

Slash Your Petrol Costs

52 Ways to Save Big Dollars
on Petrol the Cheapskates Way



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This e-book is published by Cheapskates Web Marketing.
First published 2006
Revised June 2008
Cheapskates Web Marketing
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We now have ridiculously high petrol prices. And to add to our woes in this area, the powers that be are still forecasting that the fuel prices will go even higher.... eeekkkk!

The average price we are now paying for fuel is over \$1.30 a litre. That is an increase of over 30% this year already that equates to an increase of \$50 - \$80 per month for petrol.

This extra money that is being spent on petrol is coming from our household budgets. It is money that was allocated for some new clothes for the children, a family holiday, extra mortgage repayments or savings for the new car the family needs.

Cheapskates Journal has researched within Australia and the United States to find the best ideas and strategies to help you to save fuel and keep some of your hard earned cash from going to the big oil companies.

When we began, we were amazed at all the little things that we could easily do to get a little extra fuel efficiency. We found ways that with little effort gave us more petrol when we filled and saved us cents on every litre we bought.

The Cheapskates way to save money on petrol is an accumulation of all of these ideas, tips and strategies. We have implemented as many of the ideas that are practical and we are already seeing a few extra dollars saved each fill.

Start reading this book and we are sure that within the Cheapskates way to save money on petrol, you will find some ideas that you can implement within your family. Try to do as many of the Cheapskates tips as you can.

While each idea might only save you a few dollars, together they all make a noticeable difference to your petrol costs. The Cheapskates way to save money on your petrol can help you to get back some of the savings – for the important things in your life.

Happy Cheapskating,

Cath & Lea-Anne

52 Ways you can decrease your petrol costs the Cheapskates way

In this e-book we will give you some tips, guidelines and basic advice for helping you keep reduce the amount of money that you spend each week on your petrol bill.

We will cover 52 ways you can decrease your petrol costs. These include:

- Average petrol prices and when to buy
- Fuel economy in your vehicle
- Using the Internet to find cheaper petrol prices
- Where and how to buy your petrol
- Where to find the lowest petrol prices
- The importance of maintaining your vehicle
- Taking care of the tyres on your vehicle
- Fuel saving products
- The importance of EPA fuel economy ratings
- Tips on what to look for in your next car
- Winter driving tips
- Warm weather driving tips
- Commuting encouragement
- How to drive smarter
- Current state average fuel costs
- Useful links to websites

Take a good look through Slash Your Petrol Costs and implement as many ideas as you can. Each one that you choose to carry out will add to your fuel savings and that helps your savings bottom line.

Understanding the current situation - Petrol Prices Across Australia

As we write this book, the prices for petrol range between \$1.45 to \$1.60 per litre for unleaded petrol throughout the capital cities within Australia. Country areas are suffering under even higher prices.

The news reports nightly that the price of fuel is likely to go as high as \$2 per litre in the city areas, which means it will be even worse in the country areas. With war and unrest in the Middle East and leaking pipes in the US, our petrol prices are being adversely affected and while Australia does produce its own petrol, the prices are linked to the global price of barrels of oil.

There is not much that any of us can do to alter the price of petrol, so let's find some other areas we can influence.

Energy Technology and Fuel Economy

At the Cheapskates Club we did some research and were horrified to find how inefficient our cars really are at using fuel. Companies claim to increase efficiencies all the time, but some research indicated that many vehicles only use 15% of the total fuel burned efficiently. That's up to 85% that is wasted.

The research quickly uncovered evidence that we have to look at the whole car when we are looking to save on our fuel costs. For example, the pressure in our tyres affects our petrol consumption, as does how often and how well our car is serviced.

In considering your car – you need to take a holistic view of its performance. If your wheels are not properly balanced or the wheel alignment is out and it judders and pulls to one side, you are burning extra fuel and that is costing you money.

The more you understand about your car, the better fuel efficiency you can expect and that means you can save money. If you know nothing about cars, it might be worthwhile borrowing a book from the library, asking a friend to give you an overview or even attending a class.

Seriously, you can make a big difference to your fuel economy simply by understanding what you need to be doing to keep your car operating at peak performance.

You can liken it to a sporting athlete if you like, a runner, swimmer or footballer does not just focus on one area when they are preparing themselves. They consider their overall fitness; their diet and liquid intake, and their training program to build specific muscles.

In our case, we want to understand how keeping different areas of the car at peak performance can improve fuel economy.

If this information is foreign to you, you may consider taking a basic mechanics course to gain some knowledge.

The more that you understand about the way that your vehicle runs, and what it takes to properly maintain it, the more success you will have when it comes to understanding what steps to take to start saving money.

Get your car in peak performance mode



Section 1 – Get your car in peak performance mode

1. Keep your car well tuned

This is not brain surgery. Your car needs to be well tuned and running to its peak performance.

Make sure you use a good mechanic and if you have a modern car that means one with all the computers that they need to access and check out your cars computers. New cars can have 10 or more computers in them, and these need to be checked and programmed to give you the maximum efficiency in your vehicle.

Do not necessarily go back to the manufacturer or dealer – they often take your business for granted and may or may not perform all the checks they should. However, you need to find a good mechanic who will look after your car and get you maximum performance.

Make sure you check how often the vehicle is supposed to be tuned, place a sticker on the windscreen, write it in your diary and mark it on your wall or desk calendar and get it booked in for its next service when needed.

Studies on fuel consumption in vehicles have shown that poorly tuned cars can increase the amount of petrol consumed by 10 – 20%. Ouch! With petrol prices already up by 30% this year that can increase your fuel bill even further.

Get your car tuned and keep it tuned, it is going to save you money.

The reverse is also true – let your car go without proper tuning and it could cost you another 20% on your fuel costs. For most people that could add up to \$80 plus per month or \$960 per year.

Remember, there is a big difference in how much harmful green house emissions that your poorly performing car will emit compared to an efficiently running car. In summary, your hip pocket and the environment both win.

2. Change the oil in your car

Your car engine needs oil to lubricate all the moving parts. It is essential to change the oil in your car on a regular basis.

