

Proper Hitch Adjustment

Another important factor in tow vehicle/trailer stability is proper adjustment of a conventional load-distributing hitch. Proper adjustment means that the trailer is level and that the tow vehicle was level before hitching, it should remain at that angle after hitching.

The concept of a properly operating load-distributing hitch is that it should distribute hitch weight to all axles of the tow vehicle and the trailer. Here is how to make it happen:

1. Measure the tow vehicle at reference points on the front and rear bumpers with the vehicle loaded for travel, but prior to hitching.
2. Hitch the trailer and adjust spring-bar tension, so weight appears to have been added to the front as well as the rear of the tow vehicle.
3. Measure front and rear reference points again. If, for example, the rear of the vehicle has dropped one inch and the front has only dropped a quarter inch, add more tension to the spring bars, which will raise the rear and lower the front. Continue adjustment until the measurements are approximately the same. If a discrepancy is unavoidable, the rear of the vehicle should drop slightly more than the front.

If the spring bars cannot be adjusted tightly enough to achieve similar or identical vehicle-height reduction, stiffer spring bars may be needed. The spring bars should be rated for at least the amount of hitch weight of the trailer, plus about 200 pounds if the tow vehicle is softly sprung.

If, after proper adjustment of tow-vehicle attitude is achieved, the trailer is not level; the ball mount should be raised or lowered. Bolt-together ball mounts permit ball-height adjustment. If the ball mount is welded to the shank, replace it with a ball mount that can be adjusted. (Such mounts are available at hitch shops.)