

Subject: November 2022 Newsletter from Air Safe Hitches

November 2022

Newsletter

11/1/22

Articles in this Newsletter: (Click to go to that article)

- [Tips for using RV forums, blogs, and social media](#)
- [Quick RV Tech Tip: Why is my freshwater tank filling up when hooked to city water?](#)
- [Unlimited uses for coffee filters in your RV](#)
- [Are safety chains required on gooseneck trailers?](#)
- [Race Car Trailers](#)
- [How Hitch Safety Chains Work](#)
- [Top 10 Towing Risks to Keep in Mind](#)
- [Next Webinar Nov 2, 2022, at 4:00PM](#)

The webinar will be open questions from the attendees and submitted topics.
If you have questions or items you wish to discuss please email me you questions.
lstegemann@airsafehitches.com

Lloyd Stegemann is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.
Every month on the First Wed, until Jun 7, 2023, 8 occurrence(s)
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/95013552305?pwd=S3VLbEZYS0cwRkFsa3c5YW51ZUFWdz09>

Meeting ID: 950 1355 2305 Passcode: Z8EweF

Tips for using RV forums, blogs, and social media

By Gail Marsh

October 23, 2022

No doubt about it! The internet is great if you're an RVer. We follow many online forums, blogs, newsletters, and social media sites for maintenance tips, campground referrals, and all kinds of information about the RV life. There's just one problem. Civility. Why does the nicest, most helpful RVer suddenly turn rabid when posting on the internet? Perhaps we all could use a few tips for using RV internet sites with civility.

Community

One reason for joining an RV online group is community. Reading about fellow "RV road warriors" can be informative as well as encouraging. Learning about how other folks follow their RV dreams can inspire our own RV journey. The feeling that "we're all in this together" makes unexpected trouble seem more manageable—especially when others offer good advice, words of sympathy, or even empathy, like: "That happened to us, too." "Don't give up." "You'll get through this!" "Keep movin' on down the road."

Rules

The rules for online engagement are blurry, at best. Yes, there's usually a moderator who silences profanity or illegal activity. Other than that, participating online is pretty much a Wild, Wild West, take no prisoners, toughen up or shut up proposition. I'm all for the free exchange of ideas and opinions. I just wish these could be expressed with more grace.

Words

As a writer, I know that words can either be your friend or foe. Words alone—even carefully crafted words—often do not clearly convey actual feelings or the intended meaning. The tone of voice, facial expression, and body language matter. These crucial elements for communication are impossible to see when the iPad, computer, or cell phone screen is limited to simple words.

For example, someone answered a recent forum question with, "We've had this same question over and over again! Look it up! I'm sure you've heard of Google!"

The problem

Knowing that words alone are limited when communicating online should make all of us more mindful of the words we choose. Sadly, that's not usually the case. How do I know? Because I'm seeing more and more posts like this:

"Please be kind. I'm new at this."

"Excuse me, please, if this has been asked in the past..."

"I don't ask questions on this post anymore because I'm tired of being shamed. Excuse me for not knowing! I'm new at this!"

So much for community, huh?

What to do?

First, if a question or comment gets you riled up, think *before* you post. Remember: You are not *required* to give voice to your opinion. You're free to move along. (And take that snark with you, please.)

Secondly, if you have a helpful reply, state it objectively. No need to question the motive or IQ of the one posing the query.

Lastly, remember that you, too, were once a "newbie." You had questions, too. Put yourself in the other RVer's shoes before you feel inclined to judge. Use grace. Civility.

Hope for us all

The following post sums up what I've been trying to say. Take a look and consider the advice, as well.

This forum is an exchange of ideas, questions, thoughts, and so forth. What good would this platform be if we said, "Look it up first. If there is no answer, then ask." Good Lord, there would be no communication for weeks or even months!

When we started our RV journey several years ago, I asked the dreaded question, diesel versus gas. People were nice enough to respond even though it has been asked in every way possible for

probably the last 20 years. My point is, most of us are an inviting group and don't mind the repeated questions. We simply smile, understand the person asking is very new, and try to help as much as possible.

Amen!

Quick RV Tech Tip: Why is my freshwater tank filling up when hooked to city water?

