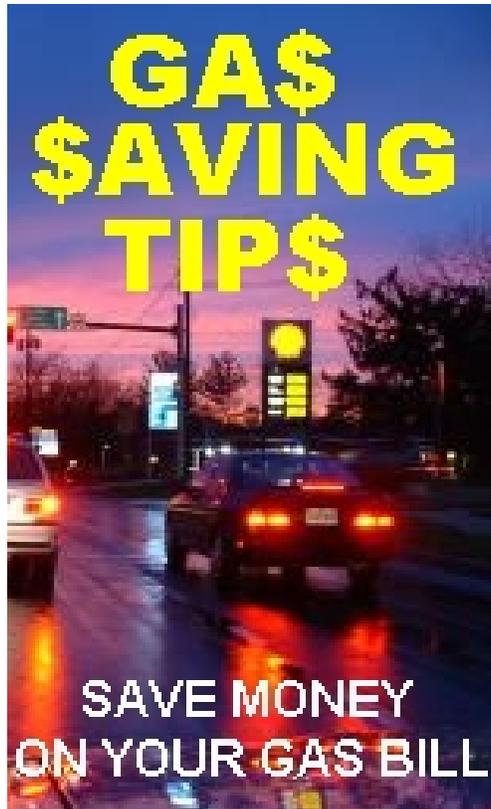


# **GAS \$AVING TIP\$**

**SAVE MONEY  
ON YOUR GAS BILL**



## **GAS \$AVING TIPS**

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### **Introduction**



For almost a decade and a half, I was known in Canada as the voice of the motorist. I spoke on behalf of the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA), then for CAA Ontario. CAA is affiliated with AAA (American Automobile Association).

For several years, I was doing over 500 media interviews per year. Guess which topic I was called about most frequently?

The high price of gasoline. That's "petrol" for my friends across the pond.

I would be asked what could be done to reduce the price of gasoline and bring the evil oil companies in their satanic towers to their knees.

Let's get a couple things straight.

The oil companies exist for one reason only: to maximize profits for their shareholders.

Who are their shareholders? Anybody who owns shares in a mutual fund. Anybody who has a company pension. Anybody who carries an insurance policy. That's capitalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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Even if you despise capitalism and want to overthrow the world, you are still probably an oil company owner.

I am not saying oil companies are good or bad. I am not saying you have to like or hate capitalism. I am just saying that that's how it is.

What can be done, then, about the high cost of gasoline?

Well, first of all, you could move to America, where gasoline taxes are lowest in the world. Or even to Canada, where the taxes that always seem so high compared to those in the U.S.A. are actually much lower than anywhere else.

But there is so much more you can do, and I have some very exciting news. The 18 tips in this booklet not only save you money on your fuel bill.

Many of them save you money on repairs and maintenance and even on insurance.

Many of these tips also add to your safety.

And all of them help the environment. Ultimately, how much we pay for gasoline and whether oil companies make a high or low profit are irrelevant if we have no good air to breathe and no clean water to drink.

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I won't call myself an expert. I do not have any technical expertise. But my exposure to various automotive issues and briefings by government, expert reports, oil companies, automotive technicians, automobile manufacturers and others have given me a vast store of important information that I am now happily passing along to you.

So profit from the following tips.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David". The letter "D" is large and stylized, with a vertical line extending downwards from its base. The rest of the name "avid" is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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### **18 Roof rack**

Let's start with ditching the roof rack. You know the one. It holds your canoe or bicycle or skis ... when you're heading to the cottage.

The rest of the time, it stays empty.

Even with no bicycle or skis in it, your roof rack still creates "aerodynamic drag" or wind resistance. To overcome that resistance, your engine has to work harder and burn more fuel.

And guess who pays for the extra fuel you burn? That's right. You.

The only thing you should have protruding from your vehicle are the side mirrors. Sorry, but you need them for safety.

#### **BONUS TIP**

Guess what else creates wind resistance? Pick-up truck tailgates. So if it is legal to do so where you are driving, let the tailgate down to minimize wind resistance.

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### **17 Empty trunk**

Wind resistance is not the only thing that can weigh you down when driving. Weight does, too.

Your engine has to work harder – and burn more gas – to carry extra weight around. If you routinely shuttle four people around, you will pay for more fuel than if you drive solo.

And if you are carrying lots of extra baggage in your trunk, things you just never seem to get around to emptying, that eats up the fuel, too.

And you pay.

So keep your car free of extra toolboxes and other items that could easily be removed.

#### **BONUS TIP**

If you want to haul a lot of really heavy items, a trailer is probably better than a roof rack and filling the trunk. Not only is a trailer likely to create less "drag", but your engine works harder carrying than pulling ... and burns more fuel carrying than pulling, of course.

## **16 Carpool**

In tip 17, I said, ". If you routinely shuttle four people around, you will pay for more fuel than if you drive solo."

