

Sprinter FAQs - North America Also review the Files, Database & Links sections.

What are Sprinter's Strengths?

Tough & economical performance, efficiency & design; 20-27mpg; Huge cargo & passenger space; Tall interior; Smooth quiet ride, handling, operation & short turning radius; Long maintenance intervals & engine life. The rest of the world has many vans like this.

Do they have the bugs worked out?

Most of them. Over a million Sprinters have been sold since 1995. VW sells a version elsewhere. The last major revision was in 2000. The next major revision will be in 2006. Owners generally find the Sprinter trouble free and reliable. FedEx & UPS own 5,000 Sprinters here, & many more globally. Ask their Sprinter drivers.

What sort of problems have people experienced?

EGR valves - fixed under 5yr, 100k mile warranty - due to dirty US fuel.  
US diesel will be cleaner in 2006. A light blend of bio-diesel may help\*.  
Extended idling isn't recommended, regardless of brand: <http://www.internationaldelivers.com/assets/pdf/dyk168i.pdf>  
A handful of owners needed to replace tire valves.  
A sensitive collision sensor released some power door locks - for safety  
Someone has seen almost every other part fail, and they post complaints here.  
Imposters also post. Satisfied owners don't post as much.  
Most owners complain only about the radio speakers - a simple fix.

Can I get a tilt-steering wheel?

No. Why do you want one? German engineers solve this by adjusting the driver to the wheel. ...Just kidding. But seriously, the wheel's position is optimized for the airbag, & not obstructing it with your arms at the 10 & 2 o'clock positions, which is no longer recommended. The driver's seat has adjustable back, rake, height, & length. It will grow on you.

Can I get 4-wheel drive?

Not in the US, & you probably can't import a 4wd, or get dealer service if you did. Check back on 2006 models. Iglhaut does 4wd conversions in Germany.

What do owners like?

The room; Sitting nearly 4 feet up; The high top; Visibility - front & sides; Mercedes engineering & drive-train; Safety emphasis; Every seat has 3-point belts; Cargo capacity; Responsive performance & handling; Owners love the mileage & long service intervals; No transmission dipstick; Thermostatic control of heat & A/C temps; Relative quiet versus other vans; Some owners of minivans & Sprinters say their spouses & kids prefer the Sprinter, but Sprinters do not have minivans' creature comforts.

What do owners dislike?

The room (it takes up); Sitting nearly 4 feet up; The high top (won't fit garages); Visibility - rear (get mirrors); Mercedes engineering quirks - sun-visors, cup-holders, fresh air vents, no transmission dipstick; "Safe" passenger seats that weigh a ton. The brake pedal feels soft yet works well.

Do German engineers have a thing about fresh air?

They seem to. The two vents in the top center of the dash are fresh air. The re-circulate button on the dash resets to fresh outside air every 12 minutes. It was designed to avoid pulling in fumes while idling. Extended idling is not recommended. German engineers also don't believe in cup-holders. They made the Sprinter for nearly ten years with just two hidden in the glove box.

What do people use Sprinters for?

Daily Driver, work truck, shuttle bus, freight expediter, weekend camper, portable office, traveling art studio, conversions, llama hauling.

Will a Sprinter drive like a car?

It drives more like a truck, but very well for a truck. Even the smallest Sprinter carries 2 tons of beer & groceries (3950 lbs), plus a 5,000 lb trailer.  
Tire pressure really affects ride & handling. It has a short turning radius, independent front suspension, rack & pinion steering, & 4 wheel ABS disk brakes.

Is it underpowered?

No. The turbo diesel will surprise you. Owners say power is adequate.

What engines can I get?

In the US, all Sprinters have a 2.7 liter common rail direct injection (CDI) turbo diesel with 5-speed automatic transmission. Mercedes, Dodge, and Freightliner Sprinters are identical. Only select Freightliner & Dodge dealers sell & service Sprinters. The nameplate on your vehicle won't affect service. The name badges attach with double sided tape. Mercedes Badges are sold on eBay. Sprinters share a body but not engine, with the Volkswagen LT.

Can I get a manual transmission in the US?

Not at this time, but shifting manually is easy. Unlike Europe, in the US 90-95% of new vehicles are automatics. About 1,000 Sprinters sell a month, so demand doesn't justify the dealer training, parts, & emissions certifications. Newer automatics are reliable & shift efficiently, particularly in traffic. Fleet buyers like FedEx and UPS seem to prefer them.

Can I get factory delivery, and/or import a European Sprinter?

Daimler Chrysler has no such program for the Sprinter. Importing a non-US certified version would be a regulatory nightmare & cost prohibitive.

What mileage do people get?

Owners regularly get 20-25mpg at high speeds. Driven with care, they can get 25-27. Owners report 25-30 mpg cruising around 50 mph. When towing, mileage drops to 16 to 20 mpg. Wind drag increases with the cube of velocity, so it becomes significant at speeds over 45 mph. Longer wheelbases & dual 15" wheels may get 2-3mpg less. The 4.11 rear end may get 1-2 mpg less than the 3.73 ratio. Acceleration, braking, tire pressure, load, A/C, boost heater, & drivers are factors. Winter mileage is less.

Is this a sooty smelly diesel that's hard to start in Winter?

No. It is a very modern super-efficient, quiet diesel. "Winter" version diesel fuels do not gel. With added anti-gel, owners report starts at 40 below.

What options should I consider?

