

Stretching Gas Dollars

by Harry Harth, Manager, Virginia Tire & Auto Gainesville

Gas prices are on the rise again, so drivers are looking for ways to get the maximum miles out of a tank of gas. In addition, improving fuel economy also benefits the environment by releasing fewer emissions into the air. Quality auto maintenance and care, sensible driving, a properly-tuned engine, and combining and scheduling trips, will each help to effectively get the best gas mileage a vehicle can provide.

Here are some tips that will help stretch those gas dollars:

1. Drive safely and smoothly: Gas mileage decreases rapidly above 60 miles per hour. Avoid aggressive driving, speeding and rapid acceleration. Cruise control helps to maintain a constant speed.
2. Remove extra weight from your vehicle: It is estimated that 100 extra pounds can reduce a vehicle's fuel economy by up to two percent.
3. Replace the air filter: Replacing a clogged air filter on vehicles with fuel-injected, computer-controlled gasoline engines (prevalent in most cars manufactured from the 1980s forward) can improve fuel economy by 6 to 11 percent. Replacing a clogged air filter on an older car with a carbureted engine may improve fuel economy 2 to 6 percent under normal conditions.
4. Keep tires properly inflated and wheels aligned: By checking tire condition and air pressure during every oil change, gas mileage will increase, overall handling will improve and tire life will be extended. The Department of Energy estimates that 1.25 billion gallons of gasoline, approximately one percent of total consumption, are wasted each year on underinflated tires.
5. Use the recommended grade of oil and change it by following the vehicle's suggested maintenance schedule. For example, using 10W-30 motor oil in an engine designed to use 5W-30 can lower your gas mileage by 1-2 percent.
6. Replace spark plugs and make sure they are not misfiring. The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence reports that bad spark plugs can decrease fuel economy by up to 30 percent and can cost drivers up to about 94 cents per gallon.
7. Combine errands: Fuel is much more efficient when the engine is warm, so consider making stops to the grocery store, dry cleaner and gas station all in one outing. It is also recommended to fill the gas tank early in the morning or late at night; by avoiding the heat of the day, the fuel will be denser and the vehicle will get more gas for the same amount of money.
8. Avoid unnecessary idling: Idling can use a quarter to a half gallon of fuel per hour, depending on engine size and air conditioner use. It also pollutes the air and wastes money.

By putting that errand list together, driving wisely and safely, and taking care of the vehicle, those gas dollars will be stretched to get the vehicle the best gas mileage!



About Us --Virginia Tire & Auto:

For more than 35 years, family-owned and operated Virginia Tire & Auto has been the leading provider of full-service automotive maintenance, repair and tire needs for customers in Northern Virginia. Named "Top Shop in North America" by Tire Review magazine, Virginia Tire & Auto's 11 locations are conveniently located in Ashburn, Centreville, Chantilly, Fairfax, Falls Church, Gainesville, South Riding, Springfield, Sterling and Vienna. For more information about Virginia Tire & Auto, please visit us at www.vatire.com or www.facebook.com/VATIREANDAUTO.