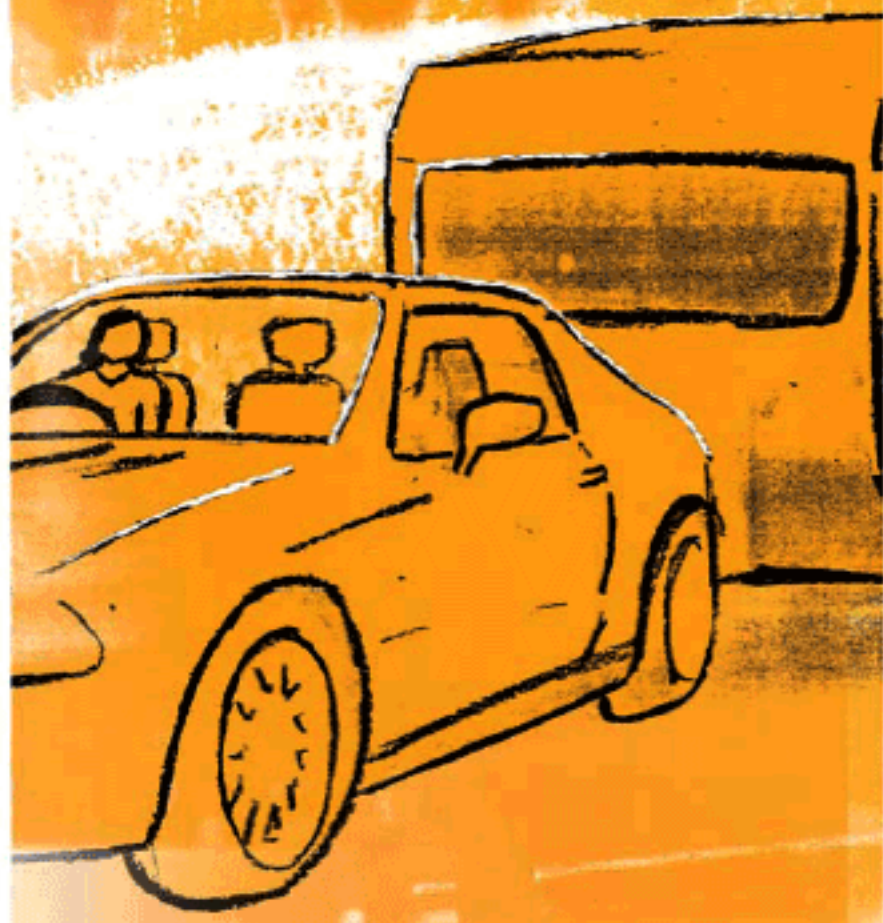


ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION OFFICE
SAFER TOWING



SAFER TOWING

Towing regulations

You **MUST** have a full category B (car) driving licence before towing any size of caravan, horse box or trailer. Throughout this leaflet reference is made to the maximum authorised mass(MAM) of vehicles and trailers. This should, in all cases, be taken to mean the permissible maximum weight, known as the gross vehicle weight. You may not be planning to drive a vehicle, or a vehicle towing a trailer, at these maximum weights, but these are key factors that determine driver licensing requirements.

If you passed your test **before 01 January 1997** you are generally allowed to drive a vehicle and trailer combination up to 8.25 tonnes.

If you passed your test **on or after 01 January 1997** you are entitled to drive:

EC Categories

- **B** Vehicles up to 3500kg and up to 8 passenger seats with a trailer up to 750 kg. If the trailer you wish to tow exceeds 750 kg, you may tow it behind a category B* vehicle, provided that the vehicle and trailer combination does not exceed 3500kg and the MAM of the trailer does not exceed the unladen weight of the towing vehicle.
- **B + E** As above plus large trailers over 750kg.
- **C1** Vehicles between 3500kg and 7500kg with a trailer up to 750kg.
- **C1 + E** As C1, with a trailer over 750kg – combined weight not more than 1200kg.

A category **B*** vehicle is a four-wheeled vehicle with a MAM not exceeding 3.5 tonnes which has not more than eight passenger seats (in addition to that of the driver).

These descriptions are intended only as a general guide to the types of vehicle included in each category. For precise definitions you should refer to Fact Sheet 17 – Licence Categories and Minimum Age Restrictions available from DVLNI.

The combination

The vehicle driver's handbook or the manufacturer's agent will normally have information on the maximum permissible trailer mass which can be towed by the vehicle and also the maximum noseweight which should be applied to the tow ball. You should not exceed either limit. There are separate and also legal limits on the laden weight of unbraked trailers. Make sure that you know what the limits are for your vehicle. As a general rule, even if the vehicle manufacturer's limits are higher, you may be safer if the weight of the loaded caravan, horsebox or trailer does not exceed 85 per cent of the kerbside (empty) weight of the towing vehicle. This particularly applies if you are not experienced at towing. Remember that the overall length of the combination is generally double that of the normal family car.

