EFFICIENT DRIVING TIPS

Fuel consumption is largely based on the car you drive. However, regardless of which model you choose, there are steps you can take to save money and reduce fuel use, CO_2 emissions and pollution. A lot of this is down to common sense and using simple preventative techniques and measures to ensure that fuel isn't being used excessively.

Cutting emissions

The first things to consider relate more to the vehicle itself, rather than driving style. To ensure that your vehicle stays in good shape, regular maintenance and vehicle condition checks should be carried out as a matter of course.

Servicing

Make sure the vehicle is serviced regularly to maintain engine efficiency and to comply with the manufacturer's warranty.

Engine oil

Check the level regularly and make sure you use the right specification for your particular model.

Tyres

Check tyre pressures regularly, and always before long journeys. Under-inflated tyres create more rolling resistance, which reduces fuel economy.

Before travelling

Before setting off on journeys of any distance, there are a number of things to take into consideration.

Lose the weight

Extra weight means extra fuel, so if there's anything heavy you don't need on the journey, leave it behind.

Leave promptly

Don't start the engine until you're ready to go. Idling wastes fuel and the engine warms up more quickly when you're moving. In the winter, scrape ice clear rather than leaving the car to warm up.

Streamline

Roof-racks and boxes add wind resistance and increase fuel consumption. If you don't need them, take them off.

Don't get lost

Plan unfamiliar journeys to reduce the risk of getting lost, and check the traffic news before you leave.

Combine short trips

Cold or frequent starts use more fuel, so it pays to combine short trips wherever possible.

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On the road

Here are some simple tips that will make your driving experience easier, more relaxed, and more environmentally and budget friendly.

Easy does it

Drive smoothly, accelerate gently and read the road ahead to avoid unnecessary braking. Anticipate as far ahead as possible.

Decelerate smoothly

When you have to slow down or stop, decelerate smoothly by releasing the accelerator in time, leaving the car in gear.

Keep rolling

Stopping then starting again will use more fuel, so keep the car moving as much as possible.

Change up earlier

Don't over-rev the engine, try changing up at around 2,000 rpm in a diesel car, or around 2,500 rpm in a petrol car. To help, most modern cars are fitted with a 'gear shift indicator' light to show the most efficient change points.

Cut the air-con

Air-conditioning increases fuel consumption so if you can bear it, turn it off. Aim to run air-conditioning at least once a week throughout the year to maintain the system in good condition.

Switch it off

Electrical loads increase fuel consumption, so turn off your heated rear windscreen, demister blowers and headlights when you don't need them.

Stick to speed limits

The faster you go, the greater the fuel consumption and pollution. Driving at 70mph uses up to 9% more fuel than at 60mph and up to 15% more than at 50mph.

Idle or switch off?

It's tempting to switch the engine off every time you stop, especially as many cars now have automatic stop-start systems that do just that. However, is switching off really the best thing for your wallet or the environment?

As a general guide, for a warm car in daylight conditions, in mild weather, turning the engine off for a wait of a minute or more will probably save fuel and cut carbon emissions. A cold engine, cold weather, or additional electrical loads will all extend the period you'd have to be stationary to benefit from switching off.

Diesel vehicles should never be turned off during diesel particulate filter DPF regeneration (a warning light will be shown) as a failed regeneration causes oil dilution and a blocked DPF.

Coasting is a no-no

Although it used to be quite a common recommendation to save fuel, rolling downhill or approaching a junction with the car out of gear is inadvisable because the driver doesn't have full control of the vehicle.

Coasting means:

- **You lose the ability to suddenly accelerate out of tricky situations.**
- **You lose engine braking which risks brake fade on downhill stretches, and overheated brakes require harder pedal pressures to stop the vehicle.**

With changes in vehicle fuel systems, these days coasting won't save you fuel either. In modern cars with electronic engine management, fuel and ignition systems are effectively controlled by the Electronic Control Unit (ECU). Take your foot off the accelerator and the ECU cuts the fuel supply to the injectors so there's nothing to be gained by coasting. Modern diesel engines also have the ability to shut off the fuel when you take your foot off the accelerator. Smooth driving and gentle blending in and out of the throttle will save fuel.