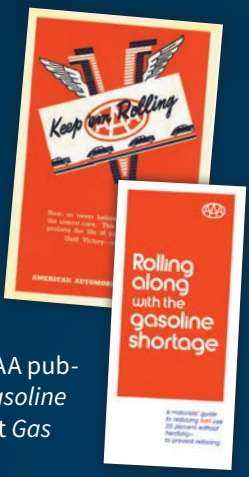
AAA and Fuel Conservation

AAA is a federation of motor clubs serving more than 53 million members in the United States and Canada with automotive, travel, financial and insurance services.

For decades, AAA has published public-service guides on car care, fuel economy and safety. In 1943, AAA published its first guide, *Keep 'em Rolling*, to assist with gasoline rationing required by World War II.



In the 1970s, when American motorists faced soaring gas prices brought on by the Arab Oil Embargo, AAA published *Rolling Along with the Gasoline Shortage* and produced its first *Gas Watcher's Guide*.

A companion brochure, *Your Driving Costs*, has been produced since 1950. That year, driving a car 10,000 miles cost 9 cents per mile, and gasoline sold for 27 cents per gallon.

Consult your local AAA club or visit AAA.com or AAA.com/PublicAffairs for more information on conserving fuel and traveling safely.

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GAS WATCHER'S GUIDE

Tips for Conserving Fuel, Saving Money and Protecting the Environment

Gas Watcher's Guide

Responsible use of energy is learned behavior. To conserve, we must slow down and find ways to do more with less. The benefits of fuel conservation include financial savings, improved road safety and a healthier environment. This brochure offers ways to be a consistent and effective "gas watcher."

Better Vehicles

In recent decades, automobile manufacturers have made significant advances in improving the overall energy efficiency of most passenger vehicles. At the same time, consumers are more aware of how much fuel their vehicles consume and how fuel economy affects their pocketbooks and the environment. Today, the average fuel efficiency of U.S. passenger vehicles and light trucks is about 22.5 miles per gallon. Going forward, the federal government has set aggressive goals to increase that number to 35.5 by 2016 and 54.5 by 2025.

More Time Behind the Wheel

Motorists also are driving more. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Americans on an average day drive 29 miles and spend some 55 minutes behind the wheel. The typical vehicle is driven about 12,000 miles per year, and annual per-vehicle gasoline use totals approximately 550 gallons.

Nationally Speaking . . .

Passenger vehicles and light trucks average

The average driver travels 29 miles and spends

behind the wheel each day.

96%

of the 3.3 million Americans who "stretch-commute," or travel at least 50 miles one way, do so by car.

Americans take

1.1 billion

trips a day, or about 4 trips per person.

of daily trips are taken in personal vehicles.

Plan Ahead

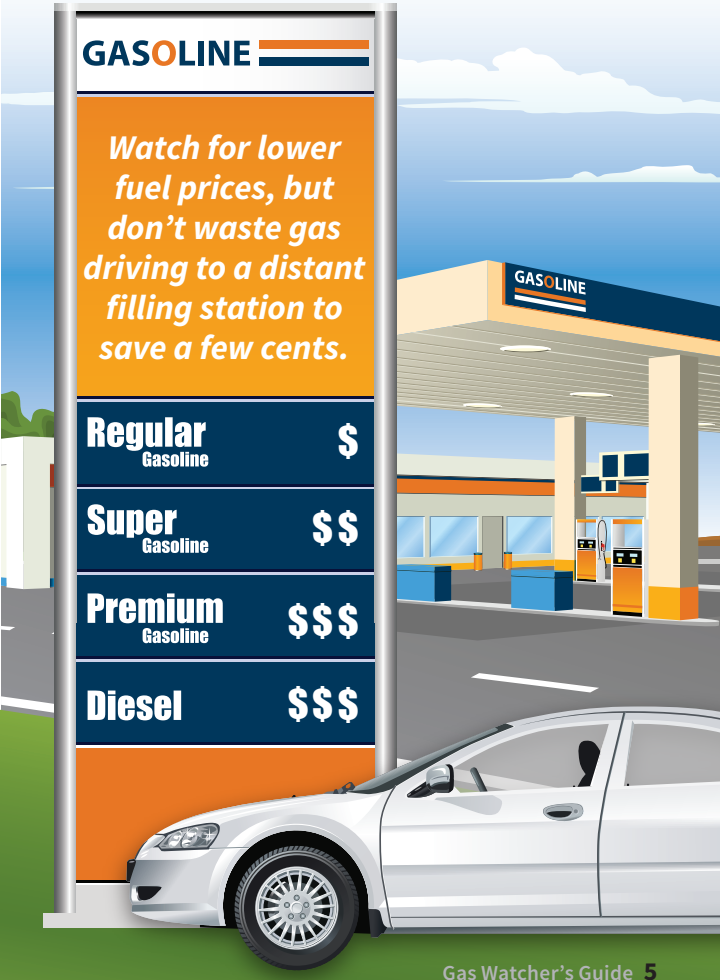
The type of car or truck you drive, how it's maintained and how you drive can significantly affect fuel conservation. Here are some tips to help you save gasoline and money:

