

TRAILER TOWING SAFETY TIPS

INSTABILITY

Swaying (or whipping) of a tow vehicle/trailer combination at low speeds may get worse as speed increases. If this happens, take your foot off the gas pedal. Steer straight ahead while manually applying the trailer brakes. Then brake gently after the combination has begun to stabilize itself. Stabilizer or weight equalizing bars will help reduce trailer sway and may also be required by law in some states.

Check cargo first to be sure that the trailer is loaded heavier in the front. If not, reposition the load so you get 10% of the total trailer weight on the tongue. Next, make certain the rear of the tow vehicle is not overloaded. Then check for wheel wobble on both vehicles caused by bearing failure, loose lug nuts or loose spindle nuts. Now check the tow vehicle's suspension alignment. Finally, make sure that you are not exceeding the recommended maximum speed limit for safety and IT'S THE LAW.

If the above instructions have been followed, instability should now be corrected. If not, something may be wrong with your tow vehicle.

TIPS FOR THE BEGINNER (ALSO SEE HITCHING UP ON P. 21)

Place your hand at the bottom of the steering wheel. While watching in your outside mirrors, if you want the rear of the trailer to go to the right, move your hand to the right. If you want the rear of the trailer to go to the left, move your hand to the left. If the trailer starts to jackknife—STOP—pull ahead to straighten out then start procedure over again. When making turns, be aware the

trailer will turn quicker than a tow vehicle. Allow extra turning space so that the trailer wheels don't jump over a curb, hit a soft shoulder, road sign or tree. Your axle and/or tire and rim can be severely damaged as a result or from hitting the curb at a bad angle and too hard.

CAUTION

TRAILER TURNS QUICKER THAN TOW VEHICLE. ALLOW EXTRA TURNING SPACE FOR TRAILER.

CHECK YOUR POLICY

Most automobile and some homeowners insurance policies will provide some coverage for cargo trailers. They should also provide for you a "grace period" of a set number of days from the date of purchase. Call your agent.

CAUTION

NEVER INCREASE SPEED WHEN TRAILER IS SWAYING OR WHIPPING

HITCH AND BRAKE SAFETY

For safe towing it is the trailer owner's responsibility to CORRECTLY MATCH the combination of tow vehicle and trailer.

1. MATCH the maximum trailer weight allowed for the tow vehicle to the GVWR of the trailer.
2. MATCH the hitch weight carrying capacity of the tow vehicle with the loaded tongue weight of the trailer. This is generally 10% of GVWR on tag models and 20% of GVWR on 5th wheels and Goosenecks. Tag models may require a weight distributing hitch with sway controls. Contact your hitch specialist to properly set up your tow vehicle/trailer combination.
3. MATCH the size of the brake controller to the number of braking wheels on your trailer. These are sold usually as 2 to 4 wheel brake or 2 to 6 wheel brake units. For proper controller adjustment, see your brake controller manual.
4. MATCH the wiring of the tow vehicle to the wiring code on the trailer. Ensure your tow vehicle does have a ground wire running from the receptacle to the frame.
5. MATCH the ball size to the coupler size.
6. MATCH your Fifth Wheel or Gooseneck trailer to a correct and compatible hitch provided by your hitch specialist. Then consult your hitch specialist for proper maintenance of the hitch assembly.
7. Match your rear vehicle suspension to the loaded hitch weight of the rear axle of the tow vehicle.

All marginal situations should be corrected for safe trailering. Remember, you are the one that will be trying to control a large combination of weight and size at high speeds. It is your responsibility to set up tow vehicle/trailer properly. Contact or confirm your set up with a local hitch company professional.

GROSS TRAILER WEIGHT (GTW) & TONGUE WEIGHT (TW)

Class I 2,000 lbs. (GTW) 200 lbs. (TW) Compact Cars	Class II 3,500 lbs. (GTW) 300 lbs. (TW) Mid Size Cars & Small Pick Ups	Class III 3,500–5,000 lbs. (GTW) 300–500 lbs. (TW) Minivans
Class III 4,000 lbs. (GTW) 350 lbs. (TW) Mid Size Cars Small Pick Ups Minivans	Class IV 5,000–10,000 lbs. (GTW) 500–1,000 lbs. (TW) Pick Ups SUV's Also see Hitch Selection chart on page 8	Class V 14,000 lbs. (GTW) 1,700 lbs. (TW) 20,000 lbs. (GTW) 2,000 lbs. (TW)

HITCHING UP YOUR TRAILER*

Hitching up a trailer to your tow vehicle is usually a one-person job, but it is easier if someone helps you. Here are a few of the basic steps:

1. **Back your tow vehicle as close as possible to the trailer.** It is easier and safer to do this than it is to pick up and pull the trailer to your car or truck.
2. **Release the coupler locking device.**
3. **Raise the front end of the trailer.** Place coupler directly over the hitch ball then lower it until it is seated on the hitch ball, covering it completely.
4. **Check under the coupling** to ensure the ball clamp is below the ball and not riding on top of it.
5. **Latch the coupler to the hitch ball.** Make sure it is locked in place by lifting up the trailer tongue. If the coupler comes loose from the ball, unlatch it and go back to Step 3.
6. **Make sure your jack is fully raised.**
7. **If you have a weight distributing hitch** with spring bars, follow the above procedures. Then attach the spring bar chain to the trailer and tighten it until your trailer and car are in a normal, level position.
8. **If your trailer has a surge brake** breakaway cable or chain, attach the cable or chain to your tow vehicle, allowing enough slack for you to make tight turns.
9. **Attach the safety chains** as described on page 22.
10. **Connect the trailer wiring harness** to the lighting system of your tow vehicle and check its operation (also see page 9 in this manual for details).

