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In this Issue:

- [Trailer Towing Tips](#)
- [The Danger of an Un-Level Trailer](#)
- [Fifth Wheel Gooseneck Adapter](#)
- [Getting Started](#)
- [RV History](#)
- [Fuel Savings](#)
- [Summer Camp Tips for Kids With Asthma, Allergies](#)
- [Air Safe Hitches](#)

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Trailer Towing Tips

The Tips List – On your way to a Trouble Free Trip.

Inspection:

- Secure all bolts and other fasteners in vibration resistant ways – use Nyloc nuts, Loc-tite, cotter keys or wired nuts. Be sure the methods are appropriate for the situation.
- Check bolts, fasteners, hitch, tires, lights and brakes — every time — prior to towing.
- Inspect the trailer frame (and other structural areas) regularly to assure there are no cracked welds, loose bolts, or other issues for problems.
- Inspect the tires carefully – especially after storing the trailer for a while. Dry rot is the #1 root cause for failure of trailer tires. (Keeping a cover over tires in storage will help reduce dry rot and cracking.)
- Check tire pressure regularly when traveling. It’s a good idea to kick the tires when you stop for gas just to see if they are all at proper pressure.
- Set tire pressure appropriate for the load. When is traveling empty, tire pressure may be reduced to 10 or 15 psi. This will allow the tires to absorb bumps and other anomalies

which keep the trailer from bouncing around, and shaking the tow vehicle. Full tire inflation pressure is needed for a full load.

- Inspect the spare tire inflation too. And, make sure it's in good condition. There's not much worse than getting a flat and realizing your spare is also flat.

Preparation Each Trip:

- Before connecting, check the hitch components to be sure they match — like ball size and coupler size. Also, check the rated capacity for both.
- After connecting, double-check the hitch to be sure it is secure. I have found it particularly valuable to check the hitch again after pulling it a block or so.
- Use tow chains and secure them to a sturdy section of both the trailer and the tow vehicle.
- Use tow chains that are adequate for the job — not wimpy, flimsy stuff. (If you have a 3000# trailer, make sure the chains are up for all of it.)
- For stability, distribute the load on the trailer evenly — not disproportionate on one side or the other if you can help it.
- Again, for stability, the trailer should be loaded so that 10% – 20% of the gross trailer weight is on the tongue (hitch).

Tips for Loading:

- If you have a problem with swaying or instability, re-distribute the load. Most instability issues come from improper trailer loading. Other issues come from improper assembly (things not lined up or square). So, if you're building a trailer, take extra time and care when building a trailer.
- Don't overload the trailer! Check the capacity limits and stay within them, please.
- Be aware of the towing limits of the pulling vehicle and the hitch components. Follow manufactures guidelines on capacity for all the parts.
- Don't overload the tires. Tires on trailers often have a lower capacity than the axle they are mounted on. This is a great way to have a blow-out.
- Secure the load so it won't shift or move while in transit.
- Keep a low center of gravity with the load. This makes all the dynamics better.
- If loads are tall, realize that wind loading can be very strong. Make sure everything is securely fastened to the trailer. You wouldn't want something to blow out or break off. And, you really don't want the trailer to tip over (like in a strong cross wind).

Take Responsibility:

- You are responsible for the load in your trailer. Anything that blows out or falls off is your responsibility. Not just as litter, but flying items can cause significant damage, injure or kill others. Be sure things are secure!!
- Double check tie-downs, tarps, ropes, etc. to be sure nothing will be "flapping in the breeze" or dragging the ground.
- It's a good idea to stop and double check the load, the tie-downs, and the overall situation after driving a few miles too. The load will "settle in" with the vibrations and bumps and wind of the road.
- If the trailer has high sides or a tall load, avoid traveling when significant cross winds are present. (Think Wyoming where it's not uncommon to see trailers laying on their side.)

- Allow added distance for acceleration and braking. Even if the trailer has brakes, it can take (most times) a lot more distance to stop.
- Allow more girth around corners — take the corners wide — to avoid hitting the trailer tires on a curb. The trailer makes a shorter radius turn than the tow vehicle. Also, the longer the trailer, the more space it takes. Hitting curbs and posts may cause big damage to wheels and tires resulting (sometimes) in high costs.
- Drive with a greater awareness of what is happening around you on the road. Any maneuvering on the road requires more time, more care and more space when a trailer is attached. Oh, and the larger the trailer, the more it takes..
- When you tow a trailer you assume a larger responsibility. Please drive carefully.

