

FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

How To Be Penny-Wise, Not Pump-Fuelish

The high price of gasoline doesn't have to bust your budget. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the American Automobile Association (AAA) offer these tips to help fuel savings at the pump:

When Gassing Up:

- ✓ Choose the right octane gas for your car. Check the owner's manual to find out what octane your engine needs. Octane ratings measure gasoline's ability to resist engine knock. The higher the octane, the higher the price: Premium (highest octane) gas sells for an average of 17 cents more per gallon than regular gas. Only about 6 percent of cars sold in the U.S. need premium gas, the AAA says. Still, premium gas accounts for 20 percent of all gas sold. Resist the urge to buy higher octane gas for "premium" performance.
- ✓ Avoid topping off your gas tank. In warm weather, fuel expansion can cause an overflow.

Before Heading Out:

- ✓ Keep your tires inflated to the proper level. Properly inflated tires provide less road-resistance and can improve fuel efficiency. Check your owner's manual for appropriate inflation levels. This information also is usually available on the jamb of the driver's-side door.
- ✓ Keep up with engine maintenance. Make sure that you change the spark plugs and filters according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- ✓ Avoid packing items on top of the car. A loaded roof rack or carrier creates wind resistance and can decrease fuel economy by 5 percent. It's better to place items inside the car or trunk.
- ✓ Lighten your load. An extra 100 pounds in the trunk reduces a typical car's fuel economy by 1 to 2 percent.

While On the Road:

- ✓ Stay within posted speed limits. Driving at high speeds, especially for long distances, uses more gasoline.
- ✓ Use cruise control; it helps maintain a constant speed and, in most cases, helps reduce fuel use.
- ✓ Avoid "jack-rabbit" starts and stops.
- ✓ Use overdrive gears when on the highway. Overdrive decreases the car's engine speed, reducing fuel consumption and engine wear.
- ✓ Use air vents to circulate the air instead of air conditioning.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint, or to get free information on any of 150 consumer topics, call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357), or use the complaint form at www.ftc.gov. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.