

Can I tow this?

So you've picked out a trailer you'd like to buy, but you're not sure what you'll need to tow it home with.

First thing you need to do is understand some of the weight ratings and numbers, so let's start with some definitions and explanations.

Dry weight. You can find this printed in a brochure, on a sticker inside one of the kitchen cabinets, or somewhere on the outside of the trailer (usually near the front on the left side). This dry weight number may not be accurate for the trailer you are looking at. It may not include options, upgrades or accessories added by the manufacturer or the dealer. It may not include the weight of the empty propane tanks or the batteries. Because this number can be as much as 500# off, I don't recommend using this for much of anything.

Tongue weight (trailers). You can usually find this number in the same place as the dry weight, and it can be just as wrong! It is usually listed as "dry hitch weight" or "dry tongue weight". There's that word again... "dry". Tongue weight for most trailers is in the 12%-15% range, but this could vary depending on the floor plan. An absolute minimum recommended tongue weight would be 10% of total trailer weight. Not enough tongue weight can cause handling problems, such as trailer sway. Too much tongue weight can cause steering problems with the tow vehicle.

Pin weight (fifth wheels). You can find this number in the same place as the dry weight, and it can be just as wrong! It is usually listed as "dry pin weight". There's that word again, "dry". Pin weight for most fifth wheels is around 20%, but this could vary depending on the floor plan.

Axle weight. This is the amount of weight on the axles (or tires). It could be listed as "dry axle weight", and you could also find a "maximum axle weight" rating.

GVWR. Gross Vehicle Weight Rating, is the maximum the trailer can weigh.

So, how can you tell if you can tow this trailer or not? The two numbers that should concern you the most are the GVWR and the hitch or pin weight.

If you already have a tow vehicle, go to "[What can I tow?](#)" and use these numbers.

If you are looking for a tow vehicle, you've got a little more work to do...mainly shopping and comparing different vehicles. While you're out shopping, you'll probably see the "tow ratings" or "towing capacity" numbers. Don't believe them! They are

mainly for advertising purposes and bragging rights! The best thing to do would be to take the vehicle to a public scale and get it weighed. (See the pages for "[How to weigh?](#)" and "[What can I tow?](#)".) You can find a scale at most truck stops, larger recycle centers, waste transfer stations, and you can even use the scales at the weigh stations along the highway (the ones the commercial truckers use). Even if it's a 2 hour drive to the nearest scale, it will be well worth your time and expense to find out that you have chosen the right vehicle to tow with before you buy it than it would be to find out later that you didn't get enough tow vehicle for the job.

Also when you're out shopping for the right tow vehicle, don't believe the salesperson when they tell you, "Sure, this can pull that trailer no problem!" Yeah, right! Most salespeople have never towed anything larger than a utility trailer, if that. Many of the RV salespeople have never towed anything either! I have read so many stories from people that trusted the salespeople, only to find out that their tow vehicle could hardly tow the trailer off the lot!

Please make sure that your intended tow vehicle is up to the task you are about to put it to. Otherwise, your RV'ing experience may not be the one you had hoped for.

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