By **Dave Solberg**

October 23, 2022

Dear Dave,

On the last two nights of a three-week trip, our city water connection started going into our freshwater tank and overflowed from there onto the ground. Can you tell us how this could happen? —*James*,

Dear James,

It could be one of two issues, depending on your plumbing design. If you have a city water diverter valve that allows you to fill the freshwater tank with city water pressure while you are connected, the valve may not be closing all the way. This valve is a left/right valve that diverts the city water from the outside source, either to the plumbing for all the sinks, toilets, and showers, or when turned or diverted, directs water to the freshwater tank to fill it up before leaving. Without this valve, owners need to fill the freshwater tank by sticking a hose from a water source into the gravity feed on the side of the rig. These diverter valves can come loose and not close all the way when switched to city water, or there can be a calcium or lime obstruction that keeps them from closing.

The second issue could be a weak or clogged backflow prevention valve on the water pump. When connected to city water, the pressurized water is routed around the onboard water pump but does have pressure on the back or outgoing side of the pump. There is a check valve there that is supposed to only allow water to flow out of the pump. If it is weak or, again, has calcium or lime keeping it from closing, pressurized water from your city source will flow back through the pump to the freshwater tank.

Unlimited uses for coffee filters in your RV

Sure you use them to brew your daily eye-opener, but did you know that there are lots of other uses for coffee filters? It's true! And because the filters are small and lightweight, they can save space and tackle many chores as you travel in your RV.

In the kitchen

- Place a coffee filter over foods you nuke in the microwave. It will catch splatters and keep your microwave clean without the hassle of a plastic "dome" taking up space.
- Use coffee filters to mop up spills in a pinch. Most are very absorbent.
- Use them in between dishes, pots, and lids to cushion them while moving down the road.
- Remove the silk from corn-on-the-cob by rubbing a coffee filter up and down the cob.
- Wrap fruit, celery, and other greens in a coffee filter and place them in the refrigerator crisper. They'll last longer.
- Make flavored "sun tea." Fill your container with water. Wrap lemon wedges, mint leaves, or other flavors inside a coffee filter. Use a plastic bread bag closure to keep the

items secured inside the filter. Add the tea bags. Then steep in the sun as usual. The tea will have great flavor!

- Serve popcorn in individual coffee filters. The filter will soak up any oils and there'll be no dishes to wash!
- When you accidentally break the cork into your bottle of wine, you can strain the wine through a coffee filter. Cheers!

In the bathroom

- Remove nail polish with coffee filters. (They are more durable than paper towels.)
- A small piece of coffee filter can stop bleeding if you nick yourself when shaving.
- Treat a bump by wrapping ice inside a coffee filter. Apply to the injury.

In the closet

- Wrap scented washer beads in a coffee filter and tie it shut. Hang it in the closet to keep the air fresh.
- Put baking soda inside a coffee filter, tie it closed, and place it inside shoes to keep them from making an unpleasant smell in the closet.
- Shine shoes. Apply shoe polish with a coffee filter and use a clean filter to buff and shine.

In the RV

- Coffee filters can take the place of paper towels when cleaning RV windows. The filters are more durable than paper towels and get those windows sparkling clean in no time!
- Coffee filters can clean and polish your television, computer, and phone screens. Just gently wipe the screen surface with a filter and dust is gone!
- Do you grow herbs in your RV windows? Put a coffee filter at the bottom of each flowerpot to keep soil from spilling out the drain hole.
- Put cinnamon, vanilla, or other scents you like into a coffee filter. Tie it shut and simmer in water on the cooktop to freshen the air in your RV.

Who knew that coffee filters could be so versatile? Give it a try ... right after your morning cuppa' joe.

Are safety chains required on gooseneck trailers?

by Elaine Knight

In this article, we will discuss: Are safety chains required on gooseneck trailers? We will explain what safety chains are and how to properly hitch a gooseneck trailer.

Are safety chains required on gooseneck trailers?

Yes, safety chains are required on gooseneck trailers. Safety chains are, well, metal chains. They are usually quite thick and strong and are used to **connect a trailer to a towing vehicle.**

Safety chains have quite an important function. You probably guessed it from the name, considering it bears the word "safety," but these chains really keep towed trailers safe. Hope we can highlight the importance of safety chains on gooseneck trailers below:

You see, these chains are normally used with the ball hitch. Ball hitches are good in theory, but they can't work alone.

A ball hitch attaches to the rear bumper of your truck, and just as the name suggests, it has a ball-shaped piece that sticks upward. These hitches can easily stay on a 247 vehicle, whether or not a caravan is being towed. But watch your knees when walking around the back of your truck.

The trailer has a section of the hitch that looks like a hood. This piece is lowered onto the hitch ball until it completely covers the ball and presses on the ball and the vehicle. It is normal for the truck to sag a bit when lowering the hood.

