

Important Information About Trailering

The information below is intended to give you (i) some details about the trailer ratings on your vehicle, and (ii) a way to ensure that the vehicle you use can handle the load you want to pull.

Trailer Weight Ratings and Gross Combination Weight Ratings

Our engineers perform extensive testing for acceleration, handling, braking, and thermal and structural performance to determine the Gross Combination Weight Rating (GCWR) and the Trailer Weight Rating (TWR) for your vehicle. The GCWR is the total allowable weight of the completely loaded vehicle and trailer including any passengers, cargo, equipment, and conversions. You should not exceed the GCWR of your vehicle when you tow a trailer. You can get the GCWR or TWR for your vehicle from your dealer or on the applicable website.

We also calculate and publish a Trailer Weight Rating (TWR) for each model or series of vehicles we sell for comparison purposes. The TWR is not specific to an individual vehicle, and is most useful for comparing product lines to one another to select a product that will meet your needs. When you buy a vehicle, you should ensure that the total load (including passengers, cargo and equipment) you intend to pull weighs less than the TWR of the vehicle.

Because the TWR is calculated for a line of vehicles, rather than an individual load situation, we have to make some standardized assumptions when we calculate the TWR. First we use the base curb weight of that type of vehicle (the weight of a standard equipped vehicle without any options). Second, we assume that there is only one person in the vehicle (the driver) who weighs 150 lbs. Third, we assume there is a certain tongue weight for the load (a tongue weight is the weight of only the tongue of the loaded trailer). For conventional trailering, we use a tongue weight that is 10% of the loaded trailer weight. For 5th wheel/gooseneck trailering, we use a tongue weight that is 16.7% of the loaded trailer weight.

How to Keep Your Load Within the Capabilities of Your Vehicle

To be sure that your trailering combination is appropriate for your vehicle, you must first obtain the weight of your specific vehicle, with all the optional equipment you ordered. You can take your vehicle to a weigh station to get this figure, or you can see your dealer who can help you calculate this figure based on the weight of the options you ordered. You can then subtract the weight of your vehicle from the GCWR. The difference between the two is the capacity you have available for your cargo, passengers, trailer, load and any other equipment you might use to set up your trailer. Put another way, your GCWR should always be greater than or equal to the weight of your vehicle, passengers, cargo, trailer (with equipment) and load.

There are a couple of other ratings that are also important to making sure your trailering combination performs properly. It is also important that your vehicle, and your trailering combination, do not exceed the Tongue Weight, Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR), or Rear Gross Axle Weight Rating (RGAWR) limitations for your vehicle. The only way to be sure it is not exceeding any of these ratings is to weigh the tow vehicle and trailer combination, fully loaded for the trip, getting individual weights for each of these items. This can be done at a weigh station having a multi-platform scale.

The tongue weight for your trailer is the downward force of the coupler of the trailer on the vehicle hitch. You can calculate the tongue weight by placing the tongue of the trailer on an appropriate scale. For conventional trailering, the tongue weight should be between 10% and 15% of the loaded trailer weight. For 5th wheel/gooseneck trailering, the tongue weight should be between 15% and 25% of the loaded trailer weight.

The GVWR is the maximum amount the vehicle itself should weigh, including the as- equipped weight of the vehicle, plus the cargo, passengers and trailer tongue weight. Put another way, your GVWR should always be greater than or equal to the weight of your vehicle, passengers, cargo, and tongue weight.

Finally, the RGAWR is the maximum allowable weight the rear axle can carry. You can weigh your fully loaded vehicle with trailer at a multi-platform weigh station to determine the weight on the rear axle of the vehicle to ensure that you do not exceed the RGAWR. You can find both the GVWR and the RGAWR on the Certification/Tire label which is found on the rear edge of the driver door.

Change is Coming

The Society of Automotive Engineers (“SAE”) has recently announced some new guidelines for trailer ratings. General Motors will therefore be changing its ratings in the next few years. GM has tested and prepared ratings to the new SAE standard and is ready to implement the new ratings when we can do so without creating consumer confusion about comparisons of vehicles commonly used for trailering. At this point, key competitors are continuing to use their existing ratings for 2013 model year pickups, so we have decided that retaining our existing rating system for the 2013 model year will reduce confusion for dealers and customers.

Please, always refer to your owner’s manual for more information on trailering, and on how to drive using a trailer.