



VW Gauge Appeal

A speedometer or a speed meter is a gauge that measures and displays the instantaneous speed of a vehicle. Now universally fitted to motor vehicles, they started to be available as options in the 1900s, and as standard equipment from about 1910 onwards. A fuel gauge (or gas gauge) is an instrument used to indicate the level of fuel contained in a tank. The gauge consists of two parts, the sensing unit and the indicator.

Evolution of the Beetle Gauges

The Air-Cooled VW dash has seen many changes over the years. From humble beginnings with no interior Fuel Gauge to improved gauges that were marked with both American and European measurements, we'll help you navigate through the changes to Classic Beetle gauges. Keep this guide handy for restoration projects, trips to the salvage yard or just to impress your friends at the next Club meeting!

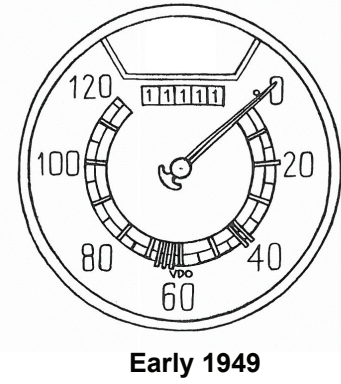
1945

The Speedometer still maintained its pre-war face even though the war was over. A Fuel Gauge was not available. On the Volkswagen there was a reserve supply of fuel in the Fuel Tank, which held about 1 gallon of fuel to get you to the nearest fuel station. The Reserve Tap was located in front of the passenger seat, which is a bit of a reach for the driver while driving. When the car began to sputter, the driver would downshift and reach over to turn the Reserve Tap from the left to the right. After a few 'coughs' from the Beetle, the driver would resume driving until the nearest fuel station was found.

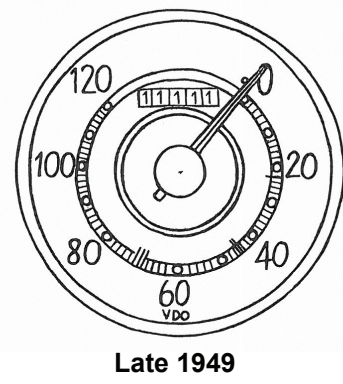
The Reserve Tap has 3 switch points. Left is "Off" (Z) which is when you are not in usage of the Reserve Tank. Straight up is "On" (A) which is when refueling so that you would get fuel into the Reserve Tank for your next sputterfest. Right is "Res" (R) for the gallon of fuel when you had no more in the regular portion of the tank.



Early & Late 1949 VW Speedometer



Early 1949



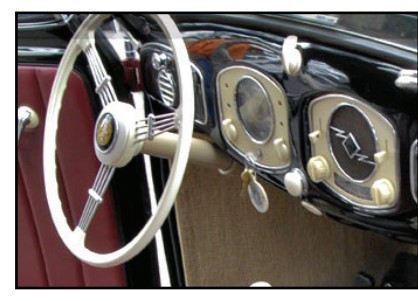
Late 1949

1949

Speedometer Gauge went in a Clockwise pattern from right to left starting with 0 in the northeast point of the Speedometer and went up to 120 Kilometers. The Deluxe Beetle's Speedometer featured a chrome ring and was a slightly smaller diameter than the Standard Beetle. 1949 had 2 face designs for the Speedometer, an early year and a later year. The early year Speedometer face had the VW logo at the top section and the later year did not feature the Logo and even had a new needle.

The Fuel Tank was also upgraded from an 8 gallon tank to a 10 gallon tank. Because of the larger tank, the Reserve Tap was moved from the front passenger area to the middle of the front firewall. This change made it easier for the driver to reach the tap.

An accessory option starting this year was a Fuel Gauge. The phrase should be used lightly, as it was a metal ruler marked off in liters (up to 40). It was used by inserting into the Fuel Tank to see how much Fuel was left. There were two U.S. Sales for the Beetle this year.

