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Advantages and Disadvantages of a Gooseneck Trailer Adapter

Gooseneck trailer hitches are smaller than other trailer hitches but they have higher weight capacities. Adapters for the hitch increase the weight limit and they are readily available in the market. Using gooseneck trailer adapters has its disadvantages and advantages. The pros and cons have been listed below in detail.

1. Space Gooseneck trailer hitches help tow larger trailers. They can tow fifth wheel travel trailers, and livestock trailers. Standard trailer hitches used on heavy trailers take up all the towing truck bed space. Even when the trailer is not being used for towing, the hitch takes up all the space. This is because most of these hitch adapters are usually installed permanently. The gooseneck trailer hitch is small and hence takes up little space. One can therefore use the rest of the truck bed.
2. Ability to maneuver. Turning radius is altered when using fifth wheel hitches and standard trailer hitches. The driver is able to make tighter turns when using Gooseneck trailer hitch adapters. The driver has to be careful not to make turns incorrectly. The curb may be hit by the trailer if the driver tries to turn normally at a very sharp corner. The driver also has to make sure the weight is distributed evenly over the truck axle for stability.
3. Weight Trailer hitch adapters reduce load that can be towed safely since they are heavy. Their weight adds to the overall truck weight. The gooseneck trailer adapter is small and hence weighs less than other adapters. A truck installed with a gooseneck trailer hitch adapter will tow more weight than one with a standard hitch.
4. Diversity The gooseneck adapter can be used on a fifth wheel trailer and on a livestock trailer. A driver with both trailers will easily transfer the adapter from one trailer to the next. Installing the adapter is also easy whether the truck and trailer are on even or uneven ground. Other hitches are best installed when the truck and trailer are on even ground.
5. Warranty Adding a gooseneck trailer alters the trailer's original design and hence the warranty becomes void. The driver installs the gooseneck adapter at their own risk if

a warranty for the trailer is available. The warranty is termed void if anything happens to the trailer even if it is not related to the hitch. This is unnecessary though if the trailer's warranty has expired.

6. **Damage Installation** of the gooseneck adapter involves drilling of holes onto the truck bed. The holes remain when the hitch is removed. The hitch causes stress on the trailer's frame depending on the weight that is towed and how it's done. Damage is also caused to the windows and walls of the trailer. The owner is usually responsible for this repair cost if they happen.
7. **Installation** The gooseneck is easy to install even on uneven ground compared to other standard hitches. It's challenging to install it though since one has to go under 2 the bed to secure the hitch to the trailer. This is because the gooseneck hitch adapter is located under the bed. Lining up the trailer arm and the ball for hookup is a bit difficult too.

Additional Reply to the Adapter issue:

Does a 5th Wheel to Gooseneck Adapter Add Stress to a 5th Wheel Trailer Towed by 2011 Ford F-350 **Question:**

I have bought a new 2011 Ford F-350. It has the gooseneck hitch prep kit. I have a 2005 37 foot Keystone toyhauler. Does converting this fifth wheel to a gooseneck situation put too much stress on the frame of this 5th wheel?

asked by: **Curt D**

Expert Reply:

Using a 5th wheel to Gooseneck adapter, like the Convert-A-Ball Multi-Cushioned 5th-Wheel-to-Gooseneck Coupler Adapter, can apply added stress to the trailer frame. You will need to contact Keystone to determine if the trailer can be used with a 5th wheel to gooseneck adapter. The biggest drawback will be a decrease in ride quality.

If the trailer has an extended pin box or requires additional support, reinforcement of the trailer frame will be required and should be performed by a qualified professional welder.

Additional consideration:

Those of us who choose a fifth wheel trailer will wonder at some point if there is an alternative to the hitch taking up most of the truck bed. One option commonly considered is a fifth wheel gooseneck adapter, which requires only a vertically mounted ball hitch in the bed of the truck. I have also considered this option, especially since our Ford truck came with a ball hitch welded onto the hauler back. In this article I summarize my findings and the conclusions I've drawn based on my research.

What is a Fifth Wheel Gooseneck Adapter?

A gooseneck adapter is a device that attaches to the fifth wheel trailer's king pin and extends it down about two feet, allowing it to couple with a vertically mounted ball hitch.

