



Save fuel in winter



Saving fuel in winter is almost an art.

Fuel is so expensive these days that all sorts of tricks are being passed along to help save any amount of the precious liquid. Winter is known to be one of the worst enemies of fuel saving motorists. How could they save more fuel?

Obviously, the choice of vehicle is where to start. We are all aware that a big V8 powered, all-wheel drive truck will gobble up gas so fast, its driver will have to spend a lot of money to keep it running this winter. But

be also leery of some four-cylinder powered cars or trucks that are performance-oriented or others with turbo engines and all-wheel drive that may be real gas guzzlers. Saving gas means driving carefully, observing speed

limits and more. Keep a careful eye on your tires' air pressure (or even better, inflate them with nitrogen!) and don't let the engine idle too long to warm-up the interior. Also, try not to carry too much dead weight in the trunk, only the necessary accessories to help you cope with winter's little surprises.

The best piece of advice for saving as much fuel as possible is to get the car in top shape before winter begins. That means choosing lighter engine oil, changing the air filter and having your mechanic look at the general maintenance of the whole car. Also, remember that a block heater with a timer to power it up in the middle of the night will make firing up the engine easier (and with less fuel) in the morning.

Five ways to keep rust at bay

It's no secret that road salt is terrible for our cars. It does a great job melting ice and keeping roads safe during the winter, but it's also a major catalyst for rust. Of course, putting your car in storage until the return of warmer days is the best way to keep it safe from winter's harsh effects, but if that isn't an option, here are some ways you can help prevent rust from taking hold in the cold:

1. Have your car professionally rustproofed. This is especially recommended if you frequently park indoors. Drastic temperature variations, especially combined with the humid air in garages, provide rust with the perfect environment to thrive.
2. Slow down and keep your distances. It's the best way to minimize contact with road debris (e.g. salt, sand, rocks from other cars). Your paint job will thank you!
3. Protect the body. Install mud flaps, a grille guard (clean it often to avoid an accumulation of road salt, which could scratch the paint), or clear plastic strips to protect the lower body frame.
4. Wash your car often. It's important to clean your vehicle periodically during the winter — even though the results won't last long! — to get rid of calcium deposits and other dirt. A dirty car is more likely to rust. Make sure to thoroughly dry everything off, and avoid washing your car when temperatures fall below -10 °C.
5. Apply surface wax. This will protect your paint job, but you'll need to act fast: the procedure requires outdoor temperatures above 10 °C to be successful.

Nine simple steps to get your car ready for winter

The days are getting shorter and it's time to start thinking about getting your car or truck winter-ready. The last thing you want is to be left in the cold while out on the roads. Here are ten easy ways to keep your vehicle running smoothly all winter.

1. Install your winter tires and have their pressure checked (don't forget the spare!)
2. Change oil and replace any dirty filters
3. Fill the radiator with a 50/50 blend of antifreeze and water
4. Make sure your wind-

shield wiper blades are in good condition

5. Fill up on winter-formula washer fluid and keep a spare jug in your trunk
 6. Make sure the heater and defroster are working properly
 7. Inspect your vehicle's headlights, tail lights and turn signals
 8. Check the battery for any signs of buildup
 9. Lubricate the locks and buy a lock de-icer
- And there you have it: your car or truck is now ready for winter. All that's left to do before you hit the frozen road is to clear the

snow off your vehicle!

Pre-winter inspection Having your car inspected by a specialist is a great way to make sure its vi-

tal components — like the brakes, sparkplugs, suspension and transmission — are in good working order. A professional will also be able

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Keep useful accessories in the trunk

In order to get the best possible fuel economy, many experts will give you some very useful advice, including that of keeping the trunk empty of unused items to minimize dead weight that uses up fuel. However, in the winter there are some items that should be kept in the trunk; these may seem like dead weight, but they are actually emergency tools in case of trouble.

Because trouble comes in many shapes in the winter, you shouldn't take any chances. Among the many items that should remain in your trunk over the winter, is a shovel. However, a full size shovel can be heavy and it can take up a lot of space in your trunk. So instead, why not buy one of those light, foldable shovels that are specifically designed to

be stored in a car. Another useful item is a pair of traction devices that can come in handy in deep snow or on ice. In the past, they were made of heavy steel, however today they are available in plastic or, as shown on TV, as small aluminum plates that can be assembled to build a traction-aiding device.

Booster cables can also come in handy. But try to find a light product that is strong enough to handle the power surge. There are new products on the market with an electronic device that ensures you don't confuse the poles. A small bag of sand can also come in handy, however don't keep salt in the car. Even a small amount of salt leaking in the car will cause corrosion damage.

Change your wiper blades



Winter wiper blades have rubber covers over their mechanism.

Winter is just around the corner. With today's cars and trucks requiring much less maintenance, many motorists have the tendency not to prepare their vehicles for winter (or any other season). Consequently, when the first cold rains or snowfalls appear, they wind up with a vehicle that is unable to cope with bad weather.

Wiper blades are one item that is often overlooked. Many cars have worn-out blades that barely clean the windshield in the rain making driving very difficult, especially at night. Indeed, drivers only see glare when meeting oncoming vehicles. Wiper blades should be changed almost twice a year in order to get the best visibility possible.

