

# Why Clean Air Filters Are Important

Vehicle owners likely know to check fluid levels and get their cars' oil changed, but air filters may not be at the top of their maintenance checklists. Despite being a relatively inexpensive part, air filters often go overlooked.

Air filters have an important job in a vehicle, prolonging the life span of engines and helping cars run more smoothly and efficiently.

## Purpose of vehicle air filters

Vehicle combustion engines operate with a mixture of fuel and air. Without oxygen, gasoline or diesel fuels cannot burn properly and power the engine.

The air filter's job is to prevent dirt, dust and other debris from being sucked into an engine. Otherwise, grime can build up and impede engine performance or cause erosion of parts under the hood.

It is much more cost-effective to routinely change air filters than replace expensive engine parts. Rather than ignoring air filters until the last minute, drivers can take steps to keep filters clean and functioning at peak performance.

- Improve fuel efficiency. Clogged air filters reduce air flow to engines, resulting in an improper ratio of air to fuel. As a result, spark plugs can be negatively affected and the engine may idle roughly or misfire. These scenarios can greatly affect fuel efficiency as well as cause engine deposits from rich fuel. To save money and trips to the fuel pump, replace filters regularly.



*Replacing air filters is an easy fix that many drivers can do themselves, or ask their mechanics to do during oil changes or other repair shop visits.*

According to GearHeads, for older cars, studies have indicated that by replacing a dirty air filter, one can improve gas mileage by as much as 14 percent.

- Reduce stress on the engine. Because of the air-to-fuel mix in engines, even a mixture that is slightly off balance can affect what is going on under the hood. That means the engine must work harder to get enough clean air into the chamber to complete the combustion cycle, says the Automotive Training Center.

- Enjoy more power. A filter that is saturated with dirt will restrict air flow. In such instances, drivers may notice a lack of power during acceleration. Replacing the filter can easily restore that pep.

- Reduce vehicle emissions. Environmental concerns are a priority for many people. By keeping the engine working properly, with the advantage of clean, unobstructed air entering the chamber, a vehicle may produce lower emissions.



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