Essentially the adapter converts a fifth wheel trailer to a gooseneck trailer.

Advantages of a Fifth Wheel Gooseneck Adapter

If you have ever seen a fifth wheel hitch taking up most of a truck's bed, then the primary benefit is obvious—to free up the bed. The gooseneck adapter offers these benefits:

- **Empty Truck Bed:** The primary reason for people to consider the gooseneck adapter is to free up the bed. A ball hitch takes up much less space than a fifth wheel hitch. If a perfectly flat bed is desired, numerous removable, folding, or pop-up ball hitches are available on the market.
- **Cost Savings:** Installing a ball hitch is less expensive than a fifth wheel hitch. Cost was my second top consideration because our Ford truck came with a ball hitch. Even after paying for a gooseneck adapter, the savings was \$1,000. (Not all fifth wheel hitch installations are so expensive. Our Ford truck required additional modifications to the hauler back to fit the hitch.)
- **Easier Hitching:** Users of gooseneck adapters find it easier to hitch up and disconnect on uneven ground. Since the gooseneck adapter comes straight down onto the ball, hitching can be accomplished even when the truck and trailer are at significant angles from each other. In similar scenarios a fifth wheel hitch may bind if the angle is too great, though a four way pivoting hitch makes this less of a problem.

- **Less Weight:** A heavy duty gooseneck hitch and adapter weighs less than a similarly heavy fifth wheel hitch, leaving more capacity for cargo and towing. The difference is not significant, but even small amounts help when the weight is approaching maximum truck ratings.
- **Tow Gooseneck & Fifth Wheel:** The same truck can tow gooseneck trailers, such as horse and cargo, as well as adapted fifth wheel trailers.

Disadvantages of a Fifth Wheel Gooseneck Adapter

Having considered all of the wonderful benefits, I wanted to rush out and buy an adapter. I tempered my excitement long enough to look at the potential disadvantages.

All of the disadvantages stem from an undeniable fact of physics—installing the adapter extends the hitch downward about two feet, increasing the amount of torque placed on the trailer frame. The additional torque brings the following potential problems:

- **May Damage Frame:** The additional torque caused by the adapter may flex the frame beyond its design limitations, potentially damaging it.
- **May Damage Walls and Windows:** Even if the frame can withstand the extra flexing, walls may not fare as well, causing windows to pop out and walls to crack.
- **May Void Warranty:** From my conversations with dealers and manufacturers, I got the feeling that very little, if any, testing has been done with gooseneck adapters. Therefore, they may play it safe and void the warranty if an adapter is installed.

Is an Adapter Right for You?

Now that the advantages and disadvantages have been laid out, how do you decide if an adapter is right for your specific trailer? Before spending time on researching the adapters, I urge you to call the fifth wheel manufacturer for their advice. Ask to speak with a structural engineer and solicit their opinion on how the adapter would affect the trailer. If you receive a go-ahead from the engineering staff, it would be wise to also talk with the service department about warranty issues.

Then, talk to your local RV dealer and see how they feel about warranty repairs after an adapter has been installed. Even if the manufacturer gave you the green light, you will have to work with the dealer for warranty repairs. If you receive a negative response, check with other dealers in the area who can service your trailer. A positive response should be easier to get from a dealer that sells the adapter.

If the manufacturer and dealer are hesitant to approve the adapter, you have to decide if you are willing to take on the monetary risks associated with the down-sides.

After consider the pros and cons, I decided not to use the gooseneck adapter. This decision was primarily based on my phone conversation with a King of the Road engineer. He gave me what seemed to be his honest opinion about the adapter.

The engineer felt confident that the adapter would cause no frame damage and had no reservations recommending it for some trailer models. However, the sticking point for our model was the bedroom slide near the front.

According to the engineer, the frame was strong enough to withstand the additional torque, but it would flex more with the adapter installed. Having the slide so close to the hitch made it likely that windows would pop out and walls crack during **aggressive** acceleration and deceleration. In the end, an empty truck bed and an extra \$1,000 in my pocket were not strong enough reasons to go against the advice of the folks who designed the trailer.

