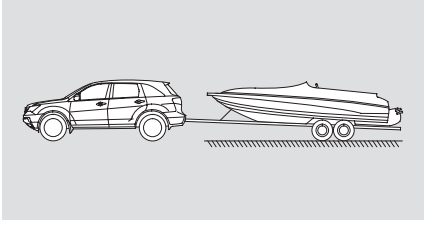
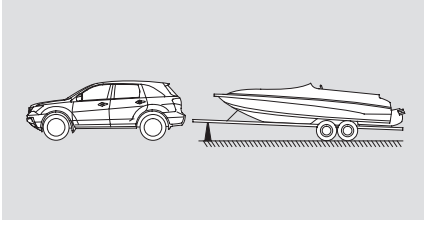
Towing a Trailer



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



7. Check the weight of the unhitched trailer. Limit: See page 358 .

8. Calculate the tongue load.
   Subtract the weight in step 6 from the weight in step 7.
   Limit: See page 358.
   Recommended: see page 356 .
   Range: 5-10% for boat trailers
   8-15% for other trailers

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, and a wiring harness.

Discuss any additional needs with your trailer sales or rental agency, and make sure all equipment is properly installed, maintained, and also meets state, federal, province, and local regulations.

Hitch
We strongly recommend that you have your dealer install a class 3 hitch. Using non-Acura equipment may result in serious damage to your vehicle.

Read the trailer manufacturer's instructions, and select the appropriate draw bar for the height of the trailer you will be towing.

Weight Distributing Hitch
A weight distributing hitch is not recommended for use with your vehicle, as an improperly adjusted weight distributing hitch may reduce handling, stability, and braking performance.

Trailer Brakes
Acura requires that any trailer with a total trailer weight of 1,000 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.

If you choose electric brakes, be sure they are electronically actuated. Do not attempt to tap into your vehicle's hydraulic system. No matter how successful it may seem, any attempt to attach trailer brakes to your vehicle's hydraulic system will lower braking effectiveness and create a potential hazard.

See your trailer manufacturer for more information on installing electric brakes.

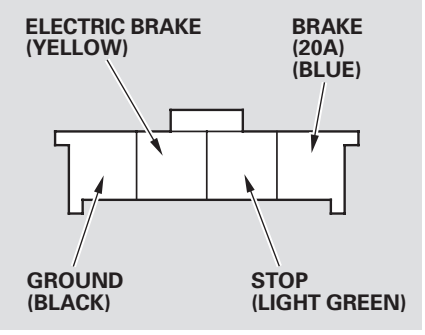
A 4-pin gray connector is available as an option at your dealer. This connector has all of the circuits required to install most electric trailer brake controllers. A jumper harness to adapt your electric trailer brake controller to the vehicle is included with the optional Genuine Acura trailer hitch kit. To obtain a connector and a trailer hitch kit, see your dealer.

Have a qualified mechanic install your trailer brake controller following the trailer brake controller manufacturer's instructions. Failure to properly install the trailer brake controller may increase the distance it takes for you to stop your vehicle when towing a trailer.

CONTINUED

Towing a Trailer

Use this illustration to identify each terminal in the trailer brake controller connector.



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 and can catch the trailer if it becomes unhitched. Leave enough slack to allow the trailer to turn corners easily, but 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.

Trailer Mirrors

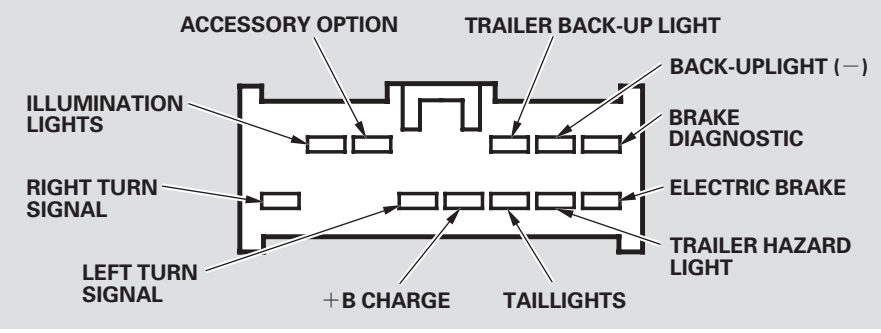
Many states and provinces require special exterior mirrors when towing a trailer. Even if they don't, you should install special mirrors if you cannot clearly see behind you, or if the trailer creates a blind spot.

Spare Tires

When towing a trailer, we recommend that you carry a full-size spare wheel and tire for your vehicle and trailer. See page 413 for proper tire size, page 424 for how to store a full size wheel and tire, and page 419 for information on changing a flat tire.

Remember to unhitch the trailer before changing a flat. Ask your trailer sales or rental agency where and how to store the trailer's spare tire.

Trailer Lights



Trailer lights and equipment must comply with federal, state, province, and local regulations. Check trailer light requirements for the areas where you plan to tow, and use only equipment designed for your vehicle.