Good clean oil can significantly reduce the wear and tear and the friction on your engine. This translates to better engine performance and better fuel economy.

Make sure your oil is changed at the service times, but it is worthwhile to have the levels checked between services. If the oil is too low, your engine will be working harder than it needs to, and this will cost you money in more petrol.

Don't over fill your car with oil. Your car engine will be working off extra oil. The dipstick has a minimum and maximum level. Always check the oil level when your engine is level (i.e. car on a level piece of road or driveway).

If you are unsure how to check your oil, find a friend who knows about cars and ask them for some help. Don't waste your time asking service station attendants – most of them won't be at all helpful. They are there to collect money not provide a useful service – where did all the service stations go?

Tip: Change your oil as per your vehicle specifications.

3. The right grade of oil

Always check which grade of oil that the manufacturer of your car recommends.

There are different grades of oil and you need to make sure you have the right grade of oil required by your car. Oil grades are measured in viscosity, which determines how much the oil can resist flow. Grades of oil include:

- 0W (this is the thinnest) (W stands for winter)
- 5W to 25W
- 20 to 60 (60 is the thickest)

You can check which grade your car needs by:

- a. Checking in the owner's manual that came with your car for details on the grade of oil that is required by your car.
- b. Check on the Internet. There is heaps of information on cars on the Internet. Remember to look at the main search engines as they all offer different results. Try NineMSN, Yahoo and Google and see what you find out.
- c. Call the manufacturer and ask the question.

Do you know that using the right grade of oil will increase your vehicles performance in all types of weather? Mind you, if you are going into extreme conditions (heat, cold, dust or dirt) you make need to make allowances on your oil type and how often you change your oil. Ask your mechanic for their recommendations.

The cheapest way to buy your oil, (and save money), is to buy your oil in bulk at the supermarket or car auto mart. You can buy 4, 5 or 6 litre packs which will save you money.

Tip: Use the right grade of oil and change when needed

4. Replace the air filter in your car

Your air filter is designed to give your car engine clean air. It removes the dust and grit and grime from the air that is sucked into the engine cavity. As you can imagine, the air filter becomes clogged up with the dirt that it is filtering.

Changing your air filter regularly is essential. It is like clearing the airways in an athlete, if they are all clogged up with a cold, they can't perform as well as a top athlete perform at their peak.

You may be surprised at how much effect a clean air filter has on your mileage. Replacing a clogged air filter can improve the mileage that you get with your car by up to 10 percent.

That is a big saving over the year.

Tip: Keep your vehicle well tuned and reduce greenhouse gases by up to 5 per cent.

5. Replace the fuel filter in your car

It is just as important to change the petrol filter. The fuel passes through the petrol filter to clean out the tiny bits and pieces of grime that enter our petrol tank when we fill it up.

It is important to keep your petrol filter clean so that you allow the petrol to flow through efficiently and the engine to perform well.

If you have a dirty filter, it is a little likely you have a clogged drain, the liquid can not flow through quickly and efficiently. In your car, this places undue strain on all the other systems at work and leads to poor performance.

Tip: Have your fuel filter checked and replaced as recommended.

Cheapskates Insight: Genuine or Non Genuine Parts

Remember, there are many non genuine parts available for most makes of vehicles that can save you a lot of money while offering you the same performance.

This allows you to change the filters more often without blowing your budget.

6. Tyre maintenance

It is important to maintain your tyres. They are a valuable part of your car system. It is no use focusing on the performance of your engine, then ignoring the system that moves the car along.

Tip: Tyre maintenance is essential for good fuel economy

7. Check the Tyre pressure.

One of the most important maintenance tasks that you can perform is to check the tyre pressure of your vehicle. All too often we drive on tyres with pressures that are too low or too high. Both cause damage and excessive wear and tear on the tyres and can affect our fuel economy.

Tyre Pressure too Low

This means that you have too much rubber surface on the road. It can expose the weaker side panels of the your tyres exposing you to more punctures.

On a day-to-day basis, it will be costing you money in petrol. Instead of the efficient part of your tyres on the road driving you along, you have extra surface causing drag. This drag means the engine works harder to drive you the same amount of miles. This means more petrol is burnt to go the same distance and you are filling more often than you need to.

Get some air into your tyres, you will feel the car move more freely, it will corner better especially if you are travelling at speed and you will increase your Km's per Litre, (or as many of us will still say, miles per gallon).

There are studies on fuel efficiency that indicates that each pound that your tyres are under inflated is costing you approximately 2% in fuel economy. So if you are running your tyres at 8 pounds below where they should be, and this is not uncommon, you are costing yourself at fuel economy of up to 16%.

Check your Tyre Pressure

The best way to check your tyre pressure is at the service station. When you top up with fuel, simply move the car to the tyre-checking centre and see how much pressure is in your tyres. There should be a sticker on the inside panel of your drivers door with information on your recommended tyre pressure. If not, contact your local Tyre centre or the manufacturer.

Alternatively, purchase a tyre pressure gauge. The tyre gauge might cost you about \$10-20 from a car mart, but you can check your tyres at home when most convenient to you.

Tip: Check tyre pressure monthly to maximise fuel efficiency

8. Rotate your tires

While this does not directly affect your mileage unless your tyres have already been damaged and are now scrubbed and pulling to one side, it is another great way to save money.

Front tyres usually wear out faster as they take the pressure during breaking. In addition, these days' smaller cars are front wheel drive, so they are under pressure during the car acceleration.

Rotating your tyres will give you more life from your tyres and this indirectly will help you to increase your fuel economy.

Tip: Rotate your tyres and save money

9. Check your wheel alignment

Is your car pulling to one side of the road?

This is a good sign that your car is out of alignment and each mile that you do will be costing you extra money in tyres and petrol to say nothing of making driving more dangerous.

In short, being out of alignment means the degree the wheel/s are pointing is not 100% towards the front of the car. It is slightly off to one side. This can be caused through hitting speed humps to fast or a bad pothole in the road. You may have clipped the gutter while turning or it might be a while since you had

your wheel alignment done and you travel rough roads. No matter the reason, you need to get it fixed.