- \* Get the factory parabolic wide-angle mirrors, period.
- \* Everyone praises the cruise control. It even assists downhill.
- \* Owners seem to like the Assyst Service Monitoring system.
- \* If you live north, consider a heater booster or aux. heater. The efficient engine wastes little heat, really. The heaters are similar but the aux. heater has a clock timer for 2 hours of unattended heating. Engine pre-heating speeds up passenger heat. Note many Sprinters aren't garaged. The boost heater with no timer runs with the engine to speed up heating.
- \* If you live south, or haul passengers, consider rear AC. Some add one later. White paint, partitions, & insulation also help. Some add their own insulation.
- \* Other packages such as windows or power doors & windows are personal preference.
- \* It can take 4-6 months to order a Sprinter, so many buy from inventory.

What is the REST heater?

It is the lowest switch on the far right climate controls. It runs half an hour using the heat of a warm engine at REST, to heat the passenger compartment. Unlike the boost or aux. heaters, it burns no fuel.

Can you do routine service yourself?

Yes, many owners change oil, and oil & fuel filters, see Files. In 2004: 10,000 miles for oil changes, 30,000 for routine service. Diesels produce more soot & have longer intervals, so use synthetics designed for diesel: Castrol Tecton SAE 15W-40; Chevron Delo 400 15W-40; Mobil Delvac 1300 Super 15W-40; Pennzoil Supreme Duty Diesel Engine Oil 15W-40; Quaker State Super Diesel 15W-40; Shell Rotella T 15W-40. There are many others - everybody has a favorite.

What is the little stick handle above the turn signal?

The cruise control: Up=accelerate, Down=decelerate; Pull=on; Push=off

What are the foam blocks in high tops above & behind the driver's head?

They are for passenger protection in a rollover.

What is ESP?

On 2500s it is Electronic Stability Program, which controls the engine and brakes to avoid and/or recover from skids and potential rollovers. In 2004: It compares the vehicle path to the course steered by the driver & corrects using the engine & brakes. Revolutionary, an Insurance Institute study said it reduces risk of fatal single vehicle crashes by 56%.

What is ASR?

Anti Skid traction control, the dash switch will override it.

What are other safety features?

Energy absorbing body structure, 4 wheel ABS disc brakes, Dual full size air bags, 3 point belts for all seats, the high visible profile, & Halogen headlights.

[http://www.whnet.com/4x4/sprinter\\_crashtest.html](http://www.whnet.com/4x4/sprinter_crashtest.html)

Can I disable optional Daytime running lights?

Yes. See Files in this section. For high beams, you must turn on your lights.

Do Sprinters require special keys?

Yes, to start the ignition the keys must contain a special chip. Common duplicate keys will only unlock the doors.

What size should I buy?

The three sizes 118", 140", and 158" wheelbases handle similarly, and get similar mileage. The lengths are 16'4", 18'7" & 21'9". The smaller two are easier to park in regular spaces, yet the largest is not too bad. The higher top won't fit most parking structures. The 158" is well suited for conversions or hauling freight. If in doubt you might consider next larger size. Standard features: <http://www.fl-sprinter.com/Cargo/features.html>

What is the difference in a 2500 & 3500 model in the US?

3500 series have dual rear wheels. 3500s have narrower wheel wells but identical bodies otherwise. 3500s can carry roughly 1200 lbs. more.

What are the three digit numbers used outside the US?

Outside the US, Mercedes has a system for their van numbers such as 207, 208, 407, 311 etc. The first number is the rating of the chassis in tons (2 tons, 3 tons 4 tons etc). The last two numbers are the horsepower. (08 is 80 horsepower, 11 is 110 horsepower etc). In the US, these would be 316 (2500), & 416 (3500). The ton figures can be somewhat archaic, and are not always literal.

Are diesel engines really different?

Yes, in more ways than you might think. For example, they do not produce vacuum as gasoline engines do. This means the 4 wheel power disc brakes may feel less firm. The brakes work well. An efficient diesel engine also produces less heat. Diesels have no spark plugs, and have very different emissions.

Can I burn biodiesel® or Waste Vegetable Oil?

While you can burn biodiesel, or a blend, there is not a complete standard yet for blends, & it may affect your warranty. The fuel provider is always liable for bad fuel of any type. Progress is being made on the standards. The industry is headed toward blends of 20% or less. Waste Oil is not recommended. Daimler ships Jeep Liberty diesels with 5% biodiesel.

How is the Sprinter as a tow vehicle?

A "fully loaded" Sprinter is rated at 5,000 lbs. It pulls the load and handles well. At one time the Dodge website seemed to suggest an "unloaded" Sprinter could tow 8,000 to 8,900 lbs, based on total payload, i.e. no other cargo. Again, a loaded Sprinter is rated 5,000 lbs. Many say it tows fine without the 4.11 rear end.

How is the Sprinter in Snow?

One race driving instructor reports the Sprinter with Blizzak W965s is the best 2 wheel drive vehicle he's driven, in half wheel height of snow with 2 foot drifts. Snow tires make a big difference. Factors include ground clearance, ABS brakes, Anti-skid, and Electronic Stability Program systems. Adding weight to the back end also helps. (Msg 11036)

What are the brackets to the left of and behind the driver's seat?

The left bracket is for a fire extinguisher. The one behind is for a reflector triangle set. In Europe, the door compartment holds a first aid kit. Tools are under the passenger's feet.

What is an easy way to improve the radio?

It sounds a lot better if you replace the 4" speakers. The foam pillars snap off to access the speaker grills. Rotate the speakers 1/4 turn to release.

What is a simple fix if a cargo door squeaks?

A tube of Lithium grease easily stops cargo door squeaks. Also use it on door hinges & external back hinges. \$2.99 at Sears. Otherwise adjust the latch.

Why is the window pillar blocking my mirror?

The mounting arms for the mirrors have 2 or 3 positions, try moving it.

What is the little wheel switch on the dash to left of steering wheel?

It allows you to lower your headlights when the rear is loaded. The "0" position is normal.