

PARADE

Smart Ways To Save On Gas

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With gas hovering at \$4 a gallon, a year of weekly, 20-gallon fill-ups now drains \$2000 more from your wallet than just four years ago. Here are a few tips to help you squeeze more miles out of every tank.

Drive intelligently.

- **Avoid aggressive driving.** “Drive as if you had a hard-boiled egg between your foot and the gas pedal,” says John H. Davis, host of PBS’s *MotorWeek*. “It’s OK to break the eggshell, but you can’t squash it.” By observing speed limits and avoiding abrupt starts and stops, you can increase mileage by 5% on city streets and up to 33% on the highway—that’s \$27 per 20-gallon fill-up.
- **Control your speed.** Using cruise control automatically reduces the amount of fuel you burn on the highway. When you set your speed, keep in mind that gas mileage decreases dramatically when you exceed 60 mph. Stick to the right lane, and you can reduce your fuel consumption by up to 20%.
- **Lighten your load.** An extra 100 pounds of weight reduces mileage by as much as 2%, the equivalent of 8 cents per gallon. In other words, you can save up to \$50 per year simply by cleaning out your trunk.
- **Don’t idle.** If traffic is at a standstill, turn off the engine. An hour of idling can swallow a gallon of gas. Also, avoid long lines at drive-through windows. You’ll save money by going inside.

Get your car in shape.

- **Tune up.** Keep your spark plugs clean, your engine tuned, and your wheels aligned. Replacing a clogged air filter can improve your gas mileage by 10%, saving up to 40 cents per gallon. Ignore the hype about additives—from chemical mixes to mothballs—that claim to boost mileage. They’re not worth the money and may even damage your engine.
- **Use the right motor oil.** If the oil is too thick, your engine will have to work harder—burning more fuel. If it’s too thin, you won’t get the needed protection. Stick with the type recommended by your owner’s manual for maximum fuel efficiency.
- **Take care of your tires.** Keep tires inflated to the pressure recommended in your owner’s manual. Soft tires use more gas, but overinflating your tires (as some mileage fanatics suggest) will mess with your car’s handling.
- **If you have two cars, use the one with better gas mileage.** If you drive 12,500 miles a year, switching half of your trips from a car that gets 20 mpg to one that gets 30 mpg can save more than \$400.

Cheat the wind.

- **Roll up your windows.** It may seem odd, but you’ll get better summer mileage by cranking the A/C on the highway, since open windows create drag at high speeds. (If you’re just running errands around town, fresh air is best.)
- **Maintain a sleek profile.** Avoid accessories like luggage racks, which increase drag, and keep your tailgate upright. Fix any dents, especially to the front of the car. A high-gloss finish won’t help your mileage much, but keeping the body straight will.

DELIVERING GAS SAVINGS

UPS squeezes every last drop of mileage from its fleet of 94,000 vehicles, saving 3 million gallons of gas a year. Some expert tips:

- **Plan ahead.** Map out the most efficient routes and make single stops for multiple tasks in the same area. “Do all your work in one trip,” says Jack Levis of UPS, “and time your trips so you don’t run into congestion.”
- **Keep moving.** “Left turns waste time and energy,” says UPS spokesperson Donna Barrett—you don’t want the engine idling at a green light while you wait for oncoming traffic to pass. When you do make a planned stop, turn off the engine.