



CHOOSING THE RIGHT TRAILER FOR YOUR NEEDS

A Guide to Making the Right Choice





TRAILERS ARE A BIG INVESTMENT

They empower your other investments and help with your toughest jobs.

Nothing is more important than getting the job done right. The trailers you choose are a big part of that. Whether you are supplementing a fleet of trailers or just need one, there are important considerations to ensure your return on your investment is exceptionally high.

This Trailer Buying Guide will help you find the perfect hauler for the job. You'll find information on:

- >> trailer types and sizes
- >> strength & capacity
- >> vehicle considerations (towing capacity, hitches)
- >> brakes, axles and other components
- >> wiring and lights
- >> construction and materials
- >> special licensing requirements

With this guide in hand, we hope you will feel confident as you shop for the right trailer for your needs.





TANDEM AXLE GOOSENECK

Gooseneck trailers tackle heavy loads, with much of the weight of the trailer placed over the truck's rear axle. Sway is minimized, space is maximized and turning radius is tighter.



INCREDIBLE UTILITY is what you get from the wide variety of Utility trailers. Get your stuff moving.



TANDEM AXLE DUMP

Dump trailers utilize hydraulics to easily and efficiently unload heavy hauls. Dumps often ride lower to the ground for stability and quick and safe load and unload.



PROTECTED MOBILITY is the promise of Enclosed/Cargo trailers. Highly versatile to manage lots of tasks and industries.

CONSIDER YOUR USAGE

Trailers come in lots of configurations. Finding the right one begins with answering what and how much you will be hauling.

WHAT WILL YOU BE HAULING?

Heavy equipment requires a sturdy deck, while piles of dirt need a box with sides and hydraulics for dumping. Cars need ramps and livestock needs stability and comfort. Whatever your load, there is a trailer type that is ideal for it.

HOW HEAVY IS YOUR LOAD?

Beyond what you will be towing, you must think about what you expect your maximum load to be. Be sure to consider the weight of your trailer as part of the payload total load.



PAMPERING LIVESTOCK is a key goal of Livestock trailers. That and handling the constant beating from hooves.



AUTO HAULER

Auto haulers are designed specifically for vehicles. Rear ramps make loading and unloading vehicles hassle-free.



TOUGHNESS, SIZE AND CAPACITY

Carefully consider your typical payload to pick the right trailer.

BEAMS, FRAMES, FLATBEDS

Some applications simply require more robust trailers. This starts with the frame, the cross members and the beds that provide the basic structure of the trailer. I-beams add heft, and larger, closely spaced cross members add support. Thicker gauge beds or heavier wood floors can take more of a beating.

TOUGHNESS/ GVWR

When considering which model is right, toughness is an important factor. You want to make sure that your hauler is well suited to take on any likely job. One aspect of determining the toughness of your trailer is to look at its GVWR.

A trailer's GVWR is the sum of:

- >> Tire rating
- >> Coupler and hitch
- >> Axle rating
- >> Brake configuration
- >> Frame

CARGO PAYLOAD CAPACITY

Many people assume GVWR is the payload, but **this is not correct**. Trailer Payload or Cargo Payload (the maximum cargo weight to be put on a trailer) is actually GVWR minus the weight of the trailer. This is an important safety factor, because if you fail to account for the weight of the trailer itself, you may overload it and your tow vehicle.





VEHICLE DECISIONS

Trailers and tow vehicles need to be compatible, including the vehicle's load capacity and matching the coupler type to the vehicle.

Your planned usage will drive your ultimate trailer decision, but it will also depend upon your tow vehicle's capacity. The below chart provides a rough guide to matching trailer type with vehicle type. No chart can fully account for every towing situation, so be sure to follow vehicle recommendations for your specific application.