The tyre pointing in slightly the wrong direction will be dragging – to imagine, think of one wheel pointing in the wrong direction, how hard would it be for the car to drive forward. The tyres would be scrubbed and the engine revving much harder to push the car. Though exaggerated, this is exactly what is happening.

Your wheel alignment will help increase your fuel economy and save you buying new tyres sooner than you need to.

Tip: Check your wheel alignment it will save you money

10. Keep your car clean

While a clean car always looks nicer, it actually helps to reduce air drag and this helps your fuel economy.

You can further reduce your wind drag by having a good polish on the car. As in the pool, the more you reduce drag the faster you and your car will go using less fuel to get there.

Tip: Clean your car and save petrol.

11. Service your vehicle between seasons

Remember to have your vehicle serviced ready for summer and winter. Both offer extreme temperatures and depending where you live, both can affect the performance of your vehicle.

In many cases, we head away for holidays in the middle of summer for Christmas holidays or the middle of winter for a snow holiday. Both the extremes in temperature affect our vehicles ability to perform. Common sense really, I am affected in both climates so it makes sense my car is.

You may have a different set of conditions that you will be driving at and need to check your filters, have the car tuned and change the pressure of your tyres before and during the trip. Many of the auto clubs have great information on how to drive effectively in the conditions you are entering, take a look on the net and get some good information to help you to increase your fuel economy.

Tip: Service your car often to maximise fuel efficiency

12. Where possible, drive on well made roads

Where you can, choose to drive on well paved roads – a smooth road will give you better fuel efficiency than driving on a rocky or rough road.

Driving on a gravel or dirt road can increase your fuel consumption by as much as 30%. You tend to have more stops or slows and the surface the wheels are moving on has more drag so we use more petrol to go less distance.

Tip: Drive on quality roads to maximise your fuel efficiency

13. Alternative fuel types

There are a number of options available to for most cars.

LPG

Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) was very popular as a result of the last spike in fuel costs. Many vehicles and most taxi's run LPG as it is often cheaper than petrol.

There is a high up front cost to convert your car to LPG. You will need to consider how long you are going to keep the vehicle and how much miles you are going to do each year to determine whether it is a good move for you and your family.

Cheapskate Insight

Some vehicles have nasty problems as a result of driving on LPG, others do not suffer these problems. Make sure you use a reputable installation company and check that your vehicle is one that is recommended.

I was looking to buy a Mitsubishi Pajero a few years ago and wanted to convert it to gas. I made some enquires and though the dealership said it was fine, I checked and found that in many cases after about 5 years they needed a major overhaul in the engine which cost over \$1,000 in parts and labor.

Add the cost of the initial installation and this made this a very expensive option. I looked around and found another type of vehicle which seemed better suited to the LPG usage and bought that vehicle. In fact, rather than saving money, I would have cost myself a lot more money.

Government Grant

The government has just released news of a grant for \$2,000 towards the conversion of your vehicle to LPG. Do your figures carefully before you make the plunge.

The suppliers and fitters of LPG are charging \$3,000 plus and now with this grant are very likely to put their prices even higher for the installation of the units. The figures released are that you can save \$20 per week on fuel costs. Some quick math shows that in the first year, you will still be behind. In fact, it will take all of the first year to make your money back.

It is in the second and third years that you can start to save some money. All this depends on the prices staying the same for LPG, your car getting reasonable economy on LPG and obviously, you keeping the same car.

If you are a person for example that leases your vehicles or changes over every 3 years, you would have to look carefully at the figures as you may or may not come out ahead. You also have to consider whether the LPG will add to or decrease the value of your vehicle.

Look carefully before you make the decision. Consider:

- a) Initial costs
- b) How much money you will save weekly / yearly
- c) How long you keep your vehicles
- d) How it will affect the resale value of your vehicle
- e) Whether you can spare the space in your boot. (Either it is fitted into your boot or where your spare tyre is now – in which case your spare tyre has to fit in your boot..... in most cases you will lose some space).
- f) Increased costs of servicing your vehicle

Case Study:

I purchased a fuel hungry 4WD some 4 years ago. I was advised that converting to gas would provide significant savings. Always concerned about safety with such a volatile product, I did some research and was advised that a company in Lilydale, Victoria was the best. Some \$3,200 later I had LPG fitted.

I had not realised that my services costs would now increase as I was tied to using this company, (or another LPG organisation to service my car). On average it cost me \$200-300 more each service.

Further, at this time LPG increased in costs, so for the 3 years I had the vehicle I saved money, but I am not convinced that it was enough to justify my initial outlay.

The really annoying part was that after two and half years and faithfully having it serviced every time at the supplier, we detected a leak in gas. Immediately I took it back to Lilydale and asked for attention. I was concerned for my and all other party's safety as someone smoking outside could cause an explosion.

They were more than carefree about this issue and some 3 hours later I got my vehicle back with no explanation as to the leak even though I asked.

Sadly, I was back within the month with the problem reoccurring. This continued for sometime with healthy bills being issued for each visit. In the end after spending some \$1,200 in additional costs and the problems still reoccurring I traded in the vehicle.

I am not saying this happens in every case, I am simply saying that through all the hype, do your research. There are hundreds of cars using LPG and many swear by it. I just want to give a balance, that it is not all good news – check your additional costs and make an informed decision.

Ethanol Fuel

A newer player in the market, ethanol received a lot of bad press a couple of years ago. As an alternative fuel, studies have shown that it is safe and looks to be a good long term option for saving money on fuel costs, and providing a renewable resource for Australians to use in their cars.

Cheapskates Insight:

I have personally been using the ethanol-based fuel as I like the cost savings and see that it is a great way to decrease some of our dependency on the Arab nations.

One of the vehicles that I drive requires me to use the premium grade fuel. This high-grade petrol has an octane rating of 98. Our standard unleaded fuel has an octane rating of 88.

From my knowledge of how the octane affects the vehicle, (I asked my dad), the car is tuned to ignite the fuel at a certain time to generate maximum efficiency. As the piston comes up, just before it reaches the top, you want the petrol to burn or explode so that the piston finishes coming up and is propelled back down from the force of the ignition.

