

Tips to Save Gas and Improve Mileage



What can I do to save gas?

- *Walk, bike, take a bus, or carpool when possible.* Use your car only when necessary. Public transportation authorities often have carpooling information as well as transit services. If you own more than one vehicle, drive the one that gets the best gas mileage whenever possible.
- *Combine errands into one trip.* Consolidate trips to destinations that are near one another. Once you arrive, park and walk between destinations. Save errands for one afternoon and plan your trip so you don't retrace your route. You not only save gas this way, but reduce wear-and-tear on your car.
- *Drive your car wisely and maintain it properly.* The way you drive and take care of your car can make a big difference in your gas mileage.

What can I do to get better gas mileage when I drive?

You can greatly improve your mileage by having your car serviced regularly and by driving wisely. Any of these eight points can help improve your mileage:

- Avoid high speeds. You can improve your gas mileage about 15 percent by driving at 55 mph rather than 65 mph.

- *Go easy on the brakes and gas pedal.* Avoid “jackrabbit” starts by accelerating gradually whenever possible. Also, anticipate stops to avoid sudden braking.
- *Avoid long idles.* Turn off the engine if you anticipate a lengthy wait. Instead of idling at a drive-up window, park the car and go in. Idling burns more gas than restarting the engine. Limit car warm-ups in winter.
- *Avoid carrying unneeded items in the trunk.* Extra weight decreases gas mileage. Also, reduce drag by placing items inside the car or trunk rather than on roof racks.
- *Use your air conditioning only when necessary.* Roll down the windows or open the air vents to keep your car comfortable on not-so-hot days.
- *Use overdrive.* If your car is equipped with overdrive gearing (on 5-speed manual transmissions and 4-speed automatic transmissions), be sure to make use of the overdrive gear as soon as your speed is high enough. If you have a manual transmission, the lower the shift speed, the better the fuel economy. Your owner's manual will give you further information.
- *Keep tires properly inflated and aligned.* Periodic wheel alignments and keeping tires inflated to the maximum recommended pressure can improve your gas mileage.
- *Get regular engine tune-ups and car maintenance checks.* Tune-ups improve performance as well as gas mileage. Check your owner's manual for recommended maintenance schedules. By following the manufacturer's recommendations, you should avoid fuel economy problems due to worn spark plugs, dragging brakes, low transmission fluid, or the transmission not going into high gear.

What should I consider when buying a new car?

- *Understand your needs and buy accordingly.* Get only the options you really need. Optional equipment that adds weight to your car can decrease your gas mileage (especially heavy options such as four-wheel drive). Automatic transmissions generally degrade fuel economy.

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Larger engines and higher horsepower typically result in lower gas mileage. If you need the additional power and torque, be aware your gas mileage will suffer during all types of driving.

- **Check the gas mileage ratings of similar vehicles.** Buy a fuel efficient model in the size category that meets your needs. The Federal Gas Mileage Guide, issued annually and free of charge at all auto dealerships, compares gas mileage of similar models.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

"Gas-Saving" Products: Fact or Fuelishness?

Gas prices are up, and so is the volume of advertising for "gas-saving" products. When gasoline prices rise, consumers often look for ways to improve fuel efficiency. Although there are practical steps you can take to increase gas mileage, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) warns you to be wary of any gas-saving claims for automotive devices or oil and gas additives. Even for the few gas-saving products that have been found to work, the savings have been small.

"Gas-Saving" Advertising Claims

Be skeptical of the following kinds of advertising claims.

"This gas-saving product improves fuel economy by 20 percent."

Claims usually tout savings ranging from 12 to 25 percent. However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has evaluated or tested more than 100 alleged gas-saving devices and has not found any product that significantly improves gas mileage. In fact, some "gas-saving" products may damage a car's engine or cause substantial increases in exhaust emissions.

The gas-saving products on the market fall into clearly defined categories. Although the EPA has not tested or evaluated every product, it has tried to examine at least one product in each category. See

"Devices Tested by EPA" by [clicking here](#) for category descriptions and product names.

"After installing your product on my car, I got an extra 4 miles [6.4 kilometers] per gallon [3.8 liters]."

Many ads feature glowing testimonials by satisfied customers. Yet, few consumers have the ability or the equipment to test for precise changes in gas mileage after installing a gas-saving product. Many variables affect fuel consumption, including traffic, road and weather conditions, and the car's condition.

For example, one consumer sent a letter to a company praising its "gas-saving" product. At the time the product was installed, however, the consumer also had received a complete engine tune-up - a fact not mentioned in the letter. The entire increase in gas mileage attributed to the "gas-saving" product may well have been the result of the tune-up alone. But from the ad, other consumers could not have known that.

"This gas-saving device is approved by the Federal government."

No government agency endorses gas-saving products for cars. The most that can be claimed in advertising is that the EPA has reached certain conclusions about possible gas savings by testing the product or by evaluating the manufacturer's own test data. If the seller claims that its product has been evaluated by the EPA, ask for a copy of the EPA report, or check www.epa.gov for information. In some instances, false claims of EPA testing or approval have been made.

Product Complaints and Refunds

If you're dissatisfied with a gas-saving product, contact the manufacturer and ask for a refund. Most companies offer money-back guarantees. Contact the company, even if the guarantee period has expired.

If you're not satisfied with the company's response, contact your local or state consumer protection agency or the Better Business Bureau.

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)



Consumer Tips for Buying Gas

In today's automotive society, the purchase of gasoline has become so commonplace we usually take the accuracy of the pump and the quality of the product for granted. Yet, carelessness or improper care or deliberate fraud can occur which may cause inaccuracy or poor quality at the pump. Consumers can protect themselves by taking these simple precautions.

Make sure the numbers add up:

- Compare the price on the pump with the roadside advertisement to ensure they are the same.
- Make sure the pump's dial resets to all zeros before you start to pump gas. If the numbers jump at all, reset the dispenser.
- Check to see that the price per gallon remains the same throughout the pumping process. If the price per gallon changes, or the numbers appear to "skip" or black out, this could be an indication of fraud.
- When done pumping the gasoline, check the price computation to make sure it is correct. Remember pump prices round up to the nearest whole cent.

Check the gauges on the vehicle and on the pump:

- Check the vehicle gas gauge before and after filling up to ensure the new reading corresponds with the amount of gas purchased. Remember gasoline gauges, gasoline cans and tank sizes vary and the sizes are approximate because they are made to allow for product expansion.
- When paying for gas, always go by the price on the pump even if the cashier's record is different.
- Always get a receipt even when paying by cash. The receipt is your proof of purchase should any problems arise after your purchase. Check to be sure you have been charged the correct amount on your receipt.

Shop around for the best quality, price and service:

- Keep track of the miles per gallon and go to the station where the best value is received.
- Do not buy more octane than you need. Check your owner's manual for octane recommendations and purchase the lowest octane gasoline your vehicle uses without your engine pinging or knocking. Once you know your vehicle's octane level, use higher octane only under stressful driving conditions such as pulling heavy trailers or boats. Using too low an octane can cause engine damage. Using too high an octane for the driving conditions of your vehicle will not give you more power or better mileage.
- Find the brand of gasoline that works best for your vehicle. Keep track of your miles per gallon. Although almost all gasoline comes from the same pipelines, the additive packages differ greatly between brands.
- Shop around for the best quality, price and service. You've spent thousands of dollars on your vehicle so it makes sense to frequent a reputable location that provides you with good service.

Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)