The reason the hood needs to press the ball and the truck down is that it creates pressure that keeps the ball on the hood during the ride, so what happens if the hood is not pressed? And if all there is a little ball that keeps the caravan in place, can't it swing a lot?

That's where security chains come in.

Safety is a big part of RVs and trailer tugs or other types of RVs and when you need to make sure the cargo is safe. When you hook up your trailer or RV, you need to create multiple safes to make sure your trailer stays where it's supposed to and doesn't bounce into opposite lanes of traffic. One of those safes that all RVers should be familiar with is the use of security chains.

Let's take a look at how you should secure your security chains and answer questions on how to duplicate any security chain. The safer your RV practices, the more fun you can have on the road knowing that you and your RV are safe.

How to secure the safety chains

Any RV or towable hitch must come with its own set of safety chains. If you bought a used model that didn't come with a chain, securing it should be one of your first jobs. Don't even risk leaving the parking lot without chains secured.

Most security chains are simple. There should be two safety chains that come with S hooks or another type of accessory. Pass the chains from one end, such as the hitch, to the other end, such as the hitch.

Safety chains must always cross each other. Crossing the safety chains creates another fail-safe system and can act as a basket to catch or tow the trailer if your trailer somehow becomes detached from its hitch. There may be other tertiary ways that you can tie your chains more securely, but they should always cross each other.

Do you need to duplicate safety chains on a trailer?

If one set of security chains is secure, wouldn't an additional set of security chains be more secure? Unfortunately, the answer is not a simple yes or no.

Most hitches are simple devices and can only accommodate one set of chains. Trying to force an additional set of chains onto a hitch that is only intended for one set can actually do more harm than good as it could cause loose or missing connections and add tension that can cause the chains to pop out of their connected areas in a safe way.

Even if many chains appear secure, they can be pushed and loose while on the road. If your trailer or hitch only has room for one set of chains, don't push it, stick with a normal single cross-chain setup.

If the hitch is configured so that you can add an extra set of chains, then please do so, but you should know that an additional set of chains on many hooks will not really be more secure but

rather redundant. As long as the chains can accommodate the weight of your trailer if necessary, you shouldn't have a safety issue.

So if your trailer has ample clearance or is even set up for an extra set of chains you can duplicate them, just don't try to force anything or come up with your own system.

Instead of duplicating the **safety chains**, you could see if your trailer or hitch has any kind of additional safety accessories or if there are some aftermarket accessories that can make your trailer safer. Check manufacturer guidelines, towing vehicle manual, and resources, both online and offline, for the best ways to ensure your trailer hitch stays in place during your adventures.

In the end, duplicating your safety chains can do more harm than good, especially if the hitch is made for a single set of safety chains. Learn how to secure and cross your chains to make sure your trailer stays where it is supposed to stay while on the road.

Guide to hitching a gooseneck trailer

A gooseneck trailer is similar to a fifth-wheel trailer in that it connects to the center of the truck bed through a special connection. This centers the mass of the trailer on the drive wheels of the truck to greatly increase the stability of the towing vehicle.

A gooseneck connection is typically used for larger trailers such as motorhomes, horse trailers, and large flatbed trailers.

Aligning the gooseneck coupler with a truck hitch is the first step in connecting the trailer. After opening the rear door of the truck to lay flat, adjust the height of the gooseneck trailer so that it is a few inches above the height of the hitch. The trailer will have a crank raising and lowering mechanism for this purpose. Reverse the truck until the hitch ball lines up perfectly under the trailer's gooseneck coupler.

Once the coupler is in place on the hitch, connecting the gooseneck trailer is a simple operation, completed by lowering the coupler onto the ball with the crank mechanism. Lock the trailer coupler in place by pushing the mechanism toward the rear of the truck. Secure the mechanism in the locked position by lowering the locking lever into the hole and turning 90 degrees.

Secure safety devices. A gooseneck trailer will have devices that ensure towing safety. Once the trailer is hitched, attach the trailer safety chains to the trailer hitch on the trailer bed. Attach the safety cable to the same hooks as the safety chains, then press the trailer's electrical harness into the receiver on the truck.

Weight and driving limitations. Trailer mass plus load weight must be less than vehicle towing capacity for safe travel. This information is found on the trailer data plate and inside the vehicle owner's manual. Drive significantly slower, providing more room for braking and emergency situations.