With a car tuned to premium, it is tuned to burn at exactly the optimum time. If you add standard grade unleaded, the time can be affected and therefore the performance of the vehicle affected.

I was interested to learn, again from my father, that the octane rating of the plus petrol is octane rating of 95. In other words, it is quite close to the octane rating of the premium and certainly better than the standard unleaded.

I would definitely consider whether it might make sense for you to consider using the plus fuel. It is a better quality, higher octane, than standard unleaded and much cheaper than the premium. Plus, I enjoy the green aspect of the fuel. Yes it is a small step, but as everyone says, every little bit helps.

Tip: Consider your fuel options; you can save money on your fuel costs.

Wise Habits For Car Owners



Section 2 – Wise Habits for Car Owners

14. Hunt down the best fuel prices

While most of the service stations obviously follow each other on the prices, you can get variances in local prices.

Sometimes one service station will not put up its prices till later in the day. Often independents seem to capitalise on the run they get when the majors increase their prices.

Other times, there will be a fuel station in the area that seems to consistently be a few cents cheaper. It all adds up to dollars when you are filling a large tank and that adds up to hundreds of dollars through the year.

Tip: Look for the best fuel prices in your area

15. Discount Prices for Fuel

Right now Coles / Shell and Woolworths / Caltex are trying to take a dominant position in the petrol market. They offer 4 cents per litre discount if you spend \$30 or more in their stores.

This can be a good way to get some savings from the price of fuel; however, you need to do your homework.

For example, Mobil offers you a discount if you spend \$5 in their shops. However anything you buy in a convenience store is going to have the prices significantly higher than you would pay at the grocery store. A bottle of soft drink may cost as much as 3 times what you can pay in a cheap supermarket.

The savings that you receive for your fuel are eroded by the increased costs of shopping at their store – so overall it can be a bad deal.

One of the popular current affairs shows has already shown that the grocery prices at the Coles and Woolworths stores that are near the discount petrol stations have increased to offset the cost of the 4 cent discount.

This affects you in two ways – one you are already paying for the 4 cents if you shop at these stores, so if you are shopping there but not taking advantage of the discount, you are paying extra. You might be best to compare other supermarkets.

Secondly, if you are shopping there to get the discount for your fuel, you are already paying for the discount in increased costs – check out the prices at other supermarkets.

Tip: Use fuel vouchers to save money

16. Get the best deal for each family vehicle

Always check the prices are the local independent service stations. Take each of your family vehicles to the service station that gives you the best value.

You may find that one car should be filled with a voucher to save the 4 cents, but the other car, using diesel, gets better overall savings by you buying the fuel from an independent.

Remember, you have to spend more than \$30 to get a savings voucher so do your homework, it can save you as much as \$10 per week to do your research and shop at the best value combination for your family needs.

Cheapskates Insight:

I have one vehicle that uses Diesel and it is often cheaper to go to the local independent to buy the diesel and not worry about the voucher. I shop at Aldi and local fruit vendors and overall my total costs are less than simply using Coles or Woolworths.

My other family car uses the premium fuel. In this case, I definitely get better value by choosing to buy the plus petrol that I can buy from the Fuel Line chain. It saves me about \$5 per fill on the cost of premium fuel and gives me a good performance. Again, I am not tied to having to shop at Coles or Woolworths.

This is my personal situation, and yours is likely to be different, my point is that we need to consider the total costs of fuel with our grocers – not just some clever, (maybe deceptive), voucher system used as a marketing tool to gain more business.

Tip: Choose the best fuel for each vehicle

17. Do more with less

It is important to minimize the running around that you do. (I hear mums around the country go yes, we'd love too). Reality is that all the running here and then there only uses a small amount of fuel each time but adds up to a much higher fuel bill for you.

With a bit of organisation, you can often arrange your tasks so that you can plan a day where you go from task to task in a nice big circle. This not only saves you time, (a massive bonus), it saves you a lot of petrol.

You might consider changing shops so that you can minimize the running around – change your hairdresser to someone local or find a local deli so that it fits in with your plans better.

At the time of writing this book it is the middle of winter. I can save as much as 50% on my fuel costs by multi tasking, organizing my trips and not using my car for many short trips. In the cold weather, we have to heat up the engine before it operates at maximum efficiency. If I do this many times throughout the week, I use a lot of fuel for no good reason.

Give this a try, you will be surprised to see you still have quarter of the tank full when you next come to fill, saving you as much as \$10 to \$15 per week.

Tip: Do more with less

18. Start your engine when you are ready to go

Some people turn on the car and have it running for a few minutes before they take off. Your husband may turn on the car while you are clipping the children in, or you have the car running while you chat with a neighbor.

All this time the car is running is using up your precious petrol. True in winter you want to warm up the engine, especially in a diesel, but I see many people with the car running while they chat to a friend or colleague.

Turn your engine off, it will cost you less in fuel to start the car again than it is costing you to have it run for 5 minutes

Tip: Start your engine when you are ready to go

19. Use your resources to get the best petrol deal.

Many talk back radio stations have taken to broadcasting the cheapest petrol deals after the news. It is a great chance for you to follow and listen for trends where there is cheap fuel.

Using the Internet to find the lowest gas prices is a great way to have all the information that you need before getting into your car to fuel up.

Cheapskates Insight

I often hear a fuel station about 15 minutes from my home. Now I am not going to drive all the way there to get my fuel – it would cost me more in fuel and take up my valuable time. False economy to say the least.

However, I now know that they offer deals and recently on 3 occasions when I was heading in that general direction, I have planned my trips to fill up at that service station and saved a few extra cents on each litre. The savings have added up to over \$20 now and that is much better in my pocket than a fuel company.

There are Internet sites that list the cheapest price petrol in each state. While I find this useful, I am not going to drive 45 minutes to the other side of town to fill up and save 2 cents.

That being said, with fuel prices such a hot topic, keep your eyes open for information on new internet sites showcasing the cheapest fuel in various areas – it will come.

Tip: Use resources to get the best petrol deal

20. Choose your day to buy your fuel

For no other reason than they can, Petrol companies choose to move the price of petrol up and down each week.