Your vehicle is equipped with a connector to install an optional trailer lighting connector that mates with your vehicle. You can get this optional connector from your dealer.

Refer to the above illustration for wiring information.

We recommend that you have your dealer install an Acura wiring harness and converter. This harness has been designed 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 dealer.

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

Towing a Trailer

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, cooling system, and lights are in good operating condition.
- The trailer has been properly serviced and is in good condition.
- All weights and loads are within limits.
- 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.
- Your vehicle tires and spare are in good condition and properly inflated.
- The trailer tires and spare are in good condition and inflated as recommended by the trailer maker.

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 below.

Break-In Period

Avoid towing a trailer during your vehicle's first 600 miles (1,000 km) (see page 316).

Towing Speeds and Gears

Drive slower than normal in all driving situations, and obey posted speed limits for vehicles with trailers. Use D position when towing a trailer on level roads. D3 is the proper shift lever position to use when towing a trailer in hilly terrain. (See "***Driving on Hills***" on the next page for additional gear information.)

When towing a fixed-sided trailer (e. g., camper), do not exceed 55 mph (88 km/h). At higher speeds, the trailer may sway or affect vehicle handling.

When driving uphill and downhill, use the Sequential SportShift mode to provide the proper engine power and engine braking on each gear. Select fourth, third, second, or first gear; depending on the vehicle speeds and road condition. Do not use fifth gear. The recommended speed range for each gear position is shown in the table.

Gear position	Speed range
1	0 — 19 mph (0 — 30 km/h)
2	19 — 31 mph (30 — 50 km/h)
3	31 — 41 mph (50 — 65 km/h)
4	over 41 mph (over 65 km/h)

If the automatic transmission fluid temperature increases and exceeds the specified limit, the A/T temperature indicator comes on (see page 68). You will also see a "A/T TEMP HIGH" message on the multi-information display.

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. Do not brake or turn suddenly as this could cause the trailer to jackknife or turn over.

CONTINUED

Towing a Trailer

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 to D3.

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. **Remember, it takes longer to slow down and stop when towing a trailer.**

Handling Crosswinds and Buffeting
Crosswinds and air turbulence caused by passing trucks can disrupt your steering and cause the trailer to sway. When being passed by a 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. Turn the wheel to the 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. Also, place wheel chocks at each of the trailer's tires.

Retrieving a Boat
If the vehicles tires slip when retrieving a boat from the water, keep D position and do not use the sequential sport shift mode. This prevents the transmission damage.

Towing Your Vehicle
Your vehicle is not designed to be towed behind a motor home. If your vehicle needs to be towed in an emergency, see page 433 .

Trailer Stability Assist

Your vehicle is equipped with trailer stability assist function. This function works on the same sensors as the vehicle stability assist (VSA) system. This function helps to stabilize the vehicle/trailer combination when the trailer severely sways or oscillates. For more information of the VSA system, see page 351.

If the function detects the vehicle/trailer instability, it checks if the swaying is caused by the trailer, and if the trailer swaying or oscillation is increasing.

The vehicle/trailer combination is more affected by crosswinds, buffeting, and improper tongue load. These conditions can make the trailer unstable, and cause it to sway.

Under these conditions, trailer stability assist begins to stabilize the vehicle/trailer combination by reducing the vehicle speed. The control unit sends signals to selectively apply the brakes and regulate the engine output. The brake lights of your vehicle will be turned on automatically by the system even if you do not keep the pressure on the brake pedal.

When the brakes are applied, the trailer's brake lights come on along with the vehicle brake lights.

When the trailer stability assist activates, you will see the VSA activation indicator blink. There may also be some noise from the VSA hydraulic system.

Trailer stability assist cannot prevent a loss of control. Always reduce the vehicle speed and steer firmly. Do not brake suddenly or make quick steering motion. It could cause the trailer to jackknife or turn over and the system becomes ineffective.

Trailer stability assist cannot prevent swaying that can occur in crosswinds and in normal and emergency driving maneuvers. It helps only to stabilize the vehicle/trailer combination in these conditions, after the oscillation becomes severe.

Trailer stability assist will also be ineffective while driving at high speed or towing a trailer with a high center or gravity.

Always obey the recommended speed limits for towing a trailer, see page 365.

Trailer Stability Assist

Trailer Stability Assist Failure

The control unit monitors the VSA circuitry and the braking system. If there is a problem with the brake lighting system, the trailer stability assist function shuts down and the "CHECK TRAILER STABILITY ASSIST" message appears on the multi-information display.

If you see this message, have your vehicle checked at your dealer as soon as possible.

In this case, your vehicle still has the VSA traction and stability enhancement, but it will not have the trailer stability assist function.

If there is a problem with the VSA system, the system and Trailer Stability Assist shuts off. The VSA system and VSA activation indicators also come on (see page 351).

The ABS indicator and the brake system indicator may also come on along with the VSA system indicator.

If you see these warning indicators, have your vehicle checked at your dealer as soon as possible.

