Towing a Trailer

Your MDX has been designed to tow a trailer, as well as for carrying passengers and their cargo.

To safely tow a trailer, you should observe the load limits, use the proper equipment, and follow the guidelines in this section.

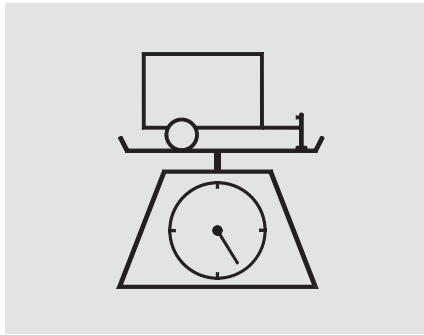
Be sure to read the *Off-Highway Guidelines* section on page 240 if you plan to tow off paved surfaces.

⚠WARNING

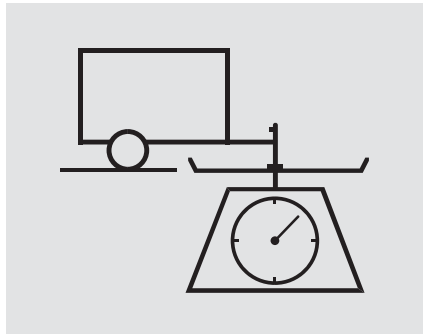
Exceeding any load limit or improperly loading your vehicle and trailer can cause a crash in which you can be seriously hurt or killed.

Check the loading of your vehicle and trailer carefully before starting to drive.

Load Limits



- **Total Trailer Weight:** The maximum weight you can tow depends on several factors. See page 228 for limits for your towing situation. Towing a load that is too heavy can seriously affect your vehicle's handling and performance.



- **Tongue Load:** The weight that the tongue of a fully loaded trailer puts on the hitch should be 5 to 10 percent of total trailer weight for boat trailers, and 8 to 15 percent of total trailer weight for all other trailers. See page 228 for limits for your towing situation.

Too much tongue load reduces front-tire traction and steering control. Too little tongue load can make the trailer unstable and cause it to sway.

Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR):
The maximum allowable weight of the vehicle, all occupants, all cargo and the tongue load is 5690 lbs (2580 kg).

Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR):
The maximum allowable weights on the vehicle axles are 2865 lbs (1300 kg) on the front axle, and 2920 lbs (1325 kg) on the rear axle.

Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR):
The maximum allowable weight of the fully loaded vehicle and trailer is 9700 lbs (4410 kg) with the proper hitch and fluid coolers (See page 232 for information about fluid coolers.)

The GCWR must be reduced 2 percent for every 1,000 feet (305 meters) of elevation.

Towing a Trailer

Total Trailer Weight and Tongue Load Limits: BOAT TRAILERS

Number of Occupants*	Equipped with transmission cooler and power steering fluid cooler.	
	Max. Trailer Weight	Max. Tongue Load
2	4500 lbs (2045 kg)	450 lbs (205 kg)
3	4500 lbs (2045 kg)	410 lbs (185 kg)
4	4500 lbs (2045 kg)	310 lbs (140 kg)
5	4000 lbs (1820 kg)	215 lbs (100 kg)
6	1700 lbs (770 kg)	90 lbs (40 kg)
7	Towing is Not Recommended	

Total Trailer Weight and Tongue Load Limits: OTHER TYPES OF TRAILERS

Number of Occupants*	Equipped with transmission cooler and power steering fluid cooler.	
	Max. Trailer Wight	Max. Tongue Load
2	3500 lbs (1590 kg)	450 lbs (205 kg)
3	3500 lbs (1590 kg)	410 lbs (185 kg)
4	3000 lbs (1365 kg)	310 lbs (140 kg)
5	2000 lbs (910 kg)	215 lbs (100 kg)
6	1000 lbs (455 kg)	90 lbs (40 kg)
7	Towing is Not Recommended	

* The corresponding weight limits assume occupants fill seats from the front of the vehicle to the back, each occupant weights 150 lbs (70 kg) and each has 15 lbs (7 kg) of luggage in the cargo area.

Estimating Loads

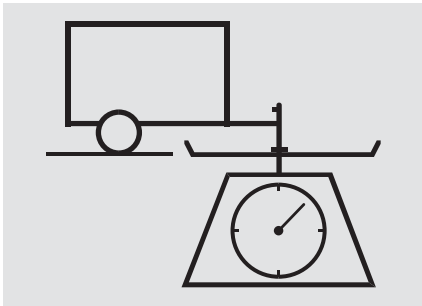
The best way to confirm that all loads are within limits is to check them at a public scale.