This means that you need to learn the cycle in your local area and buy fuel on the days when it is the cheapest. Right now in Melbourne, that means a Monday or Tuesday – though around holidays they will simply just put up the prices so they can make more money from us all.

Buying right now on the cheaper days is a difference of 10 cents per litre – which certainly adds up to a big difference each week and saves you hundreds of dollars throughout the year.

Tip: Buy your fuel on the cheapest day

21. Fuel Logs

Fuel logs give the chance to really check the savings you are getting on your petrol saving program. It is important to test and measure rather than simply having a gut feeling about the performance of your car.

If you are going to make the switch from Unleaded Petrol to Premium Petrol because it is reported to give you a better overall performance and fuel economy, a log book is essential.

There is no way that you can check the vehicles performance without doing some measurements of the results you achieve.

Cheapskates Insight:

Faithfully filling in your fuel log gives you a chance to see trends in fuel costs and which service stations give you the best deals.

Likewise if you are comparing standard, plus or premium fuels for value for money, you should also keep some notes so that you can work it out. Gut feeling in this instance is not a true indicator and can often be very misleading – this is money that you could mistakenly be spending when you could be saving it.

Tip: Keep accurate fuel logs

Smart Driving Habits



Section 3 – Smart Driving Habits

22. Avoid the peaks

Where ever possible try to drive at times outside of peak hour. While this is common sense and will save you bucket loads of frustration, now with fuel prices so high, it might be time to consider how you could do this.

Maybe you can approach your manager with a serious proposal to start work earlier or finish later. Alternatively suggest that you work longer for 3 days and finish earlier on the other 2 days.

Here is the thing, the petrol prices are costing you a lot more money, why not take the time to be creative and look at ways you can help your employer while helping yourself to save some money.

Tip: Avoid driving in peak hour

23. Car Pool

Yes an old idea, but a good one. Take a look around you next time you are on one of the major freeways at how many vehicles have only 1 driver in them.

Driving your car with 1 or 2 extra passengers and then swapping the following day makes sense. You could look to halve your petrol costs simply by sharing.

Now be smart about this, sometimes people are going to want to go somewhere after work or have some work commitments that will mean that they can't take you to work or home with them.

This being the case, plan for this to happen. Drive day about rather than weekly so that you don't end up having an imbalance on who is driving more. Discuss and agree up front that it is likely that one day per week, it is not going to be convenient. It could be an activity, a sick child or some other reason that stops the car-pooling for a day or two. Resume after this.

Even if you can car pool for 2 days per week you will save your petrol and it will add up to a few hundred dollars each year. BTW – agree up front that in your car you choose the music, and likewise they choose the radio / music in their car.

Likewise, check re smoking. Nothing worse than riding with a smoker if you are a non-smoker. Asking them not to smoke in peak hour traffic if they want too is just asking for tension. Avoid at all costs.

Use your common sense and find good neutral topics to converse about – remember the old adage never discuss politics, religion, money or marriage.

Tip: Car pool with friends or colleagues and save money

24. Drive your car efficiently

Again this is common sense, but you might be surprised at how many people, especially younger drivers, who drive their cars in the wrong gear. They rev the car instead of changing into a higher gear.

If you have an automatic car, it will control all this for you, though if you don't plant your foot when taking off from the lights, you will often find the car will automatically go to change gears sooner.

You get better mileage when your car revs are lower than when they are higher. In English, driving in a higher gear saves you money; so whether you drive an automatic or a manual, keep the car in the best gear for your driving speed and conditions. Try to keep the revs between 2,000 -2,500 for the best fuel economy.

Tip: Drive your car smoothly and efficiently and save money

25. Drive at sensible speeds

Taking off from the lights can burn up a lot of precious petrol – especially if you plant your foot. You are going to burn petrol at a much faster rate than if you take at a gentle pace. Take off smoothly, you'll get to your destination in the same amount of time and you'll use less petrol.

Some cars have gauges that register how efficiently you are driving so you can check if you are driving efficiently. Again, use some initiative here – lift your fuel foot up a little, in many cases you will find you are moving forward without pumping so much fuel through the car.

Tip: Drive at a sensible speed to maximise your kilometres per litre

26. Drive smoothly - avoid unnecessary acceleration

You may at some stage have had the misfortune of driving behind an erratic driver. They stop, start, stop, start, often breaking too hard for a corner or too soon for lights then accelerating again before the next corner.

Driving in this fashion chews up your petrol. You are likely to use between 15 - 25% more fuel for the same journey as someone who drives smoothly and efficiently.

To add to the cost even further, this style of driving wears out your tyres and brakes faster.

The total cost of your erratic driving could easily be an additional \$2-300 a year by the time you tally all the additional costs. Money you can't afford to waste.

Look ahead in the traffic and anticipate what is going to happen. Do you need to start to slow down as the traffic lights are changing colour? Can you lift your foot a little as you go up the hill to save fuel and stop accelerating as you rise over as your car will have the momentum already?

Drive a sensible distance from the car in front so that you can avoid harsh rapid stops and starts. You will get to your destination in the same time though you will have saved money and been a safer driver.

Always keep to the speed limit and be a cautious and safe driver. The point is that by concentrating on driving you can easily add \$200-300 to your savings each year just by driving smarter.

Tip: Smooth your driving techniques to maximise your petrol efficiency

27. Minimise fuel wasted in idling

One of the ways that the new hybrid cars save energy usage is by decreasing car idling time. On the Toyota for example, I have been told that when you are stopped at lights or in an idling situation, the car literally turns off.

As it is running on electricity this is easy to start and stop, however it is a good point for us to consider when driving petrol fuelled cars. When stuck in bad traffic jams, waiting for people to duck into a shop or the house for something, or even pulling over to take a mobile phone call we can burn a lot of fuel just sitting with the car idling. Turn off your engine.

With new cars, the amount of fuel required to start is less than you will burn up with the car idling for more than 45 seconds.

Now don't do this at every traffic light you come too – that would be silly and dangerous, but using some common sense, you will find times when the car is running – simply turn it off and enjoy the savings.