The Danger of an Un-Level Trailer

Why should a trailer be level? For a horse trailer to avoid overloading one of the four tires or possibly breaking one of the axles, it must be level when hitched to a tow vehicle. What we mean by “being level” is that the weight of the trailer should be sitting evenly on both axles and all four tires. Since each tire and axle is rated to sustain up to a specific maximum weight, any weight over that specific weight will overload the tire and result in a blow-out or a broken axle. With most horse trailers today being equipped with rubber torsion axles, weight shifts from one axle to another rather quickly when raising or lowering the nose, making it even more critical to insure that the trailer is level.

LEVELING A HORSE TRAILER.

Preparation: Check each tire’s pressure to ensure that they are all the same. This is important to achieve a correct level. I suggest filling them to the maximum pounds per square inch (psi) – they will flex less, ride cooler, and less apt to blow. You can locate the psi of the tires on the side wall.

Bumper Pull Trailers: To correctly set the level of your bumper pull trailer, park the trailer and tow vehicle on a flat surface. If the trailer is blatantly un-level when hooked to the tow vehicle, unhitch the trailer and raise or lower it so that the trailer is level. Since fenders, running boards, and other flat spots on the trailer may not be straight, using a level on one of these areas may not give you accurate information.

The best way to determine the trailer’s levelness is to first, stand a distance from the trailer and observe by sight if it looks as if it is sitting level. Then look at the tires to determine if they are equally flat rather than one tire being rounded. The rounded tire means there is little or no weight on it. The next step is to determine how to achieve the correct trailer height when the trailer is hitched to the tow vehicle. This can be achieved in two ways. EquiSpirit has an adjustable coupler on all its bumper pulls so with a wrench, you can adjust the trailer coupler up or down to the height of the ball mount on the tow vehicle. Most other bumper pull trailers do not have this feature, so you will need to choose a ball mount with the right height to keep the trailer level when hitched up. Ball mounts will have what is called “drops” (0”, 2”, 4” 6”) so depending on the height of your tow vehicle, you will need acquire the proper ball mount. You may not get the level exact, but close is okay as long as there is

flatness on both tires. If the level is slightly off, have the nose a bit up rather than a bit down – it will track better.

Gooseneck Trailers: The gooseneck trailer should be unhitched from the tow vehicle and parked on a flat, level surface. Observe the trailer to see if it looks level and to determine that the tires (tires need to have the correct psi) are equally flat on the bottom rather than one being more rounded and the other more flat.

Once you determine that the trailer is level, measure from the ground to the lowest part of the gooseneck. Then measure from the ground to the top of the tailgate or side of the bed of your truck. Subtract that distance from the distance from the ground to the top of the gooseneck. The amount will be the clearance you will have from the top of the tail gate to the bottom of the gooseneck with the trailer sitting level. It should be at least six inches – preferably seven or eight so that the trailer does not hit the tail gate or sides of the truck when going over uneven terrain. If you prefer not to pre measure, with the trailer sitting level, drive your truck under the gooseneck (make sure your tailgate is down). If the clearance from the bottom of the gooseneck to the top of the tailgate and sides of the truck is under six inches, there will not be enough clearance to safely pull the trailer. The gooseneck will most likely hit the tailgate or the sides of the truck bed, especially on uneven terrain. If your tow vehicle adequately clears the truck bed while the trailer is sitting level, you can adjust the coupler up or down to meet the ball while the trailer remains level.

Note: Most all gooseneck couplers are adjustable by loosening or removing a couple bolts and sliding the coupler up or down. It's important to note that the adjustable coupler does not raise the whole trailer up and down, just the nose. So if the clearance from the top your tailgate (and sides of your bed) to the bottom of the gooseneck is less than 6" while the trailer is sitting level, raising the coupler will only raise the nose of the trailer, shifting weight onto the rear axles and tires. The adjustable coupler's purpose is to adjust for different height truck beds such as a four wheel drive as opposed to two. If your trailer does not have the proper clearance over the truck bed, your options are limited. You can purchase a trailer that will fit your current truck, purchase a truck that has a lower truck bed (two wheel drive as opposed to four), or you can have the axles blocked up 4" by your local service center.

Fifth Wheel Gooseneck Adapter

by Charlie Kerekes

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.

My Decision

First, a few details about our fifth wheel to put my decision in context:

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.

Please do not assume from my decision that trailers shorter than 36' 6" without a front slide are automatically candidates for an adapter. The main point of this article is that you need to check with the fifth wheel manufacturer before deciding on a gooseneck adapter.

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Getting Started

If you are new to the recreational vehicle (RV) lifestyle, you owe it to yourself to become well informed before jumping in. Uninformed RV consumers are likely to make unwise choices financially, emotionally, and concerning safety.

Experienced RVers should also review this list when goals change and before buying a new RV.

