

# fact sheet



## Driving Smarter

### How to change your driving technique to reduce its impact on the climate and your hip pocket

Driving isn't great for the planet, but some people don't have much choice – especially people who live where there is no public transport. Luckily, by making a few simple changes to the way that you drive you can use less petrol to go the same distance – which means less greenhouse gas emissions and less money spent.

A major study of 'eco-driving' in Europe found that techniques like the ones listed below often reduce fuel consumption by 10-20% and sometimes even reduce it by as much as 50%. In Victoria, a study undertaken for Environment Victoria by RMIT University students found that a sample of drivers using these kinds of techniques reduced their fuel consumption by an average of 13% and by as much as 33%.

Of course, the best way to reduce your emissions from driving and spending on petrol is to drive less. Bikes and walking are great for short journeys, like heading down to the shops or getting the kids to school, and mean exercise without having to go to the gym. Public transport can be less stressful than traffic, and if there's none near you, tell your local politician to do something about it! Car pooling is another good way of reducing your impact and costs. But if you have to drive, here are a few good tips to reduce your environmental impact:

#### 1. Drive smoothly:

When taking off from a stationary position, (e.g. when lights turn green at an intersection), instead of 'flooring' your foot on the accelerator, increase your speed more gently, as this reduces fuel consumption by not putting such a strain on the engine. When driving along, try to keep your speed steady. When coming to red lights, or the brake lights of cars in front of you, instead of accelerating then braking suddenly, just take your foot off the accelerator and brake only when necessary.

#### 2. Keep your tyres at the right pressure:

Too low and you consume more fuel, too high and it can be dangerous. The right pressure for your car should be written on the tyres, in the manual or on a label in the car. Make sure you check the pressure when the tyres are 'cold' (i.e. before driving far).





### 3. Remove roof racks and unnecessary weight:

If you're carrying around heavy objects you don't need in your boot or back seat, you're burning fuel you don't need to burn. Roof racks also increase fuel consumption because of the drag on the car, so if you don't use them much, it's worth taking them off.

### 4. Don't warm up the engine:

Modern cars don't need to be "warmed up" before moving – they warm better through gentle driving. However they do need 30 seconds of warming up in cold climates, and older cars still need warming up.

### 5. Use your air conditioning only when you need it:

Air conditioners use a lot of fuel – try to avoid using them as much as possible. However if you are driving at more than 80 km/h, it is better to have the air conditioner on a little than it is to have the windows open, because of the wind resistance.

### 6. Plan the trip:

If driving to an unknown location, look up directions before hitting the road, to make sure you go by the most direct route.

### 7. Don't idle your engine:

If you're going to be stopped for a little while, turn your engine off.

### 8. Use higher gears. where practical:

Driving with less revs is more efficient. Aim to drive at 1500-2500 RPM (and lower for diesel cars), and change to a higher gear if you are near 2500 RPM.

### 9. If you're getting a new car, get an efficient one:

[www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au](http://www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au) ranks both new and old car models by their greenhouse and air pollution emissions and their fuel efficiency. Choose the most efficient car in your price range.

### 10. Stick to your smart driving habits!

Often people who take on these techniques slip back into old habits. Remind yourself to stick to the good habits, with a reminder on your dashboard, in your diary or in your phone – whatever works for you. And if you are ever teaching someone else to drive, get them driving smoothly from the start.

Aim to drive in this range