Mirrors

You will need to fit exterior towing mirrors so that you have a clear view along both sides of the caravan or trailer.

Stabiliser

A good stabiliser fitted to the towbar can make the combination safer to handle but it will not relieve you of the responsibility of loading the combination correctly. Neither will it cure instability caused by a poor towing vehicle/trailer combination. The stabiliser will give you added security in crosswinds, especially when large goods vehicles overtake you on a motorway.

Safety checks

Before starting your journey, check that the caravan, horsebox or trailer

- is loaded correctly, with the right noseweight on the towbar
- is correctly hitched up, with the breakaway cable attached, or secondary coupling head fully engaged and locked
- lights and indicators are connected and working correctly
- jockey wheel and assembly is fully retracted and in the stowed position
- braking system is working correctly
- windows, roof light and door are closed
- tyre pressures are correct.

You

- **MUST NOT** overload your vehicle or trailer
- **MUST** secure your load and it **MUST NOT** stick out dangerously
- should properly distribute the weight in your caravan, horsebox or trailer, with heavy items mainly over the axle(s) and ensure a downward load on the tow ball
- should not allow anyone to travel in the caravan, horsebox or trailer.

In addition

- check your caravan, horsebox or trailer tyres for tread depth, damage and cracking of the sidewalls. Even if the tread depth shows little wear or is above the legal minimum, the tyre may be suffering from the effects of ageing.
- check that your caravan, horsebox or trailer is fitted with tyres of the specified rating (see the manufacturer's handbook).

Driving technique

Always be aware of the increased weight, length and width of the combined vehicles. You should

- allow more time and brake earlier when slowing down or stopping
- give yourself three times the normal distance and time to overtake safely
- take account of the extra length, particularly when turning or emerging at junctions.

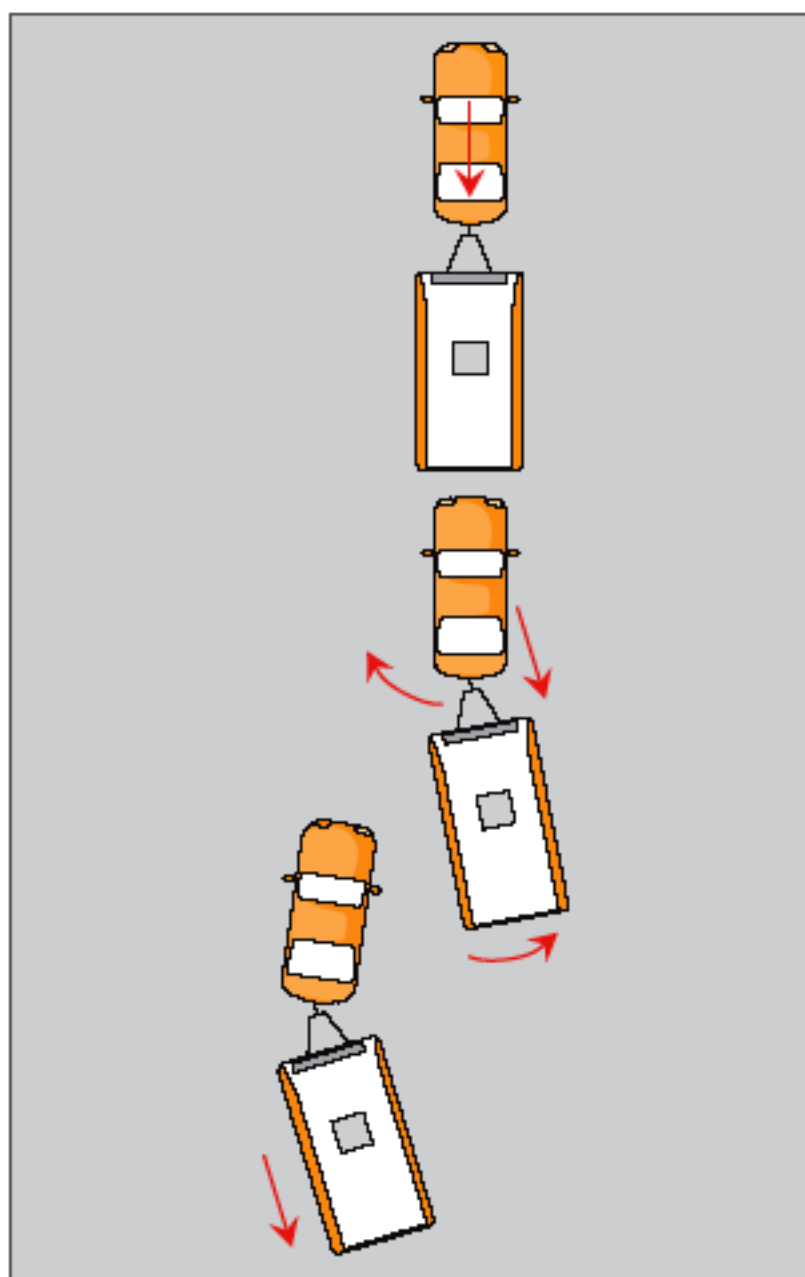
Reversing

Choose an appropriate place to manoeuvre. If you need to turn your car and trailer around, wait until you find a safe place. Try not to reverse or turn round in a busy road. Do not reverse from a side road into a main road. Look carefully before you start to reverse. You should

