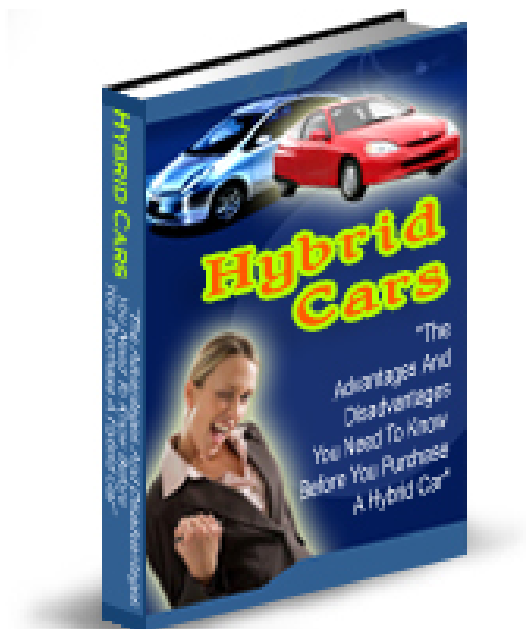


Hybrid Cars

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Introduction

The main topic of this discussion is HYBRID VEHICLES. Like many individuals and groups out there in the real world, we ask the really obvious, but sometimes also tough questions to answer that most struggle with when contemplating the addition of a Hybrid vehicle to their driveway, garage and lifestyle.

Some of the questions go to the fundamentals, like: Why hybrid vehicles? What are they? Are they any good? What do they cost? Where would they be found? Who uses them? How are they best applied?

Even more intricate and complex questions surface than at first glance and consideration:

- How do you make up your mind about hybrid cars?
- Is a hybrid vehicle even a viable option and alternative?
- Are there certain circumstances that a hybrid would be considered better, more efficient?
- What are the actual benefits of hybrid vehicles?
- What criteria is there to use and pay special attention to when buying a hybrid vehicle?

All these questions, inquiry and advocacy of sorts, will unfold in the next 60-pages, as we probe, explore and investigate hybrid vehicles. This includes cars, SUV, minivans even concept and alternative, futuristic transportation vehicles, in more detail, we plan on placing them under even closer scrutiny to figure out exactly if it is worthwhile investing in a hybrid car (or not).

For the most part, in our opinion, it is early days yet to say that the jury is in! There is evidence and trends emerging, that hybrids are here to stay and hold the promise of future transportation vehicles. Others think the technology still has a long way to go. It hangs in the balance and sways between these ‘extremes’ as its development path continues to evolve.

To Buy A Hybrid, Or Not To Buy A Hybrid... That Is The Question!

It is true that a very diverse set of drivers, owners and enthusiasts, (even most people), consider hybrid cars for a variety of different reasons (your own musings and reasons will probably just add to the list here) ...

- As a concept and environmentally sound alternative it shows good global citizenship
- It is a trend that they want to be part of and be associated with
- Conservation and sustainability of our world, the legacy we leave for our children
- Leading by example and being a pioneer
- Weird-looking and a cool idea to have one, gadget, newest ‘toy’ to add to the list
- Fuel-economy and saving money, gas
- Less emissions and pollutants into the atmosphere
- Less gasoline/fossil fuel reliant
- Potential investment
- Keeping up with the Joneses!

Whatever YOUR particular incentive, motivation or rationale for getting one, hybrid car sales are soaring. According to recent news-reports in the USA over the last 12 months an increase of 139% was cited. It is a definite trend and here to stay. The wave of the future...undeniably here!

