

SAFE TOWING GUIDE

VEHICLE TOWING CAPACITY

Vehicles have tow ratings that specify the gross trailer weight braked and unbraked to determine how much your vehicle can tow safely. The ratings can be found either in the manufacturer's manual, vin plate of the vehicle or on the compliance plate for the tow bar.

Towing capacity is the maximum weight your vehicle can tow and it is important to understand that overloading the vehicle beyond this weight can compromise the vehicle's body, brakes, chassis, wheels and/or engine.

- **Kerb Weight** - This is the weight of an unladen vehicle or trailer with a full tank of fuel, and does not include payload including passengers, luggage and accessories such as bull bars and roof racks.
- **Gross Trailer Mass (GTM)** - This is the maximum weight that your trailer is designed to carry as specified by its manufacturer. It is the combined weight of your trailer and its payload but not including the Tow Bar Download.
- **Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM)** - The total weight of the tow vehicle – the kerb weight plus payload including passengers, luggage, and accessories.
- **Gross Combination Mass (GCM)** - the vehicle and trailer combination always has to weigh within the Gross Combined Mass (GCM) limit, that is the maximum your vehicle and trailer combination can legally weigh.
- **Aggregate Trailer Mass (ATM)** - the combined weight of the trailer and its full load when it is not coupled to a tow vehicle.
- **Tow Bar Download (TBD)** - The TBD should be around 10 percent of the aggregate trailer mass (ATM). Make sure the trailer coupling and the tow ball match and are in good condition. In New Zealand, tow balls are commonly 1 7/8 inch or 50mm in diameter. and it is very important to make sure you have the correctly matched tow ball for the coupling when hitching a trailer on.

Never exceed the weight capacity of the lowest-rated component of your towing system.

For example, your trailer hitch may be rated to tow 3500kg, but your vehicle may only be rated at 2500kg.

SAFELY LOADING & SECURING YOUR TRAILER LOAD

- Load position – Distribute the load evenly over the deck of the trailer in a way that will not impede the vehicles braking and stability performance.
Load heavier items closer to or over the axles and not towards the back or front of the trailer.
- It is a legal requirement to secure any load with means including strops, ropes, tarps, nets or chains depending on the load. Weight, size and type of load need to be factored in to be able to select the right kind of tie down.
- Keep the load as low as possible. The height limit is 4.25m from the ground and load heavier items at the bottom for stability.
- Maximum rear overhang – 4m from the rear axle to the rear of the vehicle or its load, whichever is greater, with a flag required from 1m overhang coloured white, fluorescent red, orange or yellow, at least 400mm long by 300mm wide.
- Maximum side overhang – 1.25m from the center line of the trailer with a flag required from 200mm overhang.
The trailer will also require side marker lights when driving at night.

SAFE TOWING REQUIREMENTS

- The driver of the car towing a trailer (not another driver, and not the owner of the trailer) is responsible for any damage or infringements that happen while towing.
- The legal maximum open road speed limit in New Zealand for towing is 90kph.
- New Zealand law requires that every light vehicle and trailer combination must be capable of coming to a full stop within seven metres from a speed of 30kph.
- Remember to adjust your distances for the conditions.
- For a learners or restricted car licence, the limit for the full combination of tow vehicle, trailer, and the load of both is 4500kg.
- For a full licence, the limit for the full combination of tow vehicle, trailer, and the load of both is 6000kg.

For more information please see <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/>