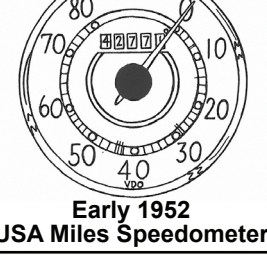


1950 Cabrio



1950 Split Window

Early & Late 1952 VW Speedometer



Early 1952 USA Miles Speedometer



Late 1952 USA Miles Speedometer

1950

U.S. exported Beetles had their Speedometers marked in Miles instead of Kilometers.

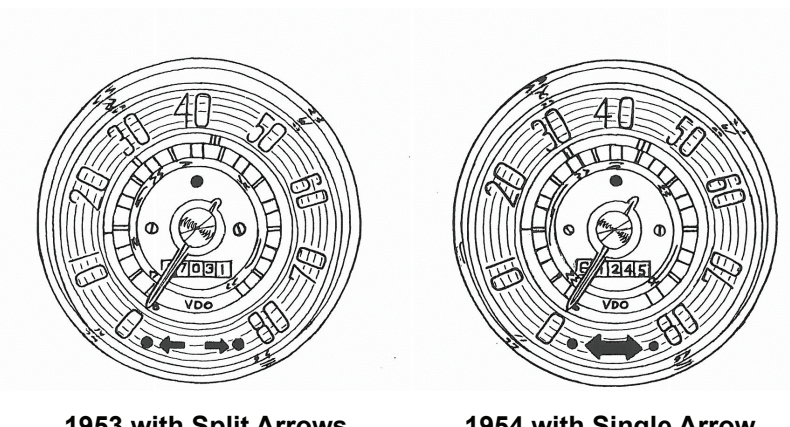
Late 1952

The 'Zwitter' Beetle got an updated Speedometer, which still went from 0-80mph but the positioning changed from the early 1952 (This was a Split Year for Volkswagen) that started with 0 in the northeast point of the Speedometer and went clockwise to 80 in the northwest point. The late 1952 started with 0mph in the lower southwest point and the needle went clockwise still from left to right up to 80mph in the southeast point. This is referred to the "Upside Down" design of the Speedometer for Volkswagen since the face, if compared to the previous version, is practically upside down. Also the trim ring was changed around the Speedometer on Deluxe Models only.

The Semaphore indicator light was moved to the lower point of the Speedometer into 2 indicator arrows for the indication of a Left or Right turn.

1954

The Beetles Speedometer got a MAJOR overhaul during this year. Just Kidding! One change was that the directional arrows on the Gauge became connected instead of a separate Left Indicator or a Right Indicator. Because of the new 36HP Motor, the shift points on the Speedometer were adjusted to reflect the slightly different running gears. 2nd Gear went from 14mph to the 15mph point. 3rd Gear went from 28mph to the 30mph point. And 4th Gear went from 43mph to the 45mph point.

