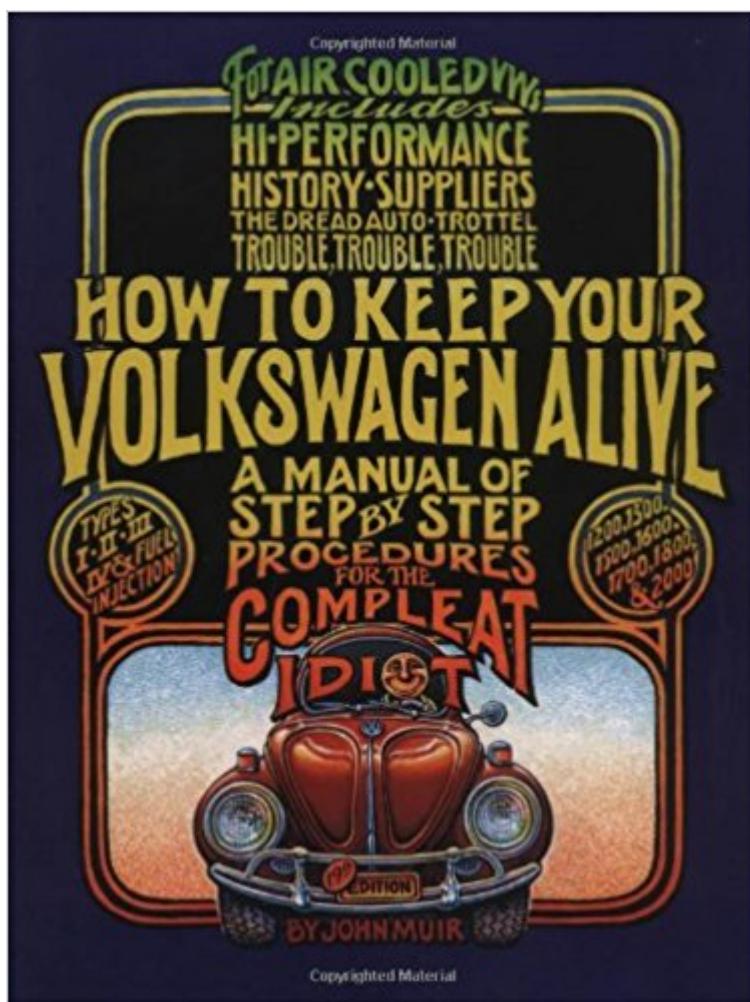


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# How To Keep Your Volkswagen Alive: A Manual Of Step-by-Step Procedures For The Compleat Idiot



## Synopsis

First published in 1969, this classic manual of automotive repair equips VW owners with the knowledge to handle every situation they will come across with any air-cooled Volkswagen built through 1978, including Bugs, Karmann Ghias, vans, and campers. With easy-to-understand, fun-to-read information; for novice and veteran mechanics alike; anecdotal descriptions, and clear language, this book takes the mystery out of diagnostic, maintenance, and repair procedures, and offers some chuckles along the way. This edition features new information on troubleshooting, new photos, and an updated resource list.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John Muir, mechanic, author, and the publisher, wrote the original *How to Keep Your Volkswagen Alive* in 1969. He died in 1977.

I think this is the 4th or 5th copy of this book I've purchased. Armed with this book and a few tools, I added 85,000 miles to the 90,000 already on a '71 Super Beetle before trading it for a '68 (heaven help me it WAS chartreuse!) Microbus, which carried me up and down the Alaska Highway and crisscrossed the Western states with me for another 150,000. Along the way I learned to rebuild engines, tune the ignition, adjust the valves, rebuild brakes and steering gear, often camped out in primitive conditions. Old but running VWs are getting harder to find at good prices. The ones left

have either been restored to like new running condition or extensively modified and are beyond the means of the sort of people who would like to learn their ways and workings from John Muir. In the alternative, there are complete basket cases in need of extensive, professional restoration and repair. Sadly, there are very few one-owner Bugs left for 16 year olds looking for reliable transportation. Sad, but the same was true of Model A Fords when I was 16...which is why my first car was a Bug. I wish I still had it. I saw a Beetle for sale the other day, but I was too slow. But I bought another copy of this just in case. My ten-year-old immediately claimed it for his own and it's his new, favorite bedtime book. If you have the good fortune of owning a Beetle, and you don't already own this book and have not come to terms with your little treasure, you need to order *How to Keep Your Volkswagen Alive*, TODAY.

