

## Towing Basics: Learning to Speak the Towing Language

When it comes to towing, there are basic definitions and terminology that you need to understand before you buy a trailer and hit the road. It's helpful to start with the basic components of a trailer hitch and some common trailer hitches types. We've separated these terms based on how they're applied: towing from the bumper vs. towing from the truck bed.

### Towing from the Bumper

**Ball Mount.** A ball mount is the part of the hitch system that connects the hitch ball to the trailer coupler. Ball mounts are available in load-carrying and weight-distributing configurations.



**Adjustable Ball Mount.** An adjustable ball mount allows a hitch ball to be raised or dropped to keep your trailer level. A level trailer will minimize strain between the trailer and hitch and will keep the trailer level behind your vehicle.



**Pintle Mount.** A pintle mount is a plate welded to a receiver tube that has a series of holes for mounting a pintle hook. Once mounted, this pintle hook will loop through an eyelet that is mounted on the trailer. Pintle mounts are known for their strength and weight capacity.



**Weight Distributing Hitch.** A weight-distributing hitch system does what the name implies; it distributes part of the trailer's hitch weight to the tow vehicle's front axle and the trailer's axle. This distribution is created by placing spring bars underneath the tension. This is also known as an equalizing hitch.

### Towing from the Truck Bed

**Gooseneck Hitch.** A gooseneck hitch connects the trailer to the tow vehicle above the rear axle of the truck using a ball. Because the connection between the truck and trailer is taking place so close to the truck's frame and axle, the rating of a gooseneck is usually the highest of any hitch. A gooseneck hitch is often used for horse and cattle trailers and both open or closed utility trailers of 30-plus feet in length.



**Fifth-Wheel Hitch.** A fifth-wheel hitch is a horseshoe-shaped hitch with several plates and a set of locking jaws. The jaws “grab” and latch on to the kingpin of a trailer or RV. This hitch is usually used to tow RVs and other large items. The attachment point for fifth wheels is commonly 15-18 inches over the axle, which is why fifth-wheel hitches are rated slightly lower than gooseneck hitches.

