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## **General Motors moves towards fuel efficiency**

URL: [http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0806/080605-fuel\\_efficient\\_cars.html](http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0806/080605-fuel_efficient_cars.html)

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## THE ARTICLE

It's all change in the American auto industry. Just a fortnight after Ford Motor Company announced cuts to its sports utility vehicle (SUV) production, General Motors followed suit yesterday. GM, the world's largest auto maker, announced it would close four factories that make SUVs and pick-up trucks by 2010. Bosses said the decision reflects changes in consumer tastes towards smaller, more economical cars. A company spokesperson said SUVs were now hurting the company's bottom line. It sold 28 per cent fewer vehicles in May compared with the same period last year. The steepest declines were in the sales of the gas-guzzling SUVs. Recent oil price hikes have meant GM is now forced to focus on more environmentally-friendly cars. It said the new policy was "to aggressively respond to growing demand for fuel-efficient vehicles".

In a sign of desperate measures, GM is considering offloading its Hummer brand. Sales of this SUV-cum-tank have plummeted as motorists can no longer afford to fill its tank and keep it on the road. GM chief executive Rick Wagoner said: "At this point, we are considering all options for the Hummer brand...everything from a complete revamp of the product line-up to a partial or complete sale of the brand." He added: "High gas prices are changing consumer behaviour and changing it rapidly. We don't believe it's a spike or a temporary shift. We believe it is, by and large, permanent." Wagoner said the emphasis now was on the production of the Chevrolet Volt, a plug-in electric car, scheduled to be in car showrooms by the end of 2010. GM is tied with Toyota for the title of the world's largest car maker, but Toyota is way ahead in producing fuel-efficient cars.

# WARM-UPS

**1. CARS:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about cars. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*auto industry / fortnight / SUVs / following suit / the bottom line / gas guzzlers / desperate measures / tanks / motorists / revamps / car showrooms / being way ahead*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. CAR OPINIONS:** What do you think of these car opinions? Why do you think people might have these opinions? Discuss them with your partner(s). Change partners and share your ideas.

- a. All cars over 1,000cc should be banned
- b. People worry too much about cars and pollution
- c. Car engines should be limited to a top speed of 80kph
- d. There should be no petrol-driven cars after 2010
- e. People should be able to drive as fast as they like
- f. Big, powerful cars are safer
- g. SUVs should be banned in cities
- h. Increased taxes on cars should help provide free public transportation

**4. WHY BUY?:** What's important for you when buying a car? Rank the items below: 10 = "so, so, **so** important;" 1 = "totally unimportant". Compare your answers with your partner(s).

_____ price	_____ fuel-efficiency
_____ colour	_____ warranty
_____ engine size / speed / power	_____ central locking
_____ stereo	_____ maker

**5. HEADLINE PREDICTION:** With your partner(s), use the words in the "Chat" activity above to predict what the news article will be about. Once you have your story, change partners and share them. Who was closest to the real story?

**6. FUEL EFFICIENCY:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the term 'fuel efficiency'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. A US car maker is going to reduce the number of big cars it produces. | T / F |
| b. The car maker is responding to changes in consumer preferences.       | T / F |
| c. The production of SUVs is very good for the company's bottom line.    | T / F |
| d. GM is selling fewer SUVs now than at the same time last year.         | T / F |
| e. The Hummer is like a mixture of an SUV and a tank.                    | T / F |
| f. High gas prices have slowly changed consumers' behaviour.             | T / F |
| g. GM believes the change in consumer spending patterns is temporary.    | T / F |
| h. GM is tied with Toyota as leaders in producing fuel-efficient cars.   | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. fortnight     | a. mirrors      |
| 2. followed suit | b. nose-dived   |
| 3. reflects      | c. generally    |
| 4. bottom line   | d. did the same |
| 5. hikes         | e. overhaul     |
| 6. measures      | f. far          |
| 7. plummeted     | g. rises        |
| 8. revamp        | h. two weeks    |
| 9. by and large  | i. profit       |
| 10. way          | j. actions      |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                                     |                               |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. It's all change in               | a. large, permanent           |
| 2. the decision reflects changes in | b. the product line-up        |
| 3. sales of the gas-                | c. hikes                      |
| 4. Recent oil price                 | d. consumer tastes            |
| 5. aggressively respond to growing  | e. have plummeted             |
| 6. In a sign of desperate           | f. guzzling SUVs              |
| 7. Sales of this SUV-cum-tank       | g. ahead                      |
| 8. a complete revamp of             | h. the American auto industry |
| 9. We believe it is, by and         | i. demand                     |
| 10. Toyota is way                   | j. measures                   |

# WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

It's all \_\_\_\_\_ in the American auto industry. Just a fortnight after Ford Motor Company announced \_\_\_\_\_ to its sports utility vehicle (SUV) production, General Motors followed \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday. GM, the world's largest auto maker, announced it would close four factories that make SUVs and pick-up trucks by 2010. Bosses said the decision \_\_\_\_\_ changes in consumer tastes towards smaller, more economical cars. A company spokesperson said SUVs were now hurting the company's bottom \_\_\_\_\_. It sold 28 per cent fewer vehicles in May compared with the same period last year. The steepest declines were in the sales of the gas-\_\_\_\_\_ SUVs. Recent oil price \_\_\_\_\_ have meant GM is now forced to focus on more environmentally-friendly cars. It said the new policy was "to aggressively \_\_\_\_\_ to growing demand for fuel-efficient vehicles".

*guzzling*  
*cuts*  
*reflects*  
*respond*  
*change*  
*line*  
*hikes*  
*suit*

In a \_\_\_\_\_ of desperate measures, GM is considering offloading its Hummer brand. Sales of this SUV-\_\_\_\_\_ -tank have plummeted as motorists can no longer afford to fill its tank and keep it on the \_\_\_\_\_. GM chief executive Rick Wagoner said: "At this point, we are considering all options for the Hummer brand...everything from a complete \_\_\_\_\_ of the product line-up to a \_\_\_\_\_ or complete sale of the brand." He added: "High gas prices are changing consumer behaviour and changing it rapidly. We don't believe it's a spike or a temporary \_\_\_\_\_. We believe it is, by and large, permanent." Wagoner said the emphasis now was on the production of the Chevrolet Volt, a plug-in electric car, scheduled to be in car showrooms by the end of 2010. GM is \_\_\_\_\_ with Toyota for the title of the world's largest car maker, but Toyota is \_\_\_\_\_ ahead in producing fuel-efficient cars.

*shift*  
*cum*  
*way*  
*revamp*  
*tied*  
*sign*  
*road*  
*partial*

## **LISTENING:** Listen and fill in the spaces.

It's \_\_\_\_\_ American auto industry. Just a fortnight after Ford Motor Company announced \_\_\_\_\_ utility vehicle (SUV) production, General Motors \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday. GM, the world's largest auto maker, announced it would close four factories that make SUVs and pick-up trucks by 2010. Bosses said the decision reflects \_\_\_\_\_ tastes towards smaller, more economical cars. A company spokesperson said SUVs \_\_\_\_\_ company's bottom line. It sold 28 per cent fewer vehicles in May compared with the same period last year. The steepest declines were in the sales \_\_\_\_\_ SUVs. Recent oil price hikes have meant GM is now forced to focus on more environmentally-friendly cars. It said the new policy was "to aggressively \_\_\_\_\_ demand for fuel-efficient vehicles".

In a sign \_\_\_\_\_, GM is considering offloading its Hummer brand. Sales of this SUV-cum-tank have plummeted as motorists can no longer afford to fill its tank and \_\_\_\_\_ road. GM chief executive Rick Wagoner said: "At this point, we are \_\_\_\_\_ for the Hummer brand...everything from a complete revamp of the product line-up to a \_\_\_\_\_ sale of the brand." He added: "High gas prices are changing consumer behaviour and changing it rapidly. We don't believe it's a spike or a temporary shift. We believe \_\_\_\_\_, permanent." Wagoner said the emphasis now was on the production of the Chevrolet Volt, \_\_\_\_\_ car, scheduled to be in car showrooms by the end of 2010. GM is tied with Toyota for the title of the world's largest car maker, but Toyota \_\_\_\_\_ producing fuel-efficient cars.

# AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'fuel' and 'efficient'.

<b>fuel</b>	<b>efficient</b>
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- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• fortnight</li><li>• suit</li><li>• reflects</li><li>• bottom</li><li>• hikes</li><li>• respond</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sign</li><li>• afford</li><li>• partial</li><li>• large</li><li>• emphasis</li><li>• way</li></ul>
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# STUDENT CAR SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about cars in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.



# CARS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the abbreviation 'SUV'?
- c) What do you think of gas-guzzling SUVs?
- d) Do you think in future the world will be full of small cars?
- e) Are you worried the tribe will now be destroyed by the modern world?
- f) Does your country, like America, have a love affair with cars?
- g) How have your tastes in cars changed over the years?
- h) Do you think it's time people started buying smaller, more economical cars?
- i) How have the recent oil price hikes affected you?
- j) What do you think of GM's decision to close four of its factories?

*General Motors moves towards fuel efficiency - 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2008*  
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# CARS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Have you ever taken any desperate measures in your life?
- c) What do you think of people who drive cars that are like tanks when they don't really need such a huge car?
- d) What do you know about the Hummer brand of vehicles?
- e) What kinds of things change your spending behaviour?
- f) Would you feel strange driving a car you plug in to the electricity to recharge it?
- g) What is your favourite car?
- h) Who do you think is the world's best auto maker?
- i) Are you happy to change your lifestyle in response to global warming?
- j) What questions would you like to ask GM CEO Rick Wagoner?

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# LANGUAGE

It's all change (1) \_\_\_\_\_ the American auto industry. Just a (2) \_\_\_\_\_ after Ford Motor Company announced cuts to its sports utility vehicle (SUV) production, General Motors followed (3) \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday. GM, the world's largest auto maker, announced it would close four factories that make SUVs and pick-up trucks by 2010. Bosses said the decision (4) \_\_\_\_\_ changes in consumer tastes towards smaller, more economical cars. A company spokesperson said SUVs were now (5) \_\_\_\_\_ the company's bottom line. It sold 28 per cent fewer vehicles in May compared with the same period last year. The steepest declines were in the sales of the gas-guzzling SUVs. Recent oil price (6) \_\_\_\_\_ have meant GM is now forced to focus on more environmentally-friendly cars. It said the new policy was "to aggressively respond to growing demand for fuel-efficient vehicles".

In a sign of desperate measures, GM is considering offloading its Hummer brand. Sales of this SUV-cum-tank have plummeted (7) \_\_\_\_\_ motorists can no longer afford to fill its tank and (8) \_\_\_\_\_ it on the road. GM chief executive Rick Wagoner said: "At (9) \_\_\_\_\_ point, we are considering all options for the Hummer brand...everything from a complete (10) \_\_\_\_\_ of the product line-up to a partial or complete sale of the brand." He added: "High gas prices are changing consumer behaviour and changing it rapidly. We don't believe it's a spike or a temporary shift. We believe it is, by and (11) \_\_\_\_\_, permanent." Wagoner said the emphasis now was on the production of the Chevrolet Volt, a plug-in electric car, scheduled to be in car showrooms by the end of 2010. GM is tied with Toyota for the title of the world's largest car maker, but Toyota is (12) \_\_\_\_\_ ahead in producing fuel-efficient cars.

**Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.**

- |     |                 |                 |                |                |
|-----|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1.  | (a) in          | (b) on          | (c) by         | (d) to         |
| 2.  | (a) fortnightly | (b) four nights | (c) fortnight  | (d) fort       |
| 3.  | (a) jacket      | (b) costume     | (c) dress      | (d) suit       |
| 4.  | (a) reflection  | (b) reflects    | (c) reflective | (d) reflectors |
| 5.  | (a) halting     | (b) hunting     | (c) hating     | (d) hurting    |
| 6.  | (a) hiking      | (b) hikers      | (c) hikes      | (d) hiked      |
| 7.  | (a) why         | (b) as          | (c) for        | (d) sure       |
| 8.  | (a) keep        | (b) kept        | (c) keeping    | (d) keeps      |
| 9.  | (a) this        | (b) these       | (c) that       | (d) those      |
| 10. | (a) rev         | (b) vampire     | (c) revamp     | (d) revise     |
| 11. | (a) enormous    | (b) huge        | (c) big        | (d) large      |
| 12. | (a) weigh       | (b) way         | (c) why        | (d) weight     |

