



# Trailer Hitch SEASON



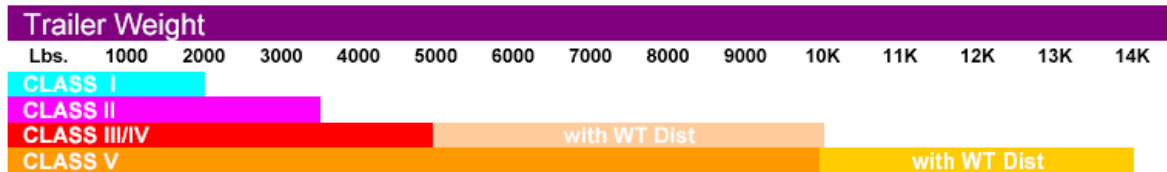
With the turn of the seasons and warmer weather around the corner, recreation activities and vacations are soon approaching. Whether you are bringing your boats to the water or your car to the show, it is time to think about trailers and hitches and what better place to start than in this month's Feature Article.

Towing a trailer requires not only a special driving skill but also the right equipment with proper installation. When choosing your hitch you must first determine what type of load you will be carrying and whether or not your vehicle can handle the added load. With the help of Hidden Hitch, one of the largest manufactures of Trailer hitches in the USA, we have put together this article to help you safely choose, purchase and install your next trailer hitch.

There are 5 basic classes of hitches for regular vehicle (consumer) towing, separated primarily by the towing capacities of each. Each class is explained below:

## SELECTING THE RIGHT HITCH

- Determine the Gross Trailer Weight (GTW) of the trailer that you would like to tow. Check with the trailer manufacturer or if you are not sure, have it towed to a government inspection scale. Remember that the GTW should reflect a fully loaded trailer.
- Consult your vehicle's owner's manual to determine if your vehicle is rated to safely tow your trailer.
- Use the chart to figure out the minimum "Class" of hitch that is required.



When considering how large a trailer you can tow, keep in mind that each truck has a published Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR). This is the maximum weight of the towing vehicle and the loaded trailer—including cargo and passengers.

**Class I** hitches are typically installed on smaller compact cars and minivans with a towing capacity of up to 2,000 lbs. They are commonly referred to as a “Light” or Regular duty hitch. A class I hitch is generally restricted to a cargo, utility or boat trailer less than 6 feet (or 14 ft boat).

**Class II** hitches have a Gross Towing Weight capacity of 3,500 lbs (and 300lbs Tongue Weight (TW)). They are designed to be used on Mid-Size cars, Mini-Vans and light trucks, and depending on the Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR) of your vehicle/trailer combination, class II hitches could tow a 12 ft cargo trailer or a 20 Ft boat trailer.

**Class III/IV** hitches are typically installed on SUV’s, Vans and Pickups. They are constructed of heavier metal and are designed to tow up to 6,000 lbs GTW (600lbs TW). Adding weight distribution (WD) increases capacity to 10,000 lbs. These hitches are most commonly used for towing accessories such as cargo carriers or bike racks. Once again, what you can tow depends on the GCWR of your vehicle and trailer combination.

**Class V** hitches are intended for heavy duty towing and have a Gross Towing Weight capacity of up to 10,000 lbs (and 1,000 lbs Tongue Weight (TW)). Weight distribution may be added to increase tow capacity up to 14,000 lbs.

## Types of Hitches

There are two types of hitches:

1. Weight-carrying hitches
2. Weight-distributing hitches

Weight carrying hitches are by far the most popular and carry all the trailer tongue weight directly on the rear of the vehicle. They are commonly used to tow small and medium-sized trailers.

Weight distributing hitches are usually recommended for heavier trailers because they even out the trailer load between the wheels of the tow vehicle and the wheels of the trailer, thus improving steering and braking control. Two parts are required: the receiver, which bolts to the vehicle, and the spring bar assembly.

Before deciding which type is right for you, consult your car or truck manual for the manufacturer’s recommendation and the load capacity of your vehicle.

## Important Notes:

The total weight of your trailer when loaded must not exceed the load capacity of the hitch. The capacity is stamped on the hitch itself or is on a non-removable sticker.

The trailer should be in a level position when hitched to the tow vehicle.

Be sure the hitch ball is sized to fit the coupler on your trailer. The coupler is marked with the correct ball diameter either 1-7/8”, 2” or 2-5/16”, and weight capacity.

Be sure you close the coupler trigger tightly on the ball, and use the locking device to ensure trigger does not lift.



