

RV Towing Safety Guide

Towing an RV requires thorough preparation, proper equipment, and safe driving habits to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. This guide combines all aspects of RV towing safety into one comprehensive resource.

I. Pre-Trip Preparation

Matching Tow Vehicle and RV

- **Towing Capacity:** Confirm that your tow vehicle's towing capacity exceeds the loaded weight of the RV. Check the owner's manual and RV specifications.
- **Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR):** Verify that the combined weight of your tow vehicle and loaded RV does not exceed the GCWR.
- **Hitch Rating:** Ensure the hitch is rated to handle the RV's weight.
- **Weight Distribution:** Use a weight distribution hitch if needed to evenly distribute the RV's weight across both vehicles' axles. This prevents sway and improves stability.
- **Brake Controller:** Install a brake controller in the tow vehicle to synchronize braking if the RV has its own brakes (required for most trailers over 3,000 lbs).
- **Mirrors:** Use extended side mirrors to maintain clear visibility around the RV.

Safety Equipment

- Install towing lights and ensure they're functioning properly (brake, turn, and running lights).
- Equip your tow vehicle and RV with reflective tape or markers for better visibility at night.

II. Hitching and Connections

Hitching Procedure

1. Align the tow vehicle with the RV.

2. Lower the hitch onto the ball and lock it securely.
3. **Safety Chains:** Cross the safety chains under the trailer tongue and attach them to the tow vehicle's hitch receiver. This prevents the trailer from dropping in case of detachment.
4. **Electrical Connector:** Connect the wiring harness for the trailer lights and brakes.
5. **Breakaway Cable:** Attach the breakaway cable to the tow vehicle. This activates the trailer brakes if the trailer detaches unexpectedly.

Final Checks

- Double-check all connections, including:
 - Hitch lock
 - Safety chains
 - Electrical connector
 - Breakaway cable
- Ensure all RV lights are functioning and the hitch height is adjusted for a level ride.

III. Driving Practices

Speed and Control

- Drive at or below posted speed limits for towing.
- Avoid sudden movements and aggressive braking.
- Keep a longer braking distance than you would with an unloaded vehicle.

Turning and Lane Changes

- Make wider turns to avoid hitting curbs or objects.
- Signal well in advance before changing lanes and ensure ample clearance.

Handling Hills

- **Descending:** Use lower gears and engine braking when going downhill to control speed and reduce brake wear.
- **Ascending:** Maintain a steady speed to prevent engine strain.

Passing and Wind Conditions

- Allow plenty of time and space when passing.
- Reduce speed during strong winds to prevent trailer sway.

Reversing

- Practice backing up in an open space before attempting tight maneuvers. Use a spotter for guidance when possible.

IV. Regular Checks During Travel

- **Mirrors:** Regularly check mirrors for traffic and ensure the trailer is aligned.
- **Connections:** Periodically stop to inspect hitch, safety chains, and electrical connections.
- **Tires:** Check tire pressure and temperature. Look for any visible damage or bulges, particularly during hot weather.
- **Cargo:** Verify that all interior and exterior cargo is secure.