

Pre-Towing and Launch Checklist for Boats

Pre-Tow Checklist

1. Check tire air pressures on the tow vehicle and trailer.
2. Make sure you are towing the trailer in a level position.
3. Verify that the lug nuts are tightened to the correct torque setting.
4. Check the trailer wheel hubs for proper bearing lubrication.
5. Secure outboard engines or stern-drives in the up position.
6. Tightly secure the boat cover if it is used when towing.
7. Secure and lock the trailer coupler so it doesn't pop open.
8. Connect the trailer lights and check that they are working properly, including brake lights and turn signals.
9. Fasten the trailer safety chains or cables and the breakaway cable.
10. Raise the trailer tongue jack and lock it in place.
11. Snug up the bow strap and fasten the safety bow chain or cable.
12. Attach and tighten the transom tie-downs.
13. Properly secure all equipment inside the boat.
14. Adjust the tow vehicle mirrors as needed.

Launch To-Do List

- *Back down far enough to allow engine cooling water to be picked up.
- *Set the emergency brake and put the vehicle in park.
- *On stern-drive or outboard boats, lower the drive.
- *Start the engine and let it warm up.
- *Disconnect the winch hook from the bow eye.
- *Proceed to launch.
- *Once the boat is clear, pull away and park.

Retrieval To-Do List

- *Back the trailer into the water, but do not submerge it too deeply.
- *The captain should approach the trailer slowly, taking wind and current into consideration.
- *Nudge the boat's bow into the center of the trailer; let it settle before winching or powering up to the bow stop.
- *Attach the bow strap and safety chain.
- *Raise the outboard or outdrive before driving up the ramp.
- *Clear the ramp area as quickly and safely as possible.
- *Reconnect trailer wiring, attach tie-down straps, lower antennas and secure the rig for the road.
- *Remove the drain plug.
- *To prevent saltwater corrosion, flush motor with fresh water.



Keep Those Lights Working

If your trailer lights don't work, the most likely causes are dirt and oxidation on the contact points. Or it could be a poor ground, which you can sometimes fix by moving the truck backward and forward slightly to achieve a better ground with the trailer ball.

Tip 1

Dielectric grease on contacts will help prevent oxidation and promote connections. On wire-to-wire places, melt solder on each joint and then cover with heat-shrink tubing to seal out water.

Tip 2

Remove any corrosion or deposits on the connectors with a small piece of sandpaper rolled around a toothpick. (Be sure the lights are off or you could blow a fuse.)

Tip 3

Alternatively, contact cleaner will do the job — and while you're at it, clean your vehicle's plug receptacle, then add a dab of dielectric grease to the contacts.