Take wider corners than normal, while keeping your lane sill, to reduce the amount the trailer cuts the inside of the curve. Drive with caution as an accident with a trailer has increased consequences.

The bottom line

Finally, no matter what you hear, always put safety first. Safety chains have quite an important function, don't ignore them and make sure you hitch your trailer properly, in order to avoid accidents and unpleasant situations.

Race Car Trailers

The Race Car trailer could be a 5th Wheel, Gooseneck, or receiver hitch type. The key issue with these trailers is the contents. The contents of the trailer are your car(s), motorcycles, equipment, and tools. In some cases, it could also be your living quarters while you are traveling. Just about every car that runs around a NASCAR or other smaller tracks arrived, along with equipment and spare parts, in big vans and trailers. Getting the cargo safely from track to track is a serious responsibility for the crew assigned to the job. It's something they deal with week after week; they know their rigs and they're in the habit of handling them.

With any hard connection hitch, the solid connection to the trailer causes your tow vehicle to feel every bump your trailer feels, and your trailer feels every bump your vehicle feels.

Have you arrived at your destination and find the trailer contents suffered damage from all of the bouncing because of bad road conditions and you have to spend time putting your trailer and contents back together?

All of the problems noted above are faced by the thousands around globe on a daily basis. Many of the problems above can be solved or drastically reduced if you place an AirSafe Hitch between you tow vehicle and your trailer. Our AirSafe hitch cushions the ride of the tow vehicle and the trailer.

Our System utilizes "HEAVY DUTY" air bags to absorb the shock, bounce and vibration that usually come with pulling a trailer with a hard connection tow hitch. This allows the trailer to rock back and forth on its natural axis as it was originally designed to do. Our hitches Will fit your Fifth (5th) Wheel, Gooseneck, and Receiver hitches.

Because you are not bouncing all over the road all 4 wheels stay in contact with the pavement, on panic braking, nosedive is virtually eliminated.

The bottom line is the ride. Enjoy a smoother ride and a 75% safer tow. Driver fatigue is greatly reduced and your family, friends, and animals Will enjoy the smoother, less bouncy ride.

The wear and tear on your truck and trailer Will be greatly reduced. You can add air springs to the truck and to the trailer, but this Will not fix the problem if you still have a hard connection hitch. Fix the problem at the source, with our AirSafe Trailer Hitches you do not need air suspension on the trailer or truck unless you just want all the comfort you can get and don't mind paying for it.

The AirSafe Hitch is a lasting investment as t can be easily transferred to a new vehicle and give you years of good service.

How Hitch Safety Chains Work

By: Patrick E. George

You're cruising along the highway at 60 mph, towing your boat on a trailer behind you. Suddenly, you hit a huge bump in the road, and your trailer becomes unhitched from your ball mount. Just like that, 12,000 pounds of metal is flying freely down the highway, ready to slam into oncoming traffic.

When trailer hitches aren't secured properly, they can cause serious accidents. That's why you need a second line of defense when towing a trailer. This is where **hitch safety chains** come in.

Safety chains are used to keep the towing vehicle and the trailer connected in case they become disconnected along some part of the towing equipment. Not only is it just a good idea to have these

on your hitch whenever you're towing, it's the law to have them installed. Federal laws, as well as laws in many cities and states, require you to have safety chains equipped while towing.

In this article, we'll discuss why you need a hitch safety chain, as well as how to properly install these hitch accessories on your towing vehicle so you don't cause any accidents.

Purpose of Hitch Safety Chains

An uninstalled -- or improperly installed -- hitch safety chain can be dangerous, if not downright deadly.

In May 2007, a small trailer became unhitched from the Lincoln Navigator towing it on Maryland's Chesapeake Bay Bridge. The trailer flew backwards, causing a seven-vehicle crash that killed three people. The Navigator had hitch safety chains, but investigators said they weren't installed properly and that the trailer didn't have a safety pin.

This is an example of the kind of damage a trailer can do when it's not properly secured with hitch safety chains. If the trailer coupling separates from the ball mount, or the ball disconnects from the hitch, the chains will keep the trailer from drifting down the road during towing. They are designed to keep your vehicle and trailer attached long enough for you to safely come to a stop and properly reattach them. They're usually metal links between 18 inches and three feet in length. Some drivers opt to use vinyl-coated safety cables to minimize noise.

