

Properly Towing A Travel Trailer

Parking

- Try to avoid parking on grades. If possible, have someone outside to guide you as you park. Once stopped, but before shifting into Park, have someone place blocks on the downhill side of the trailer's wheels. Apply the parking brake, shift into Park and then remove your foot from the brake pedal. Following this parking sequence is important to make sure your vehicle does not become locked in Park because of extra load on the transmission. For manual transmissions, apply the parking brake and then turn the vehicle off in either first or reverse gear.
- When uncoupling a trailer, place blocks at the front and rear of the trailer tires to ensure that the trailer does not roll away when the coupling is released.
- An unbalanced load may cause the tongue to suddenly rotate upward; therefore, before uncoupling, place jack stands under the rear of the trailer to prevent injury.

Backing Up

- Trailers will move in the opposite direction of the tow vehicle.
- Back up slowly and move the steering wheel slightly to adjust the trailer's direction.
- When backing up put your hand at the bottom of the steering wheel. To turn left, move your hand left. To turn right, move your hand right. Back up slowly. Because mirrors cannot provide all of the visibility you may need when backing up, have someone outside at the rear of the trailer to guide you whenever possible.
- Use slight movements of the steering wheel to adjust direction. Exaggerated movements will cause greater movement of the trailer. If you have difficulty, pull forward and realign the tow vehicle and trailer and start again.

Turning

- Remember to swing wider when turning.
- The trailer's wheels are closer to the inside of a turn than the wheels of your tow vehicle which means they are more likely to hit or ride up over curbs.

Passing

- When passing a slower vehicle or changing lanes, signal well in advance and make sure you allow extra distance to clear the vehicle before you pull back into the lane.
- Pass on level terrain with plenty of clearance. Avoid passing on steep upgrades or downgrades.
- If necessary, downshift for improved acceleration or speed maintenance.

- When passing on narrow roads, be careful not to go onto a soft shoulder. This could cause your trailer to jackknife or go out of control.

Pre-Departure Safety Checklist

- Before driving, make sure your vehicle maintenance and trailer maintenance are current. This is very important because towing puts additional stress on the tow vehicle.
- Make sure the wheel lug nuts/bolts on the tow vehicle and trailer are tightened to the correct torque
- Check and correct tire pressure on the tow vehicle and trailer.
- Inspect tires for uneven wear patterns on the tread, cracks, and foreign objects.
- Make sure you have wheel chocks and jack stands.
- Check routes and restrictions on bridges and tunnels.
- Be sure the hitch, coupler, draw bar, and other equipment that connect the trailer and the tow vehicle are properly secured and adjusted.
- Check that the wiring is properly connected — not touching the road, but loose enough to make turns without disconnecting or damaging the wires.
- Make sure all running lights, brake lights, turn signals, and hazard lights are working.
- Verify that the brakes on the tow vehicle and trailer are operating correctly.
- Check that all items are securely fastened on and in the trailer.
- Be sure the trailer jack, tongue support, and any attached stabilizers are raised and locked in place.
- Check load distribution to make sure the tow vehicle and trailer are properly balanced front to back and side to side.
- Check side and rear view mirrors to make sure you have good visibility.
- Do not overload the vehicle.

TIPS

Take time to practice before driving on main roads and never allow anyone to ride in or on the trailer.

Some tow vehicles may have specifically *calibrated* transmission tow—modes. Be sure to use the tow-mode recommended by the manufacturer.

Before you leave, remember to check routes and restrictions on bridges and tunnels.

The most common causes of accidents while towing a trailer are driving too fast for the conditions and not adjusting to the changes in handling. Slow down when traveling over bumpy roads, railroad crossings, and ditches.

Towing a trailer utilizes many of the same skills you use when driving normally: drive at moderate speeds, follow at a safe distance, anticipate stops, and avoid sudden steering and braking.

Hold the steering wheel as steady as possible. Slow down if you have to go over a pothole or other object in the road. Allow considerably more distance for stopping.

Be aware of the trailer's height, especially when approaching overpasses, roofed areas, or wooded areas. If you encounter problems such as accidentally departing the roadway or tire blowouts just remember: gas OFF, brakes OFF, steer STRAIGHT, and WAIT.

Towing a trailer causes decreased acceleration, increased stopping distance, and increased turning radius.

Use lower gears when traveling up or down hills. Downshifting assists with braking when going down hills and adds power when climbing hills.

Apply brakes at intervals on long downgrades to keep them from overheating.

To control swaying caused by air pressure changes and wind buffeting when large vehicles pass from either direction, release the accelerator pedal to slow down and keep a firm grip on the steering wheel.

Do:

- Take your foot off the accelerator and reduce your speed gradually.
- Apply the trailer brakes alone if your trailer has electric brakes.
- Use the driving gear that the manufacturer recommends for towing.
- Drive at moderate speeds. This will place less strain on your tow vehicle and trailer.
- Check tire pressure regularly, including the spare.

Don't:

- Hit your brake pedal hard as this may cause the trailer to jackknife.
- Try to steer out of the sway as sudden steering will make the sway worse.
- Speed up. Sway increases with speed.
- Do not run over or bump into curbs.
- Continue towing a trailer that tends to sway.

Above information provided courtesy of MBA Insurance