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## Towing with a car

### Notes

1. Driving licence rules and what you can tow

The rules on what you can tow are different depending on when you passed your driving test.

### Licences issued from 19 January 2013

From 19 January 2013, drivers passing a category B (car and small vehicle) test can tow:

- small trailers weighing no more than 750kg
- trailers weighing more than 750kg, where the combined weight of the towing vehicle and the trailer isn't more than 3,500kg

If you want to tow a trailer weighing more than 750kg, when the combined weight of the towing vehicle and trailer is more than 3,500kg, you'll have to pass a further test and get B+E entitlement on your licence.

You'll then be able to tow trailers up to 3,500kg.

### Licences held from 1 January 1997

If you passed your driving test after 1 January 1997 and have an ordinary category B (car) licence, you can drive either:

- a vehicle up to 3.5 tonnes or 3,500 kilograms (kg) Maximum Authorised Mass (MAM) towing a trailer of up to 750kg MAM (with a combined weight of up to 4,250kg in total)
- a trailer over 750kg MAM as long as it is no more than the unladen weight of the towing vehicle (with a combined weight of up to 3,500kg in total)

For anything heavier you need to take a [category B+E driving test](#).

### Licences held before 1 January 1997

If you passed your car test before 1 January 1997 you are generally entitled to drive a vehicle and trailer combination up to 8.25 tonnes MAM.

This is the weight of a vehicle or trailer including the maximum load that can be carried safely when it's being used on the road.

You also have entitlement to drive a minibus with a trailer over 750kg MAM.

### Towing heavier combinations

If you want to tow heavier combinations, you'll have to first [apply for provisional entitlement](#) to the new C1+E entitlement. You'll then have to pass the category C theory test and C1+E practical test.

Once you've done this you can drive vehicles and trailers with a combined weight of up to 12 tonnes MAM.

2. Car towing weight and width limits

Most cars have a maximum weight of what they can tow. It's usually listed in the handbook or specification sheet.

Alternatively the vehicle's **gross train weight** may be listed on the vehicle identification number (VIN) plate on the car. This is normally under the bonnet or inside the driver's door. The gross train weight is the weight of the fully loaded car plus fully loaded trailer and must not be exceeded.

If your VIN plate doesn't list a train weight, you should not use your vehicle for

towing.

#### **Width and length**

The maximum trailer width for any towing vehicle is 2.55 metres. The maximum length is 7 metres for a trailer towed by a vehicle weighing up to 3.5 tonnes (3,500 kilograms).

#### **3. Towing equipment**

The equipment you use with your trailer or caravan must meet certain safety standards.

#### **Towing bars**

If you get a tow bar for your car, it needs to be 'type approved'. This means it meets [EU](#) regulations and is designed for your car.

A type-approved tow bar will have a label with an approval number and details of the vehicles it's approved for.

If your car was first used before 1 August 1998, your tow bar doesn't need to be type-approved.

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#### **Towing mirrors**

You must have an adequate view of the road behind you. If your caravan or trailer is wider than the rear of the towing vehicle, you may need to fit suitable towing mirrors.

If you tow without proper towing mirrors you can be:

- prosecuted by the police
- given 3 points on your licence
- fined up to £1,000

#### **Trailer brakes**

Any trailer weighing over 750 kilograms must have a working brake system.

Some smaller trailers also have brakes, although these are optional.

Any brakes on a trailer or caravan must be in good working order.

#### **Number plates**

You must display the same [number plate](#) as your towing car on the trailer. If you tow more than one trailer, fix the number plate to the trailer at the back.

#### **A-frames and dollies**

If you attach an A-frame to a car in order to tow it with a larger vehicle, the car plus A-frame counts as a trailer.

If you use a dolly to tow a broken-down vehicle, the dolly counts as a trailer.

In both cases the usual safety regulations for trailers apply.

Read more information in the [factsheet about 'A' frames and dollies'](#)

#### **4. Towing an American caravan or trailer**

American trailers and caravans don't always meet European safety regulations.

If you want to use an American caravan or trailer in the UK or the [EU](#), you must first check that it's legal.

