

# Attaching the Trailer to the Vehicle

Become methodical about hitching up and unhitching so that you do not forget anything.

If your towcar's mirrors do not give a good view past the trailer you should fit towing mirrors.

- Apply the trailer handbrake, remove any towball and electrical socket dust covers and security devices then wind the jockey wheel to the required height. Check the towball is lightly oiled. (Not greased) (If not being used with a head stabiliser.)
- Get a helper to stand with their hands showing you where the hitch is (place a broom against it if you are alone) and reverse slowly back. Your helper indicates if you are off line.
- Raise the front of the trailer by means of the jockey wheel assembly to the required height, roll trailer up to the rear of the towing vehicle.
- If the trailer has tandem axles, raise sufficiently to raise the front wheels clear of the ground to aid maneuverability.
- Do not attempt to lift the front of the trailer. Lower the trailer by means of the jockey wheel assembly onto the towball of the vehicle.
- Over the last foot or so, your helper should use their hands to show you the actual distance between towball and coupling head.
- If you have to stop a few inches short, judge how far back you are going by comparing the front wheels' movement to something on the ground. Wind the jockey wheel down to lower the coupling head onto the towball. Some coupling heads have a locking handle which stays up then automatically locks onto the ball, others have to be held up and may have an indicator to show when the ball is in place.
- Once the coupling head appears locked on, lower the jockey wheel a few turns to lift the back of the vehicle to prove the coupling head is on properly, then fully raise the wheel before unclamping it and, finally, securely locking it fully raised. Check that the wheel in the position you have locked it is not interfering with the operation of the coupling overrun mechanism.
- Attach safety breakaway cable(s) to the rear of vehicle. This cable will apply the hand brake if for any reason the trailer becomes detached whilst towing. (Clip the breakaway cable onto the special rings some towbars have or loop it around the bar, making sure it cannot foul the coupling head. Do not loop it round the towball neck unless you can find no alternative.) Check that the breakaway and lighting cables have enough slack for cornering but will not touch the ground.
- Plug in the lighting plug, and check all lights and indicators. The electrical plug only fits one way, so line up its cut-out with the lug on the bottom edge of the socket. Some cars have two sockets – use the one with the black cover flap because the one with the white flap is for caravan supplementary electrical systems.
- It is your responsibility as the driver to ensure all lights work. Turn on the car lights and check the trailer's lights. With the ignition on, make sure the correct indicators are working – car and trailer indicators not matching is a common fault – then get someone to see if the trailer brake lights work. (If you are alone, use a short stick between the pedal and the seat to hold down the brake pedal.) Adjust both external mirrors so that a view down both sides of the trailer can be obtained.  
(If this cannot be achieved extension mirrors should be fitted).
- When loading a trailer ensure the weight is distributed appropriately. Nose weight is a very important factor in making your vehicle and trailer combination stable during towing. Inadequate nose weight can cause snaking problems. Too much nose weight causes other problems.

- Noseweight should be at least 50kg when the outfit is stationary. Refer to the recommendations of you vehicle and trailer manufacturers.
- It is your responsibility, as the driver, to ensure that your vehicle or trailer is not overloaded.
- If the trailer has an eye coupling, after attaching the trailer, make sure that the safety locking catch on the towing pin is properly applied and that the safety pin or clip is fitted. (If this is not fitted, the trailer could become unhitched).
- Lift up and lock the jockey wheel assembly. (If this is not done, the jockey wheel will become damaged).