The Questions And Rationale Behind Hybrid Vehicles

The best way to start off writing this book, I thought, was to

ask several people (proud new owners, prospective buyers and just the general public at large, across gender, age group and preferences, randomly selected) the same two questions: (i) What are the TOP FIVE reasons to buy/invest in a hybrid as well as (ii) the TOP THREE reasons they would not consider buying a hybrid. (TIP # 1: You can ask and answer these yourself to, it helps to provide some perspective)

Most frequent responses regarding reasons to buy:

- Easy to drive, handling and ease of parking
- Fuel efficiency
- Doing my part/good for protecting the environment
- Reduction in fuel emissions
- Reduced engine maintenance costs
- Value, Economical, Purchase price
- Costs to operate
- Cutting edge technology
- Proclaimed longevity

Most frequent responses regarding reasons NOT to buy:

- Added cost to purchase a hybrid vehicle
- Do not like the selection of hybrid vehicles currently available

- A follower, not a leader when it comes to new trends
- Preferences for larger automobiles (for safety reasons)
- Larger vehicles are not yet available in hybrid versions
- Insufficient track record
- Driver and passenger safety concerns
- Lack of storage

The range, scope and depth of the answers received surprised me in some cases, not in others. What are your reasons? (TIP # 2: write them down, sort and prioritize them, it helps later, when you get to the point where you might be stuck between two or more choices, or are trying to compare selection criteria).

Here is another example of a typical response received on the question of to buy or not to buy...

Also talking with owners of Hybrid vehicles to get the 'facts' and inside scoop, going for a test drive yourself and comparing features and performance according to some preset criteria can all help you to make up your mind on what to buy.

If you are considering a hybrid, maybe getting this book, was your way of figuring out if the value-proposition held anything for you specifically. We wish you well on your

1. IN YOUR OPINION OR FOR YOU PERSONALLY, WHAT WOULD THE TOP FIVE REASONS, CRITERIA, INCENTIVES OR MOTIVATORS BE FOR YOU TO INVEST/BUY A HYBRID VEHICLE?

- Is no more expensive to purchase.
- Is no more expensive to operate (fuel).
- Is no more expensive to maintain.

2. WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE DETERRENTS, ISSUES AND CONCERNS THAT WILL CAUSE YOU NOT TO INVEST/BUY A HYBRID VEHICLE?

- None of the vehicles existing today are attractive.
- None of the vehicles are spacious enough.
- None of the vehicles has enough power for a full load in mountain roads.

3. IF YOU WERE TO BUY A HYBRID TOMORROW, WHAT WOULD BE THE KEY ELEMENTS THAT YOU WOULD BE LOOKING FOR - LIST AS MANY AS YOU WANT...

Style, first, everything else is secondary.

Reliability is second, everything else after.

selection endeavor and musing on purchasing a hybrid (or not!)

As gas prices keep soaring, with not relief for consumers on the horizon any time soon and fossil fuels not a sustainable, renewable energy source, the sale of hybrids seem to be in a positive correlation. The higher the gas prices goes, the higher the sales tend to be for hybrid vehicles as people try every which way to break free and save a couple of bucks! So what is or what makes a 'hybrid' vehicle?

A typical hybrid electric vehicle or HEV as the automotive industry aptly quipped and dubbed its newest brain-child and ingenious concepts, is a popular option to consider if you are in the market for a new or replacement vehicle.

But what makes a hybrid a HIBRID vehicle? In simple terms.

As the word implies it is a combination, mix or cross between two things. The 'hybrid' actually in effect has TWO engines. One is electric and the other is internal combustion (which we all know, love and are used to). These work on

their own, independently, as well as together or collectively/collaboratively to make your car go and perform consistently.

The hybrid cars generally run on a either or basis UNTIL the driver would require MORE POWER, or wanted to go much faster, say passing, changing lanes or flooring it. Then the combination of the two engines together deliver the power and performance on-demand that you want and desire.

They can work individually quite well and self-sufficiently, BUT YET, they also collaborate and pool their resources under certain circumstances to give you that extra horses under-hood, willing, capable and able.

They are like flip-sides of a coin, working separately, but combined is their best currency and purpose. They operate almost in tandem.

If you are opting for , or looking particularly for a low emission, fuel efficient and downright wonderfully aerodynamic, automotive style and design, then the Hybrids are for you!

