

TDI 101: Determining Head Gasket Hole Size

When replacing a head gasket on any motor it is vital to know the thickness of the head gasket on the car. Even though engines are made to exacting measurements, small variations can add up. To deal with the variation in block height, piston and bearing size there are different thickness head gaskets. It is often impossible to know which head gasket you need based on the model year or VIN since the judgement was often made on the spot during the engine build.

It's easy to find your head gasket thickness. The thickness of the gasket is denoted by "holes", e.g "1 Hole", "2 Hole" or "3 Hole" thickness. The holes are physical, circular holes that are stamped into a small tab on the gasket. Follow the break to find the head gasket size on your TDI.

Step one is get to the front of your vehicle.



Front Of Car...Clearly

Step two, open the hood...



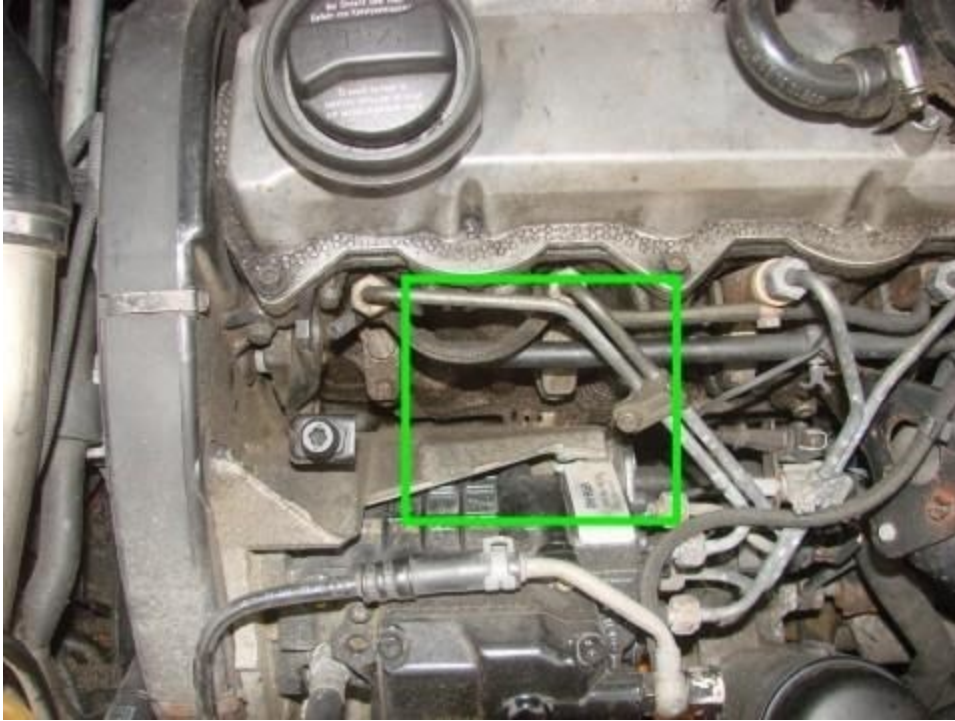
TDI ALH Engine Cover

Remove the engine cover. On many models this requires a 10mm socket to remove three 10mm nuts. They are located under the circular plastic caps in a triangle shape, they are visible in the above photo.



Green Circle is the area we are concerned with...

With the engine cover off we are going to look between the injection pump and the engine, the area indicated by the Green square. Some model TDIs don't have an injection pump, so there won't be anything in front of the engine blocking your view.



That's the straight above view. You can make out the tab, though its a bit dirty.



Head Gasket Size Close Up - This is a "2-Hole" head gasket...

The important holes are the circular ones, in this case this tab has 2 circular holes, making it a "2-hole" head gasket. The elongated hole all the way to the left does not count.

Importantly, there are only three sizes – 1, 2, or 3 hole. If you find a tab that doesn't have a hole, or has 4 holes, you aren't looking at the right thing. Remember, the elongated hole DOES NOT COUNT.