

Greener Driving Tips

1. Change gear early

Change gear early - around 2500rpm for a petrol-engined car and 2000rpm for a diesel - which saves revving the engine too hard, reducing emissions and fuel consumption. But do not labour the engine by selecting a higher gear too early - that wastes fuel and increases engine strain.

2. Read the road

Try to read the road, anticipating obstacles so that you can avoid heavy braking - that wastes momentum and therefore fuel - and avoid unnecessarily sharp acceleration too. Reading the road well can also prevent accidents.

3. Cut the air con

Use your car's air conditioning system sparingly - it's not often needed in the spring and autumn, and it can knock between one and three mpg off your fuel consumption, usefully reducing CO2 emissions too. Do run the system occasionally though - prolonged non-usage can eventually damage the compressor. Check that the heated rear window switch is not on unnecessarily too it's quite a consumer of power.

4. Get going quickly

Drive away as soon as possible once you have started the engine from cold - it warms up more quickly, reducing consumption, emissions and engine wear. But don't rev the car excessively when it's cold either - that's bad for engine wear (because the cold oil won't be circulating fully), as well as consumption and emissions.

5. Don't ruin the aerodynamics

Always remove roof-racks, bicycle racks and ski-boxes when they're not in use - they increase aerodynamic drag considerably, especially at speed, lifting CO2 emissions and knocking fuel consumption. Driving with the car's windows and sunroof open also increases drag, especially at speed.

6. Avoid short journeys

Avoid trips of only a few miles - fuel consumption and emissions output heighten considerably during the warm-up period, and a petrol-engined car's catalytic convertor, which cleans the exhaust of nitrogen oxides, particulates and other pollutants, is less effective too.

7. Cruise moderately

Consider your cruising speed on motorways - travelling at 65mph rather than 70mph can reduce consumption and emissions by as much as 25 percent.

8. Don't get lost

Plan your journey - going the long way round, getting lost and running into roadworks can increase your journey's emissions considerably. Buying a satellite navigation system - the add-on systems are now relatively cheap - can help here.

9. Check your tyres

Check your tyre pressures regularly. Running them under-inflated can increase fuel consumption and emissions by three percent, apart from being dangerous - under-inflated tyres can overheat at speed, risking a blow-out.

10. Don't be an idler

If you're stuck in a traffic jam, switch the engine off - apart from reducing CO2 output, and saving fuel, you'll be cutting the output of other pollutants.

11. Remove unnecessary weight

It's amazing how many people use their car as a mobile office/store/room/junk room, and end up carrying kilos of additional weight. Carrying 10 kilos worth of office accounts around will have a real effect on your fuel consumption, especially in stop/start traffic - because you're repeatedly accelerating and decelerating a dead weight - and it's the same story with the fishing gear/sports kit/hamster cage that you've been carting about for the past few months too. Remove it all, and save.

12. Don't coast in neutral

Coasting in neutral could save you money with old cars fitted with carburettors, but modern fuel injection systems cut the fuel supply off altogether as you slow to a stop, saving a surprising amount, especially in stop/start driving. And coasting in neutral, or with the clutch depressed, is potentially dangerous too, because you have no engine braking, and can't suddenly accelerate out of danger.