To help ensure a safe drive to a scale, or if you cannot get to a public scale to check the weights of your rig, we recommended that you estimate your total trailer weight and tongue load as described below.

Total Trailer Weight

To estimate your total trailer weight, add the weight of the trailer (as quoted by the trailer manufacturer) together with everything in or on the trailer. Then refer to the tables on page 228 to confirm that you do not exceed the limit for your conditions.

Tongue Load



To estimate tongue load:

1. Park the vehicle on level ground.
2. Measure from the ground to the bottom of the trailer hitch. Write this number down.
3. Connect the fully loaded trailer to the hitch.
4. Measure again from the ground to the same spot on the bottom of the hitch.
5. Subtract the result from Step 4 from the result in Step 2 and refer to the chart (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1

If the difference is:
- 1½″= 150 lbs (68 kg)
- 2¼″= 250 lbs (114 kg)
- 3″= 350 lbs (159 kg)
- 3¾″= 450 lbs (204 kg)
- 4″= over 450 lbs (204 kg)

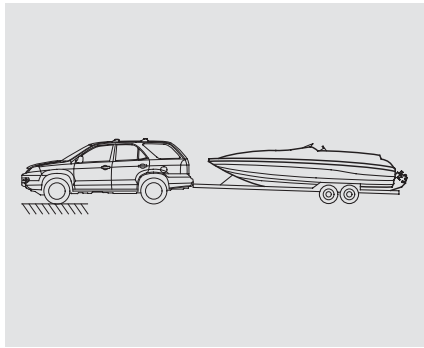
If the difference is more than 4″, you have too much tongue load at the rear. Move or remove cargo from the trailer and the vehicle, and measure again.

If the estimated total trailer weight and tongue load do not exceed the limits for your towing situation (see page 228), carefully drive your trailer to a public scale. Be sure your vehicle and trailer are fully loaded, with all occupants and cargo you plan to take on the road.

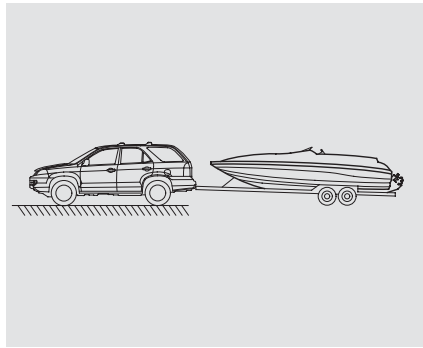
Towing a Trailer

Checking Loads

The best way to confirm that your vehicle and trailer loads are within limits is to have them checked at a public scale. The vehicle and trailer should be fully loaded, and all occupants should stay in the vehicle.

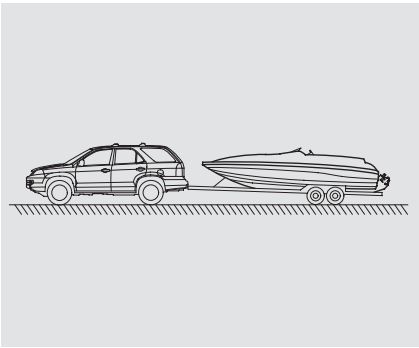


1. Check the front gross axle weight. Limit: 2865 lbs (1300 kg)



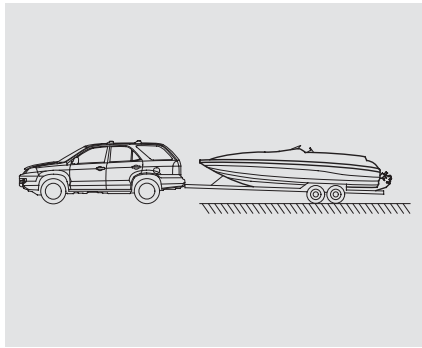
2. Check the gross vehicle weight. Limit: 5690 lbs (2580 kg)

3. If you cannot weigh the rear axle directly, calculate the rear gross axle weight. Subtract the weight in Step 1 from the weight in Step 2. Limit: 2920 lbs (1325 kg)

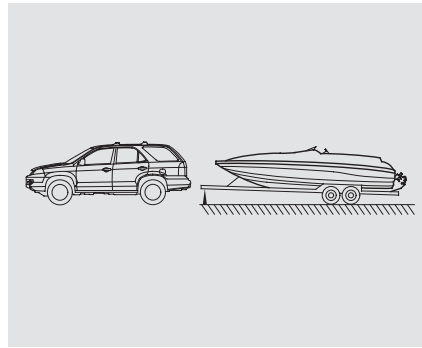


4. Check the gross combined weight.
   Limit: 9700 lbs (4410 kg)

   Gross combined weight should be decreased 2% for every 1000 feet (305 meters) of elevation.



