Volkswagen Cabriolet DIY Guide
Adjusting Shift Linkages

Section I
The following is from http://www.mikegabriel.net/vw/badhabitrabbit/shifter.html .

Having problems with your shifter? The nice thing about the A1 shifter system, compared to the newer cable type systems, is its simplicity. Roll under your car and you will find the bottom of your shifter attached to a steel rod, attached to a black plastic ball that translates your movements into left and right and forward and back movements through two other arms that are attached by two plastic linkages to the shifter arm on the tranny. Maintenance is minimal and adjustment is simple.

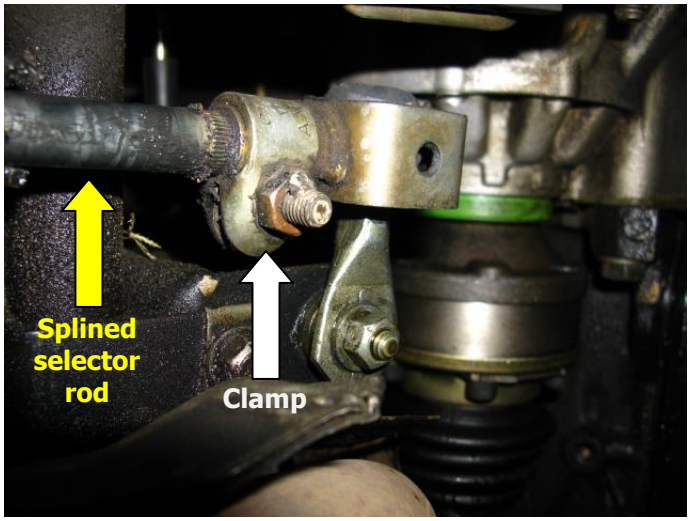
First, you would want to check for play or signs of wear. ANY sign of play or wear warrants the purchase of a shifter bushing kit. Even at the dealer, these kits run $6. I feel that, there is no excuse not to buy this kit and replace every bushing on the system. The other place to look for distortion is at the plastic-ended "dumbbell" linkages that are the go-betweens of the different shift rods. I've seen where the steel center of the linkages is slightly bent, or the plastic ends are oblong and cause unnecessary play. Replace these accordingly. You may find that these linkages can be effectively replaced with junkyard units.

If all is good as far as play or wear goes, and you continue to have problems shifting, let's consider the following: Problems with shifting can ABSOLUTELY be sourced to the transmission itself. Grab the shift arm that is directly attached to the tranny and go through the gears. The shifting motion should be just as smooth and predictable as you would expect it to be at the shift lever. If you find that third gear is where first should be, or that reverse is where first should be, then you have an issue with adjustment. Fortunately, adjustment of this kind is easy.

Keep in mind that the gate for reverse (the piece that makes you push down to engage reverse) is in the shifter unit. It's a black piece of metal that you can see by removing the cover at the bottom of the shifter. The cover comes right off without special tools. Once removed, the exposed underside will look like this:

The piece to the left in this shot is the lockout gate for reverse. The brown piece of plastic you see (referred to as the 'stop finger' in the Bentley Manual*) is what prevents the shifter from nonchalantly going into reverse. If you push the shifter all the way to the left, the plastic hits against the metal gate and stops the shifter from moving any farther left. You can then proceed to move the shifter forward, thus engaging first gear. When you push down on the shifter, you allow the brown plastic piece to clear the metal gate, thus allowing access to reverse (thus the exposed black metal on the piece in this picture from where the plastic piece has scraped away all of the white lithium grease). When properly adjusted, the shifter at rest (i.e. in neutral) should allow 15mm between the plastic piece you see above and the metal

gate. You can see that in this picture, this car's shifter is out of adjustment because the clearance between these two parts seems to be only 10mm or less. What happens in this scenario is that first gear is nearly inaccessible because the plastic piece prematurely hits the metal gate preventing the shifter from moving completely to the left. If this gap was greater than 15mm, you would find reverse to be very difficult to engage, or the shifter would easily pop out of reverse because the plastic piece would not stay under the metal gate. There is no adjustment directly under the shifter, but you can see the solid rod leading off the top of the photo. Follow this rod [up towards the transmission]. Adjusting this gap is as easy as twisting the rod one way or another to create the correct amount of gap.



Bolt head and nut are 13mm. *Photo by KamzKreationz, 2014.*

[Loosen the clamp's nut to the end of the bolt] and pull the rod out. You need to pull the rod out because the rod is splined (*ed. note: If the clamp is loose enough, no need to pull the rod out to turn it, which is a good thing; pulling the rod out of the clamp without first noting/marking its position in the clamp could screw up the front/back alignment of the "finger"*). Pull it out slowly so you do not end up moving the rod TOO MUCH. Pull the rod out, turn it in the direction you need to be going in (one or two notches), reinsert and clamp it back down. Wiggle the whole linkage system (to make sure the shifter is "at rest" in neutral). Go back to your shifter and check the gap between the brown plastic piece (which as of yet has a better name) and the metal plate. Repeat as necessary.

This is the top view of the shift gate installed. It's the square, gray metal plate bolted to the body of the car, underneath the shifter.

Here's a side shot of the shifter gate. The shifter goes in the hole, and you make out the stop just at the bottom of the photo. The part is removed from the car FROM THE TOP.

Section II

The following is courtesy of *The_Nothing* on VWvortex.com:

1. Put your car in neutral.
2. Jack the car up and put it on jack stands.
3. Loosen this bolt:

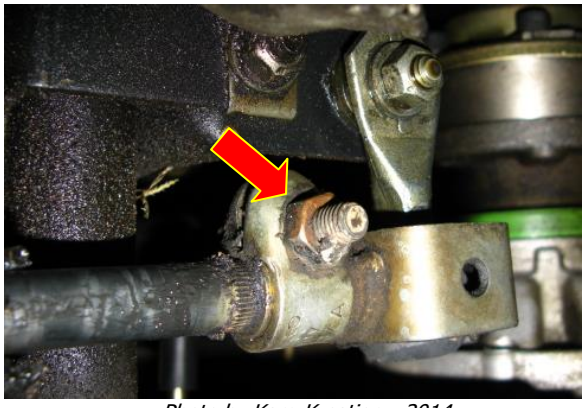


Photo by KamzKreationz, 2014.

4. Grab a cassette tape. If you don't know what a cassette tape is, one is included in the photo.

The thick part (head) is the proper size for the adjustment. Pin it in the lockout, and then tighten the bolt at the other end of the shaft that you loosened earlier. Put the car on the ground and drive away!

If you're still unable to find gears, then you've got other problems.