How I Back Up a Fifth Wheel Trailer

Introduction

One of the biggest fears I had when we first got our brand new Keystone Cougar fifth-wheel trailer was how the heck would I back this huge thing into the driveway and tight RV parks. I scoured the internet, reading as much as I could find and asked anyone I knew that owned a trailer for advice.

The best tip I ever got was from a guy at the RV lot when we picked it up. He told me always take it slow and carefully watch how the trailer is reacting. He said with a fifth wheel there is a bit of a delay from the time you turn the steering wheel until the trailer starts to change its path.

If you are moving too fast it's easy to oversteer and get the trailer way off the desired path. Now several years later and after hundreds of different RV sites I've become quite adept at backing up the rig. Below you'll find some tips I've learned and my method of how I back up a fifth wheel trailer.

Backing a Fifth Wheel Trailer Tips

- Turn the steering wheel in the opposite direction that you want the trailer to go. Some folks like to place a hand at the bottom of the steering wheel and move it in the direction they want the trailer to turn towards.
- Practice, Practice, Practice! There is no substitute for it. To learn how your particular truck and rig move together you have to get out there and do it. This way you will develop a feel for how the rig reacts.
- Take your time. Get out and survey the situation. Plan how you want to back the trailer in. Look for obstacles and move anything that is in the way. Don't forget to look up. Tree branches can ruin your day.
- Have a good spotter. My wife spots me and we have a simple but very clear set of hand signals. We discuss our tactics so both know how we want to perform the backing maneuvers. Also if I can't see her I don't back up.
- Have clean and properly adjusted mirrors and use them. Make sure you can see your spotter in your mirrors and monitor them every few seconds.
- Pay attention to the front. It's very easy to get all caught up in backing and forget what is right in front of the truck. While the trailer turns into the RV site your truck front end will be heading away from it at the same time until you pass the middle point in the turn.
- Ignore all the helpful bystanders they will usually only cause confusion. Have one spotter you can trust. Folks are very well meaning but too many cooks ruin the meal.
- Try to always back into spots on the driver's side. Backing into a spot on the passenger side is called a blind back in and is more difficult, due to limited visibility with the trailer blocking your vision.
- Push the fifth wheel. I find it helpful to think about backing the trailer as pushing it with the truck. Like taking a fully loaded shopping cart and pushing it around from the front end.
- Write this down and stick it on the dash – (GOAL) It stands for Get Out And Look and is used by professional truck drivers. Never keep backing up if you're unsure about something. I sometimes stop 3 or 4 times to look if it's a difficult spot or a blind side back in.

Setting up into the Start Position

I usually place the trailer about a foot or two from the curb and drive about 10 feet past the RV site I want to back into. This starting point works well for my truck and trailer combination. A different length trailer may need more or less room depending on how sharply it may turn. By practicing in an empty parking lot, you can soon get an idea of the radius your rig will follow and can adjust your starting point setup.

To begin I crank the truck wheel over as if I'm backing the truck up the opposite direction of the RV site and check with my spotter who ideally is positioned where I want the trailer to end up. She will give the thumbs up if everything is clear and I begin to slowly back the rig.

Setting the Jacked Position

Slowly the truck will push the front of the trailer away from the RV site and its rear end will start to track towards it. Keep the trailer in the jacked position until the trailer wheels are inside the RV site, at this point you can turn the trucks steering wheel all the way in the opposite direction and prepare to chase the trailer into the RV site.

Chase the Trailer

In the chase position, your truck wheels are turned toward the RV site and it is like you are backing the truck into it following behind the trailer. This is where some fine tuning may be necessary to make sure the trailer is tracking along the proper path. As you slowly back in visualize a path from your trailers tires along an imaginary line to where the spotter is standing, at the point you want the rig to end up. Place your hand at the bottom of the steering wheel and make minor course corrections moving your hand in the direction you want the trailer to go.

Remember there will be a lag period between the steering and when the trailer reacts. This is why it is important to keep the corrections small and back slowly. Check with the spotter and see if they feel the trailer is tracking properly. They can give you hand signals pointing which way the trailer needs to go, or thumbs up if you're on the right track. **Don't forget your front end.**

Diagonal Method

If there is a nice wide roadway in front of the RV site I prefer to set up my rig with the rear end pointing into the site. This way I don't have to jack and pivot the trailer as much and it is easier on the tire and suspension hardware. It requires a kind of an "S" maneuver on the approach so you end up with the rig straight and pointing end in.

