

Green Driving Tips

from the Experts at



greenercars.org
ACEEE'S GREEN BOOK®

Driving Green

Buying green is just the first step in reducing the environmental impacts of automobile use. Your choice of vehicle is most important, but how you drive and how well you maintain your car, van, or light truck will also make a difference.

- 8^c Avoid "jack rabbit" starts and aggressive driving. Flooring the gas pedal not only wastes gas, it leads to drastically higher pollution rates. One second of high-powered driving can produce nearly the same volume of carbon monoxide emissions as a half hour of normal driving.
- 8^c Think ahead. Try to anticipate stops and let your vehicle coast down as much as possible. Avoid the increased pollution, wasted gas, and wear on your brakes created by accelerating hard and braking hard.
- 8^c Follow the speed limit! Driving 75 mph instead of 65 mph will lower your fuel economy by about 10 percent, and can dramatically increase tailpipe pollution in many vehicles.
- 8^c When possible, plan your trips to avoid rush hour. Stop-and-go driving burns gas and increases emissions of smog-forming pollutants.
- 8^c Combine trips. Warmed-up engines and catalysts generate much less air pollution, so combining several short trips into one can make a big difference.
- 8^c Take a load off. Carrying around an extra 100 pounds reduces fuel economy by about 1 percent. Take a few moments to unload your cargo area.
- 8^c If your vehicle has it, use overdrive gear at cruising speeds. When driving a manual transmission, shift up as soon as possible. Running in a higher gear decreases the rpm and will decrease fuel use and engine wear.
- 8^c Try using the vents and opening windows to cool off before you turn on the air conditioner. Air conditioner use increases fuel consumption, increases NOx emissions in some vehicles, and involves environmentally damaging fluids.
- 8^c Unlike many older cars and trucks, modern vehicles don't need to warm up and they have automatic chokes, so you don't need to step on the gas pedal before starting the engine.

Maintenance Tips

- 8^c Keep your tires properly inflated. Tires should be inflated to the pressure recommended for your vehicle; this information is often printed inside the door frame or in your owner's manual. For every 3 pounds below recommended pressure, fuel economy goes down by about 1 percent. Tires can lose about 1 pound of pressure in a month, so check the air pressure regularly and always before going on a long trip or carrying heavy loads. Under-inflated tires can also detract from handling, safety, and how long the tires will last.
- 8^c Buy low-rolling-resistance (LRR) replacement tires. Switching to a typical set of replacement tires lowers a vehicle's fuel economy as much as 4 percent. LRR tires, on the other hand, are specially designed to improve a vehicle's fuel economy. Most major tire manufacturers now produce LRR models, so when it comes time to replace your tires, seek out a set of LRRs.
- 8^c Check your own fuel economy every few weeks. If you notice it slipping, that could mean you have a minor problem with the engine or your brakes. Using this advance warning, you can fix problems before you have a breakdown on the road.
- 8^c Get a tune-up. Whether you do it yourself or go to a mechanic, a tune-up can increase your fuel economy. Follow owner's manual guidelines. Be sure to check for worn spark plugs, dragging brakes, and low transmission fluid; have your wheels aligned and tires rotated; and replace the air filter if needed. Make sure all used vehicle fluids are recycled or disposed of safely.
- 8^c Change the oil. In addition to making your car or truck last longer, replacing the oil and oil filter regularly will also help fuel economy. Check your owner's manual for specific recommendations about how often to change. Ask the

service station if they recycle used oil, or if you do it yourself, take your old oil to someplace that does recycle. Ask for recycled oil as a replacement.

- 8^c Have your vehicle's emission control system checked periodically. Take it in for service if an instrument panel warning light comes on.

Careful Fill-Ups

Americans too often take gasoline for granted, forgetting that it is quite a hazardous substance. Gasoline fumes are toxic and carcinogenic; they cause smog; and spilled gasoline can pollute the water and poison wildlife. And it's very flammable, too.

- 8^c Use regular gasoline unless your owner's manual says otherwise. Unless your car requires premium, high-octane fuels improve neither fuel economy nor performance and will just waste your money.
- 8^c Don't overfill the gas tank or try to top it off beyond where the automatic nozzle clicks off. Spilled gasoline evaporates to aggravate smog formation and can leak into groundwater.
- 8^c Patronize gas stations that have vapor-recovery nozzles (those black, accordion-looking plastic devices attached to the nozzle) whenever you can.

Prudent Parking

- 8^c Park in the shade in summer to keep your car cool and minimize evaporation of fuel.
- 8^c If you have a garage, use it as much as possible to keep your car warm in winter and cool in summer.
- 8^c If you have to park outdoors, windshield shades can cut down on summer heat and help keep the frost off in the winter.

Take Advantage of "Commuter Choice" Programs

Most Americans commute to work, and now there are special programs that provide incentives for both employees and employers to "Get There with Clean Air." The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Transportation are teaming up with businesses and others to set up "Commuter Choice" programs. These employer-sponsored initiatives can make you eligible for cash and other benefits for greener commuting. Examples include:

- 8^c One company gives its workers free walking shoes, with the promotion "we'll even buy your walking shoes if you hoof it to work!"
- 8^c Another company offers participating employees monthly drawings for prizes that might include extra time off, mountain bikes, and other goodies.
- 8^c A municipality gives its employees an extra hour of time-off for every 5 days they use carpool or vanpool to get to work, plus permission to dress casually at the office.

Companies and communities that make use of Commuter Choice benefits often save money. For example, by cutting down on car commuting, they can avoid the need to build large parking lots that are both expensive and use up green space. These programs take advantage of recent fringe benefits rules, such as offering workers tax-free transit or vanpool benefits of up to \$100 per month. Employers can also allow employees to "cash-out" their parking space, receiving additional income of up to \$175 per month (taxed like added salary for the employee, but still a deductible business expense for the employer). Employees can use this cash to commute as they wish, including carpooling, telecommuting, bicycling, or walking. Employers benefit through lowered taxes, lowered costs, and new ways to recruit and keep employees.

Commuter Choice cuts pollution, reduces traffic congestion, and conserves energy. Ask your employer if they have a Commuter Choice program. If not, ask them to start one. For more information, check out the Commuter Choice website: www.commuterchoice.com.