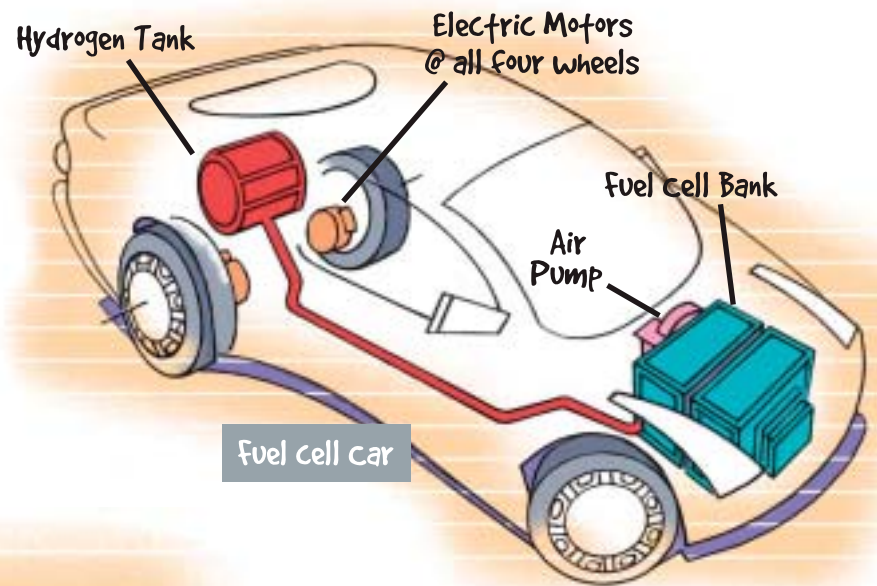
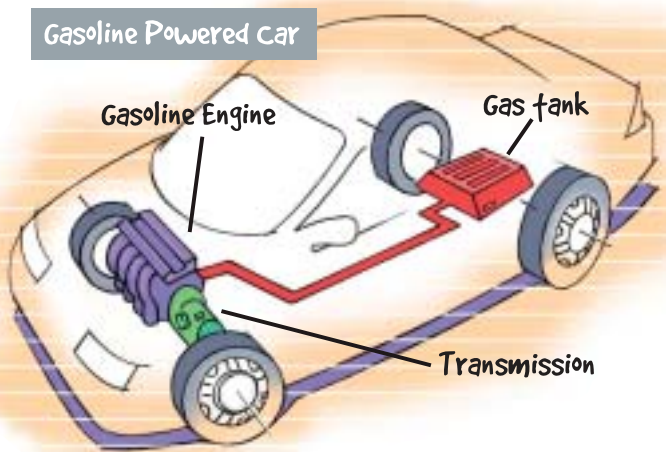
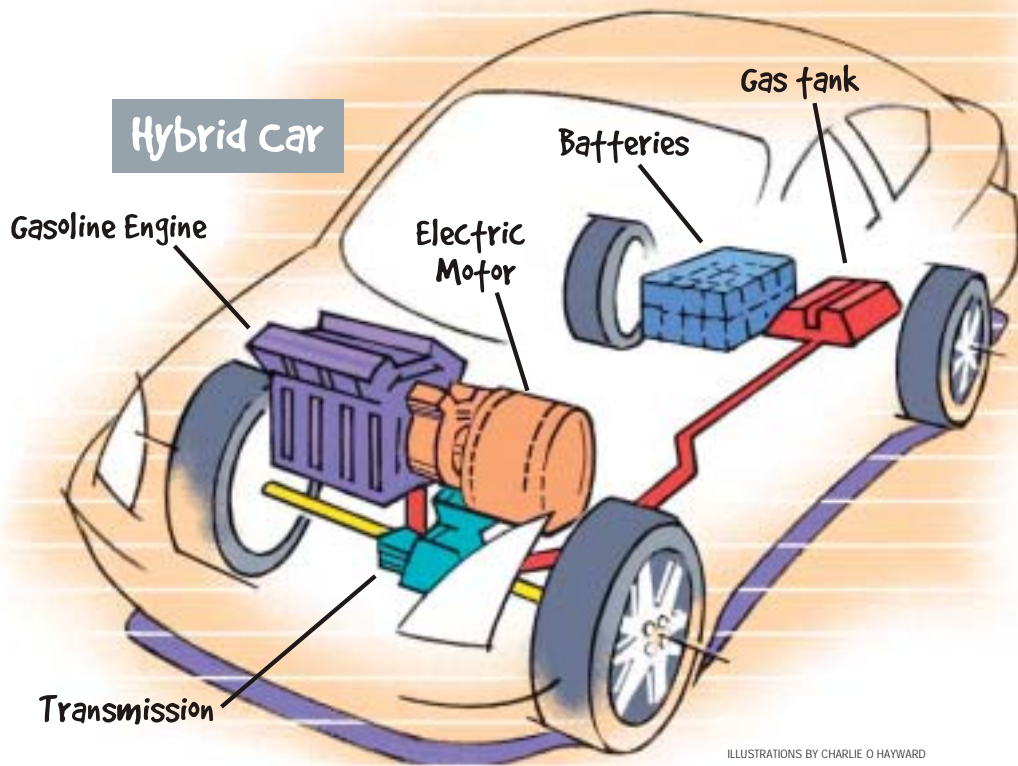


Gasoline Powered car



Hybrid car



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLIE O HAYWARD

What happens in a fuel cell

Internal-combustion engines burn gasoline to release energy, but fuel cells don't burn the hydrogen gas that fuels them. Hydrogen gas atoms are naturally stuck together in pairs (H_2). These molecules of hydrogen release electricity (electrons) when the pairs of atoms are split apart by the anode catalyst. (The atoms aren't 'split,' as in a nuclear chain reaction, they're just pried apart.) The electricity generated can run an electric motor in a car. The hydrogen ions then travel through a thin plastic membrane to combine with electrons and oxygen (air) to make H_2O – water vapor.

