

At midnight, images of all the vehicles that have been in the charging zone are checked against the registration numbers of vehicles that have paid their congestion charge for that day. The computer keeps the registration numbers of vehicles that should have paid but haven't done so. A penalty charge notice is issued to the registered keeper of the vehicle.

Not all drivers have to pay the charge. Those who are exempt include

- disabled people who hold a Blue Badge
- riders of two-wheelers.

There are also exemptions for low- or no-emission vehicles. To check whether your vehicle qualifies, visit **[tfl.gov.uk](http://tfl.gov.uk)**

Residents living within the zone obtain a reduced rate but aren't exempt unless their vehicle meets the minimum exemption requirement.

Some people may be able to claim reimbursement; for example, staff, firefighters and patients too ill to travel to an appointment on public transport.

Emission Zone London also operates an emissions zone for diesel vehicles with high carbon-dioxide outputs. The zone covers most of Greater London and operates for 24 hours a day, all year round. Charging days run from midnight to midnight, so if you entered the zone before midnight and were still driving through it at 1.30 am you'd need to pay the charge for both days. To see if your vehicle is affected by Low Emission Zone charges, visit **[tfl.gov.uk](http://tfl.gov.uk)**



## Section nineteen

# ➞ Towing a trailer

### This section covers

- Towing regulations
- Towing a caravan
- Towing a horse trailer
- Caravan and trailer safety
- Driving techniques



## Towing regulations

Throughout this section, reference is made to the maximum authorised mass (MAM) of vehicles and trailers. This should, in all cases, be taken to mean the maximum permissible weight – also known as the gross vehicle weight. You may not be planning to drive a vehicle, or a vehicle towing a trailer, at these maximum weights, but they're key factors that determine driver licensing requirements.

### **If you passed your test before 1 January 1997**

You're generally allowed to drive a vehicle and trailer combination up to 8.25 tonnes.

### **If you passed your test on or after 1 January 1997**

You may tow a trailer behind a category B\* vehicle without taking a further test as long as the trailer doesn't exceed 750 kg.

If the trailer you wish to tow exceeds 750 kg, you may tow it behind a category B vehicle provided that the vehicle and trailer combination doesn't exceed 3.5 tonnes. If you wish to drive a category B vehicle towing a trailer that exceeds the limits given above, you'll have to pass a practical category B+E test.

If you wish to drive a vehicle with a MAM exceeding 3.5 tonnes (for example, a motorhome or recreational vehicle), you'll need to pass a category C or C1 test.

\* A category B vehicle is a four-wheeled vehicle with a MAM not exceeding 3.5 tonnes which has no more than eight passenger seats (in addition to the driver's seat).

## Category B+E test

Details of the test and the minimum test vehicle and trailer requirements may be found in **The Official DVSA Guide to Learning to Drive**.

More detailed information about towing trailers can be found in DVLA factsheet INF30 'Requirements for towing trailers in Great Britain'. This also includes information about towing while driving a larger vehicle. DVLA factsheets are available free of charge at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or by telephoning **0300 790 6801**.

Further useful information on towing can be found on the National Trailer and Towing Association website.

[ntta.co.uk](http://ntta.co.uk)



In 2013, new European requirements came into force that change towing regulations. New car and light van drivers wanting to tow trailers will be able to tow a slightly larger trailer on a normal car driving licence.

Since 19 January 2013, drivers passing a category B (car and small vehicle) test have been allowed to tow

- small trailers weighing no more than 750 kg
- a trailer over 750 kg as long as the combined weight of the trailer and the towing vehicle is no more than 3500 kg MAM.

If you want to tow a trailer weighing more than 750 kg, when the combined weight of the towing vehicle and the trailer is more than 3500 kg, you'll have to pass a further test to obtain B+E entitlement on your licence. You'll then be able to tow trailers up to 3500 kg.

## The combination

The vehicle handbook or the manufacturer's agent will normally have information on

- the maximum permissible trailer mass that can be towed by your vehicle
- the maximum noseweight that should be applied to the tow ball.

You shouldn't exceed either limit.

There are separate and also legal limits on the laden weight of unbraked trailers. Make sure that you know what the limits are for your vehicle.

As a general rule, even if the vehicle manufacturer's limits are higher, it may be safer if the weight of the loaded trailer or caravan doesn't exceed 85 per cent of the kerbside (empty) weight of the towing vehicle. This applies particularly if you're not experienced at towing.