* Hitching Up courtesy of REESE PRODUCTS, INC.

REESE[®]

TRAILERING TACTICS*

With a trailer in tow, you're operating a vehicle combination that is longer, heavier and sometimes wider and taller, than you're used to. So you'll have to make some compensating adjustments in your normal driving practices. The following is advice in trailering tactics:

Take a "Shakedown Cruise". At least one short trial run before your first trip will help familiarize you with your trailer's operating characteristics. It will also allow you to check the trailer's lights, brakes, hitch, etc., and let you know they are all working properly.

Slow down. Moderate to slower driving speeds put less strain on your tow vehicle and trailer and make for safer traveling.

Allow extra time and space between your rig and traffic. You will need both when passing and stopping, especially if your trailer is not equipped with brakes.

Check rear view mirrors. Doing this frequently will let you know that your trailer is riding properly. We recommend outside rear view mirrors on both sides of your tow vehicle.

Swing wider. You need to make wider swings (turns) at curves and corners because your trailer's wheels are generally closer to the inside of a turn than the wheels on your tow vehicle.

Pass with extra care and caution. It takes more time and distance to get around a slower vehicle and return to the correct lane when you've got a trailer in tow.

Watch the wind direction and speed. To avoid swaying, be prepared for sudden changes in air pressure and wind buffeting when larger vehicles pass from either direction. Slow down a bit and keep a firm hold on your steering wheel. Aim straight down your lane.

Conserve fuel. You'll go farther on a tank of gas at moderate speeds. Higher speeds increase wind resistance against the trailer and reduce fuel mileage.

TRAILERING TACTICS* (continued)

Avoid sudden stops and starts. This can cause skidding, sliding, or jack-knifing, even if your trailer has brakes. Avoid quick stops while turning. Smooth, gradual starts and stops will improve your gas mileage.

Signal your intentions. Let surrounding vehicles know what you intend to do well in advance before you stop, turn, change lanes, or pass.

Shift to a lower gear. A lower gear will help ease the load on the transmission and engine when going over steep hills, sand, gravel, or dirt roads. If your tow vehicle has an “overdrive” gear, shifting out of overdrive to a lower gear may improve your gas mileage.

Always be courteous. Make it as easy as possible for faster moving vehicles to pass you. Keep to the right of the road and prepare to slow down if passing vehicles need extra time to return to their proper lane.

Don't tailgate. Allow at least one car and trailer length between you and the vehicle ahead for each 10 mph on your speedometer. Three seconds should be the minimum distance.

If a problem occurs don't panic. Stay calm and cool. Say you experience a sudden bumping or fishtailing. It may indicate a flat tire. Don't jam on the brakes or mash the accelerator in an attempt to drive out of it. Instead, come to a stop slowly as you keep driving in as straight a line as possible. If conditions permit, coast to a very slow speed and try to avoid braking, except when your wheels are straight ahead and your trailer and tow vehicle are in line with each other.

If your trailer begins to fishtail as you accelerate to highway speed, back off the accelerator a bit. This should stop the fishtailing. If it begins again as you increase speed, stop and check you load. It probably isn't distributed evenly from side to side, or it is too far back to put a sufficient load on the hitch ball. It is recommended that 10% of the trailer load be on the hitch. (See page 19 for more details). Redistribute the load as necessity dictates before continuing on the highway.

* Trailering Tactics courtesy of REESE PRODUCTS, INC.

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SAFETY CHECKLIST

- Maintenance Checklist (Up to Date)
- Hitch Ball Tight
- Hitch Ball Lubricated
- Hitch Secured in Receiver
- Safety Chains Crossed and Attached*
- Coupler Latched onto Ball
- Load Distributed Correctly and Securely
- Trailer Level when Hooked Up
- Trailer Lights Working Correctly
- Lug Nuts Checked and Tightened
- Inspect Tires for Cuts
- Tire Pressure Checks
- Breakaway Battery Charged
- Breakaway Cable Hooked Up
- Pin or Bolt through Coupler Latch
- Block Tires when Loading and Unloading

* If safety chains are too long, twist to shorten.

THE MAIN CAUSES OF TRAILERING ACCIDENTS

1. Driver error.
2. Failure to MATCH speed with weather and road conditions.
3. Trailer sway due to improper loading—more or less than 10% cargo hitch weight.
4. Failure to perform routine maintenance.

Remember, never carry passengers in trailer while moving. Check hub temperature at each stop. Adjust sensitivity of brake controller to match load. 102" axles are legal on all Federally-funded highways (and some state highways).