

Most drivers do not do this. Airplane pilots are required to use logbooks for flying, and therefore know the value of keeping a good logbook. It is a skill and a habit that can also be very useful for driving cars, especially older ones.

Any sort of bound (or ring-binder) small notebook will do. I find it very useful to record on the front page pertinent data about the vehicle: VIN number, year model, engine type, date purchased, etc. It is also useful to extract from the owner's manual other useful items such as fuel tank capacity, oil sump capacity and type (or types) of oil, the other fluid types, how often to change the oil, tire sizes and pressures, etc.

The second page can contain a list of the most common replacement part numbers, using the numbers from your favorite auto parts store. These could include things like oil filters, spark plug types (with appropriate electrode gap), air filters, belts, hoses, brake pads, etc. This page is also a good place to record useful data like wrench sizes for your oil drain plug, etc.

On about the third page you start keeping a log of "important things". I find a record of fuel fill-ups, oil changes, plus other maintenance and repairs, to be quite useful. I can go back and figure out fuel mileage and oil consumption rates, if I record the data correctly and completely.

#### FILL-UPS –

At a minimum, record odometer reading and gallons-to-fill. I record these plus the date, the place, the cost per gallon, and the total cost, and I leave a space for fuel mileage (computed later). Recording place-purchased and unit price helps you choose a station with the cheapest good-quality gasoline (or diesel). If you experience erratic running, look at the last place you filled up, and suspect dirt or water in their fuel. If your fuel consumption suddenly increases to something out of line with previous experiences, something is going wrong. You may need a tune-up or repair.

#### OIL CHANGES –

At a minimum, record odometer and whether or not you changed the filter. I record these plus date, place, and cost. You can check back later to see which oil change place gives you the better deal, or which place forgot to tighten something, if you develop a dripping oil leak. (Most places will stand behind their work.)

#### OIL ADDITIONS –

Some of you will need to add oil between changes. If you record odometer, date, and how much you added, you can still keep track of oil consumption rates, if you desire. If the consumption rate suddenly jumps, you may need to see your mechanic, because something somewhere went wrong.

## MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS –

Record what you did, who did it, and the cost. This could be routine (like tire rotation or new spark plugs) or non-routine (like fixing a flat or a brake job). If you keep a record of what was done and how much it cost, you can tell when the car is wearing out: maintenance costs suddenly start to spike up over time. I record these things plus date and odometer reading, for a more detailed and potentially useful record.

## TRIPS AND BUSINESS USE –

I usually record trips just because it's a different kind of driving, and fuel and oil consumption figures will be different. For business use, you need very detailed records of odometer readings and dates to satisfy the IRS (otherwise they will deny the deduction on your tax form!). Keep date, odometer, and what the trip or business use was for.

## ODDITIES –

If anything out of the ordinary happens, like erratic running or a freak weather event or a failure, make an entry. Record date, odometer, and what happened. If you are going back through the records trying to figure out when some trouble or failure started, such notes can be invaluable for you or your mechanic.

EXAMPLES – a typical front page:

OPERATIONS LOG	
Nissan Sentra GXE Sedan	
[Carb # 2599 lb Fuel 1/14/11 314/3413 mi]	
Volume 1 6-1-99	
CHASSIS (VIN)	1N4AB41D5UCR0434
ENGINE	GALIBDE model - 5000 cc V6
TRANSMISSION	Auto 3rd GP = 4th
YEAR MODEL	1998
DATE PURCHASED	6-1-99
ODO @ PURCHASE	15,560
ODO @ LOG START	15,560
LICENSE #	
FUEL	13.4 US Gal (11 Imp 50 L) 87 OCT
ENGINE OIL - (type)	3 1/2 qt of Pennzoil 40T 5W-30
TRANS FL - (type)	DEXRON 3 1 qt 122-176 F
COOLANT - (type)	Ethylene Glycol 6 qt 57 F
PURE STEER	DEXRON 3 1 qt 122-176 F
WINDSH WASH	Any Std Fluid
TIRES (size/type)	P175/65R14 33F X 29R PM
GRATE FLUID	DET 3
OIL FILTER w/oil	NAPA 511621361
AIR FILTER	30K 30
SPARK PLUGS (type)	BR4 (5000) E-11 3/8 11/16 11/16 11/16
A/C	134a w/ Nissans Tyre Tube
BELT	303X 44409 11/16 11/16 11/16 11/16

Typical fuel mileage:

OPERATIONS SINCE PURCHASE:

PURCHASE W/ FUEL TANK	6-1-99	15,560
FUEL 10.89 gal. 5000 87	\$10.88	@ 99.9 mpg
6-7-99 15.863/10280	4016	(21.8 mpg)
FUEL 6/14/99 16/96	@ 97.9	
\$ 8.85	9.04 gal	(20.1 mpg) 333.2
FUEL 6/16/99 16/336	@ 97.7	
\$ 5.92	6.048 gal	(21.1 mpg) 139.9
FUEL 6/25/99 16/633	@ 97.9	
\$ 9.78	9.98 gal	(23.6) (20.1 mpg)

Typical oil additions and changes:

Add Oil 9-29-02 608,292

0.5 qt SAE 20W50 50 +  
to 1/3 from below low mark

about 500 miles to oil change

OIL CHANGE 10-6-02 608,542

• Filled to fill 3.5 qt SAE 20W50 SL

Canoco brand 3 qt 6066, 0.5 to fill

• Was 1/2 wanted drain added low mark

• Low NAPA 21301 5.1 qt

• general fluids check 50-40 plug

1200

Typical of maintenance items:

Tire Replacement 6-14-00 33425 @ ATB  
 4 for 05 Goodrich P175 65 SR14 "B" + B"  
 342.57 incl. incl. align. 12 delaware  
 failure, perhaps a bit of could wear, maybe not

Typical of repair items:

Fuel 12-5-00 42565 @ 1299  
 8726 gal 8 11.34 67.67 "w/85"  
 Attempted repairs 12-17-00 142,706 "w/85" start  
 suspect inside dimb OK  
 spark plug wires 1 12K 2' 6K 1/2  
 OK 2 11 ER 19" 6.2 K 1/2  
 3 8.5 ER 14" 6.4 K 1/2  
 4 70 ER 1' 7 K 1/2  
 Replaced plugs NICE 0K 5E-11 @ .040 - 5111 1/2  
 (old plug sets 0.3 0.3 0.3 0.5)  
 0 new set plug set spark test slow spark OK  
 0 No bleeder hose - just use fire! old plugs  
 used fuel on them.