



Extension News Column

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Re: Pinching Pennies

I filled up my gas tank this week and saw the price per gallon was more than \$4. If you've had the same experience, you may be looking for ways to cut back on your gasoline consumption. By reducing the gasoline you consume, you can keep more money in your pocket.

The first idea is not to drive. Catch the bus, share a ride with a friend or just stay home. The less miles driven, the less gasoline you will use. Plus, if you don't go out, you won't spend money on shopping, eating out and other expenses.

Go with a smaller car. When my children were smaller, I always drove a large SUV—four kids take lots of room to transport. Now, I'm driving a much smaller car since there are only two of us at home. And if you need to run a few errands, take the cheaper car.

Use your car's cruise control. When you drive on the highway, set the cruise control to use less gasoline. However, if you are headed through the hills to Anchorage, it will keep gunning the engine to go up the hills. So don't set it until you are through the hills.

Combine your errands. Instead of running an errand or two each day, batch them into one errand day, and plan your most efficient route to save gas and time. Short trips take up time and cause lots of wear and tear on your car. Or, consider running your errands on the way to and from work. Then you won't have to head back for town on Saturday.

“Slow and steady” wins the race for both turtles and in the fuel economy. When out on the road, drive 55 miles per hour. Fuel economy drops by at least 1 percent for every one mile per hour over 55. So driving faster will definitely cut into the number of miles you get from that tank of gasoline. Some vehicles have a display that gives you miles per gallon right on the dash. If yours doesn't have this feature, experiment until you find the optimum speed to get the most mileage from your tank. Also, watch those sudden accelerations. A jackrabbit start from a stoplight or weaving in and out of traffic uses more gasoline and can be dangerous.

Reduce the extra weight in your vehicle. Extra weight means less gas mileage, so dump the extra stuff you are carrying around.

Think aerodynamics. Get rid of roof racks and storage boxes that you aren't using. These interfere with the natural aerodynamics of the vehicle and reduce the gasoline mileage.

Check your tire pressure. Properly inflated tires will extend your mileage. Check the owner's manual to see what the recommendations are for your car.

If you are using premium gasoline in your car, you might be spending money unnecessarily. Premium gas is not always better for your car than regular unleaded. If your car will run on regular, you save about 12 percent with every fill up. Again, check your owner's manual to see what is recommended for your car.

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