Read more information in the factsheet '[American caravan/trailer brakes and couplign up to 3500 kg maximum laden weight'](#)

#### **5. The car and trailer practical test**

If you want to tow a caravan or certain types of trailer you may have to take a further test.

#### **Licences held from 1 January 1997**

You'll need to take a practical test to get a B+E entitlement on your licence if you passed your driving test after this date and hold a category B (car) licence.

You'll need to do this if you want to tow a trailer or caravan heavier than 750 kilograms (kg) when the combined [maximum authorised mass](#) (MAM) of the towing vehicle and the trailer or caravan is more than 3,500kg.

[MAM](#) means the weight of a vehicle or trailer including the maximum load that can be carried safely when it's being used on the road. This is also known as gross vehicle weight.

#### **Rules for the vehicle you use**

Check the [rules for the car you can use for the practical driving test](#).

**Extra rules for the trailer or caravan test**

The car, trailer or caravan must not be carrying any goods or burden.

The [rules are changing](#) from 15 November 2013. You must then tow a minimum weight for the practical test.

The trailer or caravan must have a MAM of at least 1 tonne.

The examiner may ask for evidence of the trailer's MAM, eg the manufacturer's plate.

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**Fittings**

The vehicle must be fitted with:

- externally mounted nearside and offside mirrors (for the examiner to use)
- a device that shows the trailer's indicators are working properly

**Brakes and coupling**

All vehicle combinations must have appropriate brakes and use a coupling arrangement that's suitable for the weight of the trailer.

**Trailer cargo compartment**

This must:

- be a closed box body
- be at least as wide and as high as the towing vehicle

**What happens during the test**

Before you start the driving ability part of your test, you'll have an eyesight check and be asked 5 vehicle safety questions.

**The eyesight check**

You'll have to read a number plate from a distance of:

- 20 metres for vehicles with a new-style number plate
- 20.5 metres for vehicles with an old-style number plate

**Vehicle safety questions: 'show me, tell me'**

You'll be asked 5 vehicle safety questions. These are also known as the 'show me, tell me' questions.

The examiner will ask you 'show me' questions, where you'll have to show them how you'd carry out a vehicle safety check.

You'll also be asked 'tell me' questions, where you'll have to explain to the examiner how you'd carry out the check.

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**Driving ability**

You'll drive in various road and traffic conditions. If possible, these should include:

- dual-carriageways
- one-way systems
- motorways

You'll also be asked to do around 10 minutes of [independent driving](#).

**Reversing exercise**

You'll have to show that you can manoeuvre your car and trailer in a restricted space and stop at a certain point.

**Uncoupling and recoupling**

During the test you'll be asked to uncouple and couple your car and trailer.

**Fees and booking**

It costs £115 to take the test on a weekday and £141 during evenings, weekends or bank holidays.

[Book the car and trailer practical driving test.](#)

You must bring both parts of your driving licence - the photocard and the paper counterpart. You must take your signed driving licence and a valid passport if you

have an old-style paper licence.  
Your test will be cancelled and you'll lose your fee if you don't bring the right documents.

***Your Driving entitlement on reaching the age of 70***

On reaching the age of 70, drivers will retain their driving entitlement for Category B and Category B+E (provided Category B+E was held prior to the expiry date of their driving licence).

Category B+E entitles drivers to drive a motor vehicle (ie car, van or 4x4) not exceeding 3.5 tonnes Maximum Authorised Mass\* (MAM), drawing/towing any weight trailer/caravan within the prescribed maximum towing weight. The maximum towing weight will be specified in the technical data section of the vehicle manufacturer's handbook.

However, Caravan Club recommendations on weight ratio between trailer and towing vehicle remain at 85%.

\*The terms 'Maximum Authorised Mass', 'Gross Weight' and 'Permissible Maximum Weight' all have the same meaning, ie the weight of the vehicle plus the maximum load the vehicle may safely carry. When drivers of any vehicle over a MAM of 3,500kg reach 70 years of age and their driving licence expires they must pass the D4 Medical Test and pass the required standard eyesight test at 20.5 metres/67 feet with glasses used when driving.

**This guide is not exhaustive, please check the [Towing with a car](#) section on the [Gov UK website](#) for the latest legislation and driving licence requirements.**

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