

[MUSIC PLAYING]

PRESENTER:

Hey there, welcome to Make-It-Green Girl Quick and Dirty Tips for an Earth Friendly Life. In episode four, I gave you folks a few tips to improve your gas mileage, decrease your consumption, and save money at the pump. This week, I've got even more ideas for how you can save money, as well as a way for you to track your progress becoming a green driver.

Remember that a bike rider is the power behind his vehicle, just like your car engine is the power behind your car. This is one of my favorite analogies, because it helps us as drivers sympathize with what our car engines are going through. Hopefully you remember riding a bike, but if not, go do all these experiments at home, like hauling around lots of junk and not pumping up your tires. In today's episode just remember, car engine is too biker as car chassis is to bike.

I have two bicycles, a mountain bike and a road bike. Mountain bikes are built like SUVs, with tons of steel reinforced frame and big fat grippy tires. OK, maybe pounds of steel frame and grippy tires. You get the point. Why do I have two bikes when I can only ride one at a time?

Simply put, road bikes are built much lighter and the tires are much thinner, so the same effort on the part of the rider will propel the whole assembly much faster. Ask any serious racing cyclist if the weight they carry is important and they'll tell you about all the ways they shaved weight off their mounts. Just be sure to set aside a few hours for this conversation.

The moral of the story is if carrying around a whole bunch of extra weight makes bikers work harder, it makes your car work harder too. The bigger the car, the heavier the frame, and the more forgotten groceries in the trunk, the more work your car engine does. Working harder for bikers means eating more spaghetti and meatballs when they get home. Working harder for your car means drinking more gasoline, even if the distance is the same.

Do you really need four pairs of gym shoes in the trunk? Would one liter of water be enough for emergencies instead of 15? Is there a reason you're putting off donating those hideous pants to charity? Just get rid of it, you'll thank yourself in the end.

Perhaps you've been stuck behind a biker at a stoplight. As the light turns green, you're ready to step on the gas and zoom out of the intersection. The poor biker however is desperately

trying to match speed with traffic, wobbling on her bike like she's going to crash into you. Does she just suck at biking? No, she doesn't suck, but bikers have to put a lot of effort into starting up their vehicles.

And so it is your car. You can measurably drop your fuel efficiency by driving like a maniac. Floor the gas at every intersection when the light turns, keep pressing the gas approaching red lights until you're absolutely positive the light won't turn green, then slam on your brakes at the last minute. It's a great way to waste gas. It's called the gas pedal after all. If

You don't believe me, try to jackrabbit out of intersections on your little Schwinn, or pedal as fast as you can towards the red light, then slam on your poor little brakes. It's a lot of effort for very little gain, besides an increased heart rate. For better gas mileage, drive smooth. Think swan, not jackrabbit.

The most serious and dedicated of bikers monitors his diet, his daily mileage, and even has a little bike computer to measure his peak and average speeds while on his ride. If you truly want to improve your gas mileage by changing your driving habits, it's a good idea to track your progress. You can easily find out your car's fuel efficiency under a variety of driving conditions by keeping a driving diary.

Keep a little notepad and pen in your car. Write down the number on your odometer when your tank is 100% full, like right when you leave the gas station. Then when the little needle is at the one half point, right down the miles you drove on that half tank. Divide the number of miles you drove by half your tank capacity, and presto, miles per gallon.

For example, I reset my odometer after my first fuel up. If I'm doing mostly highway driving, or if I was stuck in traffic a lot, or if I went on a long road trip, I'll write that down and my driving diary too. Then when the needle says one half, I'll read the miles. If it says I drove 140 miles and my tank is a 14 gallon tank, then I got 20 miles to the gallon. Wow, that sucks.

If you think this is a lot to take in all at once, you'd be right. After our society developed for more than a century around the automobile, it's very difficult to change our collective consciousness about driving. Just don't be overwhelmed by all these ideas. Make them work for you. Start with one change, maybe cleaning out your trunk, and then start being a little more conscious of your driving habits.

When you have a good opportunity, like a long road trip or a time when you're the only driver

on the gas tank, test your miles per gallon. Soon enough, you'll find your whole mindset has changed, and new changes are even easier to implement. Thanks for sticking around for even more tips to save money on gas. You can find a transcript of this show and all the Quick and Dirty Tips podcasts at quickinterviewtips.com

While you're there, don't forget to check out *Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing*, the new book by Mignon Fogarty. It's available from bookstores and your favorite online retailer starting July 8th. If you have questions you'd like to see answered or comments on the show, send them to Green Girl at quickanddirtytips.com. Or leave me a voicemail at 206-600-3051. See you next week.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

NARRATOR:

You ever have one of those days where everything goes right? First, I get the best parking space at work. Tonight, I have a date with the very lovely Rachel. And today, I gave a killer presentation in Sydney, finalized a contract in London, and demoed our new product in Boston online, from my desk with WebEx.

WebEx lets me take meetings and give presentations from my desk. I just talk to clients on the phone, and they watch what's happening on my desktop from their desktop. So I can travel the world and still be here for my date tonight with Rachel.

ANNOUNCER:

Travel less, meet online. Go to WebEx.com and try WebEx free. Just click the radiographic and enter promo code Cisco to get a free trial and a free webcam too. Remember that code, Cisco, to qualify for the free web cam. WebEx, now part of Cisco, and used by more than 5 1/2 million people every month.

Give it a try free. Go to WebEx.com and enter the promo code Cisco. W-E-B-E-X.com. Free web cams available while supplies last. Terms and restrictions apply. See website for details.