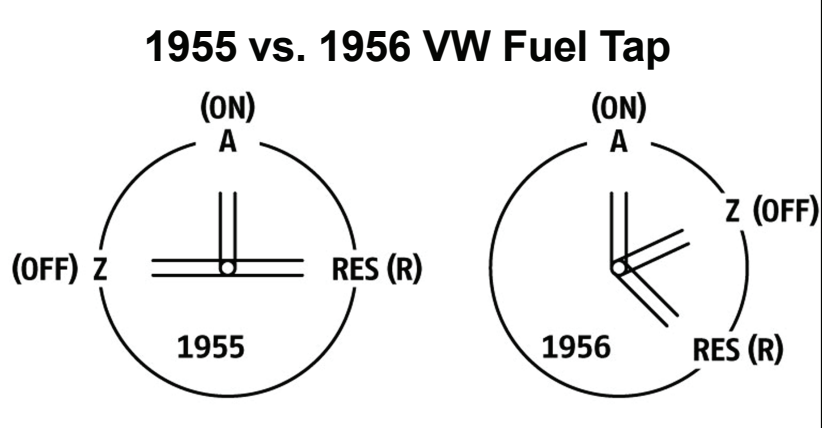


1953 with Split Arrows

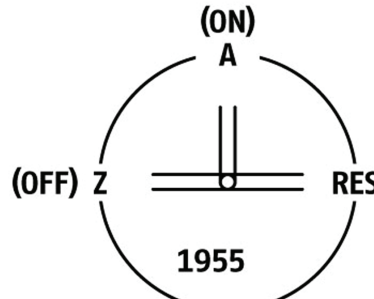
1954 with Single Arrow

1955

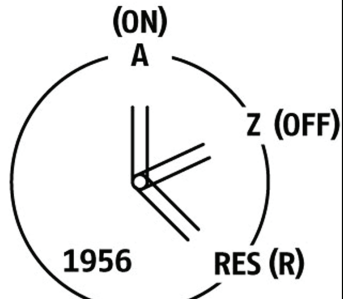
An accessory option starting this year was a VDO Electric Fuel Gauge in February 1955. It was installed to the left of the Speedometer in the dash. The face of the gauge read 'Tank' and the needle pointed to either RES, 1/2 or VOLL.



1955 vs. 1956 VW Fuel Tap



1955



1956

Fuel Tap Changes Operation Positions

1956

In 1956, a new Fuel Tank was introduced at an offset for more room in the trunk for luggage and the Reserve Tap for fuel got a redesign. The sediment bowl was taken out and the tap got new positions. Straight up is still "On" (A) at a 12:00 position. "Off" (Z) moved from the Left 9:00 position to a '2:00' position to the right side. "Reserve" (R) went from the 3:00 position to a 4:00 position.

A redesigned VDO Fuel Gauge accessory option was introduced to replace the 1955.

1958

Since the dash got a redesign this year, the Speedometer got a new Beauty Ring that was similar to the old style, but slightly modified for the new dash layout.

A new Electrical VDO Fuel Gauge was an accessory option that replaced the old style. This one looks like the stock mechanical 1962 version and read RES, 2/4 and 4/4. It was located to the right of the Steering Wheel and came with the grille. This accessory cost \$19.95 back in 1958. You could also get the 3 in 1 Fuel, Oil Temperature and Ammeter Gauge cluster for \$30.95 and included the right side grille as well. There were even aftermarket versions of both accessories, since 1957-1958 saw an increase in availability of aftermarket accessories.

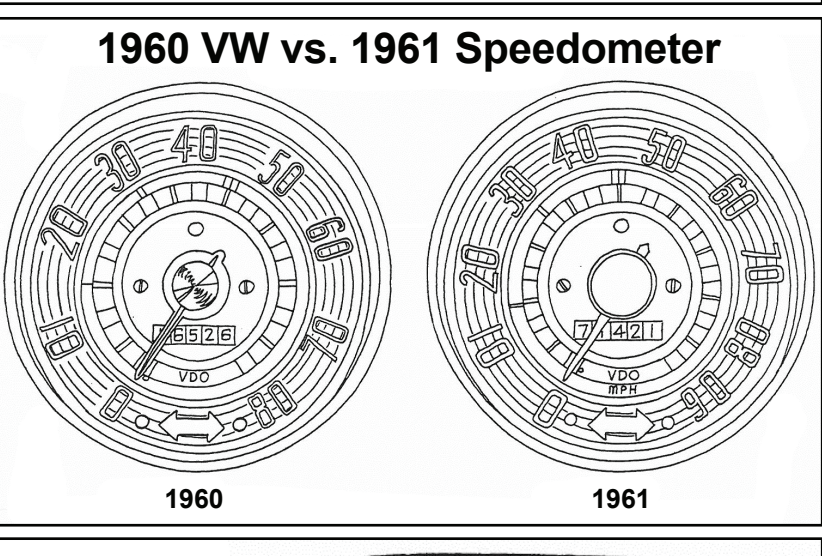
1960

The Reserve Tap for fuel got a redesign in 1960. It operated the same as before, but lacked its tendency to stick open or closed after a long period of time.

