

Preparing Your Vehicle for the Long Haul

Warm sunny days mean vacations or weekend getaways, and many families take to the road with a camper in tow. Whether you are towing a camper, trailer or boat – regardless of the size – it means you will want to take steps to make sure the vehicle you are using for towing is ready for the haul.

Modifications and towing packages

If you are willing to make some modifications to your tow vehicle, you can protect it from the stresses of towing, reduce engine wear and possibly see more engine power. If your tow vehicle is still under warranty, making modifications could void your manufacturer's warranty. Be sure to check your warranty and with your dealer before you make any modifications. Another point to consider is that adding performance components may give you more engine power, but should not exceed your vehicle's factory towing capacity. Modifications may increase your vehicle's margin of safety but not its capabilities.

If you are purchasing a new vehicle specifically for towing, consider adding the optional "Towing" or "Camping" packages that are offered. These options are installed by the automaker and will be covered under the factory warranty. If your towing will be primarily on pavement, it is recommended to buy a two-wheel drive model instead of a four-wheel drive that is heavier and has a lower towing capability than a two-wheel drive vehicle.

Springs and shocks

Heavy-duty springs are considered an aftermarket improvement, but are worth the investment if you do a lot of towing. Find a reputable spring and suspension shop and have the heavy-duty springs installed for rear or front suspensions.

It's also a good idea to outfit your vehicle with the best shock absorbers available for towing. Good shocks will keep your vehicle stable and reduce sway should you encounter potholes or rough pavement.

Upgrade your lubricants

Towing can cause increased stress on your vehicle and force the engine to run hotter as a result. Anything you can do to keep those temperatures down will extend the life of your tow vehicle. One simple and inexpensive way to prepare your tow vehicle is to change and upgrade your fluids and lubricants.

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