

# Spending too much on fuel? Here's how you can save

Cash-strapped and Covid-battered South Africans have to find innovative ways to save fuel and money following hefty January fuel price increases - petrol by between 40 and 43c per litre, and diesel by between 54 and 55c a litre.



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According to Bianca de Beer from Dialdirect Insurance: “An average increase of 48c per litre is steep on its own, but when coupled with the fact that a 60-litre tank already cost more than R800 to fill up, this places a significant strain on motorists’ wallets.”

She continues: “The good news is that, with a few minor adjustments to your driving habits and with regular car maintenance, you can boost the fuel efficiency of your car by as much as 40%. So, if you fill up 48 times a year at roughly R900 per tank, a 40% reduction in fuel consumption could save you over R17,000 a year.”

## Tips for better fuel economy:

- **Service smart:** A car can burn up to 30% more fuel if proper maintenance is not performed on a regular schedule. With this in mind, make sure that your car is serviced regularly. Things like worn spark plugs, worn rings, faulty injectors, sticky brakes, low coolant levels, dirty oil, and dirty filters all add up to engine inefficiency, which leads to increased fuel consumption.
- **Wheel wise:** Check your car’s wheel alignment. Bad wheel alignment causes more friction, which takes more power to overcome and results in higher fuel consumption.
- **Pressure check:** Check for underinflated tyres, as these, too, increase resistance.
- **Air con costs a cool buck:** Use the air conditioning only when really necessary, as it places additional load on the engine.
- **Dead weight:** Reduce the vehicle’s weight by removing unnecessary items from it and, if you mostly do city driving, consider driving with only half a tank of fuel.



Price of fuel set for steep increase

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- **Nice and slow:** Don't speed. The gas-guzzling effects of 'stepping on it' are well-known.
  - **Don't stop-start:** Maintain momentum as far as possible by looking and planning ahead, flowing with traffic and timing your approaches to hills, traffic lights and crossings better.
  - **Geared for efficiency:** Drive at the lowest speed in the highest gear that the road and traffic conditions allow, without labouring the engine.
  - **Tech-savvy:** Many vehicles have economy settings to optimise performance, throttle response, ride height etc. for maximum fuel efficiency. Use them to your advantage.
  - **Plan ahead:** Do several tasks on one round trip, as opposed to many shorter ones. This not only limits mileage and the amount of time it takes to get your chores done but also keeps your vehicle's engine running at an optimal temperature.

De Beer concludes: "Saving on fuel by keeping your vehicle in shape and changing the way you drive may seem like a bit of a hassle, but if you increase your fuel economy by 40%, a tank that normally gets you 700km could get you close to 1000km. This translates to almost a tankful of savings for every two times you fill-up."

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