

Green Driving Tips

As gas prices continue to rise with no end in sight, here are a few quick tips (Courtesy of msn.com) which can help you get the most out of every gallon.

No matter where you live and what you drive, you can maximize every gallon of fuel. Every gallon of fuel that you don't use saves you money and helps to reduce global warming. Here's how you can start making a difference today:

Regular Vehicle Servicing/ Maintenance Is Important!!!

Keep your vehicle well-maintained with regular servicing to keep it operating at peak efficiency. An inefficient engine with fouled spark plugs, for example, won't make optimum use of fuel. Be sure the air filter and the fuel filter are clean. Put in new ones if they're not. A new oxygen sensor alone can improve gas mileage by as much as 15 percent.

Don't forget little things like the air in your tires. Having tires inflated to the automaker's maximum recommended pressure can improve gas mileage by as much as 6 percent, while periodic wheel alignments can help improve fuel economy up to 10 percent, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Clean out that trunk, cargo area or pickup bed. Take out unneeded items that only add weight to your vehicle. Extra weight decreases gas mileage. Every 200 pounds of

unnecessary weight shaves one mile per gallon off your fuel mileage.

Be a Different Driver

Change your driving style. Accelerate gradually, drive smoothly and with care and you could see as much as a 20 percent gain in fuel economy compared with what you'd get with an aggressive driving style, the EPA says. Skip those jackrabbit starts and sudden pedal-to-the-metal maneuvers if you want to save gas. Anticipate stops so you avoid sudden braking, and take a long view of the road ahead, coasting safely to an intersection in front of you where you see traffic stopped.

Don't speed. A car or truck moving at 55 miles an hour can get about 15 percent better fuel economy than the same car going 65 mph. Use your vehicle's navigation system, if you have one, in your travels to new locales. This can save you from getting lost and wasting gas.

Drive Smart

Don't be idle too long. Don't waste fuel by sitting in that drive-thru lane at McDonald's or Taco Bell. Park and go inside instead. Don't let your vehicle idle as you wait outside the elementary school to pick up your children. Idling uses more fuel than turning the engine off, waiting for your youngsters and then restarting the engine.

When you're in slow city traffic, keep the air conditioner off, if possible. Roll down the windows and open the air vents to keep you and your riders comfortable. That air

conditioner is a burden that uses fuel, and if you're tooling around town, you can see a "very slight" improvement in gas mileage by keeping it turned off, a Mercedes-Benz spokesman said.

Plan Ahead

Combine your errands into one trip, rather than taking multiple trips from home. Organize your stops so they're near each other and so you don't retrace your path. You may even be able to park in one central spot and walk between some of your stops rather than driving and parking at each one. For large gatherings like family reunions and church picnics, organize a carpool. If the distance to these events is long, Budget Rent a Car Corp. suggests even renting a 15-person van to maximize fuel savings vs. driving a number of separate vehicles in these circumstances.

Plan your trips so you go out during less-congested times of day. When there's less traffic, you're more apt to be able to drive smoothly. Use navigation aids on the Internet or in your vehicle to keep from getting lost and thus wasting fuel when you're headed to a new, unknown location.

Weather Effects

Note that road and weather conditions have a role, too, in the fuel economy of your vehicle. Driving into a 20-mph headwind can reduce fuel economy by as much as 6 percent. Driving up a mountain road with a 7 percent grade

can cut fuel economy by as much as 25 percent. Driving on gravel and in slush and snow requires a bit more fuel, too.

Other Modes of Transport

Look at alternative transportation options even if it's just for one or two days a week. Walk, bicycle, carpool or take public transportation and leave your vehicle at home. The League of American Bicyclists, based in Washington D.C., notes that cycling to work not only saves on gas, it is an excellent cardiovascular workout. And in some cases, the league says, commuters actually arrive at their destination quicker on a bicycle than they would via congested auto roadways.

When you shop for a new vehicle, compare fuel economy. Bear in mind how bigger vehicles, bigger engines, four-wheel drive and lots of optional equipment can add to a vehicle's weight and, as a result, reduce its fuel efficiency. Even larger tires can have an effect. A tire with a larger "footprint" on the road that doesn't have a special rubber compound designed to improve fuel economy has more rolling resistance than a comparable smaller tire, and this can lower fuel economy.

You don't always have to avoid popular vehicles in order to save money at the gas pump. Some smaller trucks and sport-utility vehicles rank better in fuel economy than do some cars. For example, the Ford Ranger 2WD with a 2.3-liter four-cylinder engine and manual transmission is the "most efficient standard pickup truck," according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It gets an estimated

24 miles a gallon in the city and 29 mpg on the highway, the EPA says, for a combined rating of 26 mpg.

Watch for New, High-Tech Solutions

Check out the newest automotive technology. It's getting more mainstream with each passing year.

Hybrid technology-gas/electric

In spring 2002, Honda began selling its second gas-electric hybrid car in the U.S., the Civic Hybrid. It joined the Honda Insight, the first gas-electric hybrid car available in the United States, and Toyota Prius hybrid car, whose U.S. sales started in the 2001 model year, as very fuel-thrifty vehicles.