Below we have compiled a list of steps to guide you through the planning and purchase of an RV. We stopped short of numbering the steps because many can be done out of sequence. We do recommend the sequence as listed below, especially when it involves **buying decisions**.

Our text contains glossary terms underlined with green dashes to indicate that you can hover your mouse or click for the definition.

Getting Started

Define RV goals

How do you plan to use your RV? Is it for weekend outings, longer vacations, as a snowbird, or as a fulltimer?

Become familiar with RV types

Take some time to review the introduction pages to each RV type. No need to research each type in detail at this point—that comes later.

- Class A Motor Home
- Class B Motor Home
- Class C Motor Home
- Fifth Wheel
- Folding Trailer
- Travel Trailer
- Truck Camper

Review issues important to different RV lifestyles

All RVing lifestyles have many things in common, yet each has its own special requirements.

List RV amenities

Create a list of amenities that you would like to have in an RV based on your selected lifestyle. Divide the list into "must have" and "optional" sections.

Create a budget

At this point you should have a rough idea of your desired RV lifestyle and the specifics are coming into focus. Now is the time to create a budget. See [Budget for the RV Lifestyle](#) to help you get started. Knowing what you are able and willing to afford will save you precious time by narrowing down your choices.

Rent various RV types

In the following steps you need to make decisions on the type and size of the RV. Consider renting several RV types to help you decide. Living in an RV for a few days will give you insights that you can not get on the sales lot. See our [Rent an RV](#) page for guidance.

Choose RV type

Review the [RV Type Pros & Cons](#) checklist and then decide which one will suit your needs best.

Choose RV size

After choosing the RV type, determine the size based on your needs. Review [Understanding RV Weights](#) and research all relevant weights. For large RV's also review [RV Driver's License Requirements](#).

Tow vehicle type and size

If you chose a towable RV such as a travel trailer or fifth wheel, determine the size of vehicle required to tow it.

Choose RV manufacturers to consider

Choose the RV manufacturers that meet your criteria with the help of RV Consumer Group resources.

Choose RV models to consider

Choose a small number of RV models that meet your needs from each manufacturer selected previously. Keep in mind that the average owner keeps their RV for **five years**, so do your best to anticipate your needs for this span of time.

Request RV insurance quotes

Request one or more preliminary RV insurance quotes using the likely RV and truck models you are considering. A good starting point is Good Sam VIP Insurance. Add the preliminary insurance premiums to your budget. After you select the exact RV model, you should request quotes from multiple insurance companies.

If you request a quotation from your existing insurance agent, be aware that he may or may not have specialized RV insurance.

Determine fair market value

Before heading out to buy, do some research to determine the fair market value of each RV model you selected. Do this even if you are planning to buy a new unit. See [Determining an RV's Fair Market Value](#).

Inspect before buying new or used

When you find an RV that you are interested in, give it a thorough inspection **before** signing any papers.

Practice run

Set up your RV as soon after buying it as possible. If you do not have immediate travel plans, find the nearest RV park and set up your unit there. Live in your new RV a few days to find potential problems **before** you head out on your big trip.

Join the community

By now you have gained a lot of knowledge about RV's and the RV lifestyle. Join the RV community to further your knowledge, find helpful information, and share your experiences with others.

RV History

Americans, it seems, have been destined to be RVers since the earliest days that explorers set foot on this continent. Adventurers at heart, settlers came in search of freedom and opportunities to grow and discover. And discover they did – first by ship, then by horse, in groups by Conestoga wagon trains and, ultimately, by motorized vehicles that ushered in the RVs of today.

The Birth of the RV Industry

A century ago, the popularization of the automobile, improving roads and America's passion for exploration gave rise to mass-produced, manufactured recreation vehicles, and the RV industry was born.

In 1910, there were few gas stations, few paved roads and no highway system. But there were RVs. 1910 is the year that America's leading RV historians – David Woodworth, Al Hesselbart and Roger White – cite as the beginning of what has become the modern RV industry.

1910

"The first motorized campers were built in 1910," says Woodworth, a preeminent collector of early RVs and RV camping memorabilia. "Before then, people camped in private rail cars that were pulled to sidings along train routes. The year 1910 brought a new freedom to people who didn't want to be limited by the rail system. RVs allowed them to go where they wanted, when they wanted."

Hesselbart, archivist for the RV/MH Heritage Museum in Elkhart, Indiana, also pinpoints 1910 as the birth of the RV industry. "Camping has been around for centuries, but 1910 is when the first auto-related camping vehicles were built for commercial sale." Known as "auto campers" or "camping trailers" a century ago, these vehicles were a forerunner of today's modern RVs.

"There were one-offs [individual units] built prior to 1910," says White, an associate curator for the Smithsonian Institution. "But 1910 is a good benchmark for the industry."

