

Search

[Home](#) ▶ [Fifth Wheel Trailer Guide](#) ▶ [FW Basics](#) ▶  
Fifth Wheel Travel Trailer Towing Tips

# Fifth Wheel Travel Trailer Towing Tips

📅 June 11, 2019

I am pleased that after roughly 70,000 miles and over eight years of fifth wheel trailer towing I have thankfully haven't had a traffic accident, a tire blowout, or ran out of fuel.

I started as a complete newbie, never having towed a thing in my life. The first thing I did with the new trailer was off to the nearest big open parking area and practice, practice, practice! The first few times out were, I have to admit, a little nerve-wracking, but as I got more and more hours under my belt, everything became more relaxed.

**etrailer.com**

**Love Your RV! recommended for  
RV, Truck and Trailer Parts**

[etrailer.com](http://etrailer.com)

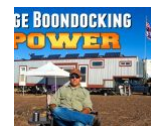
## RECENT POSTS



[Building Custom RV Battery/Inverter Cables – Tips and Advice](#)



[New WiFi Add-on for the Trimetric Battery Monitor \(Installation and Demo\)](#)



[Fellow Fulltime RVer's Massive Boondocking Power System](#)



[Olight Warrior X Pro – Flashlight Review](#)



[New Flag Pole for the RV – 22 foot FlagPole Buddy ...](#)

[Testing Out a Cheap Portable Gas Detector](#)



## Newbie Tips for Fifth Wheel Towing Video

### Fifth Wheel Trailer Towing Tips for Newbies

## Practice, practice, practice!

This has to be the all-time best tip you can get. You can read all the information you want, but the only way to truly learn is by doing it over and over. It's how you learned to drive your car, right? Take some cones and mark out pretend scenarios like backing into a campsite, turning through some tight corners, etc.

Learn how your rig reacts and how long it takes the trailer to turn and how much extra room it takes. This is also a good time to get a feel for braking. Towing a trailer makes the stopping distance greater, and the braking practice will give you a sense of how much distance is going to be a safe distance to stop.



[Repairs – How Are They Performing?](#)



[Lion Energy Lithium Battery UT 1300 – Review Update](#)



[10 RV Upgrades We Use All the Time](#)



[Adding Four Helpful Truck Accessories to our 2018 Ram](#)

[3500](#)



[Boondocking Power Upgrade – 200 Watts + Wiring Update &](#)

[Mods](#)



[Christmas RV Goodie! – Deluxe Weather Station for the](#)

[Rig](#)

Get \$100 off the **Lion Energy UT1300**  
Use discount code –  
**LYRVUT1300** ⤴



*Disclaimer: Affiliate Ad*



[Viper 15-Foot RV Sewer Hose Kit, Universal Sewer Hose for RV Camper, Includes 15-Foot Hose with Rota...](#)



\$52.53

[View on Amazon](#)

## ARCHIVES

- [Blog Posts](#)
- [RV Tips and Tricks](#)
- [Mods and Upgrades](#)
- [Boondocking](#)
- [RV Product Reviews](#)
- [Photo Gallery](#)

## Love Your RV!

Monthly Newsletter

Email Address

First Name

Subscribe

[Receive Free RVing eBook!](#)



## Respect the Weight

One thing you have to appreciate is how much mass you are moving around. With the trailer hooked up, your movements must be slow, steady, and deliberate. If you perform any jerky movements, you're not going to be able to correct the motion the same way as in a car. I see this issue all the time on the freeway when folks pulling trailers do a jerky quick lane change and then spend 10 seconds trying to get the trailer to stop fishtailing.

When braking, remember that even though you may have electric trailer brakes, they won't stop on a dime. Always give plenty of space in front in case a panic stop takes place ahead. I have had more than one occasion where I rounded a corner only to find a line of dead stopped cars waiting in a construction zone.

