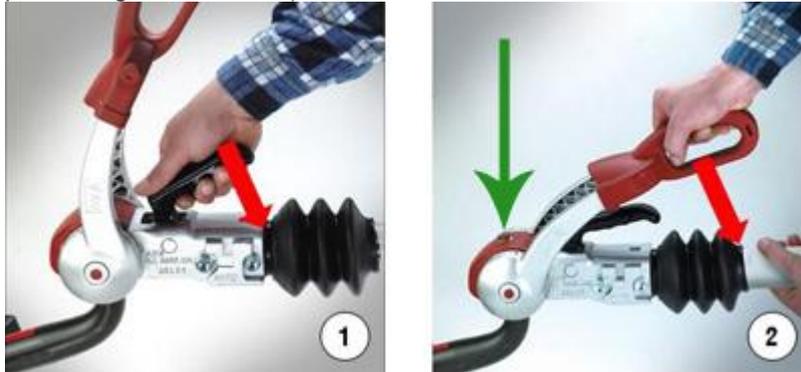


Pre-flight check 1:

This one may seem obvious but I have seen it many times – Is your caravan PROPERLY hitched up to your car? By *properly* I mean that it will not jump off your towball a mile down the road. Depending on whether you have a stabiliser on your hitch head will determine the check that you should perform to ensure you are properly hitched up. If you have an AL-KO stabiliser there is a green indicator on the head of the device that tells you that you are hitched up correctly (see diagram below, green arrow points to green indicator).



To test if you are correctly hitched up when your caravan does not have a stabiliser, simply wind the jockey wheel down further, if you are correctly hitched it should raise the car. Do not attempt to do this if you have a stabiliser fitted as this can cause serious damage to your stabiliser pads.

Pre-flight check 2:

A breakaway cable is now required by law while towing. Check that your breakaway cable is correctly attached around your towball, [this video](#) by AL-KO demonstrates how to connect your breakaway cable. I would also recommend checking that your breakaway cable is not broken or frayed as a faulty breakaway cable could prove extremely dangerous.

Pre-flight check 3:

Check that the gaiter on your damper (the corrugated rubber around the section between your a-frame and hitch head) is not split. Any splits in the gaiter could allow grit and debris to get into the mechanism and prevent it from operating correctly. Without your damper in action an emergency stop can be very dangerous.

Pre-flight check 4:

Is your jockey wheel retracted and stowed away safely? Think of your jockey wheel as your landing gear – it is not required during the flight.

Pre-flight check 5:

Hookup leads – there are several mini checks that I would suggest you perform on your hookup leads:

- Is the rubber insulation damaged exposing any wires?

- Is the socket damaged in any way or missing pins?
- Ensure the socket is not full of water or corroded as this may cause a bad connection
- Are they connected to the car correctly – pushed all the way in?

Pre-flight check 6:

Check number 5 leads us nicely on to your road lights. Now that you have confirmed your hookup leads are correctly continue to check that all your road lights are working including:

- Main lights
- Brake light
- Left indication
- Right indication
- Hazards
- Remember to check for any broken light lenses as this may dazzle other road users

It is always worth asking someone to assist you in checking your lights.

Pre-flight check 7:

It is highly recommended that you check your tyre pressures before every journey with your caravan, just as it with a car. Tyre pressure gauges are very cheap and so there is no excuse not to own one – if you do not own a tyre pressure gauge [buy one here](#). Refer to your manual for the correct tyre pressures for your caravan.

Pre-flight check 8:

Another commonly overlooked safety check that should be carried out before every journey is your wheel nuts. A torque wrench is another cheap piece of equipment that can help to prevent loss of wheels whilst towing - if you do not own a torque wrench [buy one here](#)! Check what torque setting your wheel nuts should be at in your caravan's handbook.

Pre-flight check 9:

Blow outs are one of the main causes for accidents involving caravans on our roads, and the sad thing is that in most cases they could be avoided. A quick visual check of the condition of your tyre before each journey is all it takes. You want to ensure that there are no cracks or chunks out of the tyre wall as these can be signs of a weakness in the tyre. If in doubt have an expert take a look for you – better to be safe than sorry.

Pre-flight check 10 (twin axles only):

If you own a twin axle caravan it is wise to check for any bricks, wood or debris that may lodge itself between the two wheels when you set off. Many caravan owners use bricks or blocks of wood to further secure their caravan in position in storage. A brick between the wheels on the road would be ugly.

Pre-flight check 11:

Are your corner steadies raised ALL THE WAY UP? None of this “half way will do” stuff. If you drive over a pothole with a corner steady half way down it could tear the bottom from your caravan and obstruct other road users. Wind them all the way!

Pre-flight check 12:

If you have a directional aerial ensure that it has been retracted.

Pre-flight check 13:

Has your inside load been secured? A set of big heavy awning poles rolling around inside the caravan is just not good for the towing physics. You don't want anything to influence the direction the caravan travels in except your tow vehicle!

Pre-flight check 14:

Check to ensure that all of the following are secure and will not come lose while travelling to help prevent damage, injury and danger to other road users:

- Entrance door
- Internal partition doors
- Windows
- Rooflights
- External locker doors
- Internal locker doors
- Oven and sink covers

Pre-flight check 15:

Lastly, before you pull off check that your handbrake is off. You would believe the amount of axle and chassis damage that is seen every year by caravan engineers. Not only is it a VERY costly fix but it is very dangerous to be towing with your handbrake on.

That concludes my list of 15 pre-flight checks every caravanner should undertake. I hope you enjoyed it and were able to take something away from it. Hopefully I didn't tell you everything you already know, having said that it never hurts to be reminded when it comes to safety!

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