



## Braking While Towing Safety

It doesn't matter if you're driving a huge recreational vehicle pulling the family boat, a pickup truck towing a trailer full of firewood or a minivan pulling a pop-up camper. The same basic safety principles apply.

Braking while towing a trailer can present a challenge for even the most experienced driver. Yet, as it turns out, the most effective way to prevent loss of control while towing a trailer is a page right out of the driver's education handbook -- slow down. This is even more important when braking while towing. It takes a lot longer to stop -- and you travel a lot farther -- when you have hundreds, or even thousands, of pounds of trailer weight behind your vehicle. Give yourself plenty of stopping distance, far more than you think you will need, and you'll decrease the chances of finding yourself in a dangerous position that no one wants to be in -- a panic stop while towing a trailer.

Another simple, yet effective, tip -- concentrate on the road ahead. A big part of towing involves being alert and giving yourself as much room as possible between you and the vehicle in front of you. If you remain focused, you can easily maintain the distance necessary to gently and evenly apply the brakes to bring your vehicle (and trailer) to a safe stop -- even if the vehicle in front of you comes to a sudden standstill.

Towing with a vehicle that has a manual transmission gives you an additional option. If the vehicle speed permits, you may choose to downshift prior to applying the brakes. As an added benefit, if you slow down this way, the brakes are also less likely to overheat and fail. But once again, you'll need the space between you and the vehicle ahead of you to have the time and distance to react. Overall, it's important to remember that keeping your speeds lower when you're towing a trailer is one of the best ways to maintain control.

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