

How to Save Gasoline and Money

Gas prices are not only testing our wallets these days, they're also testing the way we commute for work and pleasure, run errands, and how we drive. *WORKlife* recognizes the challenges that increased fuel prices are causing and offers the following tips to help you save gasoline and money.

The type of car or truck you drive, how it's maintained and how you drive are the most important factors in both conserving fuel and staying safe behind the wheel. Here are some tips from AAA that will help you save gasoline and money:

- If you own more than one car — especially if one of your vehicles is a less fuel-efficient vehicle such as a pickup truck, sport utility vehicle or van — use the more energy-conserving vehicle as often as possible.
- Avoid quick starts and sudden stops. This wastes fuel, is harder on vehicle components and increases the odds of a traffic crash.
- Slow down. The faster a vehicle travels, the more fuel it burns.
- Consolidate trips and errands to cut down on driving time and miles traveled.
- Keep your eyes open for low fuel prices, but don't waste gas driving to a distant filling station to save a few cents.
- Lighten the load. Don't haul extra weight in the passenger compartment, trunk or cargo area of your vehicle. A heavier vehicle uses more gasoline.
- Find one location where you can take care of banking, grocery shopping and other chores. "Comparison shop" by phone, online or through newspaper ads.

Your driving style can have a significant impact on the amount of fuel you use. Remember the following:

- Don't race a cold engine to warm it up or allow it to idle for an extended time. Avoid rapid acceleration until the engine temperature is in the normal range.
- Maintain steady speeds for the best fuel economy. A car uses extra fuel when it accelerates.
- Travel at moderate speeds on the open road. Higher speeds require more fuel to overcome air resistance. Remember, however, speeds slower than the flow of traffic can create a traffic hazard.
- Minimize the need to brake by anticipating traffic conditions. Be alert for slowdowns and red lights ahead of you, and decelerate by coasting whenever possible.
- Use the air conditioner conservatively. Use the "economy" or "recirculation" setting to reduce the amount of hot outside air that must be chilled.

Check your owner's manual for routine maintenance instructions, and keep the following points in mind:

- Spark plugs must be in good condition. Some will last for 100,000 miles, but many need to be replaced more often.
- Check the air and fuel filters at least twice a year. Dirty filters increase fuel consumption and can cause poor performance.
- Inflate tires according to manufacturer recommendations. Under-inflated tires are a safety hazard and can cut fuel economy by as much as 2 percent per pound of pressure below the recommended level.
- Have your vehicle serviced immediately if the emissions malfunction indicator light "MIL" or "check engine" light comes on.
- Have your vehicle serviced regularly by a certified technician, who can also inspect important vehicle components that can affect fuel consumption.

At the Pump If your vehicle's engine does not need premium fuel, using anything other than regular is simply a waste of money. Other tips include:

- Don't top off your gas tank. In warm weather, fuel expansion can cause overflow.
- If you must replace a gas cap, make sure it is the right one for your car. A poorly fitting cap can cause engine problems, increase emissions and reduce fuel economy.
- Keep track of gas mileage. If you notice a decrease in fuel economy, your vehicle may not be operating at peak performance.

Transportation to and from work is one of the most obvious places to save money and fuel. Consider these options:

- For short trips, try bicycling or walking. You'll save fuel, and your body will thank you for the exercise.
- If your work hours are flexible, try leaving earlier in the morning or returning home later in the evening to reduce fuel burned in bumper-to-bumper traffic.
- Talk to your employer about telecommuting. Working from home one day a week can significantly reduce your fuel consumption over the course of a year.
- Participate in a car or van pool. Many families use car pools to transport children to and from school or activities.
- When available, public transit is usually the least expensive and most fuel-efficient way to commute. It may take a little longer to get where you're going, but you'll save money and help the environment.
- When possible, combine errands with your daily commute.