



Squeeze Play

**Tired of high fuel prices?
These gas-saving tips will help
you stretch the most from
every gallon**

To combat rising gas prices, marine do-it-yourself author Don Casey teamed up with West Marine to devise boating strategies that will help boaters reduce fuel consumption and save money. With these easy-to-follow, gas-stretching tips, boaters can go faster and farther for less.

STEER SMART

Sometimes, ramping up fuel efficiency is as simple as becoming familiar with local boating conditions. Currents, winds and swells can all make a difference; a boat is less efficient in a messy chop, for example, so do what you can to stay out of nasty water. Avoiding

opposing currents and riding sympathetic currents can be helpful, too.

PUT YOUR BOAT ON A DIET

Hauling around a bunch of unnecessary gear forces your boat to work harder and drink more fuel than it has to — so take a hard look at what you're carrying, and what can be left behind.

One of the major mistakes boaters make is to carry as much fuel and water as their boats will hold. Take just what you need for the day, plus a safety reserve. You might also consider fuel additives and treatments that not only keep gas fresh, but help fight moisture, varnish and gumming

problems — especially with ethanol-blend fuels.

PROPS MATTER

For maximum efficiency, make sure you're running a propeller that allows your boat — when carrying your normal load — to operate near the upper end of the manufacturer's recommended wide-open-throttle rpm range. And keep that propeller in top shape, because nicked or dinged blades not only rob fuel efficiency, but they can also cause vibration and engine wear.

CHANGE THE OIL AND PLUGS

Gasoline-powered engines require mindful tuning. Regularly changing the oil and spark plugs — along with other manufacturer-recommended maintenance — will keep your engine running at peak efficiency.



■ Fuel flow meters, such as this one from Navman, help monitor fuel consumption in real time. Most are fairly easy to install.

TRIM PROPERLY

Needlessly “pushing” water costs money, whereas getting up on-plane quickly and maintaining optimum cruising speed (usually, slightly faster than minimum planing speed) will maximize your boat's fuel efficiency. It's also important to evenly distribute the weight on board. Installing trim tabs can help.

STUDY YOUR GAUGES

Monitor your speed, rpm and fuel consumption to help you find your boat's most efficient planing speed. If you install a fuel flow meter, you can monitor fuel consumption in real time — which is especially helpful because this allows for accurate adjustment of throttle and trim.

KEEP IT CLEAN

A hull covered with even the slightest trace of marine growth wastes gas. If you keep your rig in the water for extended periods, be sure to fight plant and barnacle buildup because any extra friction simply burns fuel. A fresh coat of antifouling paint prevents growth. Better yet, keep your boat on a trailer or in dry storage.

By making these seven easy strategies a part of your regular boating routine, you can fight back against high prices at the pump. And that's a battle we all want to win. 🌀



Check out TrailerBoats.com for fuel saving tips for your tow vehicle.