

Towing Component Weight Ratings

Every component in a towing system has a weight rating. You never want to exceed the lowest rated component in the system, or what I refer to as the weakest link. For example, your tow vehicle might be rated to tow 7,000 pounds, but if the hitch receiver on the tow vehicle is rated for 5,000 pounds that is the most you can tow. This can be especially true on some older motor homes. The motor home might be rated to tow 6,000 pounds or more, but the receiver on the motor home is only rated for 3,500 pounds. Hitch receivers are rated in classes 1 through 5. Each class of receiver is rated for different amounts of weight. Hitch receiver ratings also depend on whether it is used as a weight carrying hitch or weight distributing hitch. A Weight Carrying Hitch (WCH) means that all of the trailers tongue weight is supported by the hitch itself. Weight carrying hitches are used for lighter trailers. A Weight Distributing Hitch (WDH) means additional hardware is used to distribute a percentage of the trailers tongue weight to the axles of the tow vehicle and the axles of the trailer.

Towing a trailer safely involves more than just selecting the right class of hitch receiver. The hitch ball and ball mount also have maximum weight ratings that they are capable of handling. Hitch balls have three basic measurements, the ball diameter, the shank diameter and the shank length. The hitch ball base and shank play a major role in the hitch balls weight rating. Hitch ball diameter sizes come in 1 7/8", 2" and 2 5/16". The ball size must be the right size for the coupler on the trailer you are towing, and be rated to tow the trailers Gross Vehicle Weight Rating.

The hitch ball mount is the removable portion of the hitch that slides into the hitch receiver. Hitch ball mounts are rated by the amount of weight they can safely tow. For Weight Carrying hitches it may be necessary to find a ball mount with a drop or rise to help level the trailer when its hooked up to the tow vehicle. An adjustable ball mount is used for heavier trailer applications. Adjustable ball mounts allow the ball to be raised, lowered or tilted to compensate for trailer tongue weight and to attain proper height adjustments. Adjustable ball mounts are normally used with Weight Distributing hitches. Always check the receiver, the hitch ball and the ball mount to make sure that the weight you are towing does not exceed the hitch components weight capacities.

Happy Camping,

Mark J. Polk
www.rveducation101.com