

# Towing Four Wheels Down



CHEVROLET CAVALIER



HYUNDAI SANTA FE



JEEP WRANGLER SAHARA



LEXUS ES 300

## *A guide to year 2001 vehicles that manufacturers have indicated can be flat towed without significant modifications.*

Surveys indicate that approximately 80 percent of FMCA members tow vehicles behind their motorhomes. While some members use a trailer or a tow dolly, many flat tow; that is, the towed vehicle has all four wheels on the ground with a tow bar connecting it to the motorhome.

The following information is meant to be a guide to selecting a vehicle that is approved by its manufacturer for flat towing. The information was gathered from the manufacturers and owners manuals and pertains only to year 2001 vehicles; it may or may not be correct for earlier or later models. While every attempt has been made to present accurate information, please keep in mind that continued vehicle improvements and innovations could alter the information and render it out of date.

Always consult the owners manual for specific guidelines regarding towing procedures, modifications, and safety issues. Before purchasing or towing any vehicle, find out from the dealer, manufacturer, and/or the owners manual how towing will affect the vehicle's warranty. Also, keep in mind that while a manufacturer may say a particular vehicle can be towed without significant modifications, what is "not significant" to one person may be burdensome to another.

This is also a good time to check for directives about specific procedures for that vehicle regarding towing, ignition lock position, accessories, spare tires, and other items of concern, including possible towing restrictions and limitations. This information often is listed in the owners manual under a heading such as "Recreational Towing." You may also wish to ask if any service bulletins have been released that relate to towing the vehicle behind a motorhome. Make sure the person you are speaking with realizes you are talking about towing it and not using it *to tow* a trailer. Also, in the owners manual, do not confuse recreational towing with emergency towing. Some vehicles can be towed four wheels down for emergency purposes only.

If possible, weigh the vehicle you intend to tow. We have listed approximate weights as supplied by the manufacturer. Optional equipment can increase the weight of the vehicle.

Also, consult the owners manual for requirements and information regarding auxiliary brakes on the towed vehicle. Some chassis, motorhome, and automobile manufacturers

recommend that supplemental brakes be used on any towed vehicle. Not all jurisdictions mandate brakes on towed vehicles, but the laws of physics always apply. It is hoped few drivers would consider towing a load of bricks on a trailer that was not equipped with brakes, but some people tow a 3,000-pound vehicle without supplemental brakes. Of course, the brakes on the motorhome cannot tell the difference between 3,000 pounds of bricks and 3,000 pounds of vehicle. Most of us have never heard a driver say the brakes on a vehicle stop it too quickly. But, many of us have seen what happens when brakes didn't work quickly enough.

When you're looking for a towed vehicle, it's a good idea to weigh your motorhome (see "Understanding RV Weights," page 78, April 2000). Because of overloading issues, some motorhomes should not tow anything. In fact, certain motorhomes may need to have their load lightened before being driven solo.

The most important issue we face as we operate our coaches is safety. That means that only knowledgeable, qualified personnel should do the initial installation of towing equipment. After installation, it's imperative that all equipment be checked frequently and used only in the manner for which it was designed.

As with other mechanical gear, proper maintenance can increase the life of towing equipment. However, there comes a time when the equipment must be replaced to prevent a dangerous situation. Frequent inspections will alert you to that need.

Do not let yourself be distracted when hooking up your towed vehicle. We've all heard stories of someone who had a weld break or who forgot to connect safety chains but was fortunate enough that nothing bad happened. Others were not so lucky, and they know that the personal and financial costs of a towing mishap can be enormous.

Finally, remember that there is no single best way or best vehicle to tow. Each vehicle and each method has advantages and disadvantages. If a vehicle you already own or wish to purchase cannot be flat towed, it may be possible to tow it on a dolly or have adaptations made to the vehicle to render it towable.

*continued*

## ACURA

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
*MDX	✓	N/A	Four-wheel drive	65/None	4,328

\* Follow prescribed towing procedure outlined in owners manual.

## CHEVROLET/GMC

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
*Blazer/Jimmy 4x4	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,049
**Cavalier		✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,617
**Cavalier (4-speed automatic only)	✓		Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,632
***Malibu Sedan	✓	N/A	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,051
****Silverado/Sierra 4x4	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None	4,413
****Suburban/Yukon XL 4x4	✓	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	5,123
****Tahoe/Yukon 4x4	✓	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	5,050
*****Tracker 4x4	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	50/200	2,811

\* Blazer/Jimmy 4x4: Transfer case must be in "neutral."

\*\* Cavalier: See the owners manual for restrictions and more information.

\*\*\* Malibu: To prevent battery drain while towing, certain fuses must be removed from the instrument panel fuse block.

\*\*\*\* Silverado/Sierra 4x4, Suburban/Yukon XL 4x4, Tahoe/Yukon 4x4: The transfer case must be placed in neutral, the ignition in the "off" position, and the ignition fuse removed when towing.

\*\*\*\*\* Tracker: After towing 200 miles, the transfer case oil must be circulated for one minute before continuing.

## CHRYSLER/DODGE

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Neon		✓	Front-wheel drive	Legal/None	2,585
PT Cruiser		✓	Front-wheel drive	Legal/None	3,123
*Sebring Coupe LXi		✓	Front-wheel drive	Legal/None	3,100
Stratus Coupe		✓	Front-wheel drive	Legal/None	3,012
Dakota 4x4	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	3,852
Durango 4x4	✓	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,648
Ram 4x4 (1500 series)	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,718

\* A V-6 and manual transmission are standard on the Sebring Coupe LXi. The base-model Sebring Coupe, a 4-cylinder, comes with automatic transmission only and is not towable.