Fundamental Steps To Consider When Buying A Hybrid

1. There is a wide variety and choice of hybrid vehicles already on the market, with lots of newly launched, concept and alternative innovative hybrids making their way onto the market. Supply and demand fuels and drives this fire further. Do not assume that your choices are limited just because the technology is relatively new. **DO NOT GET OR BE CONFUSED OR MISLED BY INDUSTRY VERBIAGE:** Learn the terminology, language and culture behind these vehicles. (Tip # 3: Take the time to study the differences, classes and types of hybrid vehicles – it will help you narrow the field and tell the real hybrids from the ‘impostors’)

(i) Super Ultra Low-Emission Vehicle (90% cleaner than the average new 2002 model year car, according to the California Air Resources Board Standard); and

(ii) An Ultra Low-Emission Vehicle (about 50% cleaner than the average new 2001 model year car).

NOTE:

(iii) There are also furthermore zero-emission cars on

the road at present, but they are electric vehicles, plug-ins, not HEVs.

2. Self-assess your current situation, commute, driving habits, preferences and needs. How and where you drive your vehicle (most) is a definite valid question to be asking. This reflection and consideration will help you decide whether an HEV is right for you.

- Typically thought, as a general rule of thumb, hybrid vehicles are reliable and greatly suited for urban and suburban driving:

- The short trips and stop-and-go traffic make for impressive fuel savings, if your car runs on an electric engine at low RPMs.

- Highway and interstate commuters who drive these cars will have lower fuel economy.

- Combination/hybrid engines (combustion/electrical assist) less to no difference on the fuel economy.

3. They say that variety is the spice of life. Choices and options are limited still with Hybrid vehicles and sometimes for the more popular models you might have to wait a while for delivery of yours as well. Lots of hybrids are being

introduced in the market and it will be expanding annually. (Tip # 4: Keep a watchful eye on the car-shows, expos and industry announcements on Hybrids. The market is highly competitive and some automakers are even collaborating to get products to market quicker)

4. SLIGHTLY HIGHER COST will still be an issue. They are high in demand, short in supply, complex technology to manufacture and will become cheaper as the market grows. Some aftermarket offerings are already making its way into the marketplace.

5. Availability and maintenance might be an issues in certain areas (outside or urban centers for example). Repair and auto-body shops that work on hybrid cars have to be researched closely as well to ensure smooth operating and regular service as required, done by someone who is familiar and certified to work on these cars.

Take advantage of numerous tax deductions and even free parking for the purchase of a hybrid car.

If you are considering a serious purchase of a Hybrid vehicle

- Consider all the pros and cons, benefits and costs of a Super Ultra Low- and Ultra Low-Emission vehicles
- Keep in mind that the availability and choice for HEVs are limited
- Local repair shops, maintenance and cost of ownership might be a little more expensive than your normal run of the mill car, SUV, truck or Minivan.

An eclectic list of current Hybrid vehicles, Different Types, choices and price-points

Here is a line-up of the newest 2006 Hybrid Cars:

- Ford Escape Hybrid is a hybrid SUV first, with V6 power and a four cylinder fuel economy to boot. According to online sources, it is a popular choice and winner in/for BOTH functionality and environmental awareness categories.
- Honda Accord Hybrid is faster than a conventional model and a V6 hybrid.
- Honda Civic Hybrid is a slightly modified and converted vehicle. Its features are pretty much the same, but it offers greater fuel economy and less emissions.
- Lexus RX400h Hybrid is the top-line entry in the hybrid SUV class, it is a popular selection for the upper class budget and environmentally conscious.

- Mercury Mariner Hybrid is Ford's first hybrid attempt at the market.
- The all-time favorite Toyota Prius Hybrid for a breath of fresh air and affordable, yet responsible automotive excellence.
- Toyota Highlander Hybrid SUV is a popular choice as well generating a lot of buzz and interest lately.

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