Does that mean carpooling is costly? No. Quite the opposite.

True, four people in a car cost more to transport than one person in a car. But four people in a car cost way less to transport than four people in four cars.

Carpooling will not only save on fuel, but also on tires, engine wear, and probably insurance.

If you can organize a few people to participate in a commuter car pool or a school or after-school activity car pool, you can save big dollars, possibly even as high as \$5000/year.

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### **15 Slow down**

You have heard that "speed kills", but it also takes a bite out of your wallet.

Why? The faster you drive, the faster your car presses against the air, creating – you guessed it – wind resistance.

Does that mean you should drive at 10 miles per hour?

No, aside from being just as dangerous to drive way below the speed of traffic as to drive way above, you really won't save any money.

Typically, a modern car drives most efficiently at 50 – 60 miles per hour (90-100 kilometers per hour). So keeping to the speed limit on major highways is good for safety, for your driving record and insurance, and also for your wallet.

## **14 Cruising for savings**

Is slowing down enough to reduce fuel costs on the highway?

Actually, speed alone is not the only factor in the amount of unnecessary fuel you burn. Speed variance is, too.

Believe it or not, you pay to burn more fuel when your speed changes frequently.

Cruise control is more than just a luxury. If you drive a reasonable amount at highway speeds, it will pay for itself easily in fuel savings over the life of the car.

## **13 Turn on the air**

Another luxury is air conditioning. It is a luxury in that it is not actually necessary, and almost nobody had it just a "few" years ago . (OK, more than a few years, now; I guess I'm showing my age.). And it is still often considered an extra when it comes time to fork out your retirement funds to pay for the new vehicle.

But it is hard to call air conditioning a luxury, when almost every new car has it.

It is also hard to call it a luxury when it can save so much fuel. While you probably still save a little money by just rolling down the windows on city streets, at highway speeds you can save big dollars by using air conditioning instead of rolling down the windows.

Why? Because the open window creates – all together now – wind resistance.

I bet you never thought a booklet on gas would talk so much about blowing wind.

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### **12 Shop independent**

You shop at Shell or Amoco or Chevron because you know and trust the brand. That's a choice you can make.

Or you can choose to shop at the less expensive independent gas station.

You might be buying the same gasoline as at the Arco up the street. Or maybe not.

They might both be family-run businesses. Or perhaps not.

And you might pay the same price for gasoline at both gas stations. But not likely. Gasoline usually sells for less at independent stations, which can save you \$100 - \$200 per year.

#### **BONUS TIP**

Shop around. At the time of the most recent update, there was one website I was aware of that monitors local gas prices:

<http://gasbuddy.com/>

## **11 Don't pay a premium**

Repeat after me: "87 octane." That's all you have to remember. The product you need to buy for your car to run properly is gasoline with an octane rating of 87.

Unless your manufacturer recommends a higher octane fuel for your vehicle. This is the case with certain high performance vehicles.

Please note: while certain high performance vehicles need higher octane fuel, buying premium fuel will NOT increase your vehicle's performance. In fact, buying the wrong fuel for your vehicle could even reduce its performance.

You might also need high octane fuel if your engine is making "knocking" or "pinging" sounds. But do yourself a favor and go to a certified technician to get it checked out first. The noises you hear might not be due to the fuel you are using; they might mean you need urgent repair work done before the whole engine breaks down.

It is estimated that up to 10% of Americans buy premium fuel for no valid reason, other than the mistaken notion that anything called "premium" must somehow be better. Don't be one of those who pays an extra 10 – 20 cents per gallon on unnecessary premium fuel.

## **10 Mix and match errands**

Go to the store. Return home.

Pick up a video. Return home.

Take your daughter to piano lessons. Return home.

Does this sound like your worst nightmare of non-stop errands eating away every last moment of free time?

Well, it's also eating up plenty of cash, too.

Why not combine all the errands? Why not go to the store and pick up that video on your way back from taking your daughter to piano lessons?

Even if she complains that all the errands are boring and why can't you stop for a few hours at the shoe store along the way. Been there, done that, took her on errands anyway.

You'll probably put several miles fewer on your vehicle each time you combine errands, saving you time, fuel and costly wear and tear on your vehicle.

## **9 The half empty tank**

This is a neat little trick. It is a trade-off between convenience and cost.

Remember how it costs more to transport four people than just one because the engine has to work harder to move the extra weight?

Imagine how much work your engine has to do to move all the gasoline in your fuel tank. Yes, you burn less fuel going the same distance near the end of your tank than you do just after filling up.

What if you filled up only part way? You would pay less in the long run, because you would no longer be paying for the fuel needed to lug itself around.

On the other hand, you would have to stop for refueling more often. If you are on a long road trip, this is actually good news for your safety, since it will force you to take much-needed break from driving every hour or two.

