, suspension, carb and the new roof (hagging points - the guy wanted £3k !!!)

Take a clipboard of paper with you (or print this and the next two pages out to use as a check sheet) and write down all the flaws, major and minor, as you're looking the car over and after test-driving it.

If / when you've decided that you want the car, put a deposit on it if necessary and tell the current owner you want to have it looked over by a VW mechanic / specialist before finalising the sale. A seller with nothing to hide will be happy to have the car checked.

Remember that, with these cars, you get a strange sensation called 'scuttle shake', where the front of the car seems to rock in the opposite direction to the rear. This is a characteristic that you soon get used to. Where a lower strut brace is fitted this effect is lessened to a degree, and handling feels a bit tighter (as in the Hatchback).

Finally, just because you encounter the problems listed below doesn't mean you shouldn't buy the car. It does, however, mean you will have to spend money on top of what you pay for the car to fix what's wrong with it.

HPI reports: these don't always list minor accidents. The owner(s) may not have reported the damage to their insurance company: claims mean higher premiums, so sometimes it's cheaper to just pay for repairs – the cheaper it is the more likely that it's a 'bodge' job! Therefore, look the car over very carefully.

TEST DRIVE

Insist on starting the car from cold. Drive on local / urban roads, in traffic, and on main roads with the radio off (check the radio/cassette/CD and speakers while car is parked). Make a note of how it sounds, how it drives and what the gauges are reading.

Drive over bumps and through dips to check the suspension, and listen for any strange noises.

Turn the heater fan on and operate the vent controls. Does air come out of all vents? Turn the heat on. Does heat come out of all vents except the large square side ones (these are fresh air only)?

NOTE: UK Cabriolets do not have rear shoulder belts! If you have children and / or are uncomfortable having only lap belts in the rear seat, do not buy a Cabriolet. I do not know of any aftermarket kit for this.....but I may stand to be corrected!

Print out the next two pages and take them with you when you go to view a car.

QUESTIONS FOR SELLER

	Why are you selling the car?
	How many owners has the car had? Ask to see the logbook.
	Do you have all maintenance records and receipts?
	What parts have recently been repaired/replaced, particularly the timing belt, fuel pump(s) and filter(s)?
	Has the car ever been wrecked?
	Has it ever had body work? (many "update" the look of pre-'88 Cabriolets by adding the '88+ Clipper kit; this may be modernising or this may be hiding something).
	Do you have all the keys and manuals
	Do all VIN locations match the logbook and paper sticker in the boot.

ROOF

	Top folds down incorrectly (e.g. the centre fold sticks out, the headliner flops about)
	Top has cracks and / or tears, stitching coming undone (cracks and small tears will turn into larger ones, leading to leaks and a top replacement - £ 400 - £700 depending on the rear window frame and seal condition.) Vinyl also goes porous (feel for damp in centre padding)
	Headliner has tears, is filthy and / or is flopping around (not attached to the frame)
	Hood cover is missing, or is filthy or is in poor shape, or has broken tabs / missing clips
	Frame is bent
	Power hoods - Hydraulic ram lower mounting plates appear to be added later
	Frame seals and channels / gaskets above windows are damaged / kinked / out of line with the frame
	Header seal is damaged
	Door seals are damaged
	Windows do not sit correctly against the frame seals
	Front latches are broken or, when the roof is folded back, are loose and rattle
	Top does not latch properly when up or down
	Top is difficult to put up / down (faulty struts, hinges damaged, faulty motor on power tops)
	Rear / side tension cables incorrectly installed (or not installed at all) during replacement or have come loose leading to an arc in the top between the roll bar and door window and cable visible at rear
	THE WATER TEST – sit in the car and check for leaks while the seller plays a hose over the roof for a few minutes !!!!

INTERIOR

	Door caps are split / coming away
	Carpet is damp (indicates a water leak)
	Seats are worn, vinyl cracked, cloth ripped (remove any seat covers) and water stains (leaking roof)
	Interior is filthy; shows signs of water damage (lift carpet up to inspect floor pan)
	Floor mats are missing
	Rear seat does not fold forward (cable in boot is broken, pull strap is missing) or loose; front seats do not fold forward and / or recline
	Carpet in boot is missing
	Spare emergency wheel and / or jack and tools are missing in boot
	Seat belts do not retract and / or jerk / stop
	Interior trim pieces missing (example: door handle(s), rear light cover(s))
	Parcel shelf is missing or damaged (located behind the rear seat, this holds the folded top when down and conceals the boot when top is up)

BODY

	Trim pieces are missing / damaged (no longer available, difficult to come by) windscreen trim chrome deteriorated ('80-'89)
	Paint is in poor condition or has been re-painted anywhere
	Advertised as Sportline or Rivage (or other 'special') but graphics / badges are missing / are not in their original positions (both indicate a possible paint job) and incorrect wheels fitted
	Clipper kit (if fitted) is fitted badly / flimsy (cheap copy)
	Rust anywhere, inside and outside (lift the carpet up if you can and lift out the spare tyre in the boot; most common places for rust are strut towers, lower corners of windshield gasket, inside of bumpers, battery tray, lower portion of firewall, rocker panel, fuel filler neck, front valance, wheel arches and spare wheel well)
	Cracks on strut towers and / or on bumper shafts (inside engine compartment)
	Major body damage such as dents, particularly to rear quarter panels (if damage is severe, these are not repairable or replaceable)
	Doors sag or do not close properly
	Bumpers are missing, crooked, touching the bodywork, not mounted correctly at the sides
	Wheels centre caps/covers are missing
	Boot lid does not pop up or does not stay up (faulty strut)
	Rubber seals are cracked, broken, etc. (expensive parts to replace!)
	Door locks do not function properly; different keys for the locks (sometimes one door handle is replaced without swapping in the original lock cylinder or resetting the tumblers)

MECHANICS

	Engine bay is filthy / oily
	Cracked belts, hoses
	Fluid leaks; low fluid levels (look under car not just at the concrete/pavement!)
	Overheats / runs hot; electric cooling fan fails to turn on
	Fuel pump(s) making loud noise
	Oil cap has a white film (unscrew oil cap); oil In coolant (major engine work will need to be done)
	Brakes squeal; brakes do not stop car adequately; hand brake goes beyond 3 <clicks>
	Shocks/struts are stiff (car doesn't bounce) or are too soft (car bounces too much)
	CV boots are cracked, leaking
	Steering u/j boot is split / missing
	Steering is stiff or floppy / makes noises when turning
	Clutch is heavy and / or pedal travel long
	Gears are difficult to engage
	Gear change is not smooth (manual and automatic)
	Car loses power, hesitates, backfires, stalls, etc.; does not start / is hard to start cold and / or hot
	Engine vibrates badly (indication of bad engine mounts)
	Sump is dented; exhaust system has holes
	Smoke on start-up (worn valve stem oil seals); smoke while running (bore wear)

ELECTRICS

	Electrical accessories don't work including lights, horn, windshield wipers, heater fan, power windows (if fitted), power top (if fitted), indicators and emergency flashers
	Warning light(s) on while driving
	Alternator not charging system properly or is making whining noise
	Gauges not working
	Bulbs blown, interior and exterior
	Parts (or all) of the car have been re-wired; owner add-on wiring exists (this can be a real pain when you have electrical problems)
	Fuse box/relay panel is corroded (indicates water leak) and/or missing fuses / relays