1961

A year later the Fuel Tank got a new 'flat' design with the fuel filler neck being relocated to the right side of the car.

The Speedometer went from a max of 80mph up to 90mph.

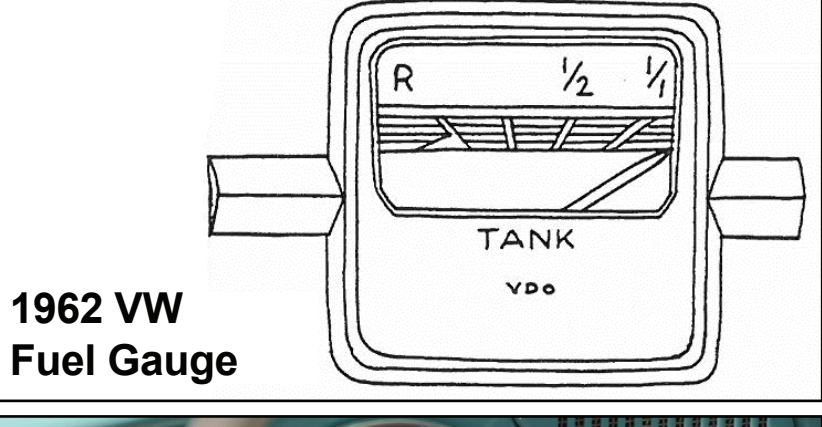


1960

1961

1962

This was a great year for the Beetle; although the American public thought the Beetle was giving into modern gimmicks with its introduction of a standard Fuel Gauge. The Reserve Tap got the old heave hoe and the dash featured a mechanical Fuel Gauge to the right of the Steering Wheel (left if you have a Right Hand Drive Beetle) that fit in with the rest of the dash molding. This gauge now showed the driver how much fuel was in the tank without having to guess or use an accessory Fuel Gauge or Measuring Stick when the Volkswagen began to sputter. The Fuel Tank got a redesign with similar attributes of the 1961 version, but more streamlined and with a Sending Unit in the center of the tank.



1962 VW Fuel Gauge

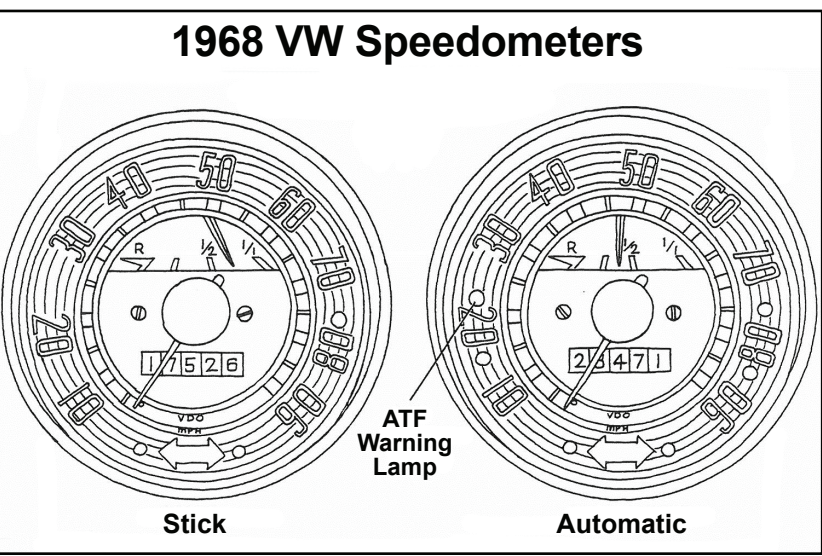
1966

In 1966, Standard Beetle 1200A Models were finally fitted with a 90mph Speedometer.

