

Save \$170/year by changing clogged air filter

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates replacing a clogged air filter alone can improve fuel economy by 10 %, which works out to 8.5 cents on an 85 cent litre of fuel or, for the average Canadian, about \$170 a year.

Loose or faulty gas caps—something a technician might discover during a spring service—also causes increased fuel usage. Regular oil changes, maintenance of fuel injection systems and such things as making sure brakes aren't dragging can also improve economy, while also saving potential repair costs down the road.

Making the effort (at least monthly) to check tire pressures is one of the most worthwhile do-it-yourself chores. Under inflated tires reduce economy by up to 5 per cent because of higher rolling resistance. They also wear out faster, are a safety hazard because they can upset the handling of your car and on the highway heat build-up can cause them to fail. If you use winter tires change them as soon as practical, as they reduce fuel efficiency by about 4 percent.

Making sure the optimum grade of fuel is being used is also important. Using a higher octane rating than called for, in the belief it will boost power, is expensive and unnecessary.

For information on vehicle

maintenance you can visit Car Care Canada's website at www.carcarecanada.ca.

Part of the holistic approach to fuel economy includes keeping the car's load to a minimum. Fuel economy is reduced by 1%-2% for

every 45kg of added weight. If you own a minivan you can eliminate weight by storing the rear seat in the garage.

Minimizing air conditioning usage can be a big help as it decreases fuel economy by 9% on

the highway and as much as 26% in stop and go traffic.

Getting serious about fuel savings also requires a change of mental gears, by adopting a more aware attitude towards the task of driving. Speed is the biggest consumer of

fuel. So drive more slowly and you'll cut fuel costs by a surprising amount. Traveling at 90km/h instead of 110km/h can reduce fuel usage up to 20%. Planning a direct route can also pay fuel saving dividends and so will reducing idling.

Idling your vehicle just 10 minutes a day—the Canadian average is five to 10—burns approximately 100 litres of fuel a year, worth about \$100 at the current price. Also don't overuse a remote starting system, and do employ a block heater.

How you deal with day to day driving has a big impact on fuel economy. Watching how traffic patterns unfold, so as to avoid braking and accelerating will help. Hard acceleration drains gas out of the tank at an amazing rate, as does aggressive driving, with lots of lane changing, and subsequent hard braking, and acceleration. Smooth operation and anticipation of traffic flow is the key.

Every time you use the brakes to reduce speed you have to use the accelerator (and fuel) to gain it back. Conserving momentum is all important.

Taking this three part approach to vehicle selection, maintenance and driving will definitely reduce the number of your hard earned dollar bills that get blown out the tailpipe each year.

—www.carcarecanada.ca



Driving tips that can help increase fuel economy

- Use top gear as much as possible. Don't change down, or kickdown your automatic transmission unless you really have to and use cruise control where practical.
- Accelerate gently. It's better to accelerate slowly, using more throttle in a higher gear than to use less throttle in a lower gear.
- Don't leave your engine running. Start it up just prior to departure and drive away at moderate speed, even if it's cold. Four minutes of idling time equals about 1km of fuel use.
- Use the vents instead of using the air conditioner where practical. Open windows at highway speeds can increase fuel use 2 %-5%.
- Wet or snow covered roads can increase fuel consumption 10 %. Drive on the driest parts, not in the puddles or slush.
- Use the cruise control where practical on long highway trips.
- Don't drive with your left foot on the brake, not only is it a drag on fuel economy, but wears out your brakes.



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