This was a purchase for a friend, of whom is working to rebuild a 1965 VW Beetle. I did have a chance to look through it a few times, and this is light years better than any of the other VW air cooled repair books that I've had the chance to look through. I'm thinking of buying a copy for myself, just for educational purposes.

If you have an aircooled beetle, ghia, bus etc. this is THE Book for you. Illustrations are great, instructions are idiot proof (which is sayin something). If you aren't mechanically inclined but are willing to learn to work on cars like an aircooled VW you need to read this book like a novel. The guidance is great, tools and techniques used are generally excellent.

This is probably the best book available for Volkswagen repair. It has great pictures/drawings and covers parts of the automobile that other books leave out. My dad had a copy in the '70s for his Bug and I had been checking this out from the library for my husband for his sand rail. We used it so much that we decided to look for a copy to keep and had it for a great price, fast shipping, and very good condition.

I bought an original copy of this great VW manual back in the 1960's but I can't really say I noticed any updates worth mentioning in the new copy. That being said, it's a must for any new or old VW owner. The illustrations alone are worth the price!!

First, my credentials for this review. From 1971 to 1994 (with insignificant gaps), I've owned and driven three Volkswagen buses (not including a parts bus) and used this manual to keep all of them

on the road. As of this writing, I'm driving my fourth bus. I've gone through four copies of the Idiot Book, using each one until it either fell to pieces, became illegible from grease and oil stains, or needed to be updated as I bought a later-model bus. It has guided me through six or seven engine rebuilds (I used my engines very, very hard) and God knows how many other procedures ... I think that I've done every single procedure in the book that applied to my particular makes and models. And using this book, I've done work on various WV bugs, buses, and squarebacks that belonged to friends of mine. I agree with everybody who calls this the indispensable reference for VW owners. I also agree with those who point out its shortcomings. Muir quotes a friend of his, on a review of another VW book, as saying "I agree one hundred percent with ninety percent of what he says." That could also apply to my own feelings about this book. As a technical manual, it mostly consists of solid information -- solid enough, anyway, to get you back on the road so you can find somebody to show you how to do it the right way. I've always advised a prospective repairer to own both this book and another manual (my favorite was the green Volkswagen Official Service Manual, also called the "Bentley"), read the Muir write-up first to get a general idea of what to do, and then compare it to the other manual, note the differences, and ask somebody why the differences are there. Usually it's because Muir assumes you're making do with a minimum of tools, or are too cash-strapped to make a proper fix. Occasionally, you'll find that John was flat wrong about something (such as how to warm it up in the morning, or why chokes should be disabled, or why the 009 distributor was perfect in every way), or that your particular model had a different set-up than the ones he was familiar with. But to simply compare this book with other technical manuals would be to ignore the most important feature of this book, which is its ability to empower you. It presumes that the reader has no technical aptitude and starts you gently down the road to proficiency and self-confidence. I'll bet that more mechanics have been inspired by this book than any other technical manual ever written. Not only that, but once you have discovered that you can indeed perform a repair competently, you get a sneaking suspicion that there are other things you can do if you apply the same confidence, common sense, and ingenuity that John taught you about. I doubt if I would have had the courage to time a sewing machine, install a hard drive, build a mandolin, or re-assemble a hang glider if John hadn't shown me that I had the potential to do these things. This book has survived because of its idiosyncrasies, not in spite of them. John writes that "You must do this work with love or you will fail. You don't have to think, but you must love." He's telling you something important about Life here, and about the relationship we have to our possessions and to our work. Forty years later, these are still wise words, and to find them in an automotive manual is astonishing. Pirsig's "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" tried to apply philosophical

principles to machine repair, but it failed because he was no mechanic and tried to gauge his mechanic's skill according to his own expectations of what a mechanic's mind-set should be. John knew better. He knew, and taught, that you achieve oneness with the machine by applying mind, heart, and hands together, and by listening to the machine as it tries to tell you what needs to be done. If there's ever been another book like that, I haven't heard of it. And if there is, I'll wager that the author has read the "Idiot Book."

Now on our third generation of readers. I genuinely believe this book, a beater bug, and weekends in the garage with car talk on the radio in background were as valuable as a fair chunk of the money spent on the kids college education. The lessons go beyond the bug and the book. Great stuff.

I don't really like this book. If you are a scatterbrained eccentric who just wants a laugh, great, buy this book. I am not that type of person though. I much prefer the straight forward instruction provided by a Clymer or Haynes manual. My biggest complaint about this book is that it's difficult to look things up. It's all kinda scattered.

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