

TOOLBOX TALKS

DRIVING MORE EFFICIENTLY

Drive Sensibly

Aggressive driving (speeding, rapid acceleration and braking) wastes gas. It can lower your gas mileage by 33 percent at highway speeds and by 5 percent around town. Sensible driving is also safer for you and others, so you may save more than gas money.



Economy Benefit:	5-33%
Equivalent Gasoline Savings:	\$0.20-\$1.32/gallon

Observe the Speed Limit

While each vehicle reaches its optimal fuel economy at a different speed (or range of speeds), gas mileage usually decreases rapidly at speeds above 60 mph.

As a rule of thumb, you can assume that each 5 mph you drive over 60 mph is like paying an additional \$0.20 per gallon for gas.

Observing the speed limit is also safer.



Economy Benefit:	7-23%
Equivalent Gasoline Savings:	\$0.28-\$0.92/gallon

Remove Excess Weight

Avoid keeping unnecessary items in your vehicle, especially heavy ones. An extra 100 pounds in your vehicle could reduce your MPG by up to 2%. The reduction is based on the percentage of extra weight relative to the vehicle's weight and affects smaller vehicles more than larger ones.

Economy Benefit:	1-2%/100 lbs
Equivalent Gasoline Savings:	\$0.04-\$0.08/gallon

Avoid Excessive Idling

Idling gets 0 miles per gallon. Cars with larger engines typically waste more gas at idle than do cars with smaller engines.

Use Cruise Control

Using cruise control on the highway helps you maintain a constant speed and, in most cases, will save gas.

Use Overdrive Gears

When you use overdrive gearing, your car's engine speed goes down. This saves gas and reduces engine wear.

Note: Cost savings are based on an assumed fuel price of \$4.00/gallon.



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None of us can do much about the prices being charged at the pump these days. But once we've tanked up, there are a few things we can do to keep the needle away from "E" as long as possible. These include:

Maintain engine tune. On a modern car, that means not driving around with the "check engine" light on. That light signals a fault with a component such as the oxygen sensor, which helps the engine maintain the ideal air/fuel ratio. A bad oxygen sensor can reduce fuel economy by as much as 40 percent - and will increase your vehicle's emissions output as well.

Pump the right gas. Burning the wrong grade of gasoline can reduce economy as well as performance - in particular, using high-octane premium in an engine designed to burn regular grade gas. Octane is a measure of burn rate, not the quality of the fuel. Higher octane fuels burn more slowly than lower octane fuels. Put high octane (slow burning) gas in an engine designed to run on regular (faster burning) gas and combustion efficiency is impaired, reducing fuel mileage as well as performance. Always use the grade of gas specified by the manufacturer of your vehicle for optimum mileage and performance.

Check those tires. Under-inflated tires are commonplace because most people neglect to periodically check for proper pressure. And it's hard to notice a drop of 5-10 psi or so under normal driving. But fuel economy drops by about half a percent for each psi below recommended inflation pressures - costing you as much as a couple miles per gallon if your tires are at 28 psi instead of 35.

Check the oil, too. Following the recommended service interval will help prevent crud from gumming up your engine's internals, increasing friction and lowering efficiency. And be sure to use the recommended viscosity (thickness) oil for your engine; a thicker oil - for example, 10W-30 vs. the recommended 5W-30 - can lower your fuel economy by up to two percent. Look for motor oil that says "Energy Conserving" on the API performance symbol to be sure it contains friction-reducing additives.

Ride with the windows up. On the freeway, anyhow. It is more efficient - and you'll burn less gas - running your car's air conditioner than it is to roll down the windows. The aerodynamic drag caused by open windows takes more energy to overcome than operating the A/C compressor. Plus, you won't muss your hair.

Drive smoothly. Building up speed gradually, as opposed to flooring it and running through the gears at redline, can improve your overall mileage by ten percent or more. Cruise control can help maintain smooth, steady speeds with little abrupt use of the throttle. The optimum "mileage zone" to eke the best-possible fuel economy out of your vehicle is approximately 45 mph; speeds of 70 mph and faster dramatically cut down on gas mileage.

Keep it off idle. When you're stuck sitting in traffic, your engine is getting zero mpg, about as wasteful as it gets. If you are faced with having to sit still for more than a minute, turning off the engine until things get moving again will save fuel.

Dial out 4x4. If you drive a truck or SUV with a part-time 4x4 system, be certain the system is in 2H whenever you're driving on clear, paved roads. Keeping a 4x4 system in 4H when not needed will accelerate wear of major parts such as axles and transfer case and cut down on your mileage considerably, as the engine is driving all four wheels instead of just two.

Ditch the roof rack. Avoid them unless you intend to use them. These create wind resistance and increase aerodynamic drag, which can cost you two to five percent in fuel economy at highway speeds.

Empty the trunk. Every extra 100 pounds of stuff you're carting around with you can reduce your vehicle's gas mileage by as much as two percent. Don't use your trunk as a permanent storage space for old boxes full of junk or cart around an old axle housing in the bed of your pickup.



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