Tip: Don't idle unnecessarily

28. Don't warm up the car in the morning

In the old days we had to warm up the engine before driving our cars. New cars however are designed for today's hectic lifestyle so they are made for us to get in and get going.

Even on cold mornings, idling your car for more than 30 seconds is simply wasting your petrol. Try to park under some form of cover to reduce ice or your car fogging up and maybe consider wearing gloves rather than warming up the car for 10 minutes before you drive it.

Tip: No need to warm up your engine

29. Use your neutral gear

We all spend way too much time sitting at traffic lights. Why not consider placing the car in neutral while sitting at the lights. It saves engine revs, which save you petrol and as a bonus, you will reduce the wear and tear on your car.

If you drive an automatic, it is easy to pull the gear to neutral and allow the car to sit while the lights change or you are waiting for the traffic to clear at an intersection.

Likewise if you drive a manual, don't hold the car in gear with your clutch. You are needlessly revving the car and placing strain on the engine. Place the car into neutral and wait until the light changes or traffic clears.

Though it only saves you a few cents for each stop, when you consider how many times we stop and start on any drive, you will agree, it can quickly add up to many, many litres of fuel we needlessly burn.

This idea can save you possibly \$50-150 per year. Definitely worth implementing whenever practical!

Tip: Slip into neutral wherever possible

30. Speed kills your fuel economy

It is a well-known fact that the slower you are travelling the less fuel that you are using. So by keeping to the speed limits and taking off slowly from the lights you will save a lot of petrol money over the course of the year.

Fact: You will save 25% on your petrol costs by travelling at 90km/hr rather than 110km/hr. On a long trip or for a person that is travelling daily on freeways this difference in speed could save you hundreds of dollars – plus you will never get a speeding ticket!

Tip: Speed will kill your fuel efficiency

31. Take the roof racks off

When your car was designed by the manufacturer, they sought to make it as fuel efficient as possible so they would get better fuel ratings on the vehicle.

After market products added to the vehicle such as roof racks, spoilers, spotlights etc, all decrease the aerodynamics of the car. This increases the wind drag and means that we use more on petrol to get the same distance. Ouch – more money!

In some cases these additions can add over 20% to the fuel costs of your vehicle. Consider removing your roof racks when not being used. Most brands are quick and simple to fit these days and this can save you a packet in wasted fuel.

Another less known fact is that open windows significantly reduce your aerodynamics and increase your fuel consumption. Consider using the car fan and vents to get fresh air – especially when driving at higher speeds.

You are better to use your air conditioner rather than having your window open when travelling at 80 km and over, as it is better for fuel consumption than an open window.

Tip: Minimise wind drag and maximise fuel economy

32. Use air conditioning only when needed

Your air conditioner needs power from the engine and generally will increase your fuel bill by about 10 per cent while operational.

On hot days you simply can't do without it, but try to use it only on economy setting if possible and always park your car in the shade to reduce the heat when you return to the car. This way you can use your air conditioner and fan less often.

Tip: Only use air conditioning when you really need to

33. Keep your foot off the brake

Some people have the bad habit of driving with one foot on the brake and one on the accelerator. Good driving practice is to use the right foot on the accelerator and the brake. This prevents you from driving with your foot slightly on the brake and the other one on the accelerator.

These days with more and more people driving automatics, it is becoming commonplace for them to drive with the left foot on the brake. Unfortunately often people leave their foot resting gently on the brake. This causes a slight drag on the car causing a significant reduction in fuel economy.

Try wherever possible to drive far enough back from the car in front to be able to gently brake and reduce the overall cost of burning unnecessary fuel from the stop start motion.

Tip: Keep your left foot on the floor. Don't let it sit on the brake.

34. Take unnecessary weight out of the car

While it is nice to carry everything you might possibly need in your boot, it is costing you an extra 2% in fuel costs for every 50 kg you carry.

Lift your golf clubs out of the car, remove the kid's sports stuff, take out your heavy toolbox etc. This includes the stuff in the boot and the back seat. You can really save quite a bit of money by only carrying what you really need in your car. (Maybe this is the incentive we need to go on a diet! Perhaps it could be the next Jenny Craig advertisement – Lose weight and save petrol!)

Tip: Give your car a weight loss program – lighten up and save

35. Use your Cruise control

On long trips, straight roads and highways and while driving on freeways try to use your cruise control wherever possible. This will give you a consistent steady driving speed and help to increase your fuel efficiency.

Please note: if you are on a particularly hilly piece of road, you can save fuel by clicking your cruise off and reverting to you controlling the acceleration. This will allow you to back off the petrol slightly while going up the hills. Give it a try; you can often lift your foot a little while maintaining the same speed. This will save you a lot of petrol.

Likewise, by driving up steeper hills at a slightly decreased speed – say 5-20 km/hour you can save as much as 20% of your cost for that section of the road. This makes a big difference to your overall fuel bill if you drive in hilly areas often.

Tip: Cruise control makes driving easier and saves petrol

36. Use your overdrive gear

If your car is fitted with an overdrive gear make sure you are using it, especially on longer highway driving.

Your overdrive gear essentially switches you to a higher gearing ratio. Really all you need to know is that it will save you petrol.

Most modern cars have an overdrive that will engage automatically so you need not worry about it, but some older cars offer you the choice.

Tip: Slip into Overdrive. You'll decrease your petrol costs.

37. Use petrol saving products

There are a number of fuel saving devices and additives you can use to save fuel.

These after market items can be in the form of things that you fit to your car or products that you add to your fuel tank while filling your car.

There are many and varied reports and results for each product so you need to do your research on these products. A great place to start is to use the Internet and do some searches.

In most cases, you will need to keep a logbook to track whether the products or equipment actually do improve your fuel economy. I would suggest talking to people who have used this product before investing money.

Also, if you have a new car, ensure that it will not void your warranty by fitting or adding these products.

Some different types of product are:

- Air Bleed Devices
- Vapor Bleed Devices
- Liquid Injection
- Ignition Devices
- Fuel Line Devices

It is essential that you do your homework to see if these devices or additives will actually increase your fuel efficiency. In some cases they are hundreds of dollars. If they only offer you a saving of a few cents, it is going to be a long time before you recoup the initial cost outlay – making this false economy.