- When buying a new vehicle, choose one that meets your normal daily needs. While a large family might need a V8-powered sport utility vehicle, a solo commuter is better off economically in a 4-cylinder compact. You can always rent a larger vehicle, should the need arise.
- If you own more than one vehicle, use the more energy-conserving model as often as possible.
- Consolidate and plan your trips to cut down on time behind the wheel and miles traveled. This can be accomplished by finding a "one-stop destination" where you can take care of banking, grocery shopping and other common errands.
- Comparison-shop by phone, online or through ads, rather than driving from store to store.
- Lighten the load by not hauling unnecessary items in the vehicle's passenger compartment, trunk or cargo area. More weight means more gas.
- Use air conditioning conservatively. Many systems have an "economy" or "recirculate" setting that reduces the amount of cooling needed and fuel consumed.
- Watch for lower fuel prices, but don't waste gas driving to a distant filling station to save a few cents.

Think it through. Your driving style can have nearly as much impact on fuel economy as the type of car you drive. Remember the following:

- Don't idle a cold engine for an extended time. Cars today can be safely driven almost immediately after starting. Doing so speeds the warm-up process and produces fewer exhaust emissions. Just remember to avoid hard acceleration until the engine reaches operating temperature.

- For the best fuel economy, maintain steady speeds. A car burns extra fuel during acceleration. Use cruise control when appropriate to help maintain a constant speed.
- Avoid quick starts and sudden stops. They waste fuel, are hard on your vehicle and increase the risk of a traffic crash.
- Minimize the need to brake by anticipating traffic conditions. Be alert for slowdowns and red lights ahead of you, and decelerate by coasting whenever practical.
- Travel at moderate speeds on the open road. Higher speeds require more fuel to overcome air resistance. But remember that driving slower than the flow of traffic can create a traffic hazard. Also, keep in the right lane, except to pass another vehicle.



Consider the Total Cost of Ownership

Fuel is part of the total cost of vehicle ownership, so the mileage rating should be an important factor when choosing a new vehicle. Compare the Environmental Protection Agency fuel economy ratings on all vehicles you're considering. Other factors to think about include:

- Four-wheel-drive vehicles generally use more fuel than other vehicles, especially if the four-wheel-drive system is engaged during routine driving.
- Vehicles with automatic transmissions may use more gasoline than those equipped with manual transmissions.
- Smaller engines usually produce better gas mileage than their larger counterparts.
- Vehicle engines that require premium fuel, as stated in the owner's manual, will cost more to operate in the long run.
- Some trucks, vans and SUVs come in several sizes and configurations. Models with smaller cabs, shorter beds or abbreviated cargo areas generally are lighter and consume less fuel.
- Light exterior and interior colors, along with tinted windows, can reduce heat buildup and lower air-conditioning use.

