

10 Tips for Improving Fuel Efficiency

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1] Slow Down On The Highway

Your car is optimized to drive at 40-60mph (70-100km/hr), when you drive 70-80+mph fuel efficiency drops by up to a whopping 33% . Yes 33% , that is not a typo. I had heard this before and thought it was an exaggeration, then I drove the new Chevrolet Cobalt which has a fuel efficiency gauge in it and I saw it first hand, what a surprise.

Is it worth speeding to save 5 minutes off your commute to work so you can just get held up in city traffic? Between the lost fuel efficiency, the extra wear and tear on the car driving beyond optimized speeds, added stress and inherent safety concerns I will need a good reason to start speeding on the highway from now on.

2] Cruise In The City

The same idea applies in city driving. Speeding up to make the next red light guzzles gas and is hard on your car. This can decrease fuel efficiency by 5%.

Why hurry up just to make the next red light? Let's face it, speeding in the city doesn't get you anywhere's faster. If you drive like a bat out of hell you might make an extra light or two and chop a mere 2-4 minutes off your commute assuming you make it there alive.

I drive at sane speeds throughout the city while most others fly by me and hard brake at the next red light, I then pull up beside them or even pass them as I may not of needed to stop as the lights are usually synchronized for sane driving speeds not surprisingly (it also takes more gas to get back up to speed than to maintain it). So have some fun watching people fly by you and seeing them at the next red light knowing your car is much better off.

3] Maintain Your Car

Inexpensive oil and air filter changes can boost your cars performance and increase your cars lifespan. A blocked air filter can decrease fuel efficiency by as much as 10% and a misfiring spark plug won't help either. So try to follow your cars service manual.. It beats dealing with an unexpected major repair and major inconvenience.

4] Link Your Trips/Errands

Plan your trip to include as many destinations or errands as possible. Fewer trips means less cold starts, better fuel efficiency and less driving than multiple small trips.

5] Avoid Unnecessary Idling

You're getting 0 mpg for this one. If you're going to wait 5-10 minutes for a friend, give your car and wallet a break.

For those who live in colder climates this is a bigger issue. We all want our cars toasty warm in the winter time when we get inside. Today's cars really only needs 30 second of idling to warm up even in cold weather, then 1-2 minutes of driving to get it fully warmed up. So bundle up and save yourself a bundle.

6] Tire Pressure

Here's one everyone can do easily. It only takes a couple minutes to check your tires pressure. Under inflated tires can result in 3% less fuel efficiency

7] Monitor Your Fuel Efficiency

I like to measure how many miles/km I get on half a tank after filling it up. It's easier to measure this way as we don't let our gas tanks completely run dry and it avoids any calculations for those of us who hate arithmetic. Just set your odometer after the fill up and read it at half a tank, pretty simple.

You can see how your driving habits affect your fuel economy and if your habits haven't changed and you fuel economy drops off, then maybe its time for some car maintenance. I have recently seen a sudden drop off of 5-10% and will go have my air filter, spark plugs/wires replaced as was suggested last time I visited the mechanic.

Purchasing a fuel consumption gauge (if you car doesn't already have one) can give you real time feedback and more accurate reading. This provides great instant feedback on driving habits, the drawback is the price tag though.

8] Remove Unnecessary Items From Your Car

For each extra 100lbs you lose 1-2% fuel efficiency, so get those golf clubs out of the trunk until your next tee off time.

Leaving items on your roof rack also creates extra drag which makes your car work harder, so lock your mountain bikes up till the next trip.

9] Jack Rabbit Starts

Some people like to suddenly accelerate by putting their foot through the floor. This guzzles gas and gives marginal speed improvement to a gradual acceleration.

10] Back Off

Tail gating results in unnecessary breaking and accelerating. Hang back a little more and you can avoid the added stress and save some gas. It's also safer to drive this way, give yourself an extra second to avoid an accident !Paul Fezziwig writes for and administers Green Cars Now , <http://www.greencarsnow.com>, a website devoted to promoting fuel efficient cars and driving habits.