

Get Better Fuel Mileage: Easy Changes Save Money At The Pump

(NAPSA)—“No matter how much money you’ve got, you’ve got better things to spend it on than gasoline,” says Sue Elliott-Sink, director of content for enjoythedrive.com, the consumer Web site from SEMA, the Specialty Equipment Market Association. “While you certainly can save money by driving less, that isn’t an option for most of us. Fortunately, it’s easy for practically any vehicle to get better gas mileage. And here’s a bonus: Many modifications that enhance fuel economy also improve your vehicle’s performance and reduce emissions.”

The following tips may help you save money at the pump.

1. Make life easier for your engine.

Engines hate friction, so anything you can do to reduce it will make your motor—and your wallet—happier. For starters, be sure to change your oil regularly, and use a high-quality or synthetic motor oil to further reduce internal friction. You also can use oil additives to reduce friction.

2. Breathe deeply.

If you’ve ever tried to drink a thick milkshake through a straw, you know how hard it is to pull fluid through an opening that’s too small. Your engine may feel the same way, if it’s trying to gulp air through a small intake system. Something as simple as changing to a high-flow air filter can help your engine inhale more easily, and so can a larger throttle body and a performance intake manifold.

3. Let it out.

If your engine is trying to exhale through an exhaust system that’s too small, a high-flow muffler and performance exhaust system will really help.

Also, make sure your catalytic converter isn’t clogged (you’ll know, because your exhaust will smell like rotten eggs). When it’s time to change, a high-flow “cat” will increase your fuel economy.

4. Light a fire.

Is your engine overdue for a tune-up? If it is, new spark plugs and wires will make a huge difference.

Even if you’re not behind in maintenance, an upgrade to high-performance spark plugs and low-resistance plug wires can



improve fuel economy and performance. Plus, high-performance coils and ignition boxes make it easier for an engine to burn air and fuel, so it can make more power from the same amount of gasoline.

5. Shift quicker.

If you have an automatic transmission, a shift improver kit will enhance gas mileage and power. This kit reduces slippage, so your transmission shifts quicker and harder—which actually prolongs the life of your transmission, too.

6. Improve aerodynamics.

Pickup trucks generally can get the biggest gains when it comes to aerodynamics. That’s because, in many cases, air flows into a pickup’s bed and runs smack into the tailgate. To reduce wind resistance, you can drive around with your tailgate down, or you can remove your solid metal tailgate and replace it with a tailgate net, so the air can flow through. An “air gate” operates under the same principle, but it’s made from metal tubing or mesh, instead of vinyl netting.

Another option is a tonneau cover or truck cap. Not only do these products smooth the air flow over your bed, they also provide plenty of secure storage space.

Spoilers and ground effects also can improve a vehicle’s aerodynamics. However, these products originally were designed to work on race cars, and many street versions do more to make your vehicle look racy than to reduce wind resistance.

7. Check your tires.

Do you need to add air to your tires? Tires that are running low not only reduce fuel economy, they also wear out faster.

If you’re not diligent about using a tire pressure gauge, you might consider installing a tire monitoring system to alert you whenever it’s time to add air.

8. Add overdrive.

If your vehicle didn’t come with an overdrive transmission, you can make a huge improvement in your highway mileage by changing to an overdrive unit, which allows your engine to spin more slowly at cruising speeds.

You also can add extra overdrive gears to a transmission by installing a “gear splitter.” It enhances acceleration and towing abilities, too.

9. Don’t idle while you’re waiting.

It takes more gas to sit around with your car running than to restart it, so shut off the engine while you’re waiting for passengers to arrive.

10. Don’t floor it.

It may be fun to see how fast your vehicle can accelerate, but it’s definitely not the way to optimize your fuel economy.

For more information on improving your gas mileage, visit www.enjoythedrive.com. The Web site includes information on hundreds of the latest custom auto accessories, as well as links to product manufacturers’ and retailers’ Web sites. If you don’t have Internet access, write to SEMA, Gas Mileage, 1575 S. Valley Vista Dr., Diamond Bar, CA 91765-3914.