Remember that the overall length of the combination is generally double that of the normal family car.





### Mirrors

You'll need to fit exterior towing mirrors so that you have a clear view along both sides of the caravan or trailer.

### Stabiliser

A good stabiliser fitted to the towbar can make the combination safer to handle, but you'll still be responsible for loading the combination correctly. A stabiliser won't cure instability caused by a poor towing vehicle/trailer combination.

The stabiliser will give you added security in side winds, especially when large goods vehicles overtake you on the motorway.

## ➡ Towing a caravan

### Basic requirements

Most of the skills and precautions involved in towing a caravan are the same as those needed for towing a trailer. You must have a full category B (car) driving licence before towing a trailer or caravan of any size.

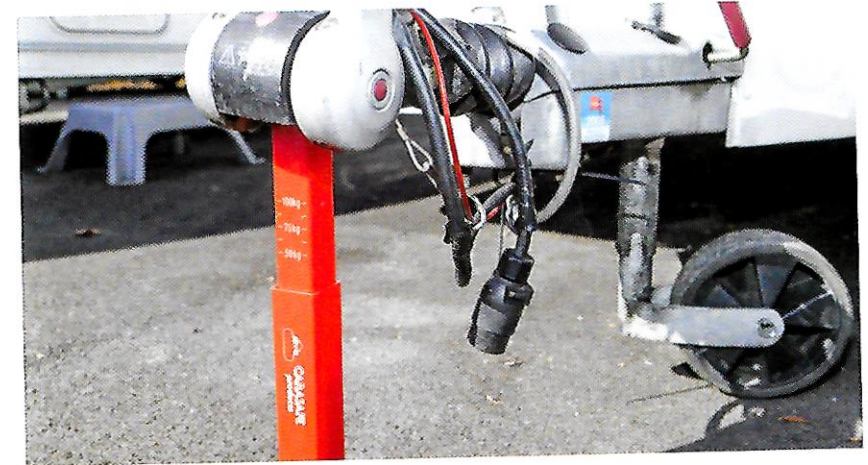
### Weight distribution

The overall stability of both the caravan and the towing vehicle depends on correct weight distribution.

For example, heavy items should be loaded as low as possible in the caravan so that the weight is mainly over the axle(s).

Bulkier, lighter items, such as bedding or clothing, should be distributed to give a suitable 'noseweight' at the towing coupling. The noseweight should never exceed the vehicle manufacturer's recommendations.

If in doubt, the noseweight may be measured by using an inexpensive gauge available from caravan accessory stockists.



**REMEMBER**, the more weight you carry, the more fuel you use.



## ➡ Towing a horse trailer

Before setting out on any journey with a horse trailer, you should perform the following checks.

### Tow-ball height

Trailer manufacturers will usually specify the height at which the trailer should be attached to the towing vehicle. If the tow bar is too low for your horse trailer, it's likely to result in too much stress being placed on the rear axle of the towing vehicle. It can also affect the front axle of the trailer by overloading it, leading to poor control, excessive tyre wear and reduced braking action.



Setting the tow bar too high transfers the load to the rear of the trailer and can lead to the towing vehicle becoming detached from the trailer. Before you hitch the trailer to the towing vehicle, make sure that the tow bar is set up to provide equal distribution of weight between the towing vehicle, the coupling and the trailer. Grease the tow ball and check it for signs of wear. You should be able to check tow-ball wear by looking at the wear indicators in the trailer's hitch. If you have any doubts at all about the condition of your tow ball, get professional advice.

## Caravan and trailer safety

Any load must be carried so that it doesn't endanger other road users. It must be securely stowed within the size and weight limits for the vehicle.

The load needs to be secure so that it can't move or fall from the vehicle when cornering or braking.

Before starting a journey, check that the caravan or trailer

- is loaded correctly, with the right noseweight on the towbar
- is correctly hitched up, with the breakaway cable or secondary coupling properly connected and the coupling head fully engaged and locked
- lights and indicators are connected and working correctly
- jockey wheel and assembly is fully retracted and in the stowed position
- braking system is working correctly
- windows, roof light and door are closed
- tyre pressures are correct.

In addition

- check the caravan or trailer tyres for tread depth, damage and cracking of the sidewalls. Even if the tread shows little wear or is above the legal minimum depth, the tyre may be suffering from the effects of ageing
- remember that tyre regulations also cover the tyres on your caravan or trailer
- a caravan that has to be left standing for long periods should be raised on supports that take the weight off the tyres. This will help prolong tyre life

- check that your caravan or trailer is fitted with tyres of the specified rating (see the vehicle handbook)
- check that you've secured and turned off all fuel supplies, such as liquid gas cylinders.

