# AAA and Fuel Conservation

**AAA is a federation of motor clubs** serving more than 51 million members in the United States and Canada with automotive, travel, financial and insurance services.

For decades, AAA has published public-service guides on car care, fuel economy and safety. In 1943, AAA published its first guide, *Keep 'em Rolling,* to assist with gasoline rationing required by World War II.



In the 1970s, when American motorists faced soaring gas prices brought on by the Arab Oil Embargo, AAA published *Rolling Along with the Gasoline Shortage* and produced its first *Gas Watcher's Guide.*

A companion brochure, *Your Driving Costs,* has been produced since 1950. That year, driving a car 10,000 miles cost 9 cents per mile, and gasoline sold for 27 cents per gallon.

Consult your local AAA club or visit AAA.com or AAA.com/PublicAffairs for more information on conserving fuel and traveling safely.

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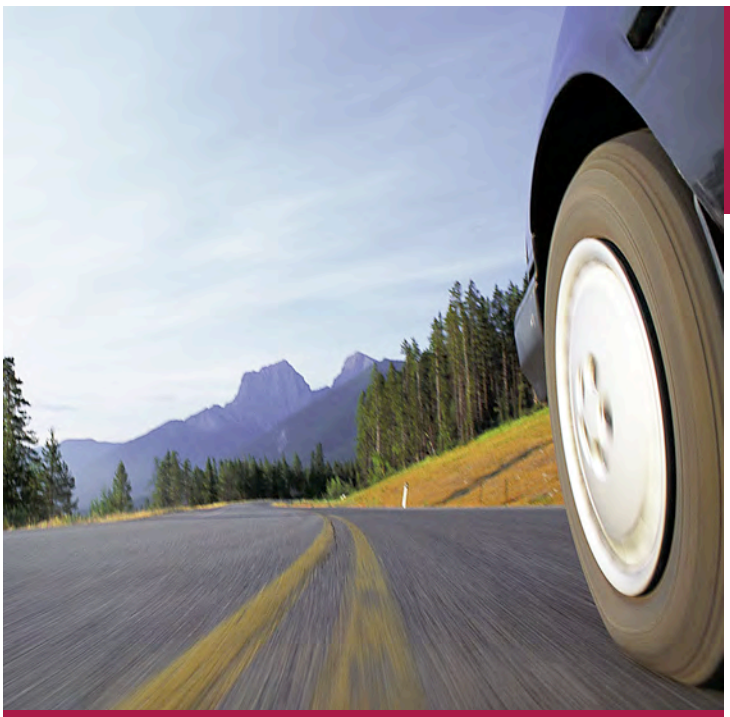
**www.AAA.com • www.AAA.com/PublicAffairs**



# Gas Watcher's Guide

**Responsible use of energy** is learned behavior. To conserve, we must slow down and find ways to do more with less. The benefits of fuel conservation include financial savings, improved road safety and a healthier environment. This brochure offers ways to be a consistent and effective "gas watcher."

| Nationally Speaking... |
| --- |
| Passenger vehicles and light trucks average 22.5 miles per gallon. |
| The average driver travels 29 miles and spends 55 minutes behind the wheel each day. |
| 96 percent of the 3.3 million Americans who "stretch-commute," or travel at least 50 miles one way, do so by car. |
| Americans take 1.1 billion trips a day, or about 4 trips per person. |
| 87 percent of daily trips are taken in personal vehicles. |



# Better Vehicles, More Time Behind the Wheel

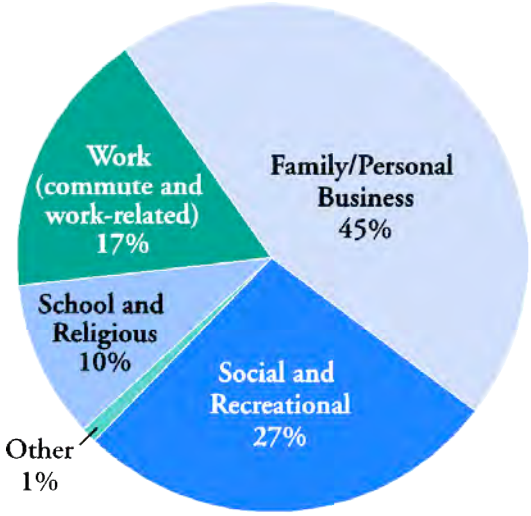
**In recent decades,** automobile manufacturers have made significant advances in improving the overall energy efficiency of most passenger vehicles. At the same time, consumers are more aware of how much fuel their vehicles consume and how fuel mileage affects their pocketbooks and the environment. On average, fuel efficiency among U.S. passenger vehicles and light trucks is about 22.5 miles per gallon.