Whether you're towing short distances or going cross-country, it's important to always use safety chains. At the same time, remember that safety chains aren't meant to tie something down or to tow another vehicle out of the mud, like hitch hooks and anchors. Hitch safety chains are used more as an insurance policy against

In this next section, we'll discuss how to properly install this piece of towing equipment on your vehicle.

Installing Hitch Safety Chains

Installing hitch safety chains takes a few extra minutes when you're preparing for a road trip with your trailer, but they'll be well worth it to keep your towing equipment safe. Whether you decide to use cables or chains, make sure they can support whatever you're towing. On many Web sites that sell towing accessories, you will see listings for "Class II" or "Class IV" chains. This refers to the weight of your trailer [source: Trailer Hitches]. In short, don't get hitch safety chains too weak to hold whatever you're towing. The sizes of the chains you get also depend on your towing vehicle. Most light duty trucks will use 5/16-inch-thick chains. Most medium-duty trucks use half-inch chains, and heavy-duty vehicles handle 5/8-inch chains.

Here's how to install them:

Have two chains crisscrossing under the trailer tongue connecting the trailer to the bumper or the receiver on your towing vehicle. Attachment devices (like trailer hooks) at the end of the chains should be sturdy and solidly in place. If the chains are too long, they can be twisted until they're short enough. Also, wires should be used at the hook points to keep the chains from accidentally falling off. Make sure you then attach the chains to the towing vehicle itself and not to another part of the trailer hitch. This ensures that the two units will be kept together if the coupler separates from your receiver unit. Crossing the chains under the tongue will allow them to form a net that catches the trailer's tongue in case it breaks loose and falls to the roadway.

The chains must be small enough to keep the trailer from drifting but with enough slack to allow the towing vehicle to turn with ease. They also shouldn't be allowed to drag on the ground.

Top 10 Towing Risks to Keep in Mind

By: Jonathan Strickland

Maybe you've just bought a boat and you want to take it out on the lake. Or perhaps you're preparing to move to a new city, and you need to rent a trailer to carry your belongings. Or you may want to take your family on a cross country trip in an RV and tow a second vehicle behind you for sightseeing trips. These are just a few reasons why you might need or want to tow something behind your vehicle.

Towing can come with some risks. Careful drivers and consumers can minimize those risks and make their experience much less stressful. We're going to look at 10 risks associated with towing and how drivers should approach each one to keep themselves and their property safe.

If you're new to towing, you should find the time and place to practice common maneuvers. An empty parking lot is an ideal practice location. You'll need to learn how your setup handles during turns, braking, backing up and other situations before you hit the road. A practice session might also clue you in if something isn't working properly. You may also want to practice working with a partner for tasks like parking and making tight turns. It's a good idea to work out a series of hand signals to make communication easier.

It's also very important to research the laws of the areas through which you will be driving. In the United States, each state has its own set of laws regarding towing procedures and equipment. Before hitting the road, you should check to make sure your vehicle meets legal specifications. Otherwise, you could risk a run in with the law.

Your insurance company may also have regulations they expect you to follow when towing a vehicle. Take time to research this information, too -- if you violate any rules your insurance company may refuse to provide coverage if something goes wrong.

Some of the scenarios we'll look at in this article can cause even experienced drivers to have a serious accident. You can prevent most of them from happening to you with a combination of practice, focus and attention to detail. While there are always risks associated with towing, with the right attitude and preparation you can overcome them.

We'll start by looking at a basic risk: using the wrong equipment.

10. Mismatched Equipment

Make sure your equipment is in good working condition before you take a trip.

Whenever you tow anything, it's important to use the right equipment. If the equipment you use doesn't match up correctly, you could have serious problems on the road. Here are a few tips to make sure you're in good shape:

Consult the owner's manual for your vehicle and see how much weight it can tow safely. Don't exceed this weight. Remember to take into account the weight of the towing rig itself. Pulling a heavier load can increase your risk of accidents as well as cause damage to your vehicle.

When using a trailer hitch and coupler, be sure the parts fit together correctly. If you use a coupler that doesn't fit the ball on the end of your trailer hitch, the trailer won't remain stable during towing. Also check that your equipment is in good working order.

Make sure the trailer is level. When using a tow bar to tow another vehicle, check to see if the tow bar is parallel to the ground. If the tow bar or trailer is at an angle, you could have problems when braking. Braking suddenly can result in jackknifing or other accidents.

Be sure that your vehicle's trailer braking system is compatible with the trailer you're using. Trailer brakes are very important and can help reduce the risk of trailer sway.