Setting the jack position too early or pulling ahead too far when setting up the start position will cause the trailer to track towards the RV site before it reaches the RV site entrance.

Setting the jack position too late and you'll miss the RV site entrance.

Starting from the middle of the road when the road is very narrow. You will run out of room on the opposite side of the road.

Not beginning the chase early enough will cause a position later on called the point of no return where no amount of correction will straighten the rig in time. At this point pull forward and reset the angle.

Our Hand Signals for the Spotter

- Stop – Hand up palm facing the driver
- Direction – Arm straight out pointing left or right
- Pull Forward – Pointing motion straight at the driver
- Trailer needs more jack – Arms up in 90 degree angle from each other
- Thumbs up – looking good, keep going
- Driver points up – spotter checks for any possible high obstacles

Conclusion

Everyone will back up a fifth wheel trailer a little differently and have their unique tricks. These are the methods we have developed that suit us and get the job done efficiently and safely. If you have any advice and tips for backing a fifth wheel leave a comment below I'm sure new fifth wheel RVers will appreciate them.

Finally don't be worried about what other folks are thinking about you're back in. If you're off track and know it, pull ahead, reset the angle and try again. Do this as many times as

necessary. You'll be better off than trying to snake the rig and force it in. Sometimes I'll pull forward all the way to the starting position and do it all over again. The more you practice, the better you'll get and soon you will be safely backing in the rig in one shot.

RV Appliances, Equipment And Accessories for Motorhomes, Fifth Wheels & Travel Trailers That Make The RV Trip More Fun

by Guest Author: Jim Johnson

There is an awful lot of rv appliances, equipment and accessories to choose from, ranging from the ridiculously simple and cheap to the very expensive. Since the rv lifestyle is so unique and the tasks are so specialized, there are many products that have been produced and sold specifically for rv owners and users. And some of those products are more useful and necessary than others, so here is a short list of rv accessories that any motorhome owner should seriously consider if they want to make the trip more fun:

- RV washer and dryer combos: It may sound odd to consider that a washer and dryer can make the trip more fun, but most people don't consider spending hours in a laundromat an exciting time, and that is what having a built-in rv washer and dryer can help you avoid. Of course, clothes get dirty when you travel on the road just as they do anywhere else, so eventually you will be forced to wash and dry them at some point. Today, there are several space saving washer/dryers combos that can fit easily into many motorhomes and solve this age old problem for RVers.
- A satellite dish hookup for TV programming anywhere. Before satellite TV services came along and made TV programming available pretty much anywhere you want to go throughout the entire country, including rural areas, RVers had to rely on park hookups to provide their TV entertainment. But today, satellite TV has made it as easy as just cranking up the satellite dish when you park and aiming it at the part of the sky where the reception is best. And the programming choices certainly rival, and in some cases even exceed those of cable TV.
- Satellite internet. If you like to keep up with your email while traveling or just surf the web while on the road, you can do that easily these days by expanding your satellite service to include the internet as well. It's not the cheapest alternative, but for those that can afford it, it means that you will always have the World Wide Web available to you pretty much anywhere you go.
- GPS navigation systems. Who has fun when they are lost? Not many folks for sure. And modern GPS units can pinpoint your precise location and show you how to get where you need to go at those times when you are turned around and just can't seem to find your way. Many units are handheld and can cost only around a couple hundred dollars making them an excellent choice for those that tend to get lost a lot.

RVing should be fun and rv appliances that help you have more fun while on the road should be considered a good investment as they will make life on the road so much more enjoyable.

RV Travel With Your Dog

If you enjoy RV travel there is no reason why you shouldn't take your dog with you. Dogs love going on adventures with their owners. Here are some books and resources that will provide you with some invaluable information on how to make the most out of your RV vacation with your best friend.

Dog Friendly s Campground and Park with Your Dog in the U.S. and Canada

This guide will provide you with everything you need to know from the best dog friendly places to stay to campgrounds that allow dogs. The guide is packed with useful information such as how many pets are allowed in different camp sites; whether there are any breed restrictions and if there are applicable fees for pets. The guide will also provide you with information about where there are off-leash places where you can walk your dog. The guide contains thousands of campground listings complete with detailed information about each site.

