



Hitch-Up Checklist

Standard ball hitch. Same steps, same order, every time.

Hook up, in order

- ☐ **1 Chock** the trailer's tires.
- ☐ **2** Open the coupler **latch**; jack the coupler a little **higher than the ball**.
- ☐ **3** Back up **slowly and straight** (camera or helper; agree on signals; lose sight = stop).
- ☐ **4** Ball directly under the coupler: **parking brake**, truck in **Park**.
- ☐ **5** Lower the coupler onto the ball; watch it **seat** (truck squats a little). On top of the ball? Raise and reposition.
- ☐ **6** Latch **all the way down**; **safety pin or lock** through it. No pin, no tow.
- ☐ **7 Lift test**: jack up a little. Truck lifts = locked. Coupler lifts = start over.
- ☐ **8** Jack **all the way up**; swivel jack to travel position and pin it.
- ☐ **9** Safety chains **crossed** under the tongue, to the hitch's chain loops (never the bumper or ball mount). Slack to turn, not drag. Keepers closed.
- ☐ **10 Breakaway cable** to the point your trailer manual specifies on the truck or hitch, never to a safety chain. Slack to turn, not drag.
- ☐ **11 Plug in** (4-way or 7-way) until it seats; cover clip closed; cord routed so it flexes, doesn't drag.
- ☐ **12 Light check**: running, left, right, brake.
- ☐ **13** Electric brakes: controller shows the trailer **connected**.
- ☐ **14 Pull the chocks** and stow them.
- ☐ **15** Roll forward slowly; squeeze the controller's **manual lever**: feel the trailer tug back.
- ☐ **16 Final walk-around** (see right).
- ☐ **17** After the **first few miles**: pull over somewhere safe and check it all again.

Before you ever hook up

- ☐ **Ball size matches** the coupler (stamped on both).
- ☐ Every part's **weight rating** (receiver, ball mount, ball, coupler, chains, truck): the lowest one is your limit.
- ☐ Hitched trailer rides **close to level**. If not, change the ball mount drop or rise.
- ☐ Breakaway pin **tested** before every trip (Lesson 29), then pushed straight back in.

Final walk-around

- ☐ Coupler latched and pinned
- ☐ Jack up
- ☐ Chains crossed and hooked
- ☐ Breakaway cable attached
- ☐ Plug in; lights working
- ☐ Chocks in the truck
- ☐ Doors, ramps and cargo secured

Unhitching

- ☐ **1** Park on the **flattest ground** you can find.
- ☐ **2 Chock** the tires, front and back, before touching the coupler.
- ☐ **3** Soft ground? Block or pad under the jack foot.
- ☐ **4** Unplug the wiring; hang it up off the ground.
- ☐ **5** Unclip the breakaway cable **without pulling the pin**.
- ☐ **6** Unhook the chains.
- ☐ **7** Open the latch; jack the coupler clear of the ball. Watch the tongue: tail-heavy? Support the rear with stands first.
- ☐ **8** Pull the truck forward slowly.

Most common misses: wrong ball size · latch not pinned · chains not crossed, or hooked to the bumper · breakaway cable clipped to a chain · jack left down · skipping the light check. **Every one takes five seconds to prevent.**

Goes with Lesson 3, "Hitching & Unhitching, Step by Step." Fifth-wheels and goosenecks work differently and aren't covered here. California requires breakaway brakes on trailers required to have power brakes; check your state's rules. Follow your owner's manuals.