

Top Fleet

Driver Assessment

The Fifth Wheel / Maintenance and Sliding



The Fifth Wheel Trailer Hitch.

The Fifth Wheel trailer hitch is a vital component of the truck tractor.

It's main function: Safely connects the truck and trailer units together allowing the truck to pull the trailer making articulate turns while supporting heavy weights.

This component requires attention and maintenance that will help allow it to operate safely and affectively. Failure to do so may cause the device to malfunction. Yet drivers continue to neglect this device unaware of the potential danger which my lie ahead.

Unintentional separation (while driving on the road) could be disastrous as a disconnected trailer could skid out of control and possibly injuring others.

Drivers must follow certain steps to help ensure the fifth wheel hitch can operate as intended (safely and securely).

This course will help drivers understand their responsibilities for fifth wheel maintenance (including adjusting the position for legal weight distribution).

The Fifth Wheel Trailer Hitch.

Some of the current different Fifth wheel options are...



- The Holland (Cast Steel Top Plate)
(One of the more popular Fifth Wheels on the road today).
- The Holland (Aluminum Top Plate)
(A lightweight option which also offers a grease free Teflon cover plate).
- The Fontaine (Cast Steel Top Plate)
(Offers an auto adjusting jaw mechanism helping to ensure a secure hold).

A person wearing safety glasses and a dark jacket is working on a fifth wheel trailer hitch. They are using a tool to adjust or inspect the mechanism. The background is dark and industrial.

The Fifth Wheel Trailer Hitch.

Fifth Wheel Maintenance should always begin with a complete inspection.

1. Ensure there are no cracked or damaged parts including the top plate.
2. Clean off any access old grease or dirt which may have covered the top plate.
3. Check that the jaws are in the open position and ready to receive the king pin.
4. Ensure the slider jaws are in the closed position.
5. Ensure the plate has adequate grease. (do not grease a Teflon plate cover).
6. Prior to backing, ensure your fifth wheel is tilted back to receive the trailer.
7. Do a visual inspection to ensure the jaws are completely closed around the king pin.
8. Perform two or three tug tests to confirm the jaws have a firm grip on the king pin and will not accidentally release.
9. A jaw adjustment may be required (if during the tug test) you are finding excessive free play in the jaws.
10. Do vehicle checks throughout the day. Include checking the fifth wheel jaws and confirming they remain in the closed and locked position, and there are no indications of any malfunctions or tampering by others.

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Remember! The fifth wheel is the component on the truck which holds the truck and trailer together. It manages heavy weights and is constantly being twisted, yanked and pounded on, and is put through many challenges throughout the day. It should never be neglected or abused as its proper operation is crucial to the safety of the vehicle.

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Occasionally the Fifth Wheel may need to have its position adjusted to accommodate The weight distribution and transfer weight from the drive axles to the steering axle.



There are important steps required to successfully move the fifth wheel on the truck.

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Start by ensuring the tractor and trailer parking brake valves are closed.
(The brakes are applied, and the vehicle is secured)



Next lower the landing gear enough to take the weight and pressure from the fifth wheel slider mechanism.

Lowering the gear too much may cause the drive tires to lose traction or possibly damage the landing gear.

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Locate the Fifth Wheel slide switch
On the dash of the truck and move it to the unlock position.
This should unlock the slider pins.



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Next visually inspect the pins and ensure they are in the open (unlocked) position. The pins should be protruding out the side of the base allowing the fifth wheel to slide on the track.

A slight rocking of the truck (using the accelerator) may be required to help the pins release.

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Spraying the slider tracks and the locking pins with a spray lube or apply some grease will help the device unlock and slide easier.

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- Next return to the truck cab and release the tractor parking brake valve.
- Ensure the trailer supply valve is closed and the trailer parking brakes are applied. You may also wish to secure the trailer with wheel blocks.
- Place the truck in low gear (or reverse) for the direction in which you require to slide the fifth wheel.
- Apply a small amount of power to move the truck slightly and position the fifth wheel where required.
- Apply the tractor parking brake and exit the truck to verify if the fifth wheel is in the desired position. You may be required to make an additional move.
- Once confirmed the position has been obtained, move the dash valve (to the lock position) and confirm that the pins have returned to the closed position (and retracted back inside).
- You may be required to rock the truck a little (using the accelerator) to completely place the pins in the closed position.
- Once again, visually confirm the device is locked.

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Raise the landing gear all the way to avoid damage, and do a forward and reverse tug test to ensure the locking pins are holding and there is no free play in either the slider or the jaws.

Remember: sliding the fifth wheel forward will add weight to your steering axle but may also add weight to your drive axle as well.

Sliding the trailer boogies will also affect the weight on the drives and maybe even the steering axle.

Always scale the unit (after any adjustments) to ensure your weights are legal for your present location (and right up to your destination). Failure to do so may produce an overweight ticket.

It is the driver's responsibility to ensure any vehicle taken on the road is in good condition and the gross weight and axle weights are legal. With cross border moves, always ensure you are legal for both sides of the border.



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Thank you for your attention to this course.

At Top Fleet Driver Assessment our main objective is to help ensure our customers have safe reliable drivers.

Through In-Cab training, pre-hire road tests, classroom and PowerPoint training programs, we hope to achieve this.

For more information on this course or others we offer, or to leave a comment, email us at topfleetdriver@shaw.ca

Thank you.