

U.S. Department of Energy - Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Energy Savers

Driving and Car Maintenance

Transportation accounts for 66% of U.S. oil use — mainly in the form of gasoline. Luckily, there are plenty of ways to improve gas mileage.

Driving Tips

- Idling gets you 0 miles per gallon. The best way to warm up a vehicle is to drive it. No more than 30 seconds of idling on winter days is needed. Anything more simply wastes fuel and increases emissions.
- Aggressive driving (speeding, rapid acceleration, and hard braking) wastes gas. It can lower your highway gas mileage 33% and city mileage 5%.
- Avoid high speeds. Above 60 mph, gas mileage drops rapidly. The [fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov) Web site shows how driving speed affects gas mileage.
- When you use overdrive gearing, your car's engine speed goes down. This saves gas and reduces wear.
- Using cruise control on the highway helps you maintain a constant speed and, in most cases, will save gas.
- Use air conditioning only when necessary.
- Clear out your car; extra weight decreases gas mileage.
- Reduce drag by placing items inside the car or trunk rather than on roof racks. A roof rack or carrier provides additional cargo space and may allow you to buy a smaller car. However, a loaded roof rack can decrease your fuel economy by 5%.
- Check into telecommuting, carpooling and public transit to cut mileage and car maintenance costs.

Car Maintenance Tips

- Use the grade of motor oil recommended by your car's manufacturer. Using a different motor oil can lower your gasoline mileage by 1%-2%.
- Keep tires properly inflated and aligned to improve your gasoline mileage by around 3.3%.



- Get regular engine tune-ups and car maintenance checks to avoid fuel economy problems due to worn spark plugs, dragging brakes, low transmission fluid, or transmission problems.
- Replace clogged air filters to improve gas mileage by as much as 10% and protect your engine.
- Combine errands into one trip. Several short trips, each one taken from a cold start, can use twice as much fuel as one trip covering the same distance when the engine is warm.
- **\$ Long-Term Savings Tip:** Consider buying a highly fuel-efficient vehicle. A fuel-efficient vehicle, a hybrid vehicle, or an alternative fuel vehicle could save you a lot at the gas pump and help the environment. See the [Fuel Economy Guide](#) for more on buying a new fuel-efficient car or truck.

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