Motorists also are driving more. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Americans on an average day drive 29 miles and spend some 55 minutes behind the wheel. The average vehicle is driven about 12,000 miles per year, and annual per-vehicle gasoline use totals approximately 550 gallons.

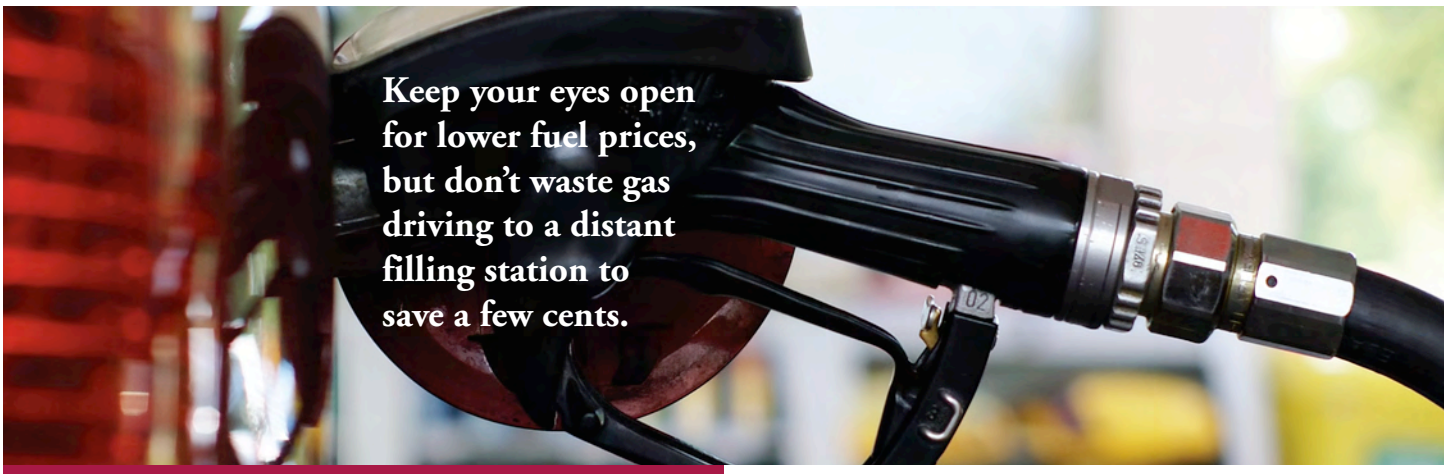
**Transportation continues to be** a major sector of the U.S. economy and is a critical factor in our quality of life.

According to the DOT, personal gasoline consumption breaks down like this:

## Daily Travel in the U.S.




Source: Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics




## Attitude Is Everything

**The type of car or truck you drive,** how it's maintained and how you drive are the most important factors in both conserving fuel and staying safe behind the wheel. Here are some tips from AAA that will help you save gasoline and money:

- If you own more than one vehicle — especially if one is a less fuel-efficient model such as a pickup truck, sport utility vehicle or van — use the more energy-conserving vehicle as often as possible.

- Consolidate trips and errands to cut down on driving time and miles traveled.

- Find one area where you can take care of banking, grocery shopping and other errands. Comparison-shop by phone, online or through newspaper ads.

- Slow down. The faster a vehicle travels, the more fuel it burns.

- Avoid quick starts and sudden stops. This wastes fuel, is harder on vehicle components and increases the odds of a traffic crash.

- Lighten the load. Don't haul unnecessary weight in the passenger compartment, trunk or cargo area of your vehicle. A heavier vehicle uses more gas.

- Keep your eyes open for lower fuel prices, but don't waste gas driving to a distant filling station to save a few cents.

- Stick to a routine maintenance schedule. Keeping tires properly inflated, moving components lubricated and ignition and emission systems in good operating order will help ensure maximum fuel efficiency and extend the life of your vehicle.

**Think it through.** Your driving style can have a significant effect on the amount of fuel your vehicle uses. Remember the following:

- Know the correct starting procedure for your car. Don't race a cold engine to warm it up or allow it to idle for an extended time. Avoid rapid acceleration until the engine temperature is in the normal range. The engine will warm up faster under a light load, and emissions equipment will begin to function properly sooner.