## Hitching and Unhitching

imagine why. Also on the flip side when done, make sure the tailgate is up, or you will carve out a sweet hole in the front trailer cargo bay door.

2. Always attach the emergency brake cable, at least in the unlikely event the trailer comes unhitched it will stop itself.
3. Before raising the front jacks too far and after hookup give the trailer a tug test with the truck to make sure the hitch jaws are fully engaged. That step can save your truck bed rails from getting squished by a falling fifth wheel. This is an excellent time to check the trailer brakes are working too.
4. Always [chock](#) your wheels even if the ground seems flat, you never know, better safe than sorry.
5. Don't let people distract you while doing the hitch operations. Too many bad things can happen if you forget something.
6. Keep the hitch lubed and clean. I use a [round plastic type lube plate](#) on my pin and works great. Check the nut and bolt torque settings every once in a while too.

I have a routine for hitching and unhitching and do it the same every time, that way it becomes second nature, and I'm less likely to forget something. Just before departure, my wife goes through our checklist, and I confirm the tasks were done.

## No Distractions

## TAGS

[advice](#) [Arizona](#)  
[boondocking](#)  
[boondocking](#) [california](#)  
[camping](#) [desert](#)  
[dry camping](#) [electrical](#)  
[Electronics](#) [fifth wheel](#)  
[fun](#) [help](#) [hiking](#)  
[how-to](#) [howto](#)  
[maintenance](#) [mod](#)  
[mods](#) [motorhome](#)  
[national parks](#) [ocean](#)  
[Oregon](#) [photography](#)  
[photography](#) [photos](#)  
[plumbing](#) [repairs](#)  
[review](#) [reviews](#) [RV](#)  
[RVing](#) [RV Tips](#) [safety](#)  
[snowbirds](#) [solar](#) [tips](#)  
[tips and tricks](#) [trailer](#)  
[travel](#) [upgrade](#)  
[upgrades](#)  
[Vancouver Island](#) [video](#)  
[wildlife](#)

**SHOP THE LOVE YOUR RV!**

**amazon PAGE**



second will count if an emergency maneuver is required.

I won't even let Anne play a podcast while we drive unless we are on a very wide open expressway with little traffic or she uses headphones. I like to listen to all the noises and sounds, so if anything sounds different, I'll know. Hearing a tire hissing or axle bearing squealing early can mean the difference between slowly pulling over or frantically trying to maintain control.

## Mirrors, use them!

[Mirrors](#) are your best friend when towing.

Make sure you set yourself up with ones big enough and far out



**Tow mirrors**

from the vehicle enough to see down the trailer side to the back. Mine are set so I can see the trailer walls and the tires. This way, I can see if a tire is running low or worse is blown. The next thing to do is add blind spot fish eye type mirrors as an add-on. With these, you can see vehicles that sneak up beside you, your trailer roofline and they are an aid when backing up the trailer. Always keep your mirrors as clean as you can and check them often to watch what's happening behind you.

[View on Amazon](#)

## Cornering

The fifth wheel is going to demand some extra care and attention when taking sharp corners. When you take the corner, the trailer is going to track a path inside that of your tow vehicle. How much depends on the length, and it is important to get to know. The more you practice, the better feel you'll have as to how wide of a turn you need. During the turn take it slow and check your mirror to make sure the trailer is clearing the corner.

Also, keep in mind the back-end of the trailer will swing wider than the tow vehicle path, so allow space for this. Very important in tight campgrounds where I've been witness to many small crunches to people's trailer sides as they scrape an obstacle such as a tree or post. Worse yet the electrical pedestal or water tap!

## Plan Your Route

This can save you much time and aggravation. When you are touring around in a car, it's so easy to turn around, get fuel, and deal with any type of roadway. Not so much when your 40-65 feet long and 12-14 feet high. Always plan ahead and know where you're going with the trailer before departing. Some of the websites I use to check on weather, routes, and campsites are [listed in this blog post](#).