Tip: Use petrol saving products

38. Learn to drive efficiently

Nothing is going to beat the fuel saving you can achieve when you drive in a fuel efficient manner. If you are unsure how to drive to save petrol talk to friends or consult driving experts who can help you to learn to drive better.

Reality is that you may have picked up bad driving habits or may drive in a jerky fashion. All this costs you money. Investing a hundred dollars in a course to learn to drive smoothly or efficiently may save you hundreds of dollar over the course of the year.

First step I would take is to become conscious of how you drive. Look at your braking habits and make a conscious effort to change your bad behavior. Keep a mental note of how much petrol it saves you over the next few weeks – you will be pleasantly surprised.

Tip: Drive well and enjoy saving on your fuel costs

Smart Car Purchases



Section 4 – Smart Car Purchases

39. Buy a hybrid vehicle

If you are currently driving a large 6-cylinder car or have thought of upgrading, it would be worth considering buying a hybrid vehicle to save on the cost of petrol.

There are a number of manufacturers and options available. You really need to do some solid research on the Internet and go and talk to some car dealers.

My understanding of the cars is that while they offer good fuel economy because they are using the electric car component while you commute around town, there are significantly more expensive than a standard petrol-driven car.

This being the case, you need to be prepared to make a large commitment up front and repeat the benefits by retaining the car for a lengthy period of time.

That being said, they have now been out for a number of years and with sales figures increasing, they are coming down in price.

When doing your sums, ensure that you take into account the costs of service and upkeep, as well as upfront costs and resale value of the cars.

Tip: Make your next car a hybrid vehicle

40. Buy a smaller car

Buying a smaller car, especially if the family has left home or you do most driving by yourself can be the best way to drop your fuel costs. No point driving a thirsty Commodore or Falcon when you could be driving a fuel efficient 4 cylinder.

There is such a large range to choose from now. Some 4 cylinders such as the Mazda 6, Honda Civic, Camry or Astra are still quite big cars while offering the efficiency of a 4 cylinder.

Remember, if you specifically need a large car for a holiday, you could hire one and still save money the rest of the year by driving a smaller car

Tip: Consider downsizing to a smaller car

41. Two wheel drive

Unless you need a 4WD vehicle consider buying a two-wheel drive. The 4WD are not only larger; they require more fuel to power all 4 wheels. In addition they will cost you more on tyres and services.

This comes down to personal choice. Many mums today own them as they are safer and roomier for their children. If you need to have a 4WD shop around, as there is a massive variation in how economical these vehicles are.

Tip: Two wheel drives save you more than four wheel drives

42. Buy a diesel car

If you tow a boat, caravan or trailer or carry heavy equipment you should defiantly consider buying a diesel.

The diesel engine will give you much better fuel economy while under load. With the increasing leisure activity – especially within the gray market / caravan brigade, this is a viable option as it will significantly reduce fuel costs.

Case Study

My parents tow a caravan to north Queensland on a yearly basis. They have had numerous petrol, gas and diesel vehicles over the years but nothing beats the diesel they have now for fuel economy.

While I don't like to promote the car as we had numerous issues with it mechanically and the dealer was less than helpful, the car itself has been wonderful for fuel saving when towing the van.

Where we used to almost double the fuel bills when towing, now it goes from 13.2 L/100 Km to 13.8 L/100 Km. With fuel costs so high – this equates to a saving of many hundreds of dollars on each trip.

Tip: Diesel cars are cheaper if you tow caravans, boats or horse trailers

43. Check the EPA Fuel Economy Rating

Before you purchase a new car, check out the EPA fuel economy rating. These are produced and released for all new cars and can really help you make an informed decision.

This information is supplied by the Commonwealth of Australia 2006

To give an indication of potential savings, a difference in fuel consumption of 1 L/100km will cost - or save - the average motorist about \$150 a year. This is assuming the motorist travels 15,000 kilometres during the year and petrol costs \$1 a litre.

The following table gives an indicative guide to fuel costs for cars of different fuel consumption values, based on 15,000 kilometres travelled annually and with fuel priced at \$1 per litre:

Fuel consumption	Annual fuel cost
6 L/100km	\$900
8 L/100km	\$1200
10 L/100km	\$1500
12 L/100km	\$1800

When you multiply these costs over a number of years you can see that the differences really start to add up.

You will also help the environment by reducing the volume of greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere.

Tip: EPA ratings tell you if your car is petrol hungry or an economic choice

Smart Fuel Buying



Section 5 – Smart Fuel Buying

Tips for when you Buy your Petrol

44. Times to Purchase petrol

It is best to purchase your petrol in the cooler temperatures, so buying your fuel first thing in the morning or last thing at night – especially in the heat of summer can mean that you get more fuel for each dollar spent.

Amazing isn't it. Petrol becomes denser in colder temperatures and as the petrol pumps are set to measure the volume of the fuel that you pump and not the density, you actually get more fuel in cooler temperatures.

Tip: Buy fuel in cooler temperatures

45. Always buy your petrol from busy service stations

Buying your fuel from a busy service station will give you better cleaner petrol.

Petrol is stored in large underground tanks. Service stations that are not busy may have their fuel sitting in the tanks for long periods of time and this can lead to contamination.

When you buy contaminated fuel, you are not getting what you pay for – good clean fuel that will give your car the best performance. Not only does it reduce your cars performance, it will clog your petrol filter and cost you to have your car serviced more frequently.

Find a service station that has a good regular flow of petrol with this.

Tip: Buy your fuel from busy service stations

46. Turn the nozzle

The petrol you are issued is calculated on the total amount through the bowser, whereas you receive your petrol from the end of the pump hose and nozzle.

A quick and simple way to get a little more each time you fill is to turn the nozzle of the petrol pump 180 degrees as you finish. You will find between one eighth and a quarter of a cup of extra fuel is issued.

While this is only a small amount, like most things in life, the little things sure add up over time.