- For the best fuel economy, maintain steady speeds. A car uses extra fuel when it accelerates.

- Minimize the need to brake by anticipating traffic conditions. Be alert for slowdowns and red lights ahead of you, and decelerate by coasting whenever possible.

- Travel at moderate speeds on the open road. Higher speeds require more fuel to overcome air resistance. But remember that driving slower than the flow of traffic can create a traffic hazard.

- Use the air conditioner conservatively. Most air conditioners have an "economy" or "recirculation" setting that reduces the amount of outside air that must be chilled. Both settings can reduce the air-conditioning load — and save gas.


**If your vehicle's engine does not need premium fuel, using anything other than regular is simply a waste of money.**

# Weigh the Total Cost of Ownership

**Fuel is part of the total cost** of vehicle ownership, so mileage rating should be an important factor when choosing a new vehicle. Determine whether the vehicle under consideration is bigger and heavier than necessary. Compare the Environmental Protection Agency fuel economy ratings on all vehicles you're considering. Other factors to think about include:

- Four-wheel-drive vehicles generally use more fuel than other vehicles, especially if the four-wheel-drive system is engaged during routine driving.

- Vehicles with automatic transmissions may use more gasoline than those equipped with manual transmissions.

- Smaller engines usually produce better gas mileage than their larger counterparts.

- Vehicle engines that require premium fuel, as stated in the owner's manual, will cost more to operate in the long run.

- Some trucks, vans and SUVs come in several sizes and configurations. Models with a shorter bed, abbreviated cargo area or smaller cab are lighter and generally consume less fuel.

- Light exterior and interior colors and tinted windows can reduce heat buildup and save on air-conditioning needs.

- Cruise control may be a fuel-saving option if you drive a lot on open roads. Maintaining a steady speed conserves fuel.

When shopping for a new or pre-owned vehicle, check AAA's annual *Your Driving Costs* publication, which is available from your local AAA office. Also, visit AAA's Web site, AAA.com, for helpful information and detailed vehicle comparisons. Many clubs also offer auto-buying services, which can save you money, regardless of what vehicle you choose.

# Maintaining Fuel Efficiency

**Check your owner's manual** for routine maintenance instructions, and keep the following points in mind:

- Spark plugs must be in good condition. Some will last for 100,000 miles, but many need to be replaced more often.

- Check the air and fuel filters at least twice a year. Dirty filters increase fuel consumption and can cause poor performance.

- Inflate tires according to manufacturer recommendations. Under-inflated tires are a safety hazard and can cut fuel economy by as much as 2 percent per pound of pressure below the recommended level.

- Have your vehicle serviced immediately if the emissions malfunction indicator or "check engine" light comes on.