Never use a tow rope or tow strap for extended towing. Tow ropes are good for emergency use, such as pulling a vehicle out of a ditch, but they aren't appropriate for extensive towing. You can use a tow strap to pull a vehicle a few miles -- such as to a nearby mechanic -- but you shouldn't rely on one for a longer drive. Straps and ropes can fray and snap if you use them inappropriately.

Next, we'll learn about how visibility plays a role in towing safety.

9. Limited Visibility

An unbalanced load on the road can be dangerous.

Before you hit the road, you should consider the length, width and height of what you're towing. Increasing your overall vehicle's size impacts visibility. Visibility plays a pivotal role in basic maneuvers such as backing up towed vehicles, making turns and changing lanes.

Many companies offer towing mirrors, which either replace or attach to a vehicle's existing side-view mirrors. Extended mirrors are particularly useful if the load you are towing is wider than your vehicle. Without extended mirrors, you won't be able to see traffic approaching from the side or the rear.

For some maneuvers, you might also want to have a partner act as a spotter to help guide you. Working with another person can take some of the stress out of tasks like backing into a parking space or launching a boat. Using pre-arranged hand signals is a great way to communicate -- it decreases the risk of misinterpreting directions. If there are other drivers in the area, it will also help prevent confusion.

Now let's learn about accelerating and passing other vehicles while towing.

Take a Good Look

Always examine your vehicle and towing rig carefully before heading out on the road. Check to make sure all the connections, safety chains and pins are in place and in good working order.

8. Accelerating and Speeding

If you need to use a jack to support a trailer, make sure it's designed to hold the weight.

When you're towing a load, your vehicle has more mass. That means you have to handle a vehicle that has a greater amount of momentum and inertia than normal. Momentum simply refers to mass in motion. An increase in mass or speed results in an increase in momentum. Inertia is the tendency for anything with mass to resist a change to its state of motion. The more massive an object, the greater it resists change. That means it takes more energy to get a massive object to start or stop moving than an object with less mass.

What this means for you is that your vehicle will have to work harder to accelerate when you're towing. If you use the same amount of energy as you would to accelerate your vehicle under

normal conditions, it will take more time to get up to speed. This becomes important to understand when you need to merge onto a highway or if you need to pass another vehicle.

Passing a vehicle while towing a load requires a steady hand and focus. Remember, your vehicle's length (and possibly width) are greater than normal. Before passing another vehicle, you should signal much earlier than normal. This will alert other drivers of your intentions. After passing the vehicle, remember to take the length of the trailer (or towed vehicle) into account before pulling back into the lane.

Speeding while towing can damage your vehicle and your trailer. Avoid accelerating down hills -- you may find your vehicle more difficult to control at the bottom of the hill. It's also harder to handle your vehicle at faster speeds should something go wrong. You should avoid driving too quickly down roads with lots of bumps. If you go too fast, you could risk a serious accident -- the trailer could flip or skid, causing you to lose control of your vehicle.

Even the most basic maneuvers can become difficult when you're towing. Next, we'll look at what you should be aware of when you make a turn.

7. Turning

If you find normal maneuvers while towing to be challenging, be extra careful when trying something like this.

When towing a load that has a wider wheelbase than your towing vehicle, you'll need to remember to make wider turns at corners and curves. That's because the wheels of the trailer (or towed vehicle) will be closer to the inside of the turn than your own vehicle's wheels. If you aren't careful, the trailer can hit curbs, signs or other items adjacent to the road. This can cause damage to the trailer, the trailer's tires and axle.

You should also take sharper turns gradually. Taking a turn too fast can strain your towing equipment. It also runs the risk of causing the trailer to flip over or to begin to sway. Simply slowing down and taking the turn carefully can reduce these risks significantly.

Turning isn't completely dependent upon technique. Your equipment will also have an impact on how well you can make turns. For example, if the trailer tongue -- the part that extends from the trailer to connect to your vehicle's trailer hitch -- is too long, it will be more difficult to make turns without rolling over the curbs. If the safety chains that secure your trailer to your vehicle don't have enough slack, they'll restrict your ability to turn at all.

Another very basic maneuver is simply coming to a stop. What do you need to know before you tap the brakes? Find out in the next section.

6. Braking

Be careful driving on bumpy roads.

Because towing a load means your vehicle has more inertia and momentum, your vehicle's brakes have to work harder to bring you to a stop. Some trailers come equipped with their own brakes. These brake systems connect to your vehicle, which should have a trailer brake control on the driver's console. Using a trailer's brake system in conjunction with your own vehicle's brakes will mean less wear and tear for your vehicle.

