

4 fuel-saving myths debunked

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If you think the price of fuel can't go any higher, I have news for you. With the cost of petrol rising to R21 a litre from March, and the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the situation's unlikely to get better any time soon.



Source: [Pxabay](#)

But there is one thing more painful than filling up your tank right now, and that's listening to some of the fuel-saving advice being dished out by so-called experts on social media. In fact, the crazier the tip, the more people seem to like it.

So, for the sake of my own sanity and your fuel bills, let's debunk some of these old myths for once and for all, and give you some fuel-saving advice that really works.

Myth 1: Turn off the aircon

Okay. What's the first thing you're going to do if you turn off the aircon? Yup, you're going to open the windows.

Which means a few things. In the city, you're going to be breathing smog, and potentially become a prime target for smash-and-grabbers. On the highway, the drag caused by your open windows will cost you more fuel than the aircon.

Verdict: Modern aircons have a minimal impact on your fuel consumption. Rather be safe and comfortable.

Myth 2: Buy fuel early in the day

The theory is that liquids are denser at lower temperatures, so at cooler morning temperatures, you'll get more fuel for your rand.

This is all very interesting, but we're forgetting one fundamental fact here: fuel is stored in underground tanks, so it barely changes in temperature at all.

The only benefit of filling up early in the morning is that you'll miss the queues. Verdict: Put your fuel in when you need it.

Myth 3: Put your car in neutral and coast

Let me be blunt. This is horrible advice. For a start, driving a car with the clutch depressed or in neutral doesn't save you any fuel, because the engine is still idling. But the bigger problem is that it's dangerous, because you pick up speed quicker and have less control.

Because your wheels aren't powered, your ability to take a safe line around corners is compromised, and in an emergency, you'll have to rely on your brakes alone to stop you.

Verdict: Do not do this. Ever.

Myth 4: Use XYZ additive or fuel-saving gadget

The more fuel prices go through the roof, the more we're bombarded with ads that claim incredible fuel savings from a little bottle of secret goop, or a little device that you attach to your car.

As a petrolhead of many years, I can sum up these additives and gizmos in one sentence: they don't work. And on the off chance that they do, they cost more than the fuel you would have saved. Go figure.

Verdict: Avoid.



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Here are three fuel-saving tips that actually do work:

Reality 1: Lose weight

Out of your car, I mean. Take off roof and bike racks when you're not using them. And leave the golf clubs at home.

Every extra kilogram (and increased drag in the case of items on the exterior of the car like roof racks) adds to your consumption in the long run.

Reality 2: Maintain your vehicle

Getting your car serviced regularly and keeping your tyres properly inflated are easy maintenance tasks – and make a big difference to your fuel consumption.

Reality 3: Drive smoothly

This is the single, undisputed, number one way to save fuel. Better driving habits can literally save you thousands of rands a year in fuel costs.

Here's my challenge to you: try driving as if you have a cup of coffee on your dashboard.

That means no sudden acceleration or sharp braking, driving at steady speeds, and avoiding high speeds on the highway. And you'll save on tyres and maintenance in the process. Your bank balance will thank you.

The bottom line? There's no magic trick to saving fuel.

The best way to save at the pump is to apply common sense and to drive in a relaxed and calm manner. Be safe out there.

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