The Freedom to Travel Anywhere

"The 1910 RVs offered minimal comforts compared to today's homes-on-wheels," says Woodworth. "But they did provide the freedom to travel anywhere, to be able to get a good night's sleep and enjoy home cooking. One notable contrast to today's RV was the bathroom. In 1910, it was usually either yonder tree or yonder bush."

The First RV Models

Camping trailers made by Los Angeles Trailer Works and Auto-Kamp Trailers also rolled off the assembly line beginning in 1910. A version of today's Type B van camper, the Pierce-Arrow

“Touring Landau,” was unveiled at Madison Square Garden that same year, complete with an on-board bathroom. These companies and innovative products were featured in a *Popular Mechanics* issue in 1911. Take a [stroll down memory lane](#) to see where we’ve been.

1913

The 1913 Earl was an ancestor of the contemporary travel trailer.

The Tin Can Tourists

RV camping clubs date back to the Tin Can Tourists of the 1920s and 1930s. The Tin Can Tourists were RVers who braved dust and mud to drive their Tin Lizzies across the U.S. before transcontinental roads were paved. They camped by the side of the road, heated tin cans of food on gasoline stoves and bathed in cold water.

The 1930s

RVs sold in the 1930s used aircraft-style construction and came equipped with beds, dinettes, electricity and water. After World War II, the RV industry flourished as more Americans sought mobility.

1950

From tiny do-it-yourself kits to plush 30-foot models, travel trailers came into their own as true towable RVs by 1950. Many of today’s RV manufacturers started production in the 1950s and 1960s. The RV’s evolutionary path included advances in aerodynamic design and interior comforts.

1970 and Beyond

Through war and peace, booms and busts, fuel lines, fads and the cyber-revolution, the RV lifestyle has endured and is still going strong, even in today’s challenging economic times.

Fuel Savings

When it comes to miles per gallon, size isn’t all that matters. Compact, aerodynamic and lighter-weight motorized models are more fuel-efficient than ever. Towable RVs account for more than two-thirds of RV sales, and innovative designs coupled with lightweight, durable building materials mean there are many that can be towed by family minivans and small to mid-sized SUVs.

Check out how savvy RVers save on fuel:

Camp closer to home. With more than 16,000 campgrounds nationwide, RVers can enjoy the outdoor experience whether they travel five miles or 500 miles.

Stay longer in one place. Many RV parks are vacation destinations in their own right, offering pools, playgrounds, hiking trails, entertainment centers, organized activities, convenience stores and so much more.

Pack lighter by not topping off fresh water tanks until at the campground and by purchasing firewood and other camping materials on-site to keep the RV lightweight while traveling. Be sure holding tanks are dumped before heading out to further lighten the load.

Tune up the engine of your motorhome or tow vehicle, inflate tires properly and conduct regular maintenance to maximize fuel efficiency.

Some other facts to keep in mind:

Fuel is typically only the fourth largest expense on a road trip, behind lodging, food, vehicle payment and maintenance.

Airfares and hotel rates also rise when fuel costs increase and fuel surcharges are added. You can avoid those costs in an RV.

Fuel prices would need to more than triple from their current level to make RVing more expensive for a family of four than other forms of travel.

Summer Camp Tips for Kids With Asthma, Allergies

Feb. 24, 2018,

By Robert Preidt, *HealthDay Reporter*

SATURDAY, Feb. 24, 2018 (HealthDay News) -- Your children may already be looking forward to summer camp. But when it comes to kids with asthma or allergies, parents need to take extra steps in planning their outdoor experience.

"Kids with allergies and asthma need an extra layer of preparation to ensure they stay healthy and enjoy their adventure," said Dr. Bradley Chipps, president of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

"Parents have to make sure they have packed the right medications and that there's been communication with the camp in advance to keep their child's symptoms under control," he explained in a college news release.

Before the child goes to camp, consult with the youngster's allergist to assess whether the medications are effective and symptoms are under control. It's a good idea to make any necessary adjustments in advance, Chipps said. You also should ask the allergist to prepare a personalized plan for your child that can be shared with camp staff.

If food allergies are an issue, be sure your child knows how to watch out for allergens. The child should also always carry an epinephrine auto injector, and a spare. Chipps recommends talking to kitchen staff and informing camp counselors and medical staff about the foods that can trigger an allergic reaction in your child.

Be sure your child has all the necessary medical supplies and that prescriptions are the correct dose and up to date, he added.

If you think your child's allergies and asthma are too severe for a regular summer camp, check into specialty camps, Chipps said. For example, some camps are just for children with asthma or just for those with food allergies, and they have specialized staff and medical providers.

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