Tom Johnson CAMPING CENTER
MARION, NC CONCORD, NC

A Guide to Safely Towing and Trailering

Before you Tow
In order to ensure safe towing of your RV using your existing vehicle (or one you may purchase in the future), please review the following information to determine the suitability of a hitch model for your specific towing needs. Particular types of hitches must be used in accordance with the tongue weight and gross trailer weight (GTW) of your towing device. For full safety information, consult the owner's manual for your vehicle.

Note: the trailer weight ratings and ranges listed below are provided as guidelines only, based on industry standards and using an appropriately equipped base vehicle, plus driver.

Trailering Classifications

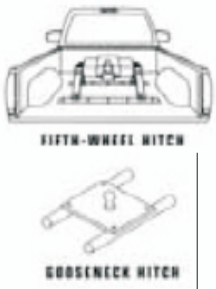
CLASSIFICATION	TYPICAL EXAMPLES	WEIGHT RANGE	TYPICAL HITCH TYPE	TYPICAL HITCH (TONGUE) WEIGHT	
Light Duty (I)	folding or travel camping trailer, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), Jet Skis or snowmobiles	up to 2,000 lbs. (trailer and cargo combined)	weight-carrying hitch	10%–15% of gross trailer weight (200 lbs.) maximum	
Medium Duty (II)	small, single-axle trailers, toy haulers (motorcycle, equipment, general open utility trailers) or small speedboats	2,001–3,500 lbs. gross trailer weight	weight-carrying hitch	10%–15% of gross trailer weight (350 lbs.) maximum	
Heavy Duty (III)	dual- or single-axle trailers, enclosed utility trailers or large boats	3,501–5,000 lbs. gross trailer weight	weight-carrying hitch, or weight-distributing hitch	10%–15% of gross trailer weight (600 lbs.) maximum	
Extra-Heavy Duty (IV)	Two-horse, travel and fifth wheel recreational trailers	5,001–10,000 lbs. gross trailer weight	weight-distributing hitch or fifth-wheel hitch	10%–15% of gross trailer weight (1,200 lbs.) maximum	
Maximum Heavy Duty (V)	largest horse, travel and fifth wheel recreational or commercial trailers	10,001 lbs. and beyond gross trailer weight	weight-distributing hitch or fifth-wheel hitch	10%–15% of gross trailer weight (1,500-lbs. maximum for weight-distributing hitch).	15%–25% of gross trailer weight (3,500-lbs. maximum for fifth-wheel or gooseneck hitch)

Selecting an Appropriate Hitch

Selecting the appropriate hitch for your trailer affects the overall safety and security of your vehicle, and the gear you are towing. Adequate equipment must be used in order to ensure your vehicle drives, turns, and stops correctly. Before selecting a hitch or trailering package, familiarize yourself with the weight ratings specific to your vehicle.

The Weight-Carrying (Deadweight) Hitch is comprised of a hitch ball mounted to a step bumper or draw bar. It is most commonly used for trailering light and medium loads. Hitch balls are available in a variety of sizes, including: Class I hitches use a 17/8-inch hitch ball, Class II trailers use a deadweight hitch and a 2-inch hitch ball, Class III hitches may be weight-carrying or weight distributing, depending how they are employed. With any weight-carrying hitch, it is critical that the hitch ball diameter matches the trailer coupler, and the ball must meet or exceed the gross trailer weight.

The Weight-Distributing Hitch is used for heavier trailering, as it evenly distributes the trailer load through the use of adjustable spring bars that pull upward on the hitch, shifting some of the weight forward onto the tow vehicle's front axle, as well as to the trailer's rear axles. This type of hitch reduces trailer sway at higher speeds, as well as generally improving vehicle steering and control.



Fifth-Wheel and Gooseneck Hitches are specifically designed for heavy trailering with full-size pickup trucks. These hitches can be found in the bed of the truck, and they position the trailer's kingpin weight over the truck's rear axle. Fifth-wheel and gooseneck hitches are most frequently used with commercial, travel, horse and other large trailers.

It is important to choose the right wiring harness to accompany your trailer hitch. The wiring harness connects the electrical components of your trailer to your vehicle, such as the brake and signal lights, providing maximum safety on the road.

Trailering Glossary of Terms

Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR): the maximum weight in pounds each axle is capable of supporting. The GAWR is based on the assumption that the load is equal on both sides.

Gross Combination Weight Rating (GCWR): the maximum possible weight of the vehicle and trailer combination, including the weight of the driver, passengers, fuel, equipment and gear inside the vehicle. GCWR assumes that the trailer has functioning brakes.

Maximum Trailer Rating: determined by subtracting vehicle weight from the GCWR. At the maximum trailer rating for a properly equipped vehicle, you should be able to accelerate and merge with traffic, climb typical interstate grades at highway speeds, have control on varying road surfaces and stop adequately within a reasonable distance.

Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR): the maximum number of pounds a tow vehicle may weigh when loaded for travel, factoring in the weight of the vehicle, driver and all passengers, fuel, trailer tongue weight, hitch weight and all equipment.

Maximum Loaded Trailer Weight (MLTW): maximum weight that a tow vehicle is rated to tow.

Hitch Ratings: The hitch on a tow vehicle will have two distinct and important ratings. The tow rating, which defines the maximum weight of a trailer in tow, and the vertical or tongue rating, which defines the maximum vertical hitch load that the trailer can provide for the tow vehicle.

Gross Trailer Weight (GTW): the weight of a loaded trailer.