Whether the towed load has its own brake system or not, it's important to remember that the added mass means you'll need more space to come to a stop than normal. Give yourself plenty of space

when slowing or stopping -- don't assume you can stop in the same amount of time and distance as you can when you're not towing anything.

When applying your brakes, it's best to use light, gradual pressure. Otherwise, you could risk jackknifing or skidding. Because your brakes have to work harder to slow down the heavy load, you can wear through them quickly or overheat them by using too much pressure. By giving yourself more time to slow down, you reduce the amount of work your brakes have to do.

You should also use your brakes periodically when traveling down hills. This will help keep your speed at the appropriate level. It's better to apply your brakes in short, light intervals than to wait until you get to the bottom of the hill. Downshifting to a lower gear will help you control your speed, too.

A critical element of towing safety is making sure your equipment is up to the task. Learn more about towing and tire pressure in the next section.

5. Tire Pressure and Blowouts

Trailers come in all shapes and sizes.

Before you set out on any trip, it's always a good idea to check your tires first. This is particularly important when you are towing a trailer or another vehicle. Consult your owner's manuals (or rental information if you've rented a trailer) and make sure all of your tires have the right tire pressure. Under-inflated tires can be hazardous. Think of it this way: Every tire on the road is another potential blowout. Preventative maintenance might mean the difference between a pleasant trip and a major accident.

Blowouts are always serious problems, but when you're towing a load they become even more dangerous. An unstable tow load can flip over, causing the tow vehicle to lose control and crash or roll. If you do experience a blowout while on the road, the key is not to panic, pull out of the way of traffic and slow down gradually.

Changing a tire on most trailers is identical to changing one on a car. You'll need a jack strong enough to lift the trailer. You should use a wedge to chock the wheel on the opposite side of the trailer. It's also a good idea to loosen the lug nuts before jacking up the trailer. With the trailer jacked up, remove the damaged tire and replace it with a spare. Replace and hand-tighten the lug nuts, lower the trailer down to the ground, use a wrench to tighten the lug nuts and remove the wedge on the other side of the trailer.

What if your vehicle isn't rated for towing, or if you need to tow more than your vehicle's manufacturer recommends? We'll take a look at tow loads and ratings next.

4. Vehicle Not Rated for Towing

Be careful not to overload your trailer.

It shouldn't come as a surprise to find out that not every vehicle can tow a load behind it safely. While there are trailer hitches on the market that can fit cars, trucks and SUVs that aren't designed to tow a load, it's probably not a good idea to rely on them too often. If your vehicle isn't rated for towing, attempting to tow something behind it might cause serious damage. Your vehicle's suspension, brake system, engine and transmission might not be able to handle the strain.

Even tow-rated vehicles have their limits. Each manuf

acturer lists the load weight their vehicles can tow safely. Towing gear, like hitches, couplers and trailers, also have load limits. Exceeding these limits is unwise -- it can cause damage to the

equipment and can increase the risk of accidents. The heavier the load, the more difficult it is to control the towing vehicle.

If you need to tow something that exceeds your vehicle's rated load limit, consider renting a vehicle with a greater load limit. If you're moving equipment in a trailer, you may need to make multiple trips. While that may take some of the convenience out of towing, safety should always be a primary concern.

Next, we'll learn about an issue that is very dangerous but one you can correct easily in many cases: unbalanced loads.

3. Unbalanced Loads

The results from this jackknifed trailer aren't pretty -- in fact, they're fishy.

Before you tow a trailer, you need to balance the tow load properly. Try to place heavier objects toward the front of the trailer (closest to the tow vehicle and ahead of the trailer's axle). This will help reduce the risk of trailer sway and fishtailing. If you overload the rear of the trailer, you could damage the trailer -- possibly even breaking its axle.

You should also make sure that you distribute the weight equally on either side of the trailer. Unbalanced trailer loads can create major problems on the road. Turning while towing an unbalanced load can result in an overturned trailer.

Keep an eye on your trailer while you drive. If you begin to notice it swaying or if you can feel it resisting turns, you may need to stop and rebalance the load. Fortunately, an unbalanced load is fairly easy to fix -- you just shift items around inside the trailer.

Unbalanced loads are dangerous even if you're not on the road. Simply unhitching the trailer from your tow vehicle can be risky. If there's too much weight in the back of the trailer, uncoupling the trailer from the tow vehicle can cause the tongue to rise up quickly. If you're in the way, the tongue might injure you. To prevent this from happening, you should position jack stands at the rear of the trailer before uncoupling it from the tow vehicle.