- check the 'blind spot' behind you (the part of the road you cannot see easily in the mirrors)
- check there are no pedestrians, particularly children, cyclists or obstructions in the road behind you
- if possible look mainly through the rear window
- check all around just before you start to turn and be aware that the front of your vehicle will swing out as you turn
- get someone to guide you if you cannot see clearly

You **MUST NOT** reverse your vehicle further than necessary. On a motorway you **MUST NOT** reverse, cross the central reservation, or drive against the traffic flow. If you have missed your exit, or have taken the wrong route, carry on to the next exit.

Caravan towing guide

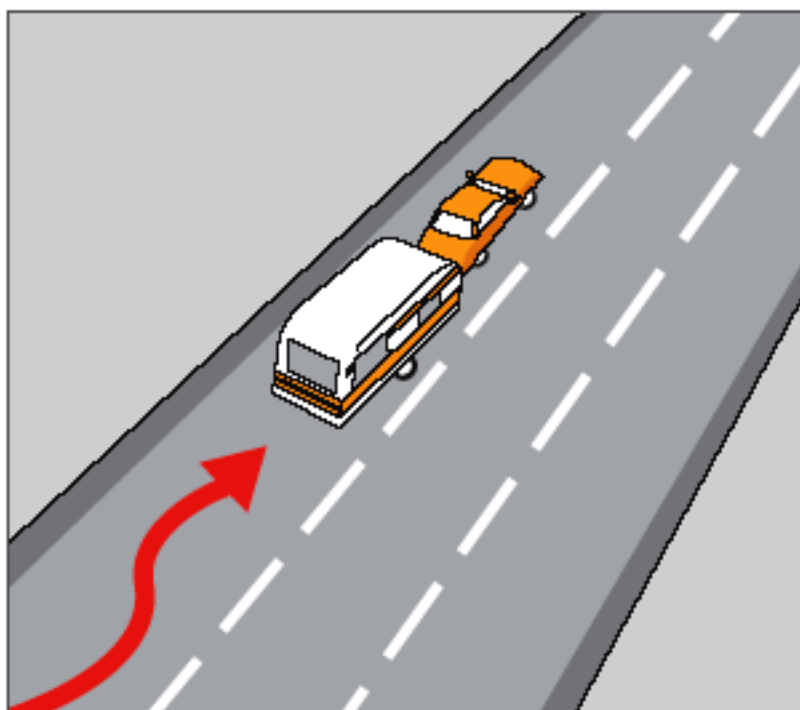


Snaking

Never attempt to correct swerving or 'snaking' by increasing speed, steering sharply (zigzagging), or braking hard.

The safe technique is to

- ease off the accelerator slowly
- allow a certain amount of 'twitch' in the steering
- reduce speed until the snaking has stopped.



High-sided vehicles

Take extra care when passing or being passed by high-sided vehicles. Allow as much space as possible to avoid the effects of turbulence or buffeting.

Speed limits

Some speed limits are lower than normal when you are towing. Unless road signs tell you otherwise, you **MUST NOT** exceed

- 30 mph in built-up areas
- 50 mph on single carriageways
- 60 mph on dual carriageways or motorways.

TYPE OF VEHICLE

Cars towing caravans or trailers
(including car derived vans and motorcycles)



Reduce speed





- in high or crosswinds
- when travelling downhill
- in poor visibility.

Motorway driving

Caravans, horseboxes or trailers should not be towed in the outside lane of a motorway having more than two lanes, unless other lanes are closed.

Be considerate

Check your mirrors frequently. If you are holding up a queue of traffic, you should be prepared to pull in where it is safe to let other faster traffic pass.

BUILT-UP AREAS	SINGLE CARRIAGEWAYS	DUAL CARRIAGEWAYS	MOTORWAYS
			
MPH	MPH	MPH	MPH
30	50	60	60

CONTACTS

Further information on Road Safety may be obtained from the DOE Road Safety Education Offices located at the following addresses:-

Belfast Education and Library Board Area

c/o 40 Academy Street
Belfast
BT1 2NQ
Tel: 028 9050 8181

North Eastern Education and Library Board Area

County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
Ballymena
BT42 1HN
Tel: 028 2564 4311

South Eastern Education and Library Board Area

Hydebank
4 Hospital Road
Belfast
BT8 8JL
Tel: 028 9025 3123

Southern Education and Library Board Area

Library Headquarters
1 Markethill Road
Armagh
BT60 1NR
Tel: 028 3752 0773

Western Education and Library Board Area

Lisnagelvin Crown Building
2 Crescent Road
Lisnagelvin
Londonderry
BT47 2NJ
Tel: 028 7131 9319