After selecting the class hitch you think you will need, you have a few options. You may take your vehicle to an installation shop such as the vehicle dealer or aftermarket specialty shops or you can elect to do it yourself. Typically an installation shop will cost you between \$200 to \$500 in labor to provide the installation and you may not necessarily have a choice of manufacturer or options. Since the "hidden" hitch is becoming increasingly popular and for our purposes it was important that the hitch be easy to install and not protrude when

not in use, our research located the manufacturer Hidden Hitch. With the help of Hidden Hitch our installation of a Class III hitch on a 2002 Chrysler Town & Country Minivan was very easy. The maximum tow weight of the vehicle is 3800lbs, which could be increased if we installed an aftermarket tow package that includes an oil cooler, however at this time we elected to keep it as stock as possible.

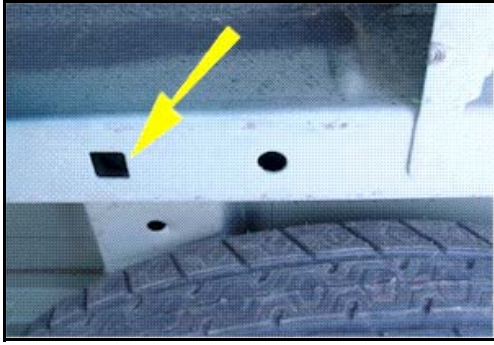
This was the "Kit" we received from Hidden Hitch which included the Lighting wiring kit. This kit retails for \$275.55 USD



This is the rear view of the vehicle before the hitch installation



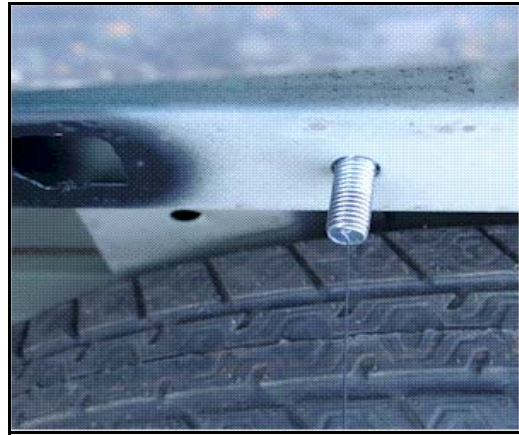
The Hitch is bolted onto the frame in 4 locations using  $\frac{1}{2}$ " bolts and 80lbs of torque. The Hitch utilizes two of the original frame bolts while the other two require fitting the frame with bolts. In this picture we are removing the two original frame bolts.



The yellow arrow is where we needed to “open” up to feed the new bolts for the Hitch mounts.



Hidden Hitch provided “feeder” lines to help fish the new bolts to their locations in the frame rail.



This is a picture of the new bolt in place. We then sprayed black primer over the holes we made to feed the bolt, to minimize the risk of rust.



We bolted up the hitch to the frame and the new bolts.



The hitch is now bolted to the frame. Notice how the hitch barely peaks out behind the bumper.



Installation took approximately 30 minutes. Hidden Hitch provides the wiring kits so that you do not have to cut your factory wiring harness. The Kit we received included a pig tail clip that simply plugged into the tail light connector. Depending on how you would like to route your wires it could take longer, however actually plugging into the existing wiring took less than a minute to do. The Hitch can now be removed from the receiver in a matter of seconds. Once the hitch is removed the receiver looks very flush and non-obtrusive on the vehicle.



As you can see, installation was fairly simple and easy to do. If you are considering installing a hitch on your vehicle this season you may consider saving yourself some money and doing it yourself. Regardless of the hitch class, just be sure to check your vehicle's towing capacity and your load size. If you have any questions or would like further information about the Hidden Hitch products you may visit <http://www.hiddenhitch.com> or contact a sales representative at 1-800-632-3290. Below are some features and benefits provided to us from Hidden Hitch.

#### **Features and Benefits of the Hidden Hitch**

- *All hitches are finished inside and out with a Rust Resistant Coating which keeps its superb appearance for years*
- *Custom designed for each vehicle type and model year for simple installation and better fit. A custom design ensures no cutting of rear bumper and no drilling whenever possible.*
- *Low profile design to compliment the rear contours and aerodynamic styling of today's vehicles.*
- *Removable ball mounts eliminate banged or bruised shins and enhance the appearance when not in use.*
- *All Hidden Hitches meet and exceed V5, VS, CSA and SAE J684-98 standards and are inspected for quality and workmanship.*
- *All Hidden Hitches have a Limited Lifetime Warranty.*