

Jim's Tech Tip

by Jim Cannon

Towing your Model A on a Trailer



There will be times when you need to transport your Model A on a trailer. Here's a tip on trailer loading to help you tow safely.

When the car is loaded on the trailer, the tongue weight of the trailer on the trailer hitch (on the back of your car or truck) should be between 10-15% of the total weight of the combined "trailer+Model A". If you load the trailer with less than 10% of the weight on the hitch, the trailer will sway as the speed increases, which is very dangerous. Over 15% can put too much unnecessary load on the back of your tow vehicle, which can take weight off of your front wheels (needed for steering and braking)- which is also not good.

How do you know the weight of your "trailer+Model A"? I took my car on the trailer to my local feed store where they have a scale. Many truck stops also have scales. I parked the loaded trailer on the scale, disconnected my truck, and moved the truck off the scale. They charge a small fee to give you the weight. Once I had that total weight, it was easy to calculate 10% and 15% of that. For example, if your "trailer+Model A" is 4,200 pounds, your Target Tongue Weight is 420 to 630 pounds, call it 525.

Once you know the Target Tongue Weight that you are shooting for, how do you know what the actual tongue weight is when you put the Model A on the trailer? You can figure it out with a ruler or tape measure. Go to a building supply store (like Home Depot) with your tow vehicle and no trailer. Measure and record the distance between the bottom of the trailer hitch and the ground. Now start loading 80# bags of dry concrete mix into your car trunk or truck bed until you have loaded your Target Tongue Weight. (I had a helpful young guy at HD load them in for me.) The exact load is not critical, but it must be above your 10% number. Now measure and record the distance between the bottom of the trailer hitch and the ground again. Once you have those 2 numbers, you can ask the helpful/ad at the store to unload all those bags and put them back! Thankfully, you only have to do this exercise one time.

With these 2 measurements, before and after the load was added, you can quickly figure out the change in height above the ground when you have your Target Tongue Weight on the back of your tow vehicle. This CHANGE in the height of your trailer hitch is the HITCH DROP that you need to get when you load your Model A on the trailer. Before attaching the trailer to your tow vehicle in the future, measure the height of the trailer hitch above the ground. Now attach the trailer and load your Model A on it. Pull the Model A forward on the trailer until your trailer hitch has dropped by your Target Hitch Drop. You can roll the Model A forward and backward a bit on the trailer to get the amount of drop that you are shooting for. Now tie the Model A down in this position on the trailer and be confident that you have enough, but not too much, tongue weight on your trailer hitch.

I have marked on my trailer the best spot to load a Model A to get the target tongue weight and hitch drop. When I put them on the mark, the tongue weight is correct.

For more tips on safe towing, check out the following web site:
<https://www.curtmfg.com/towing-safety>

Let's be careful out there, and Have a Model A Day!

Jim Cannon