However, this is a very unwise strategy at night or in remote areas, where you might drive for hours without seeing a service station.

## **8 Gas cap pressure**

How much gasoline is escaping from your tank in the form of vapor? Go to a garage and find out.

An old, leaky gas cap really does not cost much to replace. The gasoline that escapes does cost a lot to replace.

## **7 Credit cards**

Most gas stations have some sort of credit card that allows you to save a small percent on your gasoline and other purchases.

That could save you up to \$100 a year.

When I was associated with CAA Ontario, a AAA affiliate, Sunoco stations would give a discount just for showing the CAA membership card.

The people who take advantage of promotions save money. Ultimately, the people who don't take advantage of promotions are the ones paying for the others to save.

Check for what discount programs might be available at gas stations near you.

## **6 Tune it up**

What happens when you take on a task inefficiently? You probably waste a lot of time and possibly materials.

When a vehicle runs inefficiently, it wastes fuel. It's time for a regular tune-up.

Unbelievable as it may sound, some people do not get their oil changed more than once a year. Some people do not get their air filters changed ... ever!

These two simple tune-up tips alone can make a big difference in your fuel costs as well as in the life of your engine.

Of course, a complete tune-up is good for your car and will help you get a longer life from such an expensive machine – and reduce the number of unexpected breakdowns you suffer down the road.

## **5 Advance deceleration**

See that stop sign ahead? Yes? Then why is your foot still on the accelerator?

Due to wind and road surface resistance, your vehicle will naturally slow down in time for the stop sign or traffic light.

If you keep your foot on the accelerator, you are consuming fuel needed only to carry your vehicle BEYOND the intersection. Since you will have to stop, all that fuel will be wasted when you hit the brakes.

Why not just pay for the gasoline, then pour it down the drain? It would be just as useful.

Anticipate stops ahead, like when the traffic light is about to turn yellow, and let your vehicle slow to a gentle stop with minimal need for using the brakes.

By the way, this will add life to your braking system, reducing your repair bills, too.

## **4 Foot power**

Suppose you left the car at home and used your feet instead. You could walk or cycle. How much do you think you would save?

Well, do the math:

- No fuel consumed
- Less wear and tear on vehicle parts
- Less depreciation on the vehicle

On the other hand, you might wear out an extra pair of shoes.

As a bonus, walking and cycling (and skateboarding, and skating, and unicycling, and ...) are also great exercise and stress-relievers.

In fact, there are only three situations where walking and cycling is not an option:

1. When Old Man Winter blows through the streets of Chicago full of rage.
2. When you live in the country and the closest general store is six miles away.
3. When you have to carry home a heavy load (and even then you can use a shopping cart for many loads).

### **3 Midweek refills**

When I was routinely called for TV interviews on the price of gasoline, those calls mostly came on Wednesday afternoon or on Thursday or Friday.

Why?

Because that's when the price of gasoline most often jumps. On the other hand, it usually dips for the early portion of the week.

Although there is very little predictability in any given week, Tuesday and perhaps Wednesday are generally the best days on which to fill up.

## **2 Tire inflation**

My second-to-top tip is to keep your tires inflated to the manufacturer's suggested tire pressure.

Which manufacturer, the tire or the car?

As long as you do not exceed the maximum pressure listed on the tire, inflate the tire to the pressure suggested by your vehicle manufacturer (usually found on the inside of the door panel).

You can reduce your fuel bill by up to 4% just by keeping your tires properly inflated. And you can cut the cost of replacement tires, by extending their life by as much as six months .... just by keeping them properly inflated.

Most importantly, it's not just the money you can save. You can save your life.

After all, what's holding you to the road? What keeps you from sliding or skidding out of control? What defies the laws of ice and snow and water and sand?

That's right. A properly inflated tire.

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### **BONUS TIP**

In warm climates, an underinflated tire can blow in the heat. A properly inflated tire should not.

Because air contracts in the cold, check your tire pressure in cold climates every week as winter sets in.

## **1 Take the other car**

This is my top tip. But what does it mean?

In this day of two (or more) vehicles per household, we get into habits. One person always takes the Chevy. The other always takes the Ford.

So what happens when there's a minivan or SUV and a compact car sitting in the driveway? If you are used to taking the minivan, chances are you will take it – even if the compact car will do just fine.

But check the fuel economy ratings for the vehicles. Chances are that one vehicle (not usually the minivan or SUV) has better fuel economy than the other.

If you don't need the space in the minivan at this very moment, take the other vehicle and save the massive amount of fuel you will probably waste.

This one tip alone can save families hundreds of dollars every year. Indeed, the wear and tear on an SUV or a minivan usually costs much more, so there you have double savings.

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### **BONUS TIP**

A great way to learn which vehicle gets better fuel economy – before you buy or when deciding which vehicle to use more often – is <http://www.fueleconomy.gov> .

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