## Riding in the caravan

Don't allow anyone to ride in the caravan when it's being towed.

If you stop for a break, always lower the jockey wheel and corner steadies of the caravan before entering or letting anyone in. Don't forget to raise them fully before you move off.

Are you fit to tow? See Highways England's playlist to ensure you're towing safely.

[youtube.com/playlist?list=PL29D22F39BE35A278](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL29D22F39BE35A278)



## Driving techniques

If you haven't towed a caravan before, seek advice from one of the large caravanning organisations.

You should also consider attending one of their courses, which cover safety aspects such as loading, manoeuvring and driving techniques.

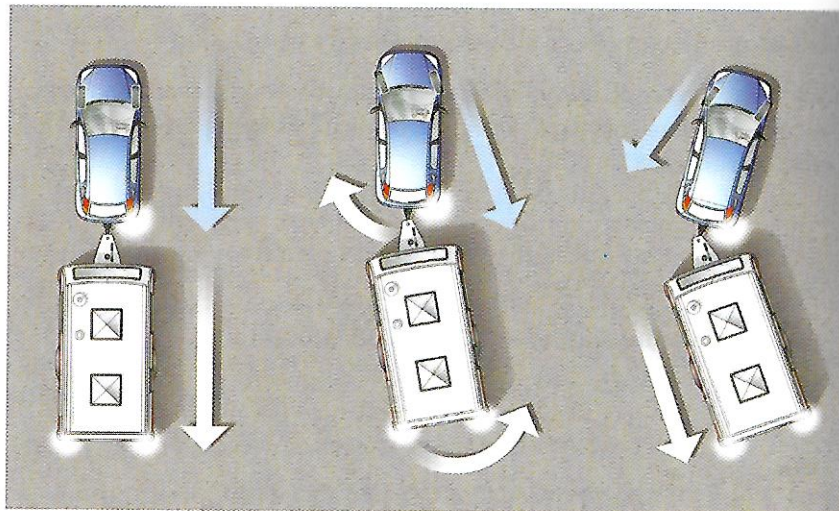
You can find detailed guidance on all aspects of towing in the booklet **The Caravan Towing Guide**, which is available from

National Caravan Council Ltd  
Catherine House, Victoria Road  
Aldershot, Hants GU11 1SS  
Tel 01252 318251  
Fax 01252 322596  
Email [info@thenc.org.uk](mailto:info@thenc.org.uk)  
[thenc.org.uk](http://thenc.org.uk)

## Manoeuvring

Drivers without experience of towing need to take great care, particularly when manoeuvring.

Don't be afraid to practise reversing in a quiet car park until you've mastered the technique.



## On the road

Always be aware of the increased weight, length and width of the combined vehicles.

You'll soon adjust to the different techniques involved in towing, so long as you remember not to hurry any manoeuvres and to plan well ahead. You should

- allow more time and brake earlier when slowing down or stopping
- give yourself three times the normal distance and time to overtake safely
- take account of the extra length, particularly when turning or emerging at junctions.

## Snaking

Never attempt to correct swerving or 'snaking' by increasing speed, steering sharply (zigzagging), or braking hard.

The safe technique is to

- ease off the accelerator slowly
- allow a certain amount of 'twitch' in the steering
- reduce speed until the snaking has stopped.

## High-sided vehicles

You need to take extra care when passing or being passed by high-sided vehicles.

Allow as much space as possible to avoid the effects of turbulence or buffeting.

## Speed limits

Some speed limits are lower than normal when you're towing. Unless road signs tell you otherwise, you mustn't exceed

- 30 mph (48 km/h) in built-up areas
- 50 mph (80 km/h) on single carriageways
- 60 mph (96 km/h) on dual carriageways or motorways.

Reduce your speed

- in high winds or side winds
- when going downhill
- in poor visibility.

**REMEMBER**, check your mirrors frequently. If you're holding up a queue of traffic, you should be prepared to pull in where it's safe to let other, faster traffic pass.





## Motorway driving

Caravans or trailers mustn't be towed in the outside lane of a motorway that has more than two lanes, unless other lanes are closed.



## Section twenty

# ➞ Vehicle security

### This section covers

- Security measures
- Parking