

WITHOUT A HITCH

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

AL-KO

Ready to launch:
Everything you
need to know
about towing
your fishing boat



Whether you're going for a short punt around the heads or a three-night deep-sea fishing expedition, this eBook will refresh you on the towing basics you need to ensure you and your boat stay safe during transport.

Chapter 1

Preparing and loading your trailer

Calculating towing capacity

The first step to towing your boat is to make sure you understand the various weights and masses prescribed by the manufacturers of your boat trailer and tow vehicle.

Start by calculating the aggregate trailer mass (ATM), which is the combined mass of the boat and fuel (about 1kg per litre), trailer, boat engine and any extra items such as safety equipment.

The trailer's compliance plate will give you its maximum ATM. Maintaining a safety margin will help to protect the trailer frame and bearings.

Also, be sure to check the capacity of your towing vehicle.

If you have a heavy fishing boat that you plan to tow long distances, a heavy-duty trailer is better than a standard trailer that's loaded to its limit.

Positioning and securing the boat

Keep in mind that the hull of your boat is designed to be supported by water.

Therefore, make sure that you position it on the trailer in order to distribute its weight as evenly as possible which will minimise risk of damage during road travel. Most boat trailers have support skids or rollers that can be adjusted to accommodate different boat shapes and sizes.

To keep the boat from moving vertically or horizontally during travel, fasten it to the trailer at both front and rear using tie-down straps. If you are towing a smaller boat or tinnie, general purpose tie-down straps or ropes may be adequate. However, ratchet straps can provide a tighter and more secure anchoring for bigger boats.

Double-check your tie-downs before driving away. The last thing you want is a poorly secured boat that will bounce



or slide off the trailer while you are cornering or collide with the back of the towing vehicle if you have to slam on the brakes.

Hitching the boat trailer

To hitch the boat trailer to your car, follow these steps:

1. Place a brick, block of wood or wheel chock behind or in front of each of the back tyres on the trailer to keep it from rolling backwards or forwards.
2. Use a jockey wheel to raise the trailer coupling so that it's positioned higher than the car's towball.
3. Get a friend to stand facing the back of the tow vehicle where they have a clear view of the trailer's coupling and the car's ball mount. They can help guide the tow vehicle into the right position for attachment.
4. Slowly back up the car until the towball is closely aligned with the trailer coupling.
5. Open the latch on the trailer coupling, pull back the coupling handle and lower it on to the towball. Use the jockey wheel to control the rate of descent and don't remove the jockey wheel until it is seated securely. When done, push the handle back in (or release it if it's spring loaded) and close the latch.
6. Attach the safety chains to the connectors on either side of the trailer's tow coupling and close the shackles. The chains should have enough slack so that they won't restrict turning. If two safety chains are fitted, they should be crossed over under the main coupling to prevent the trailer drawbar from hitting the ground if the trailer detaches from the car.
7. Attach the trailer's electrical plug to the socket on the towing car. Have your friend verify that all the trailer lights are working and that the brake lights are in sync with the car.

Chapter 2

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On the road

Driving with a boat trailer

Don't rush it. There will be much less strain on your car, trailer and boat if you are gentle on the accelerator and observe the speed limit. Use a lower gear when driving up and down hills, which will reduce the load on your brakes and decrease your stopping distance.

For extra safety, leave plenty of room between you and the vehicles in front and behind.

If you have a trailer brake controller, set it so that the trailer's brakes activate just before the car's brakes. This will give you better braking control and help to prevent jackknifing.

If you find yourself in an on-road emergency, don't panic! Give yourself as much time as you need to slow to a stop.

If your fishing boat has come loose, don't risk injury by trying to re-mount it yourself – call immediately for assistance.

Turning your boat trailer

Try to avoid any sudden turns. Even if your trailer has its own brakes, keep in mind that the lateral force produced by a heavy boat and trailer can be very large.

You will also have a greater turning circle, so allow more room when turning corners to avoid damaging your tyres or blowing them out on the kerb.

If the combined length of the towing vehicle and trailer is 7.5 metres or longer, you are permitted to attach a “DO NOT OVERTAKE TURNING VEHICLE” sign to the rear of the trailer.

It may be attached to fabricated supports or moveable panels provided it is clearly visible to other drivers.

This plate is required by law if you are required to straddle lanes, or turn from an outside lane, when turning left or right at intersections.

Chapter 3

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Launching your boat

Before you launch

While you're waiting to launch, prep your boat following these steps:

1. Check the boat from bow to stern for any damaged sustained during the trip.
2. Load it with fishing gear, equipment and other items needed for your expedition.
3. Remove the stern tie-downs after making sure the winch cable is attached and locked.
4. Loosen the bow tie-downs, but keep them in place to prevent the boat launching prematurely.
5. If you have an outboard motor, raise it so that it won't collide with the bottom during launch.
6. Check the drain plugs are in place and secure.
7. Attach bow and stern lines to the fishing boat so that it can be easily positioned on the water after launch. Take note of the wind direction, strength and water current.



Reversing your boat trailer

First, make sure you understand the rules of the boat ramp. It is usually good etiquette to do most of your pre-launch preparations – such as removing tie-downs and putting in drain plugs – in an area where you aren't blocking the ramp so that you don't keep other anglers waiting.

When you are ready to reverse your fishing boat trailer down the ramp, seek assistance from a passenger or bystander. Get them to stand where they can see directly behind your boat to minimise chance of damage or injury as you reverse.

A popular reversing method is to place your hand at the bottom of the steering wheel as you back up, checking mirrors frequently and making corrections as needed. Turn the wheel slowly in the direction you want the trailer to go.

Reverse the trailer only as far as needed for the boat to be able to roll or float off the trailer.

Release the winch, and remove the winch cable hook and bow tie-downs from the bow eye. Give the boat a gentle push so that it floats off the trailer, making sure that you are holding onto the bow and stern lines.

Once the boat has been launched, move it out of the way of the launching area. Finally, park your car and trailer away from the ramp.



**You've now
safely launched
your boat,
so enjoy!**

For further tips on safe towing, smooth sailing, and how to get the most from your fishing boat, visit the **Without a Hitch website**.

If you're interested in finding out about the towing technologies

that AL-KO produces to make your boating experience safer and easier, there is a wealth of information online for solutions such as **iQ7** and **replacement parts and accessories**.

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