This is a comprehensive list of campsites that allow dogs along 25 highways and a chapter devoted to almost 500 camp sites that provide dog-friendly cabins. You will also enjoy the chapter on beach sites that allow dogs. Each camp site description includes a list of the amenities available such as golf courses, swimming pools, and fishing as well as regular RV amenities: hookups and dump stations etc.

The new edition includes a listing of day use doggie parks that don't include camping. These parks make a welcome opportunity for hiking and walking your dog even when you're not on the road, you can go to these places for a picnic or just for a day trip. The book is available in paperback and is published by Dogfriendly.com Inc; 4 edition.

Pet E.R. Guide: A Directory of 24-Hour and After-Hour Veterinary Facilities in the United States This book is a must-have for both RVing pet owners alike as it offers a lot of invaluable information about veterinary facilities in each state. You shouldn't wait for an emergency to happen before frantically looking for a veterinary facility, this book will help you be prepared and ready to take control of the situation should an emergency befall you.

The 198 page book is published by Trailer Life Books and helps you plan ahead for unforeseen emergencies. The book provides a state-by state listing of after hour and 24 hour veterinary emergency facilities with full contact details such as websites, phone numbers and addresses. Also included is a description of each facility. The book is a lifesaver if something happens to your pet while you're RVing.

The guide also includes an illustrated section with a pet travel safety checklist to help you prepare properly for your trip. Another important section lists 10 toxic and non toxic plants that are dangerous to your pet. Regardless of the species of your travel companion, this book is priceless to have when RVing with a pet. Paperback: 198 pages, Publisher: Trailer Life Books

Travels with Charley: In Search of America

This book is not so much informative as it is enjoyable. Written by famous author John Steinbeck, this is one of the best books ever written about RVing with a canine companion. It's also a look back to a time when RVing was simpler and more of an adventure.

When he was 58, John Steinbeck went on a road trip with his French Poodle named Charley. They set out to discover America and Steinbeck takes you with him as he vividly describes his encounters with truckers and bears at Yellowstone Park.

At that time there weren't as many RVs as there are today so Steinbeck's RV attracted a lot of attention everywhere he went. Even though by today's standards it would be considered primitive, it was a comfortable and snug home for Steinbeck and Charley and it took them on many adventures.

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RVing Frequently Asked Questions by New RVer (FAQs)

On this page you'll find some of the most frequently asked questions by new RVers about RVs, RVing and the RV lifestyle. If you don't find your answer below you can use the link at the bottom to email us.

Q: Do most RV parks & campgrounds have showers/sanitary facilities? **A:** Yes but midnight potty trips while camping are a bummer. On the up-side, many RVers avoid the sites near the bathhouse, so these spots are often available.

Q: Do most RV parks offer reduced rates for longer stays; i.e. weekly or monthly rates?
A: Most RV parks and Campground offer reduced rate for longer stays and often off-season rates are even lower. Government operated parks are an exception. They usually only have daily rates and often limit you to two weeks stays.

Q: Are pets generally accepted at RV parks? **A:** Generally, yes, especially small pets. But it's always a good idea to check before you arrive or make reservations.

Q: Are RV parks reasonably immune from the crime? **A:** Yes. At the very least RV parks and Campgrounds are as safe as the average neighborhood. Usually they are much safer. Public campgrounds sometimes have a problem with thefts while snowbird RV parks almost never do. It depends on the park though so use good judgment. It's always a good idea to lock your vehicle and RV and put expensive things away whenever you leave your site.

Q: How does one deal with laundry on the road? **A:** Most commercial parks, have coin laundries. Campground guides will usually tell you if there is laundry. There is almost always a coin laundry in a nearby town. Some RVers have washer/dryers in their motorhomes, fifth wheels and travel trailers.

