

While the Tire Rack tries to keep tire costs as low as possible, price is often a consideration when purchasing tires. Even with high fuel costs, it seems less agonizing to fill the tank with fuel than invest in a set of new tires.

Why is it that the price of fuel seems relatively inexpensive while the cost of its tires may give the impression of being high? If we tracked our total costs we'll find that typical fuel costs for just 10, 000 miles of driving for a car that delivers 20 mpg (see chart below) actually exceed our tire costs. And believe us, we've found that the quality and performance of tires has a lot more to do with driving satisfaction than fuel does.

We think that much of the misperception has to do with the fact that we buy fuel one tank-full at a time, and don't really look at its total cost for thousands of miles. Our tires are paid for "up front" and then last for tens of thousands of miles.

If you are selecting new tires to improve your car's performance and come across two tires that have caught your eye, comparing their cost over the long run can help you decide. If one tire looks perfect, although more expensive than another tire that appears to be a close second, consider evaluating your options by comparing "how much per mile" each tire will cost.

Consider the following:

If you drive your sports car another 20,000 miles and are considering the "perfect" set of performance tires at \$150 each, or another set that costs \$130 each, you may be surprised to find out that the cost of the "perfect" set of four tires costs just 3 cents per mile...while the "second place" set of four costs 2.6 cents per mile. Will **not** spending the extra \$80 today make up for **not** having selected the "perfect" tire that you will be driving on the next couple of years?

If you drive your vehicle another 60,000 miles and are considering "premium" long-wearing tires at \$100 each, or economy tires costing \$60 each, you may be surprised to find out that the cost of the "premium" set costs just 0.6 cents per mile...while the economy set costs 0.5 cents per mile. Will **not** spending the extra \$100 today make up for **not** having selected the "premium" tire that you will be driving on the next four years? Will the economy tire last 60,000 miles?

If you live in the snowbelt and drive your vehicle another 60,000 miles and are considering 2 sets of tires (a set for summer and winter) at \$100 each, or all-season tires costing \$75 each, you may be surprised to find out that the cost of both "premium" sets costs just 1.3 cents per mile total...while the economy set costs 0.5 cents per mile. Will **not** spending the extra \$500 today make up for **not** having selected the premium summer and winter tires that will make it easier to navigate snow and ice for the upcoming years?

Estimated Total Fuel Costs:

10,000 miles @ 15 mpg = 666 gal @ \$3.37/gal =
\$2,244.00

10,000 miles @ 20 mpg = 500 gal @ \$3.37/gal =
\$1,685.00

10,000 miles @ 25 mpg = 400 gal @ \$3.37/gal =
\$1,348.00

10,000 miles @ 30 mpg = 333 gal @ \$3.37/gal =
\$1,122.00