As for those of us who live in very cold or snowy areas, it is better to choose what is commonly called "winter wiper blades". These are blades whose mechanism is covered with a rubber envelope designed to keep it free of ice, thus allowing the blade to better rest against the windshield.

Most service stations, auto parts stores and even large department stores can provide the correct blades for your vehicle. Remember that blades are not all alike and surprisingly, the blade on the driver's side of some vehicles is a different length from the blade on the passenger side. Some cars even have unique blades that only the dealer can provide.



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Getting ready for a snow storm

Many people don't have protection for their parked vehicles when there's a snow storm. There are many reasons for this, one of which is that they live in a place that doesn't have a garage or that has parking on the street only. The other is that their garage is already occupied by another vehicle. Some home owners in the Snow Belt area already have a protective car port erected before winter hits. However, too many people must face the next storm with their car or truck out in the open.

Obviously, weather reports on TV or the radio will warn people of an upcoming storm. There is no reason not to be ready. First of all, make sure your car has been winterized — something that should have been done a long time ago. Then, try to park it in the safest possible place. If you have to leave it on the street, try to make sure it doesn't block snow removal equipment. Park it in a way that ensures you won't have to work too hard to pull it out of the snow bank after the storm.

If the forecast is calling for sleet or freezing rain, try to cover the windshield the best you can using plastic tarps or even plastic garbage bags opened lengthwise and secured in the door jambs. The Canadian manufacturer, MiniGarage, offers tailored-made covers for the windshield, the wipers, the front side windows and the rear-view mirrors at a very reasonable price. This is an easy-to-store item that can come in very handy in snowy and cold areas. Look them up on the Internet!



You can protect your car before a winter storm.

Do you really have to drive in a storm?

Winter certainly is not the best season to travel by car. Yet, there are so many motorists who think they really must do it, even if there's a blizzard outside. Obviously, the best advice is to stay home or where you are until road conditions improve. That said, if you feel you really must drive...

Before leaving your point of departure, listen to the radio for advice on which roads to avoid, road closings or accidents. Try to plan your route ahead of time to beat the bad weather. It would be wise to let someone know your plans and, if possible, about your intended route so that person will know where authorities can

start looking in case something dramatic happens.

Remember that bridges and overpasses freeze before roads do. Drive at a slower pace than usual. Accelerate gently, turn slowly and be gentle on the brakes so that your wheels don't block and cause you to lose control of the car. Don't go too slowly either and be certain to leave a good distance between your car and the one ahead of you.

During a storm, always turn on your lights, even if your vehicle is equipped with daytime running lights. Finally, even though you may have bought an all-wheel or four-wheel drive vehicle equipped with good winter tires, don't be overconfident and rely on its capabilities to outrun other motorists. Such vehicles can accelerate faster and maybe even turn a little better than conventional cars or trucks on snow or ice, but they cannot brake faster — this is a mistake often made by all-wheel drive motorists, mostly in the beginning of winter.



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Check those tires

You might roll your eyes to read this yet again, but have you checked your tire pressure lately? If you take a look around you the next time you idle at an intersection, chances are you'll notice more than one slightly deflated tire. Regularly checking the air pressure in your tires, no matter where you live, no matter how cold it is, will keep you safe on the roads and prolong the life of your tires and vehicle.

it will definitely help you avoid more expenses down the road, if one of your tires is underinflated.

By the way, most new cars and trucks are equipped with tire pressure detectors (TPMS: tire pressure monitoring system), but too many motorists ignore them,

thinking that they can do a few more kilometres and check the tires later. That is not a good practice! You never know when you will need the most out of your tires and their capabilities, and they will only work properly if they are inflated to the recommended pressure.



No matter the road or weather conditions, tires are most efficient at their properly indicated pressure.

Though safety is the most important issue here, the advice also goes for saving money. Indeed, underinflated tires do cause more fuel consumption, in all weather. And don't listen to the old wives' tales that say you'll have better traction on ice if your tires are slightly underinflated! Tire manufacturers, especially those who deal in specialized in winter tires, spend a lot of time and energy developing tires that grip on the ice at their normal air pressure.

If you are not familiar with checking air pressure, simply ask your mechanic to do it for you or show you how to do it. Most likely, he or she won't charge you for it, and

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Clean your windows before winter!



Clean glass, inside and out, will help your winter driving.

Winter driving can be messy, especially when it rains, snows, or when the roads are slushy. A dirty car doesn't stop most busy people from driving, but there are some risks to driving with dirty windows.

Squirting some windshield washer onto the windscreen might help, but that's only if the fluid has been topped up, and it doesn't do much to clean side and rear windows. The kind of windshield washer fluid used also has a big influence on the visibility you end up with.

Another factor affecting visibility is the sun: since it

sets much earlier in winter, usually during the homeward drive, it can hit the windshield at an angle that obscures vision pretty badly. That means that even if the outside of the windshield is nicely cleaned, but the inside is dusty or streaked, the driver can be handicapped by sun glare. A thorough cleaning of all windows, from the inside, is a good winter time preparation. Check at your hardware

store or gas station for window cleaning products that will also eliminate fogging.

While you're at it, why not clean the sunglasses you keep in the car? Be sure that they are good quality glasses that are easy to clean and that perform well in sun-glare conditions. Taking care of all the glass in your car before winter comes will help you stay safe on the road!

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