It is important to know the terrain you'll be towing through, is it hilly? Too curvy? Rough road? Etc. Where are the easy in and out fuel stops? Nothing worse than being in some unknown town with low fuel trying to jam yourself into a tight situation to refuel.



Cities take extra planning such as knowing when rush hour might be, what's the bypass route and if they have tolls. The internet is a wonderful resource and if in doubt about the routing, go to one of the many good forums like [Love Your RV forum](#), [RV.net](#), [IRV2.com](#), [RVForum.net](#) and ask. You'll usually get a boatload of information back from folks that have done the same route or have intimate local knowledge.

## Pay attention to your Tires

A big problem fifth wheel and travel trailers may face is tire blowouts. All the weight and stress eventually is on the little patch of rubber meeting the road. I watch my tires like a hawk. Before every tow, I check the pressure, lug nut torque, visually inspect the sidewall and treads. Whenever stopped for a rest break I feel the tires for overheating along with the bearings. A handheld [infrared temperature gun](#) is also an excellent tool for this.



[SHOP!](#) ▼

margin of safety when I purchased my second set of tires, I elected to upgrade them to a higher load range. Just a little extra piece of mind as the OEM manufacturers are notorious for barely meeting the safety requirements to save a dime.

[\(See my post and video tips for trailer tires\)](#)



[EEZTire-TPMS6 Real Time/24x7 Tire Pressure Monitoring System - 6 Anti-Theft Sensors, incl. 3-Year Wa...](#)



\$349.00

**\$319.00**

[View on Amazon](#)

## Our Gusty Friend Wind

I find the wind to be the biggest enemy to my fifth wheel trailer towing experience. Being that the rig is near 13 feet high and box-shaped any wind has a dramatic effect. The worse scenario is on the big Interstate highways when traveling among the tractor trailers. When it's gusty, and they are passing by you pushing a lot of air themselves, there is a push-pull effect that happens that you must be aware of. The wind can also devastate fuel mileage and is hard on the truck trying to pull the trailer through it, worse if you add hills into the equation.

So I always check the weather and tend to plan my tow days around the wind. Many times I will leave a day early or a day late to get the least wind. One time we were towing across South Dakota's rolling hill country into 30







## Backing it up

This can be the most intimidating part of fifth wheel ownership. The dreaded backing into a campsite with the local peanut gallery watching.

- The first tip is to take your time, rushing it is only going to enhance the chance of problems. Fifth wheels respond to your steering input in a delayed manner; by going slow, you have a better opportunity to correct a miss guided path. It will help if you can pull a reasonable distance ahead before backing in to allow plenty of space for a gradual turn into the spot.
- Second, use a spotter always!! Also, have a good simple set of hand signals and have the spotter always visible in your mirrors. A set of [two-way radios](#) or cell phones for communication is another good option.
- The third is GOAL. GOAL stands for “Get Out And Look.” I will sometimes do this twice or more if in doubt, no shame in looking. It’s actually an acronym

line quickly as there is a significant swing to the end and doesn't follow the same arc as the tires. When backing up, don't forget about the front of the truck. It's so easy to get wrapped up in the looking back you crash into something right in front of yourself.

- Finally, always look up and have your spotter look up. It is easy to forget how tall the rigs are. A low tree limb can ruin your camping trip.



[Camco 15 Feet 15ft Sidewinder RV Sewer Support, Made from Sturdy Lightweight Plastic, Won't Cre...](#)



\$26.23

[View on Amazon](#)

## Take your Time

Traveling in the RV is not a race. It is meant to be enjoyable. Make sure you don't overdo the mileage. I tend to stick to between 100-250 miles as a nice distance in a day. I feel any longer than that, and you start to speed and get tired. Two terrible things when on the highway. If you feel tired at all pull over somewhere and take a nap, you have your house with you after all. Instead of taking the fastest Interstate highway, try a slower secondary road, and you may discover interesting things or that super cool off the beaten path camping spot.