When shopping for a new or pre-owned vehicle, check out AAA's annual *Your Driving Costs* publication, which is available from your local AAA office. Also, visit AAA.com for other helpful information and detailed vehicle comparisons. Many AAA clubs also offer auto-buying services that can help save you money, regardless of the vehicle you choose.

Vehicle engines that require premium fuel, as stated in the owner's manual, will cost more to operate in the long run.

Maintain Fuel Efficiency

Check your owner's manual for routine maintenance instructions, and keep the following points in mind:

- Stick to a routine maintenance schedule. Keeping tires properly inflated, moving components lubricated and ignition and emission systems in good operating condition will help ensure maximum fuel efficiency and extend the life of your vehicle.
- Change engine oil at the intervals indicated by the in-car maintenance reminder system or factory schedule. Use an "energy-conserving" oil that meets the vehicle manufacturer's specifications.
- Keep tires inflated at the proper pressure. Use the figures on the tire information decal on the driver's door jamb—not the ones molded into the tire's sidewall. Along with hindering fuel economy, under-inflated tires can be a safety hazard.
- Check the air filter at least twice a year. A dirty filter won't affect fuel economy on a modern fuel-injected car, but it will reduce engine performance.
- Engine spark plugs must be in good condition. Some types last for 100,000 miles, but others need to be replaced more often.

- Have your vehicle serviced immediately if the emissions malfunction indicator or “check engine” light comes on.
- Have all maintenance performed by a certified technician who is trained to inspect other important vehicle components that affect fuel consumption.

At the pump. If your vehicle’s engine does not require premium fuel, using anything other than regular is simply a waste of money. Other tips include:

- Don’t top off your gas tank. Stop filling after the automatic nozzle shuts off the second time. In hot weather, expanding fuel can flood and impair important emission control devices.
- If you have to replace a gas cap, make sure it is the right one for your car. An ill-fitting cap will increase emissions and trigger the “check engine” light.
- Keep track of gas mileage. If you notice a sudden decrease in fuel economy, have your vehicle checked by a technician to ensure it’s operating properly.

Don’t top off your gas tank. Stop filling after the automatic nozzle shuts off the second time.

Vacationing

Some 90 percent of Americans vacation by personal vehicle. Chances are, you're one of them. These tips will help you save fuel and reduce hassles on your trip:

- If you have a choice of vehicles, take the one that gets the best gas mileage. Renting a more fuel-efficient model also can save you money in the long run—both at the pump and by reducing wear and tear on your personal vehicle.
- Choose a route that enables you to travel at constant speeds and bypass congested areas as much as possible. Unless you're taking a scenic drive, avoid two-lane roads that have lots of stop signs and traffic signals. Your AAA Travel representative can help plan the best route and provide you a customized TripTik routing that has door-to-door driving directions, or you can visit AAA.com and create your own.
- Start trips early in the day while traffic is light. Plan meal stops to coincide with likely periods of traffic congestion.
- Take only what you need to maintain as light a load as possible. Keep luggage inside the vehicle, rather than strapped on the roof, where it will create wind resistance.
- Choose a vacation spot where minimal driving will be needed after you arrive.
- If your trip seems too far to drive the whole way, consider using public transportation or air travel, then rent a vehicle at your destination.

Saving Money While Making Money

Transportation to and from work is one of the most obvious places to save fuel and money. Consider these options:

- When possible, combine errands with your daily commute.
- If your work hours are flexible, leave earlier in the morning or return home later in the evening to reduce fuel burned in bumper-to-bumper traffic.
- Talk to your employer about working from home one day a week. This can significantly reduce your fuel consumption over the course of a year.
- Participate in a carpool or ride-sharing program. Many families carpool to transport children to and from school or activities. Starting a carpool can be as easy as talking to neighbors who travel to the same destination or posting a notice on a company or school bulletin board.
- When available, public transit is usually the least-expensive and most fuel-efficient way to commute. It may take a little longer to get where you're going, but you'll save money and reduce emissions.
- For short trips, try bicycling or walking. You'll save fuel, and your body will thank you for the exercise.

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