Most likely you will be towing your trailer with a large vehicle, but there are small cargo and utility trailers that even small vehicles can manage. As

TRAILER - VEHICLE SIZING GUIDE

	Compact Cars	Mid-size Cars	Full-Size Cars, Vans, Compact Trucks	Full-Size Trucks, Vans, SUVs
Auto Haulers			Medium Load	Heavy Load
Cargo Trailers	Light Load	Light Load	Medium Load	Heavy Load
Dump Trailers			Medium Load	Heavy Load
Equipment Trailers		Light Load	Medium Load	Heavy Load
Gooseneck Trailers			Medium Load	Heavy Load
Landscape Trailers		Light Load	Medium Load	Heavy Load
Motorcycle Trailers				Heavy Load
Tilt Bed Trailers			Medium Load	Heavy Load
Truck Beds			Medium Load	Heavy Load



HOOKUPS AND ATTACHMENTS

Change to Your hitch type will depend upon your vehicle, trailer and typical load.

WHAT KIND OF TRAILER ATTACHMENT DO YOU NEED?

There are several ways to attach a trailer to a vehicle. The load and the vehicle type help determine the best option.

HITCHES

When choosing a hitch, you'll need to know how much your trailer weighs fully loaded (gross trailer weight) as well as the hitch rating (tongue weight). The hitch rating will determine how much downward force the coupler exerts on the hitch ball. The appropriate ratio of hitch to trailer weight varies and is listed in the specifications of each trailer.

- >> Typically hitch receivers are bolted to the frame of the tow vehicle, and can be added aftermarket.
- >> Hitches vary by class: Class I hitches are smaller for lighter loads, increasing class by class up to large Class V hitches for heavy loads.

GOOSENECKS & PINTLE HITCHES

- >> Gooseneck hitches shift the trailer weight over the axle of the vehicle and accommodate larger loads.
- >> Pintle hitches feature a hook for a ring on the trailer and are typically for heavy equipment.

HITCH SPECIFICATIONS

	Hitch Opening	WC GTW	WC HW	WD GTW	WD HW
Class I	1.25-in	Up to 2,000#	Up to 200#		
Class II	1.25-in	Up to 3,500#	Up to 350#		
Class III	2-in	Up to 8,000#	Up to 1,200#	Up to 12,000#	Up to 1,200#
Class IV	2-in	Up to 10,000#	Up to 1,000#	Up to 14,000#	Up to 1,400#
Class V	2 or 2.5-in			Up to 18,000#	Up to 2,500#

SAFETY CHAINS

Your trailer should come equipped with safety chains that exceed the GVWR of the trailer, and be attached to the trailer using cold-rolled eyelets. Breakaway cables that activate your trailer's electric brakes in the unlikely event your trailer comes separated from your tow vehicle add additional safety.



RIDE SMOOTH

Trailer Alignment, Suspension, Axles and Brakes help smooth the two

PROPER ALIGNMENT

One of the most important aspects of how a trailer pulls is the proper alignment of the frame. Without proper alignment, the trailer could suffer from a number of ailments such as improper towing, uneven tire wear, short tire life and excessive heat on the bearings. Proper alignment throughout the frame of the trailer also prevents trailer sway.

SUSPENSION

Suspension is another big factor that affects how smoothly your trailer pulls. Adjustable suspensions allow for continuous, precise axle alignment, reducing drag and increasing tire life. The design of a well-made adjustable suspension allows for reduced road shock to the cargo, as well as improving the integrity, reliability and durability of the trailer.

AXLES

Axles are one of the most important contributors to the security of your load. To ensure your load will be properly supported, be sure that your trailer is equipped with the right axles. This includes understanding maximum weight capacity, as well as maintaining consistent lubrication and upkeep.

BRAKES

Good brakes on the trailer are crucial to ensure the vehicle's brakes don't have to work alone to stop both the vehicle and the trailer with its load. Trailer brakes come in several designs, some of which eliminate the need for manual brake adjustments, while maintaining optimum performance and braking power.





