

How motorists can help reduce demand for fuel

Don't use a car if you really don't need to

If you live close to your destination do you really need to drive? If you live one or two miles from work or school, why not walk or ride a bike? Taking a bus or train is also a fuel-efficient alternative to driving alone. Consider alternating the driving with others whose children attend the same school or activities as your children do. As for commuting to and from work, why not offer to share a ride with another colleague living nearby or a neighbour working close to you?

Drive your car only when necessary. Don't use it for those 'around the corner' trips-walk instead. Don't make two trips when one will do. Combine errands in a single trip.

Maintain your car properly

A poorly tuned engine can increase fuel consumption by up to 50%. By properly maintaining your car and by following the recommended maintenance schedule in your owner's manual, you can maximise fuel efficiency. With a well-tuned engine, you'll also minimise engine wear and tear.

Don't carry unnecessary weight

A rooftop carrier provides additional baggage space and may allow you to meet all your driving needs with a smaller vehicle. However, a loaded rack can increase fuel consumption by as much as five per cent in motorway driving. Even the most streamlined empty rack will increase fuel consumption by about one per cent when it's not loaded. If the carrier is not permanently fixed to your vehicle, remove it when it is not needed.

Be a steady driver

Fuel can be saved by using a steady driving technique where the driver anticipates what is ahead and keeps as constant a speed as possible. In general, a one-unit increase in speed requires a three-unit increase in power consumption. It is therefore beneficial if a driver can avoid high speeds while at the same time maintaining the overall average speed. This can be achieved by anticipating what lies ahead on the road and by selecting the most suitable route.

Restrict your speed

For most fuel-efficient cruising do not exceed 50 miles per hour (DfT estimate). Most cars use about 10% less fuel when driven at 50mph rather than 62mph and a reduction in speed from 68mph to 50mph can reduce fuel consumption by 20%. The optimum speed for HGVs is also below 50mph and large vehicles can achieve similar savings in fuel consumption by reducing their speed to this level.

Don't idle

No matter how efficient your car, idling consumes fuel. One minute of idling uses up more fuel than restarting your engine. Turn off the ignition if you are waiting (it would also help to relieve air pollution).

Use electrics less

Car electrics impose an extra load on the engine, making it work harder and burn more fuel. Air conditioning can increase fuel consumption by up to ten percent in stop-go traffic. At motorway speeds, air conditioning increases fuel consumption by three to four per cent. Flow-through ventilation reduces the need to drive with air conditioning on or with windows open, both of which consume more fuel. A sun roof can reduce the need for air conditioning, but when the roof is open at motorway speeds, wind resistance is increased and greater fuel consumption will result.