

Driving kids here and there?

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When fuel costs are high, many families look for ways to make their vehicles more energy efficient. You have a number of simple things you can do to save a few dollars on your fuel budget. All vehicles are different and will experience various levels of savings, but here are a few of the basics that work for all types of cars and trucks:

- **Make sure your air filter is clean.** Clogged air filters make your engine work harder, burning more fuel to create the same amount of power. Replacing a clogged air filter can save up to 10 percent on fuel costs, or up to 35 cents a gallon.
- **Check the air pressure on your tires.** Mileage per gallon may be reduced as much as 3 percent with tires that aren't inflated to the proper level. Properly inflated tires also last longer and are safer for you and your family. Paying attention to tire pressure could save you up to 10 cents per gallon. However, overinflating a tire results in uneven tire wear.
- **Slow down.** Most vehicle mileage drastically begins to drop off at speeds in excess of 60 mph. As a general rule, every 5 miles an hour in excess of 60 mph is costing you an extra 20 cents a gallon.

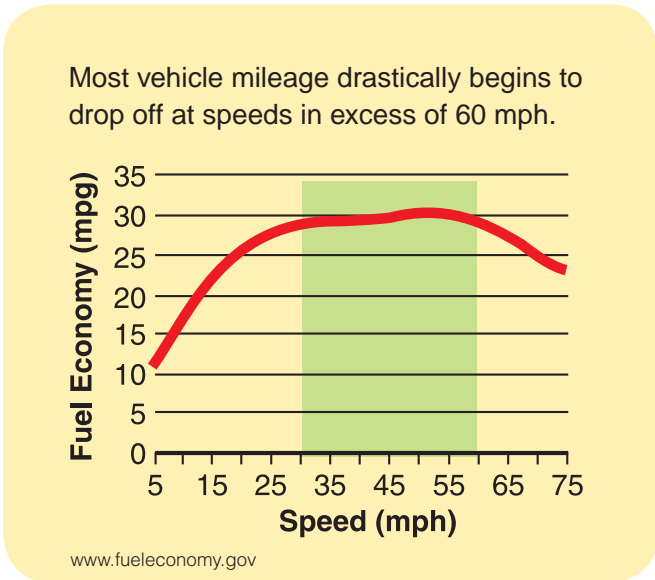


- **Calm down.** Aggressive driving, rapid acceleration and braking can affect fuel mileage. You can see savings up to 30 percent by changing your driving habits. That could be a savings of more than \$1 per gallon.
- **Remove extra weight.** Those bags of traction sand you left in the bed of the truck or trunk are reducing your mileage. Extra weight will affect smaller cars more than larger vehicles, but removing extra weight, especially in excess of 100 pounds, can improve mileage from 4 to 7 cents a gallon.
- **Car pool.** Combining trips with friends, family or co-workers not only saves gas money, but wear and tear on vehicles.
- **Be leery of “gas-saving” claims.** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has tested more than 100 fuel-saving products and has found none that significantly reduce fuel mileage. In fact, a number of them actually caused damage to the engines in which they were used.
- **Make sure your car is maintained according to manufacturers’ recommendations.** Driving a car with the check engine light on or one that is obviously not running properly can drastically affect mileage. An improper functioning oxygen sensor can use as much as 40 percent more fuel. At \$3.51 per gallon, that would be the equivalent of paying an extra \$1.40 for every gallon of gasoline used.

- **Eliminate extra wind resistance.** Using a loaded roof rack increases fuel consumption.
- **If you are in the market for a new vehicle, choose one that is more fuel efficient.** According to the government Web site www.fueleconomy.gov, a person driving 15,000 miles a year can realize a savings of \$878 per year by driving a vehicle that gets 30 miles per gallon (mpg) versus one that gets 20 mpg. That is a savings of more than \$4,388 in five years.

For more tips on cutting your fuel costs, visit these Web sites:

<http://agbiopubs.sdstate.edu/articles/xEx14094.pdf>
www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/drive.shtml
www.ftc.gov/ftc/oilgas/archive/061013.htm
www.ndsu.edu/energy



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