

Costco Gas  
Told by Steve Welling

A while ago, I pulled up to get gas at Costco. The line was unusually long. I had to remind myself of that 2 cents per gallon savings. But I was going to lose my savings idling my engine while I waited for a pump. I turned my engine off. Immediately, the car in front of me pulled up. Well, we've all been told how much more gas it takes to start your car than to simply idle. So what was I to do now? The one-car space in front of me was screaming "Here's a weak and vulnerable person who will easily surrender his place in line!" Without any further argument from these competing voices, I shifted into neutral and got out. Leaning inside the car, I began to push.

But the car didn't budge. Not until I had struggled two more times in public, dramatic fashion did I clear my car's inertial resistance start moving it. Looking back, I was surprised to see that an elderly woman from behind me in line had left her car and was actually the driving force moving mine. "It would be a mighty strong young man that could push his car all by himself," she said, emphasizing the rhetorical 'it would be' – though generously leaving out 'though that's clearly not what we have here today'. Then, the gas station attendant began to help push. "How far have you been pushing it?", he said. I paused to consider the consequences of lying to a uniformed Costco agent. "Oh, not far", I said modestly.

With the three of us pushing, my car was now barreling ahead towards the next car in line. The situation was about to go from "uncomfortable" to "truly unfortunate". I jumped back in just in time to brake. After another stop and start with me, now inside the car, watching my brave little pit crew push with all their might, my car finally comes to a rest parallel to a pump. My two new friends were beaming ear to ear as they waved and returned from our bonding experience together. Somehow it didn't seem like the right time to tell them that I still had a quarter tank of gas. Instead, I chose to think on how our combined effort had reduced greenhouse emissions and, of course, saved me enough money to profit from my Costco fill-up.