

Saving Money on Gasoline

First of all, buy fuel-efficient cars. Over the life of a car, you can save an enormous amount of money by following this advice. None of us can predict what OPEC, a war, or additional federal and state taxes will do to future gasoline prices. The Federal Trade Commission and other experts offer the following tips on how to save at the pump.

1. **Fill 'em up.** Your tires, that is. Keep them inflated as prescribed by the owner's manual. Keep wheels properly aligned. And change the oil, spark plugs and filters as recommended. Misaligned wheels, worn wheel bearings or dragging brakes can also reduce fuel efficiency by 10%.
2. **Stop speeding.** Driving at 65 mph rather than 55 increases gas consumption 20%; at 75, it jumps 25% more. Also use your cruise control whenever possible since keeping a constant speed increases fuel-efficiency.
3. **Shop around for the least expensive, yet quality, gasoline.** Maverick and Costco's gasoline prices are on average .10 cheaper than the big name competitors. Avoid buying gasoline just before a holiday weekend.
4. **Buy the proper octane gas.** Putting premium in a car that calls for regular won't get you better mileage but will cost significantly more money.
5. **Fill up the tank in the morning,** especially during the hot summer months, for you get a little more gasoline. Cooler gasoline is more compact.
6. **Keep starts and stops smooth.** Accelerating sucks up extra fuel, so try to minimize the need to slow down or even stop completely by anticipating traffic conditions, such as slowdowns and red lights. Abrupt stops wastes fuel and cause unnecessary extra wear and tear on your vehicle. Maintaining steady, constant speed is more fuel-efficient.
7. **Use your air conditioner wisely.** On hot days, try to park in the shade and crack your windows to let the hot air escape. When you return to your car, leave the doors open for a few minutes to cool off the car. Gas consumption is greatly increased when running the air conditioner so when possible, let the fresh air keep your car cooled down.
8. **Keep the trunk and luggage rack free of extra weight.** Added weight lowers fuel economy.
9. **Plan your trips to avoid peak traffic congestion.** Stop-and-go traffic really increases fuel consumption. Also try to avoid unnecessary idling for it is more cost effective to turn off and restart your engine.
10. **Plan your short trips.** Combine your errands because taking frequent short trips guzzles gasoline. For example, drop off your dry cleaning on your way to the grocery store. Or stop at a gas station to fill up your car on your way to work. Think through all the mandatory places you have to go and plan errands for places you pass on your way to those locations. Consolidating errands will not only save you money on gasoline and wear and tear on your vehicles, but will also save you precious time.
11. **Avoid drive-thrus.** Don't use drive-thru opportunities at banks, dry cleaners or fast-food restaurants if the line of cars ahead of you is long. Idling for as little as 10 minutes while you sit in line can waste five or six miles' worth of gas.
12. **Carpool whenever possible.** Try carpooling at least a couple of days a week.