

GREEN DRIVING MADE EASY

Change your habits, save the planet

Want to do more for the environment? You could trade in your current car for a newer, greener model - but not all of us can afford to do so. Don't worry, though - you can make a real difference just by changing your driving habits.

- Don't drive around with unnecessary weight in your car - the engine will have to work harder and, as a result, you'll use more fuel. If you don't need it, don't carry it.
- Remove roof boxes and roof racks when you're not using them, because the extra aerodynamic drag they cause will increase fuel consumption.
- If conditions allow, close the windows and sunroof and get any loose items of external trim fixed, because these all create drag, which dents your car's fuel economy.
- Stick to the manufacturer's service schedule, and have any work carried out by a competent garage - a well-maintained car emits less carbon dioxide than one that isn't.
- Under-inflated tyres increase your car's fuel consumption, so check them weekly. Also, keep an eye on your car's fuel consumption and investigate any sudden changes.
- Modern engines don't need to be warmed up before driving, so just drive off after you've started the car. That said, a car's engine is at its most inefficient when cold, so don't use your car for very short trips - walk or ride a bike instead. Use public transport for other trips, too.
- If you get stuck in traffic for even a couple of minutes, switch the engine off. Air-conditioning, heated seats and other electrical components also use energy, so switch off what you don't need.
- By keeping an eye on the road ahead, you can drive greener as well as more safely. Always try to keep the car moving, and use the gears to slow the car rather than by using the brakes - this gives more time for the cars in front to move off.
- Avoid having to brake suddenly and don't race between sets of traffic lights or junctions.
- Use gravity on slopes to start the car rolling, rather than the accelerator.
- Sticking to the speed limit will save fuel. Cruise control can help you to maintain a steady speed.
- Use the highest gear possible without letting the engine labour, and try changing straight from second to fourth gear, or third to fifth - this saves time and fuel, and reduces clutch wear and tear.
- Don't travel in the rush hour if you can avoid it. Plan a route that misses busy areas or roadworks and stick to roads that allow you to drive at a steady speed, rather than having to stop and start.
- Share a car with friends or colleagues, or join a car-sharing scheme such as www.liftshare.org.
- Learn to press the accelerator lightly and smoothly. Don't over-rev the engine - keep the revs under 3000rpm and cruise along.
- Allow more time for journeys so you don't have to rush, and stay relaxed for a smoother trip.