



Government of the United States Virgin Islands

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Getting the Facts on Gasoline Mileage

Are you drowning under the burden of high gas costs? If taking public transportation isn't an option and you have no immediate plans to buy a hybrid vehicle, is there anything you can do to save gas? The truth is that the way you drive, the health of your car and your lifestyle all play a part in fuel efficiency. But there are a lot of myths out there, too. We talked to the experts to get to the truth.

Yes.

Aggressive driving reduces fuel economy by as much as 33 percent at highway speeds and 5 percent around town, according to Fueleconomy.gov. "Avoid aggressive driving," says Troy Green, spokesperson for the American Automobile Association (AAA). "Keep the speed limits in mind and avoid sudden starts and hard breaking." Syndicated car columnists Tom and Ray Magliozzi, also known as Click and Clack, state the obvious: "Drive less and walk more." They add that if you must drive, "Drive gently."

Yes.

Experts agree that excessive idling wastes fuel, and areas that encourage idling like restaurant drive-thrus should be avoided altogether. "Avoid excess idling whenever possible. Go ahead and park and go into the restaurant. Even when you pick children up from school, find a parking space rather than needlessly idling," says Green.

No.

It is fuel-efficient to drive with your windows down if you are driving in your neighborhood at 25 miles per hour, says Diane MacEachern, author of "Beat High Gas Prices Now!" But if you're driving on the highway, "keeping your windows down creates drag on the car which slows the car down and the car uses more gasoline to gear it up to highway speeds," she says. MacEachern also recommends switching off the air conditioning, radio, lights and windshield wipers before turning off the engine. This improves the overall efficiency of the car, she says. Goss adds that this is only true for cars that are more than 25 years old.

Yes.

According to Department of Energy statistics, there is a 3.3 percent fuel efficiency gain if your car's tire pressure is correct. Experts agree that the condition of tires, their pressure and their size are all very important to fuel economy. Always follow the car manufacturer's specifications for tire pressure and never stray from it. You can find the correct specifications for your vehicle inside the driver's door, between the console center and the floor shifter or inside the fuel filler door. How often should you check tire pressure? MacEachern says, "Check tire pressure with the changing seasons as it fluctuates from spring to summer to winter." Automotive expert Goss takes it a step further, and recommends checking tire pressure every week and never going over a month without checking it.

Yes.

When it comes to saving gas, every component of a car is important to maintain and no part supersedes another. Experts agree regular tune-ups are very important for fuel efficiency. Goss says there is a



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misconception that air filters on modern cars affect performance and fuel economy. That is false. The truth is that in today's cars, a computer measures the amount of air coming out of the filter and automatically adjusts the air to match the amount of fuel. In older cars built before the mid '90s, Goss says the air filter can have a significant effect on your car's performance, but not its fuel economy.