Tip: Turn your nozzle and get up to another cup extra petrol every four fills

47. Drain the hose

As mentioned in the point above, you pay for the fuel as it leaves the bowser – some of the hoses are long and that fuel sits there – technically the person before you will have left their paid for fuel in the hose so it all works out, but I have seen some people with the hoses extended across their vehicles – so they get the extra fuel you have paid for.

It is a hassle – but can add up to extra petrol for your car – keep it in mind when choosing fuel stations and pumps that you use.

There are several studies that indicate that you can gain a good half cup of petrol by doing this.

Tip: Drain your petrol hose and gain up to an extra half a cup in petrol

48. Avoid topping off

When you fill your tank, the petrol will stop when the car registers that the fuel tank is near full. Many times we try to put little bits of fuel in to get it up to an even dollar amount.

To do this we squeeze the pump in a number of short burst – on / off /on /off. We can actually rip ourselves off during this on / off action because although the pump is measuring, we may not be getting exactly the amount of fuel we would get during a normal flow of fuel.

Once the pump clicks off a second time, call it quits and pay the amount on the gauge – if you are using a credit card, which most people seem to these days, it doesn't matter if it is an uneven amount.

Tip: Stop the top off and save

49. Round down effect

If you are paying with cash, you can win a few cents each fill by using the round down effect. This is because for any amount between 1 and 3 cents, they are required to round down to zero cents.

This means if your fuel bill was \$36.82 and you were paying with cash, you would be charged \$36.80. While this is only a saving of 2 cents, it does all add up.

The reverse happens when you fill to \$36.84 – you would pay \$36.85.

If you pay with a credit card this does not apply – instead spend your time getting a lower interest rate on your credit card to save money.

Tip: Use your round down effect if paying in cash

50. Don't let your petrol get to empty

When your car begins to starve for fuel, it will not be running very efficiently at all. This will cost you more in fuel.

Remember, the petrol will swish about as we go around corners and up over hills, so keep enough fuel in the tank to allow the engine to always perform at peak efficiency.

Tip: Top up your fuel tank – don't let it get to empty

51. Don't buy from a station that is being filled

When the big tankers fill up the petrol tanks they pump the fuel in at a rapid rate. This of course stirs up all the fuel in the tank. Any contamination that had settled on the bottom of the tank is likely to be stirred up.

Try to avoid buying your fuel either while the tanker is filling or just filled. Obviously you won't know if the tanker has just left, but if you use the same service station on a regular basis, you can begin to learn their fill times and know when to avoid filling there. Most contaminants will settle quite quickly, (especially larger pieces), but again it is worth noting that anytime you buy contaminated fuel you reduce your running efficiency and increase your car servicing requirements.

Tip: Don't fill at a services station that is being filled

52. Tighten your petrol cap

Sounds like common sense, but especially on older cars, make sure you turn the petrol cap all the way around so that it forms a tight seal. This will reduce any loss of petrol through evaporation.

Tip: Make sure your petrol tank is tight and sealing well.

Links to useful information



Section 6 Links for useful information

These websites are a great place for you to find more information about how to save money at the gas pump:

Alternative Fuels

http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/transport/alternative_fuel.html

Fuel consumption label

<http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/fuellabel/label.html>

Public Transport Users Association Inc.

<http://www.ptua.org.au/myths/efficient.shtml>

Evaluation of 26 Australian TravelSmart Projects in the ACT, South Australia, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia 2001-2005

www.travelsmart.gov.au/publications/evaluation-2005.html

Transport Comets Final Report

www.greenhouse.gov.au/tdm/publications/transport-comets.html

Using the Concept of Effective Speed as a Stimulus for Travel Behaviour Change and Policy Development

www.greenhouse.gov.au/tdm/publications/effectivespeeds-concept.html

Bikeability Toolkit

www.travelsmart.gov.au/bikeability

Walking School Bus - a Guide for Parents and Teachers

www.travelsmart.gov.au/schools/schools2.html

TravelSmart Snapshots - new TravelSmart brochure

www.greenhouse.gov.au/tdm/publications/travelsmart-snapshots.html

RAILCORP NSW/AGO/UITP Marketing Mass Transit: The Forgotten Sector - proceedings of the Forum and Workshop, Sydney, 8 April 2005

www.travelsmart.gov.au/resources/uitpaprill05

2002 Household Travel Survey Summary Report

NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources

www.planning.nsw.gov.au/tpdc/pdfs/htsreport_2004.pdf

Effective Speeds: Car Costs are Slowing Us Down

www.greenhouse.gov.au/tdm/publications/effectivespeeds.html

Car sharing: An Overview document available for downloading as pdf files. This report prepared for the Australian Government describes the concept of car sharing and examines the preconditions required to establish and run a car sharing organisation (CSO).

www.greenhouse.gov.au/tdm/publications/carsharing.html

TravelSmart South Australia

www.transport.sa.gov.au/environment/travelsmartsa/publications.asp

TravelSmart Victoria

www.travelsmart.vic.gov.au - research for Victorian TravelSmart programs

TravelSmart WA

www.dpi.wa.gov.au/travelsmart/maps.html - maps, guides and brochures

Road Tests and Reviews

<http://carsguide.news.com.au/roadtests/make/>

Motormouth

<http://www.motormouth.com.au>

Fuelwatch

<http://www.fuelwatch.wa.gov.au/>

Conclusion

We have outlined 45 practical ways that you can increase your fuel efficiency and save money on petrol. We encourage you to implement as many of the ideas as you can.

Writing down a plan or even having a small sticky note on the dash to remind you will help you to remember to drive more fuel efficiently and to follow many of the other tips.

The many point is to take action. If you can implement two, three or four ideas you may look at save between \$100 to \$500 dollars, where as if you can take these ideas seriously, you make save over \$1,000.

Sure some you will take to and others won't be your cup of tea, but remember, the increasing fuel costs are taking money away from other areas of your life. It might have been money you had earmarked for a family holiday or some new clothes or golf clubs.

It hurts to know it is just wasted on paying more money to greedy petrol giants. Be proactive and save as much as you can be driving efficiently and buying smart.

Remember there are always new fuel tip ideas and handy hints being added to the Cheapskates Club Tip Store all the time.

Take a look at www.cheapskates.com.au to find out more.