5. Check the weight of the hitched trailer. Write this number down.



6. Check the weight of the unhitched trailer. Limit: See page 228 .

7. Calculate the tongue load.
   Subtract the weight in Step 5 from the weight in step 6.
   Limit: See page 228 .
   Range: 5-10% for boat trailers
   8-15% for other trailers

Towing a Trailer

Towing Equipment and Accessories

Towing generally requires a variety of supplemental equipment. To ensure the best quality, we recommend that you purchase Acura equipment whenever possible. Your dealer offers a trailer package that includes a hitch, a ball mount, a wiring harness, a transmission fluid cooler and a heavy-duty power steering fluid cooler.

Discuss any additional needs with your trailer sales or rental agency, and make sure all equipment is properly installed and maintained. Since local requirements may vary, check with appropriate state authorities to be sure that your equipment will meet all regulations in the areas where you plan to tow.

Hitch

We strongly recommend that you have your Acura dealer install a genuine Acura hitch and the required fluid coolers. Using non-Acura equipment may result in serious damage to your vehicle.

Weight Distributing Hitch

A weight distributing hitch is not recommended for use with your MDX as an improperly adjusted weight distributing hitch may reduce handling stability and braking performance.

Safety Chains

Always use safety chains when you tow a trailer. Make sure the chains are secured to the trailer and hitch, and that they cross under the tongue so they can catch the trailer if it becomes unhitched. Leave enough slack to allow the trailer to turn corners easily, but to do not let the chains drag on the ground.

Sway Control

This device is recommended if your trailer tends to sway. Your trailer maker can tell you what kind of sway control you need and how to install it.

Transmission Fluid Cooler and Power Steering Fluid Cooler

To help prevent overheating, a heavy-duty transmission fluid cooler and a heavy-duty power steering fluid cooler are required for trailer towing. These coolers are available only from your Acura dealer.

Trailer Brakes

Acura requires that any trailer with a total trailer weight of 1000 lbs (455 kg) or more have its own brakes.

There are two common types of trailer brakes: surge and electric. Surge brakes are common for boat trailers, since the brakes will get wet.

Electric brakes must be electronically actuated. Do not attempt to tap into your vehicle's hydraulic system. Any attempt to attach trailer brakes to your vehicle's hydraulic system will lower braking effectiveness and create a potential hazard.

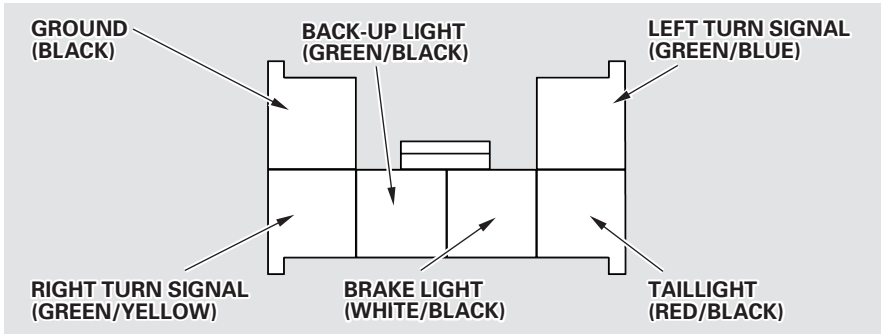
See your Acura dealer for more information about powering the electric brake activation system.

Towing a Trailer

Trailer Lights

All states and Canadian provinces require some type of trailer lights. Check requirements for the areas where you plan to tow.

To get to your vehicle's trailer lighting connector, open the tailgate, remove the cargo cover, then remove the rear panel trim. The connector is on the left side. We recommend that you have your Acura dealer install an Acura wiring harness and converter. This harness has been designed and tested for your vehicle.



