

Fuel-efficient driving techniques

Fuel-efficient driving can save you hundreds of dollars in fuel each year, improve road safety and prevent wear on your vehicle. Adopt these 5 fuel-efficient driving techniques to lower your vehicle's fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions by as much as 25%. These techniques are especially vital with increased gasoline prices, insurance rates, and repair costs.

1. Accelerate gently

The harder you accelerate the more fuel you use. In the city, you can use less fuel by easing onto the accelerator pedal gently. To be as fuel-efficient as possible, take 5 seconds to accelerate your vehicle up to 15 miles per hour from a stop. Imagine an open cup of coffee on the dashboard. Don't spill it! Some insurance companies will give you huge discounts if you allow them to place an OBD II monitoring device in your car which monitors your car's data. Acceleration is why Top Thrill Dragster requires more energy and maintenance than Gatekeeper.

2. Maintain a steady speed

When your speed dips and bursts, you use more fuel, and spend more money, than you need to. Tests have shown that varying your speed up and down between 45 and 55 mi per hour every 18 seconds can increase your fuel use by 20%.

Consider using cruise control for highway driving, where conditions permit. Be mindful, however, that little variations in speed can actually be good when gravity does the work. Where traffic patterns permit, allow your speed to drop when you travel uphill, then regain your momentum as you roll downhill.

3. Anticipate traffic

Look ahead while you're driving to see what is coming up. And keep a comfortable distance between your vehicle and the one in front of you. By looking closely at what pedestrians and other cars are doing, and imagining what they'll do next, you can keep your speed as steady as possible and use less fuel. It's also safer to drive this way. If you're not in a hurry after school, just sit in your car with the engine off until after parking lot traffic clears. It's less stressful and saves gas.

4. Avoid high speeds

Keep to the speed limit and save on fuel! Most cars, vans, pickup trucks and SUVs are most fuel-efficient when they're travelling between 30 and 50 mi per hour. Above this speed zone, vehicles use increasingly more fuel the faster they go due to air friction.

For example, at 75 mi per hour, a vehicle uses about 20% more fuel than at 35 mi per hour. On a 15-mi trip, this spike in speed – and fuel consumption – would cut just two minutes from your travel time. Leave early and there is no need to speed.

5. Coast to decelerate

Every time you use your brakes, you waste your forward momentum. By looking ahead at how traffic is behaving, you can often see well in advance when it's time to slow down. You will conserve fuel and save money by taking your foot off the accelerator and coasting to slow down instead of using your brakes. When coasting, you're saving fuel and wear and tear on your brakes. Sudden stops result in many traffic accidents.

More ways to use less fuel

Here are more easy ways you can reduce your fuel consumption and costs:

Avoid idling your vehicle

Turn off your engine when you're stopped for more than 60 seconds, except when in traffic. The average vehicle with a 3-liter engine wastes over 1/16 gallon of fuel for every 10 minutes it idles.

Measure your tire pressure every month

Driving a vehicle with tires under-inflated by 8 pounds per square inch can increase fuel consumption by up to 4%. It can also reduce the life of your tires by more than 6,000 miles. Find the right tire pressure for your vehicle on the tire information placard. It's usually on the edge of the driver's door or doorpost.

Use a manual transmission properly

Pay attention to the tachometer, which shows engine speed. Use it to know when to shift a manual transmission for the best fuel efficiency. The higher the rpm, the more fuel the engine is burning. So shift through the lower gears smoothly and quickly, and build up speed in the higher gears. In the past, manual transmission allowed greater fuel economy. Today, gear shifting humans are competing with computerized automatic transmissions...the winner is not as obvious.

Don't carry unnecessary weight

Remove items such as salt, sand and sports equipment from your vehicle. The less it weighs, the less fuel your vehicle will use. The fuel consumption of a mid-size car increases by about 1% for every 55 pounds of weight it carries.

Remove roof or bicycle racks

Streamline your vehicle by taking off the racks when you're not using them. Aerodynamic drag can increase fuel consumption by as much as 20% on the highway.

Use a fuel consumption display

See the impact of the 5 fuel-efficient driving techniques firsthand with the help of a fuel consumption display, a feature now standard on many vehicles. (Some newer vehicles come equipped with even more sophisticated displays that analyze speed variations, shift points for manual transmissions, and driving behaviors such as acceleration and braking times.)

Many drivers consume 15% less fuel by acting on the feedback that fuel consumption displays provide.

Track your fuel consumption

How long can you go without filling your tank? Two weeks? A month?

Challenge yourself to refill as seldom as possible and your monthly costs will come down.

Plan ahead

- Map out your route, especially if it's long
- Listen to traffic reports and avoid accidents, road construction and other trouble spots
- Avoid roads that cut through major cities and are dotted with stoplights, intersections and pedestrians
- Use four-lane highways when you can

Combine trips

Longer excursions let your vehicle's engine warm up to its most fuel-efficient temperature.

- Run your errands one after the other
- Plan your route to avoid backtracking and rush-hour traffic

Drive less

The best way reduce fuel consumption is to drive less.

- Walk or bike to your destination. You'll use no fuel and have a healthier lifestyle
- Join a car or van pool. You and your group will save fuel and avoid emitting tons of air pollutants a year

Challenge yourself

Committed to saving money and shrinking your environmental footprint? Use this personal action plan to achieve your goals.

Your Personal Action Plan

Your fuel-savings target:%

Ways to reach your goal

1. **Drive for maximum fuel efficiency**
 - Accelerate gently
 - Maintain a steady speed
 - Anticipate traffic
 - Avoid high speeds
 - Coast to decelerate
2. **Adopt other tips and tricks**
 - Avoid unnecessary idling
 - Measure tire pressure monthly
 - Use a manual transmission properly
 - Avoid carrying unnecessary weight
 - Remove roof or bicycle racks not in use
 - Use a fuel consumption display
 - Track fuel consumption
 - Plan ahead
 - Combine trips
 - Drive less often