Q: How do you get mail while RVing? **A:** If you will be traveling for just a few weeks you may be able to have a relative, friend or neighbor forward your mail to you. Whoever you get will probably burn out quickly so don't ask them to do it more than three to six weeks depending on how often you will have it forwarded to you. If you plan to be on the road longer or full time make arrangements with a mail forwarding service. Some RV parks will accept your mail but many will not. It's a good idea to have it sent General Deliver to a nearby town. Keep in mind the General Delivery mail goes to the main post office in a town with more than one. Choosing a small town with one Post Office will make getting your mail easier. Ask the campground manager what post office to use.

Q:What is a battery isolator and why do I need one? **A:** A battery isolator is an electronic device that allows your motorhome's alternator or converter to charge both the engine battery and the coach battery, but keeps the two systems separate or isolated so the engine battery won't be drawn down by the coach electrical system ensuring it will always start the vehicle,

Some motorhomes have a switch, usually a push button on the dash, that will bypass the isolator allowing the coach battery to temporarily be used to start the engine should the engine battery fail.

Q: How do you know if your roof sewer vents are clogged? **A:**

- (1)Very bad odors. (first clean the tank)
- (2)Very slow draining out of the tank. (first clean the tank)
- (3)Water belching as it drains into the tank.(sinks,shower,or toilet).

How do you clean out roof vents?

- (1)Small hand crank sewer snake.
- (2)Garden hose down the vent.
- (3)Small 1 1/2in. water-bag down the vent to blow it out.

Remember, RV roof vents can slide to far down into the tank and clog themselves. To fix that, they must be re-positioned.

Q: We have winterized our Class C , but still plan to camp a few times this fall/winter. Is there a way to still use the stool using portable water. Would having waste in the black holding tank ruin the tank in freezing weather.

A: We take about 10 1-gallon jugs of water and use the water down the sinks and toilet. We heat up water when we need it on the stove. Store the jugs of water in the tub or shower. It won't hurt the black or gray tank to use them. Just remember to top-off your black tank before you dump. When your put the RV back in storage remember to use a little RV antifreeze in all the p-traps, toilet, and shower.

Q: I've never owned a motorhome before but am now looking at 1977 GMC which is reasonably priced.

However, I've just learned that commercial parks sometimes won't let people in old RV's park there. Is this a common problem?

A: Older RVs, of any type, may be excluded from some high-end RV resorts that cater to the folks who own high priced motor coaches. But these types of Resorts are few. On rare occasions a park owner or manager may use the 'your RV's too old' rule to exclude some really beaten-up, ill-maintained RV but again this is rare.

The vast majority of RV parks and campgrounds do not have any such restrictions and in any case if your RV is well maintained and has a reasonably good appearance (not new... just clean and presentable) you will not have any trouble.

In the off-chance you do get turned away there's always another park down the road. So, don't let it bother you. Just enjoy your new-to-you RV!

Q: When making camp site reservations, there is often a choice of back-in or pull-in spots. Is there a standard side the campsite will be on, if you back in will the campsite be on the passenger side of the rv?

A: I can't think of a time when a campsite didn't have the 'open space' on the passenger side of the RV regardless of drive-in, back-in or pull-thru. I'd be willing to say that 99.9% of campsites are set up this way. If the one I was assigned wasn't I would ask for another site unless there was a special reason... close to the beach... had a great view etc. RV resorts that cater to motorhomes often have drive-in sites because the biggest window in motorhome is the windshield so to get the best view or whatever they drive into the site. But, the open spaces assigned to the site should still be on the passenger side. That said, I've seen motorhomes drive into a site that was set up to be a back-in just to get a better view out the windshield. In these cases the open space could wind up on the driver's side of the motorhome depending on the site.

Q: Is an Extended Warrantee or 'Breakdown Insurance' an good idea? **A:** Full Time RVer, Lew Mann Answers: I've been an insurance agent since 1975 so I know how to read insurance contracts.

After reviewing several forms of breakdown type plans 5 years ago I decided to purchase the Good Sam CSP* on my gas coach. The CSP was designed differently that other "extended warranty" plans I reviewed. However, when I traded up to my diesel coach the CSP became too expensive (\$1,200+ per year) for the benefit received. Most items covered would cost less to replace than the deductible!

In my humble opinion, unless you have little cash resources, you should self-insure. That is to say, be prepared to pay for any repairs you may eventually need.

Q: I have two propane cylinders on my travel trailer. These are bigger than the ones I use on my gas grill which I take in and swap out when emptied. What's the procedure for filling the larger cylinders?