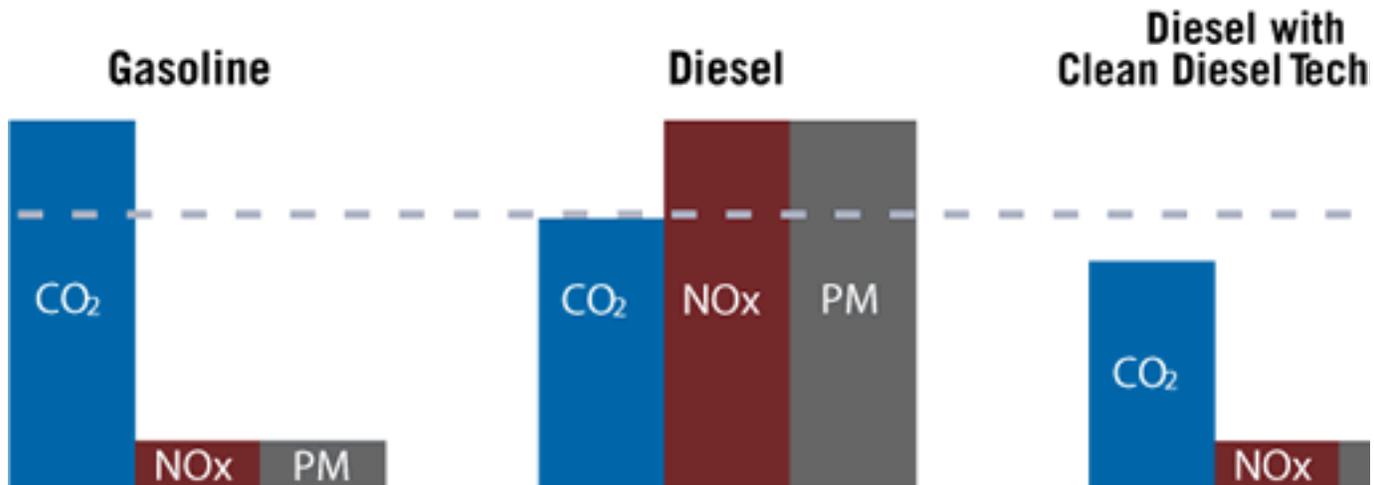
The Civic Hybrid is rated at 50 miles a gallon in combined city/highway fuel economy by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This was the first sedan already in production to be made available with a hybrid powertrain. It has since been followed by a number of passenger cars, including the Honda Accord Hybrid and Toyota Camry Hybrid.

Ford Motor Co. introduced the first gas-electric hybrid sport-utility vehicle the Escape Hybrid in calendar 2004, and other automakers have added hybrid entries as well.

Clean Diesel Technology

Going forward, stricter regulations are expected to be implemented in markets worldwide. These regulations will

focus not only on commercial and light vehicles, such as passenger cars, but also on two-wheeled and off-road vehicles, locomotives and marine transportation, and stationary power.



2010 brings the introduction of Clean Burning Diesel Technology. Mercedes Benz introduced their BlueTEC Diesel Technology in their SUV product lines--3 vehicle introductions. BMW's introduction of the twin turbo charged 3.0 6 cylinder clean burning diesels the BMW 335d sedan and the X5 xDrive 35d SUV product lines. VW has also introduced 4 models using their TDI Clean Diesel Technology. The VW 2.0L I4 Golf, Jetta, Jetta Sport Wagon and the 3.0L V6 Touareg.

All Electric Vehicle-Plug-in

Tesla Motors introduced there energy efficient electric vehicle, Roadster S2.5--the first all electric vehicle introduction to have long range capability-245+ miles per charge. Cost for the Roadster exceeds \$100,000. In 2012

Tesla Motors will be introducing a more affordable all electric version, the Tesla Model S sedan.

In 2011 we will see the introduction of two affordable all electric plug-in vehicles. Nissan Motors Inc. will introduce the "Leaf " and GMC will attack this potential market with the Chevy "Volt".

Next Generation Technology

New technology efforts don't end there. Virtually all automakers are researching ways to build a commercially viable fuel-cell vehicle.

Even if you don't decide on a new-technology vehicle, you should carefully consider whether you really need a V6 or a V8 in your next car or truck. The National Automobile Dealers Association advises consumers to test drive models with various engines in a range of driving conditions to determine what fits them best, and to assess the tradeoffs.

Other Costs Affected

Keep in mind you might pay a bit more for that next new car. Higher fuel prices in recent years have prompted many automakers to boost the price of delivering vehicles to dealerships. You see these higher trucking charges on the window sticker, on the "destination and delivery" line.

An Eye to the Future

Think about how your fuel conservation efforts benefit the Earth and future generations.

Scientists say global warming and its projected disastrous effects on weather, rising sea levels and heat deaths are due, in part, to the burning of fossil fuels.

So, every gallon of gas you don't use can help ease global warming.