

EcoDriving Practices

Subtle changes in driving habits can produce significant benefits, such as saving money at the gas pump and reducing CO2 emissions. Here are best practices for green driving:

Believe You Can Reduce Fuel Use and Emissions

Tip #1 Many of the best practices for green driving are subtle, but they can add up over a year. Making small changes in your driving can be the most effective way to reduce fuel use and carbon dioxide emissions, and the best part is you can do it today, with whatever vehicle you are currently driving. What you monitor, you manage...so start adapting a "lead foot" to a "feather foot" and keep track of the savings over several tanks of gas. Typically, practicing moderate levels of EcoDriving can reduce fuel use by an average of 15%.

Avoid Rapid Starts and Stops

Tip #2 Rapid starts and stops, often called "jack rabbit" starts and stops, use fuel and costs money at the gas pump. Gentle acceleration and braking can save more than \$1 per gallon, according to the U.S. EPA, because smart driving can improve fuel economy by up to 33%. A few seconds of high-powered driving can use as much gas as driving for several minutes at more measured speeds. Ease into accelerations and brake smoothly, especially around corners, to raise your mileage the most. Avoid tailgating. When EcoDrivers avoid rapid starts and stops, they are not only practicing safe driving habits, but they're also reducing the energy required to get the vehicle moving again.

Keep on Rolling in Traffic

Tip #3 Slow-and-go is always better than stop-and-go, and not just to reduce traffic congestion woes. Maintaining a constant speed in your commute increases fuel economy, because it takes much more energy to move a stopped vehicle than to keep a vehicle moving. In fact, it can take 20 percent more fuel to accelerate from a full stop than from 5 miles per hour. Many truckers practice this approach to reduce shifting ten-speed truck transmissions. Drivers who try to achieve the highest mileage possible, often called "hypermilers", practice looking ahead down the road to anticipate stops and to coast as much as possible.

Ride the "Green Wave"

Tip #4 Traffic lights are often synchronized so that a motorist driving at a specific speed will pass through a series of green lights without stopping. Driving more quickly means you arrive sooner at a light and need to stop. Engineers optimize the traffic light timing to reduce congestion and improve traffic slowly. A steady speed often can help drivers avoid red lights, therefore keeping the car moving more efficiently.

Use Air Conditioning at Higher Speeds

Tip #5 Air conditioning can reduce mileage significantly, by as much as 20%. In fact, your air conditioner can consume up to one gallon of gas per tank to cool the vehicle. But driving with your windows open can produce aerodynamic drag, which reduces fuel economy. What's a driver to do? When driving at slower speeds (less than 40 mph), such as driving in urban areas, open windows are better. At higher speeds (over 40 mph), open windows use more fuel than the air conditioner, so close the windows and turn on the air conditioner. Another good idea is to take advantage of the "recycle inside air" feature. The air that is already cooled in the car is reused by the air conditioning system, instead of drawing hot air from the outside to be cooled.

Maintain an Optimum Highway Speed for Good Mileage

Tip #6 Highway driving that exceeds 60 miles per hour uses more fuel. According to the U.S. EPA, every 5 miles over the 60 mph level is equivalent to paying 20 extra cents per gallon for gas. Observing the speed limit and not exceeding 60 mph (where legally allowed) can improve mileage by 7-23%.

Use Cruise Control

Tip #7 During highway driving, cruise control helps maintain a steady speed. According to a test conducted by