What do you need to know before you tow another vehicle behind your own? Find out in the next section.

2. Damaging a Towed Car

You should never ride inside (or outside) a towed trailer.

There are many reasons you might need or want to tow a car behind a vehicle like an RV. There are three main options when towing a car with another vehicle. You could:

- Use a tow bar to pull the car "four-wheels-down," also known as a flat tow
- Use a tow dolly, which means only the car's rear wheels touch the road
- Use a tow trailer, which carries the entire car "four-wheels-up"

If you use a tow trailer, you don't have to worry about damaging the towed car's transmission. Trailers also minimize the wear and tear on the towed car's tires. But trailers take up a lot of room and aren't as convenient as a tow bar when you just want to hop in the car and go sightseeing.

Before you use a tow bar, make sure the towed vehicle can travel four wheels down safely. Not all cars can travel four wheels down without suffering transmission damage. According to tow company Remco, any front-wheel-drive vehicle with a manual transmission is safe for towing four-wheels-down. The company suggests owners ask manufacturers if towing a specific vehicle

four wheels down is safe and to get the answer in writing [source: Remco]. Cars with an automatic transmission may require a lube pump before they can be towed safely. And you may have to disconnect the driveshaft of a rear-wheel drive vehicle before flat-towing it.

Tow dollies can also damage a car if you don't take the proper precautions. If your car has rear-wheel, four-wheel or all-wheel drive, you may need to disconnect and remove your car's drive shaft prior to using a tow dolly. You should never attempt to back up with a tow dolly attached to your towing vehicle -- the risk of jackknifing is too great.

Finally, we'll look at the biggest risk you'll encounter when you're towing: trailer sway.

Keeping Parallel

When using a tow bar, make sure the bar is parallel to the ground. Otherwise, you could risk jackknifing while braking.

1. Swaying

You don't want to risk your trailer ending up like this one.

We've mentioned it a few times in this article already, but trailer sway deserves its own section. Many things can cause a trailer to sway: Getting hit with a gust of wind, making a sharp turn, driving too fast or carrying an unbalanced load are just a few situations that might cause a sway problem. If a trailer is carrying a heavy load, the swaying can cause the tow vehicle's driver to lose control. The swaying trailer can rock the tow vehicle and cause a serious accident. In several incidents, a swaying trailer caused the tow vehicle driver to lose control to the point that both the trailer and tow vehicle rolled over.

A big part of the problem is that once a trailer begins to sway, it can be very difficult to make it stop swaying. Even an experienced driver can have problems getting a swaying trailer under control. To make matters worse, many drivers will try to regain control using their own vehicles' steering or brakes. Unfortunately, that usually contributes to more swaying.

It's best to take every step you can to avoid swaying in the first place. That means you should tow a balanced load, drive at a cautious speed (particularly downhill) and pay attention to the way your trailer behaves as you drive. If you detect swaying early, it's much easier to deal with the problem. If the trailer has brakes, you should use them to get the swaying under control. Don't use your tow vehicle's brakes, and don't try to steer out of the swaying pattern. After regaining control, keep an eye on the trailer. Should your trailer begin swaying again, you should find a place to pull over so that you can inspect it.

If the trailer doesn't have its own brakes, you should slow down by letting your foot off the gas pedal. If you do need to use your brakes, tap them lightly. Pressing too hard could cause the trailer to jackknife. You'll want to move off the road as soon as you can. Remember that you shouldn't attempt to compensate for the swaying through steering -- you may only make the problem worse.

In many cases, you can reduce swaying by redistributing the load in the trailer. Make sure that the heavier items are in front of the trailer's axle. By putting more of the weight toward the front of the trailer, you'll improve the trailer's ability to handle the road. You can also purchase equipment designed to reduce sway -- this equipment can help stabilize a trailer by providing resistance against swaying.

While the risks of towing are real, they're not insurmountable. With the right preparation and approach, you can tow with confidence.

Contact Us

Air Safe Hitches
264 Lincoln Ave
Island arkh, New York |
11558
Tel. 321-939-2132
Fax. 866-201-3391
airsafehitches.com

Follow Us



Unsubscribe

Air Safe Hitches
ISLAND PARK New York 11558
United States

This email is intended for lstegemann@ecpginc.com.
[Update your preferences](#) or [Unsubscribe](#)