1968

The Fuel Tank for 1968 had 3 designs. The first design changed the filler neck to the Passenger Side of the car so that fuel could be filled without opening the trunk and possibly spilling inside the car. The First Design featured an Oval shaped intake pipe with a breather pipe that ran across the tank to the right side and traveled back to the filler neck. The second edition tank had an internal breather tube and a new filler neck hose with a metal spring protector that replaced the early 1968 version. This was a Sedan change only. The Third Design saw a change of the fuel pipe that went from an Oval inlet to a round version. The Breather Tube also saw a change, converting to 2 short hoses placed on a steel elbow section. So in all, 1968 had an Early, Mid and Late Edition Beetle.

In 1968, the Speedometer and Fuel Gauge also saw some change, being fused together into 1 complete unit. The Electronic Fuel Gauge now was in the top center section of the Speedometer, which still featured its same pre-1968 style. This was a 1968-only Speedometer. 2 versions of this particular Speedometer were made to accommodate the Manual or Autostick Transmission. They look exactly similar except for the Autostick had an ATF (Oil) Warning indicator right above the 20mph mark. The Generator Cooling Light was still green and the Oil Pressure light was red. A new molding ring was also on the 1968 models due to the new padded dash.



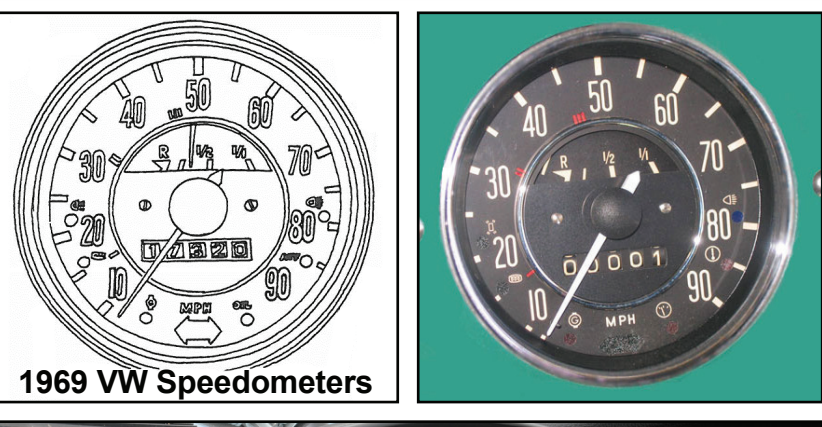
Stick

Automatic

1969

The face of the Speedometer was changed this year. The numbers were now vertically placed instead of radially. The oil light went from green to red. The ATF warning light moved from the 20mph mark to the 85mph mark. The High Beam light was now located to the 20mph mark and the new rear window defogger indicator was positioned at the 15mph mark. Also the addition of a 1/10 mile indicator was added to the odometer.

The Fuel Gauge received a plastic vibrator, since the previous metal version would interfere with radio frequencies.



1969 VW Speedometers

1972

The Fuel Gauge portion of the Speedometer now featured a red mark painted to accentuate the Reserve Level and to basically show the driver to either get to the nearest fuel station or to start pushing. The Speedometer also got a slight upgrade to reach 100mph, although that speed would only be achieved going down a very large hill!

1973

In 1973, the Super Beetle Speedometer was installed by pushing it into the dash. The bezel around the Speedometer on the Custom Models was now black, and the Super Beetle bezel was just taken out all together. Manual Beetles had 4 warning lights and the Autostick had 5.

1975

An EGR light was placed in the Speedometers for the Super Beetle in 1975 and with every 15,000 miles driven it would light up to remind the driver to have the emission system checked during routine maintenance.

1976

The last change to the Beetle Speedometer/Fuel Gauge was that now the Speedometer was marked not only in mph, but in Kilometers. This was for the Deluxe Sedan and Super Beetle Convertible.



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