A: I've not head of service that will swap the larger cylinders. Besides I know MY cylinders and what goes in them. And they're not beat up like so many cylinders you get when exchanging.

Typical places to get propane cylinders filled include:

- Propane dealers... usually the best price.
- RV dealers & repair centers.
- Campgrounds... usually the highest price, but you're paying for convenience.
- Gas stations... look for a large propane tank somewhere on the lot. Can be expensive.

Q: Professional Inspection of an RV Prior to Purchase I know there are people who will inspect an RV before you buy it. I know you have to pay them for their service, but where do you look for these people?

A: Local RV repair shops and mobile RV repair techs should provide that service. You will want to make sure they work from a comprehensive checklist and provide a detailed written report of any problems found. It would be nice if they also gave repair estimates. A good survey takes time and expert knowledge, expect to pay between a \$100 and \$350 depending on the type of RV. A small travel trailer will cost less than a large expensive motorhome.

Q: Do you know if there is a recommended weight ratio between a trailer, 5th wheel trailer or travel trailer, and the tow vehicle?

A: All suitable tow vehicles have two tow ratings... Tow Rating - Weight a tow vehicle can tow. This figure may vary depending on the vehicles equipment, such as a manual or automatic transmission, if it is equipped with a 'tow package' and whether it is equipped with four-wheel drive. Gross Combination Weight Rating (GCWR) - Permissible combined weight of the tow vehicle, rv travel trailer, passengers, equipment, fuel, etc., that the tow vehicle can handle. These ratings are usually found on a plate on the driver-side door pillar but can also be found in your vehicle's owners manual. It's your vehicle's tow ratings that will determine the weight and size of trailer you can pull rather than a weight ratio. If you are looking to buy an RV and do not yet have a tow vehicle most veteran RVers will recommend you buy the RV first then buy an appropriately rated tow vehicle.

Weight-Distributing Hitches

A weight-distributing hitch uses an adjustable spring-bar system under the trailer tongue that joins the trailer to the hitch head and receiver to distribute weight evenly among all axles of the tow vehicle and trailer. It effectively takes the normal center of the weight off the hitch and redistributes it forward to the vehicle axles and back to the trailer axles. Essentially, the spring bars push down on the rear of the trailer tongue, which transfers weight to the trailer axles, and pushes up on the hitch, which transfers more weight from the hitch to the vehicle's front axle. The result is that the weight is distributed more evenly among all the axles on the truck and trailer. Pretty neat.

A good guideline for weight-distributing hitches is that you should use one if the trailer weighs more than 50-percent of the tow vehicle's weight.

Weight-distributing hitches use conventional Class III (up to 6000 lbs. towing capacity, 350 to 600 lbs. tongue weight) and Class IV receivers (up to 10,000 lbs. towing capacity, tongue weight 600 to 1,000 lbs.), which bolt to the frame and your vehicle and use 2-inch draw bars. These are compatible with pickups and SUVs with sufficient tow ratings. Where weight-distributing systems differ is at the hitch itself. Where conventional hitches use a ball and draw bar, weight distributing hitches use a shank to which the ball mounts and the spring bars of the

weight-distributing system attach. Most often the opposite ends of the spring bars attach to the trailer tongue by chains. If you are towing a tall recreational vehicle trailer or an enclosed car trailer, which can get blown around by high crosswinds, consider a sway-control system, which quells side-to-side movement that can be unnerving and dangerous at freeway speeds.

The type of weight-distribution hitch system you need for towing will vary with the weight and size of the trailer. Differences include shank bar length and spring bar length. Most hitch manufacturers sell systems in kit form, but again, it is best to have a professional shop do the calculations for you, perform the work and help familiarize you with how the system operates. Because of the differences in weight-distributing systems, hooking up a weight distributing hitch varies from system to system, so it is best to consult the manufacturer. In general, hook the trailer to the hitch, then link the spring bars to the trailer tongue, then check your lights, turn signals and brakes.

Contact Us

East Coast Partners Grp
1041 Old Blush Road
Celebration, Florida | 34747
Tel. 321-939-2132
Fax. 866-201-3391
www.airsafehitches.com

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