HAVE YOUR TRAILER LOOKING AND WORKING AT ITS BEST

Ramps, lighting, wiring and finishes are important decisions in your trailer choice.

GATES AND RAMPS

Properly securing your haul can depend on having the right ramp gate. This means making sure your trailer's ramp gate not only meets weight standards but security standards as well. When deciding between the variety of gates and ramps out there, be sure to look at construction. How much does this add to the gross weight rating? Is the material built to last or prone to "sagging" over time?

Angled iron construction of gates and ramps may be perfectly fine for lighter loads. Tubular construction can give the ramp additional strength without adding a lot of weight.

LIGHTING AND WIRING

Lighting is a key element to secure a safe haul. Tail lights, specifically, require dependable wiring to ensure road safety.

Tail lights

Visibility and durability are two very crucial performance requirements for tail lights. Smart placement that offers both visibility and protection is crucial so that your trailer will be well seen on the road for years to come.

Wiring

Unprotected wiring is common on inexpensive trailers, causing wiring problems as trailers get beat up. Protected wiring, either inside the framing or in protected channels, ensures durability. Access to wiring junctures is important in case replacement or repair becomes necessary.

LEDs

Many of today's trailers are equipped with LED lighting as a standard feature. LED lighting lasts longer, shines brighter and uses less energy than traditional incandescent lighting. In general, brighter lights are safer.

FINISHES

Trailers are at least as exposed to the elements as are vehicles, so always look for high-grade protection that can take a licking and still not only look good, but fend off the creeping danger of corrosion.

CARGO CONTROL/RAILS

There is nothing worse than cruising smoothly down the highway and feeling your cargo make a dangerous or even catastrophic shift. Ample tie-down locations both on the bed and on the trailer edges is crucial to maintaining control and safety.





TOP ENGINEERING & MATERIALS

Toughness isn't an accident

MATERIALS

When pulling a trailer, there are many variables to ensure you not only have a successful haul but a smooth one as well. Everything from materials to tires to axles and alignment can affect your trailer and towing experience. When considering different trailers keep these materials in mind:

Made with Steel

The strength of your trailer is usually synonymous with its quality. When it comes to strength, materials really count. Look for trailers manufactured using heavy gauge, low carbon, high-alloyed steel. Heavier steel absorbs flex and prevents frame twist and fatigue, providing for a longer, more productive life for the trailer.

Flooring

Flooring, though often overlooked, is an important part of your trailer buying decision. The flooring you choose should be determined by what you will be hauling.

For example, if you are moving boxes, a lighter-weight floor will work well with weight evenly distributed. However, if you plan to move motorcycles or large items with fewer touch points and uneven distribution of weight, you will need stronger flooring. Heavier weight pressing down through fewer pressure points requires floors that can take the load.

Tires

All tires are not the same. Trailer tires can be very different from regular vehicle tires and it is important to make sure that the rubber your hauler is riding on will last.



SECURE YOUR PURCHASE

Warranty, certifications and the backing of a strong company.

WARRANTY

Look for reliable warranties that will protect your trailer against defects in materials and construction, giving you the confidence to really put it to work. The variation you will find in length of warranty and what is covered may prove very important in the long run.

DEALER NETWORK/SERVICE/PARTS

Be sure to choose your dealer wisely. Look for dealers with a long history of success and a broad footprint. A great dealer should be able to provide reliable and convenient service, a deep inventory for parts and accessories, and trained professionals to help with all your trailering needs.

CERTIFICATIONS

The National Association of Trailer Manufacturers certifies some companies for quality manufacturing processes and materials, providing assurance that you will receive the highest quality trailers available.

COMPANY

Look into the history and reviews of the brands you are considering. If you consider carefully, you can feel confident that you are investing in a relationship with a reputable company that takes care of its customers.

BRAND RECOGNITION

Brand names aren't everything, but they may make a big difference at resale. A known name may convince your clients that you value the quality of your tools and will deliver good work. Consider brands that reflect well on you.