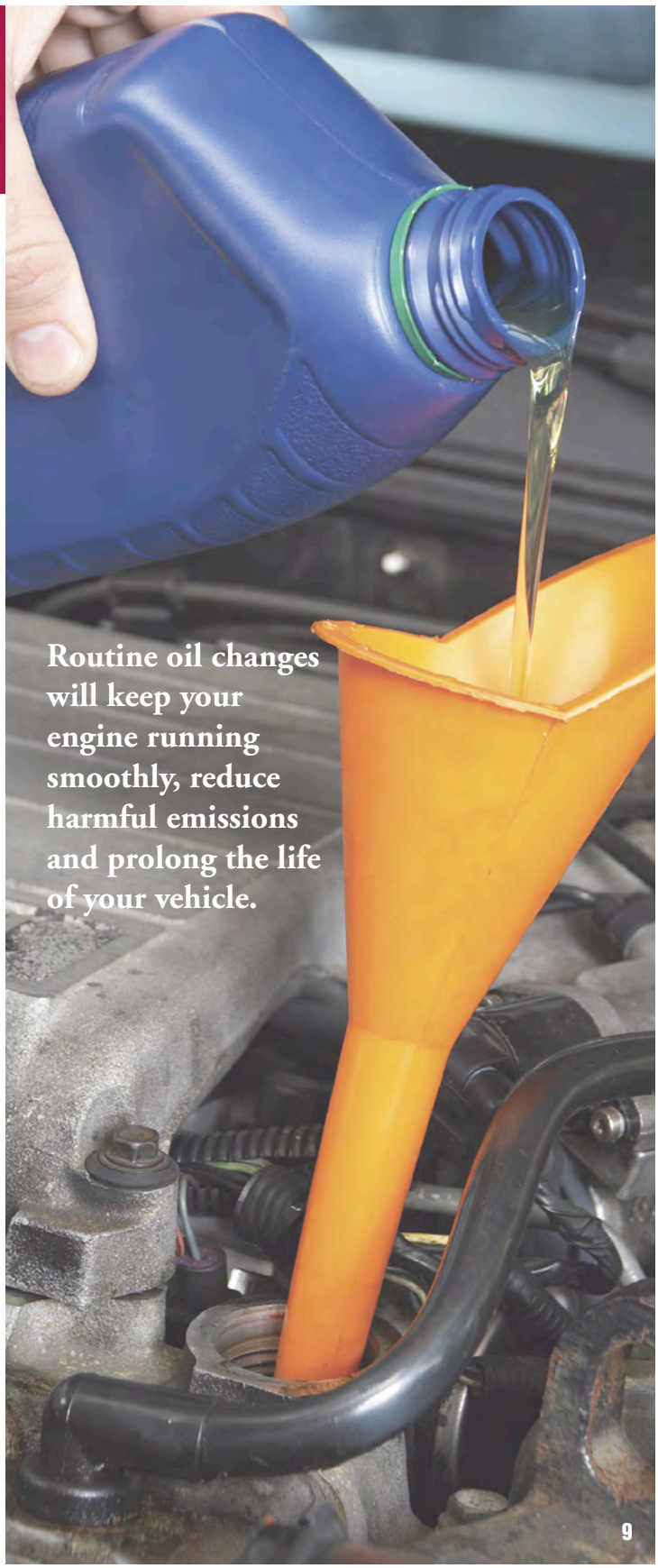
- Have your vehicle serviced regularly by a certified technician, who can also inspect important vehicle components that affect fuel consumption.

**At the pump.** If your vehicle's engine does not need premium fuel, using anything other than regular is simply a waste of money. Other tips include:

- Don't top off your gas tank completely. In warm weather, fuel can expand and overflow.

- If you must replace a gas cap, make sure it is the right one for your car. An ill-fitting cap can cause engine problems, increase emissions and reduce fuel economy.

- Keep track of gas mileage. If you notice a decrease in fuel economy, your vehicle may not be operating at peak performance.



**Routine oil changes will keep your engine running smoothly, reduce harmful emissions and prolong the life of your vehicle.**

# Vacationing

**Some 90 percent of Americans** vacation by personal vehicle. Chances are, you're one of them. These tips will help you save fuel and reduce hassles on your trip:

- If you have a choice of vehicles, take the one that gets the best gas mileage. Renting a fuel-efficient model also can save you money in the long run — both at the pump and by reducing wear and tear on your personal vehicle.

- Choose a route that enables you to travel at constant speeds and bypass congested areas as much as possible. Unless you're taking a scenic drive, avoid two-lane roads that have lots of stop signs and traffic signals. Your AAA Travel representative can help you plan the best route and provide door-to-door driving directions with a customized TripTik routing, or you can visit AAA.com and create your own.

- Start trips early in the day while traffic is light. Plan meal stops to coincide with likely periods of traffic congestion.

- Take only what you need to maintain as light a load as possible. Keep luggage inside the vehicle, rather than strapped on the roof, where it will create wind resistance.

- Choose a vacation spot where only minimal driving will be needed after you arrive.

- If your trip seems too far to drive the whole way, consider driving part way and using public transportation or air travel for the remaining distance.



# Saving Money While Making Money

**Transportation to and from work** is one of the most obvious places to save fuel and money. Consider these options:

- When possible, combine errands with your daily commute.

- If your work hours are flexible, try leaving earlier in the morning or returning home later in the evening to reduce fuel burned in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

- Talk to your employer about working from home one day a week, which can significantly reduce your fuel consumption over the course of a year.

- Participate in a carpool. Many families use carpools to transport children to and from school or activities. Starting a carpool can be as easy as talking to neighbors who travel to the same destination or posting a notice on a company or school bulletin board.

- When available, public transit is usually the least-expensive and most fuel-efficient way to commute. It may take a little longer to get where you're going, but you'll save money and reduce emissions.

- For short trips, try bicycling or walking. You'll save fuel, and your body will thank you for the exercise.