If you turn off the VSA, the trailer stability assist function also shuts off. Press and hold the VSA off switch until you hear a beep (see page 352). The VSA activation indicator comes on as a reminder. Press and hold the switch again to turn the system on.

The function turns on every time you start the engine along with the VSA, even if you turned it off the last time you drove the vehicle.

General Information

Your vehicle has been designed primarily for use on pavement. But its higher ground clearance and super handling-all wheel drive (SH-AWD) system allow you to occasionally travel on unpaved roads, to campgrounds, picnic sites, and similar locations. It is not designed for trailblazing, mountain climbing, or other challenging off-road activities.

If you decide to drive on unpaved roads, you will find that it requires somewhat different driving skills. Your vehicle will also handle somewhat differently than it does on pavement. Be sure to pay extra attention to the precautions and tips in this section, and get acquainted with your vehicle before leaving the pavement.

⚠WARNING

Improperly operating this vehicle on or off-pavement can cause an accident or rollover in which you and your passengers could be seriously injured or killed.

- Follow all instructions and guidelines in this owner's manual.
- Keep your speed low, and don't drive faster than conditions permit.

Important Safety Precautions

To avoid loss of control or rollover, be sure to follow all precautions and recommendations.

- Be sure to store cargo properly and do not exceed your cargo load limits (see page 325 and 327).
- Whenever you drive, make sure you and your passengers always wear seat belts.
- Keep your speed low, and never go faster than the conditions allow.
- It's up to you to continually assess the situation and drive within the limits.

Off-Highway Driving Guidelines

Check Out Your Vehicle
Before you leave the pavement, be sure to do all scheduled maintenance and service, and inspect your vehicle for any problems. Pay special attention to the condition of the tires, and check the tire pressures.

After you return to the pavement, carefully inspect your vehicle to make sure there is no damage that could make driving it unsafe. Recheck the condition of the tires and the tire pressures.

Remember
The route presents limits (too steep or bumpy roads). You have limits (driving skill and comfort). And your vehicle has limits (traction, stability, and power).

Driving off-highway can be hazardous if you fail to recognize limits and take the proper precautions.

Accelerating and Braking
For better traction on all surfaces, accelerate slowly and gradually build up speed. If you try to start too fast on wet soil, mud, snow, or ice, you might not have enough traction to get underway, and you may dig yourself a hole. Starting with the shift lever in D position will help you have a smoother start on snow or ice.

Keep in mind that you will usually need more time and distance to brake to a stop on unpaved surfaces. Avoid hard braking. Do not "pump" the brakes; let the anti-lock braking system pump them for you.

Avoiding Obstacles
Debris in the road can damage your suspension or other components. Because your vehicle has a high center of gravity, driving over a large obstacle, or allowing a wheel to drop into a deep hole can cause your vehicle to tip or roll over.

Driving on Slopes
If you can't clearly see all conditions or obstacles on a slope, walk the slope before you drive on it. If you have any doubt whether or not you can safely drive on the slope, don't do it. Find another route.
If you are driving up a hill and find that you cannot continue, *do not try to turn around.* Your vehicle could roll over. Slowly back down the hill, following the same route you took up the hill.

Crossing a Stream
Before driving through water, stop, get out if necessary, and make sure that:
- The water is not deep enough to cover your wheel hubs, axles, or exhaust pipe. You could stall and not be able to restart your engine. The water can also damage important vehicle components.

- The banks are sloped so you can drive out.
- The water is not flowing too fast. Deep rushing water can sweep you downstream. Even very shallow rushing water can wash the ground from under your tires and cause you to lose traction and possibly roll over.
- The banks and surface under the water provide good traction. The water may hide hazards such as rocks, holes, or mud.

If you decide it is safe to drive through water, choose a suitable speed, and proceed without shifting, changing speeds, stopping, or shutting off the engine.

After driving through water, test your brakes. If they got wet, gently "pump" them while driving slowly until they operate normally.

If the water is deeper than the wheel hubs, some additional service may be required. This service is not covered by your warranties.

If You Get Stuck

If you get stuck, carefully try to go in the direction (forward or reverse) that you think will get you unstuck. Do not spin the tires at high speeds. It will not help you get out and may cause damage to the transmission or SH-AWD system.

If you are still unable to free yourself, your vehicle is equipped with front and rear tow hooks designed for this purpose.

Use a nylon strap to attach the MDX to the recovery vehicle and carefully take out the slack in the strap. Once the strap is tight, the recovery vehicle should apply force. Remember that the recovery vehicle needs good traction to avoid becoming stuck, too.

You should never use a jack to try to get unstuck. Your vehicle could easily slip off the jack and hurt you or someone else.

Towing a Trailer Off-Road

You may be able to safely tow a lightweight trailer (such as a motorcycle or small tent trailer) off-road if you follow these guidelines.

- Do not exceed 1,000 lbs (450 kg) or a tongue weight of 100 lbs (45 kg).
- Stay on smooth, level dirt roads, and avoid driving in hilly terrain.
- Allow extra room for starting, stopping, and turning.
- Slow down if you encounter bumps or other obstacles.