If you use a non-Acura trailer lighting harness and converter, you can get the mating connector and pins that mate with the connector in your vehicle from your Acura dealer.

Since lighting and wiring vary in trailer type and brand, you should also have a qualified mechanic install a suitable connector between the vehicle and the trailer.

Trailer Mirrors

Many states and provinces require special exterior mirrors when towing a trailer. Even if they don't, you should install special mirrors if you cannot clearly see behind you, or if the trailer creates a blind spot.

Spare Tires

When towing a trailer, we recommend that you carry a full-size spare wheel and tire for your vehicle. Using the compact spare that came with the MDX may adversely affect vehicle handling.

See page 291 for proper tire size, page 320 for how to store a full-sized wheel and tire, and page 315 for information on changing a flat tire. Remember to unhitch the trailer before changing a flat.

We also recommend that you carry a full-size spare wheel and tire for your trailer. Ask your trailer sales or rental agency where and how to store the spare.

Pre-Tow Checklist

When preparing to tow, and before driving away, be sure to check the following:

- The vehicle has been properly serviced, and the brakes, suspension and cooling system are in good operating condition. If you tow frequently, follow the Severe Conditions maintenance schedule.
- The trailer has been properly serviced and is in good condition.
- All weights and loads are within limits (see pages 226 and 228).
- The hitch, safety chains, and any other attachments are secure.
- All items on and in the trailer are properly secured and cannot shift while you drive.
- The lights and brakes on your vehicle and the trailer are working properly.
- Your vehicle tires and spare are in good condition and properly inflated (see page 287).
- The trailer tires and spare are in good condition and inflated as recommended by the trailer maker.

Towing a Trailer

Driving Safely With a Trailer

The added weight, length, and height of a trailer will affect your vehicle's handling and performance, so driving with a trailer requires some special driving skills and techniques.

For your safety and the safety of others, take time to practice driving maneuvers before heading for the open road, and follow the guidelines discussed below.

Break-In Period

Avoid towing a trailer during your vehicle's first 500 miles (800 kilometers) (see page 194).

Towing Speed

Drive slower than normal in all driving situations. Obey all local speed limits for vehicles with trailers. To keep the transmission from frequently upshifting and downshifting, drive in D4. When driving with a fix-sided (e.g, camper, utility) trailer, do not exceed 55 mph (88 km/h). At higher speeds, the trailer may sway or affect vehicle handling.

Making Turns and Braking

Make turns more slowly and wider than normal. The trailer tracks a smaller arc than your vehicle, and it can hit or run over something the vehicle misses. Allow more time and distance for braking. When you need to slow down, slowly lift your foot off the throttle and gradually apply the brakes. Do not brake or turn suddenly as this could cause the trailer to jackknife or turn over.

Driving on Hills
When climbing hills, closely watch your temperature gauge. If it nears the red (Hot) mark, turn the air conditioning off, reduce speed and, if necessary, pull to the side of the road to let the engine cool.

If the transmission shifts frequently while going up a hill, shift down one gear.

If you must stop when facing uphill, use the foot brake or parking brake. Do not try to hold the vehicle in place by pressing on the accelerator, as this can cause the automatic transmission to overheat.

When driving down hills, reduce your speed and shift down to D3. Do not "ride" the brakes, and remember it will take longer to slow down and stop when towing a trailer.

Handling Crosswinds and Turbulence
Crosswinds and air turbulence caused by passing trucks can disrupt your steering and cause your trailer to sway. When being passed by a truck or other large vehicle, keep a constant speed and steer straight ahead. Do not try to make quick steering or braking corrections.

Backing Up
Always drive slowly and have someone guide you when backing up. Grip the *bottom* of the steering wheel; then turn the wheel to the left to get the trailer to move to the left, and turn the wheel right to move the trailer to the right.

Parking
Follow all normal precautions when parking, including putting the transmission in PARK and firmly setting the parking brake when you have finished parking.

Do not park on an incline unless it is unavoidable. If you must park on an incline, turn the vehicle wheels toward the curb on a downhill and away from the curb on an uphill. After parking, place wheel chocks at each trailer tire, on the downhill side.

Retrieving a Boat
If the vehicle wheels slip when retrieving a boat from the water, shift to first gear and turn on VTM-4 Lock (see page 217).

Disengage VTM-4 Lock as soon as the boat is out of the water to prevent damage to the VTM-4 system.