# **WRITING:**

Write about *cars* for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

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# HOMework

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out more about GM's decision and its impact on its workforce. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. CARS:** Make a poster about the history of cars. Compare cars today with those of the past and those of the future. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. TASTES:** Write a magazine article about people's changing tastes in cars. Include imaginary interviews with a 20-year-old who loves big, fast cars and a sensible, middle-aged person with a family who cares about the environment.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to the head of General Motors. Ask him three questions about his decision to close four factories and cut SUV production. Give him three pieces of advice on what he should do to increase fuel-efficiency in cars. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

# ANSWERS

## TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T      b. T      c. F      d. T      e. T      f. F      g. F      h. F

## SYNONYM MATCH:

- |     |               |    |              |
|-----|---------------|----|--------------|
| 1.  | fortnight     | a. | two weeks    |
| 2.  | followed suit | b. | did the same |
| 3.  | reflects      | c. | mirrors      |
| 4.  | bottom line   | d. | profit       |
| 5.  | hikes         | e. | rises        |
| 6.  | measures      | f. | actions      |
| 7.  | plummeted     | g. | nose-dived   |
| 8.  | revamp        | h. | overhaul     |
| 9.  | by and large  | i. | generally    |
| 10. | way           | j. | far          |

## PHRASE MATCH:

- |     |                                  |    |                            |
|-----|----------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 1.  | It's all change in               | a. | the American auto industry |
| 2.  | the decision reflects changes in | b. | consumer tastes            |
| 3.  | sales of the gas-                | c. | guzzling SUVs              |
| 4.  | Recent oil price                 | d. | hikes                      |
| 5.  | aggressively respond to growing  | e. | demand                     |
| 6.  | In a sign of desperate           | f. | measures                   |
| 7.  | Sales of this SUV-cum-tank       | g. | have plummeted             |
| 8.  | a complete revamp of             | h. | the product line-up        |
| 9.  | We believe it is, by and         | i. | large, permanent           |
| 10. | Toyota is way                    | j. | ahead                      |

## GAP FILL:

### General Motors moves towards fuel efficiency

It's all **change** in the American auto industry. Just a fortnight after Ford Motor Company announced **cuts** to its sports utility vehicle (SUV) production, General Motors followed **suit** yesterday. GM, the world's largest auto maker, announced it would close four factories that make SUVs and pick-up trucks by 2010. Bosses said the decision **reflects** changes in consumer tastes towards smaller, more economical cars. A company spokesperson said SUVs were now hurting the company's bottom **line**. It sold 28 per cent fewer vehicles in May compared with the same period last year. The steepest declines were in the sales of the gas-**guzzling** SUVs. Recent oil price **hikes** have meant GM is now forced to focus on more environmentally-friendly cars. It said the new policy was "to aggressively **respond** to growing demand for fuel-efficient vehicles".

In a **sign** of desperate measures, GM is considering offloading its Hummer brand. Sales of this SUV-**cum**-tank have plummeted as motorists can no longer afford to fill its tank and keep it on the **road**. GM chief executive Rick Wagoner said: "At this point, we are considering all options for the Hummer brand...everything from a complete **revamp** of the product line-up to a **partial** or complete sale of the brand." He added: "High gas prices are changing consumer behaviour and changing it rapidly. We don't believe it's a spike or a temporary **shift**. We believe it is, by and large, permanent." Wagoner said the emphasis now was on the production of the Chevrolet Volt, a plug-in electric car, scheduled to be in car showrooms by the end of 2010. GM is **tied** with Toyota for the title of the world's largest car maker, but Toyota is **way** ahead in producing fuel-efficient cars.

## LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a    2 - c    3 - d    4 - b    5 - d    6 - c    7 - b    8 - a    9 - a    10 - c    11 - d    12 - b