## FORD /MERCURY

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Escort		✓	Front-wheel drive	None stated	2,468
ZX2		✓	Front-wheel drive	None stated	2,478
Focus		✓	Front-wheel drive	None stated	2,551
Explorer 4-Door 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	None stated	3,845
*Explorer 4-Door 4x4	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,045
Explorer Sport Trac 4x4		✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,323
Explorer Sport Trac 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	None stated	4,103
**F-150 4x4	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,311
*Mercury Mountaineer 4x4	✓	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None stated	4,045
Ranger 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	55/None	3,313
Ranger 4x4		✓	Four-wheel drive	55/None	3,584
***Super Duty F-250/350 4x4	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	None stated	5,500

\* Explorer 4-Door 4x4 and Mountaineer 4x4 with automatic transmissions: Control-Trac models with V-6 must be equipped with dealer-installed Neutral Tow Kit.

\*\* F-150 4x4: Manual transfer case only (not electronic shift-on-the-fly 4x4). The center disconnect must be locked out by capping off one of the front-axle vacuum motor lines. See dealer for assistance.

\*\*\* Super Duty F-250/350 4x4: Manual transfer case only (not electronic shift-on-the-fly 4x4).

## HONDA

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
*CR-V 2WD LX	✓	N/A	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,126
*CR-V LX, EX	✓	✓	Real Time 4WD	65/None	3,210

\* Follow prescribed towing procedure outlined in owners manual.

## HYUNDAI

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Accent		✓	Front-wheel drive	None stated	2,280
Elantra		✓	Front-wheel drive	None stated	2,650
*Santa Fe		✓	Front-wheel drive	None stated	3,500
Sonata		✓	Front-wheel drive	None stated	3,100
Tiburon		✓	Front-wheel drive	None stated	2,600

\* Two-wheel drive only; the Santa Fe four-wheel-drive model cannot be flat towed.



DODGE STRATUS COUPE



ACURA MDX

## INFINITI

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
G20		✓	Front-wheel drive	*60/500	2,950
I30		✓	Front-wheel drive	*60/500	3,415

\* G20, I30: After towing 500 miles, idle the engine in "neutral" for several minutes to circulate fluids.

## JEEP

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Jeep Cherokee Limited	✓	N/A	Part-time 4WD*	None	3,355
Jeep Cherokee Sport	✓	✓	Part-time 4WD*	None	3,297
Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo, Limited	✓	N/A	Four-wheel drive	None	3,968
Wrangler	✓	✓	Part-time 4WD	None	3,294

\* Cherokee full-time 4WD (optional) models also towable.

## KIA

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Sportage 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	*55/400	3,186
Sportage 4x4		✓	Part-Time 4WD	55/None	3,352

\* After 400 miles, start the engine and allow it to idle for several minutes to ensure proper lubrication of internal transmission parts.

*continued*



## LAND ROVER

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
*Discovery Series II	✓		Permanent 4WD	None stated	4,600
**Range Rover	✓		Permanent 4WD	None stated	4,960

\* Discovery Series II: Set the main gearbox in "park" and the transfer box in "neutral." Turn starter switch to position "I" to unlock steering, and then to position "II" for brake light/turn signal operation.

\*\* Range Rover: Insert a fuse (5 amps or greater) in fuse position "11." (See owners manual for procedure.)

## \* LEXUS

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
ES 300	✓	N/A	Front-wheel drive	**55/200	3,373
RX 300 2WD	✓	N/A	Front-wheel drive	**55/200	3,715
RX 300 4WD	✓	N/A	Four-wheel drive	**55/200	3,924

\* Lexus notes that these vehicles will not sustain internal damage to the transmission or transfer components when towed, but towing these vehicles does not eliminate the possibility of damage to other vehicle systems (body, chassis, electrical systems, etc.). The transmission must be placed in the "neutral" position when flat towing.

\*\* After 200 miles, let the engine idle for more than three minutes.

## MAZDA

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
B-Series Pickup 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	None stated	2,960
B-Series Pickup 4x4		✓	Four-wheel drive	55/None	3,380
Tribute 4x2		✓	Front-wheel drive	55/None stated	3,091

## MITSUBISHI

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Eclipse Coupe GS		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,910
Eclipse Coupe GT		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	3,053
Eclipse Coupe RS		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,822
Eclipse Spyder GS, GT		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	3,042
Mirage Sedan ES, LS		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,437
Mirage Coupe DE, LS		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,183

## \* NISSAN

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Altima		✓	Front-wheel drive	60/500	2,851
Maxima		✓	Front-wheel drive	60/500	3,186
Sentra		✓	Front-wheel drive	60/500	2,633
Frontier Crew Cab 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	60/500	3,817
**Frontier Crew Cab 4x4		✓	Four-wheel drive	60/500	4,069
Pathfinder 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	60/500	3,940
**Pathfinder 4x4		✓	Part-time 4WD	60/500	4,250
Xterra 4x2		✓	Rear-wheel drive	60/500	3,504
**Xterra 4x4		✓	Four-wheel drive	60/500	3,933

\* All Nissan vehicles: After towing 500 miles, idle the engine in "neutral" for several minutes to circulate fluids.

\*\* Four-wheel-drive Frontier, Pathfinder, and Xterra: The transfer lever must be placed in 2HI.

## OLDSMOBILE

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
*Alero	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,010

\* Certain fuses should be removed to prevent battery drain while towing. See owners manual for instructions.

## PONTIAC

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Grand Am SE	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,066
Sunfire		✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,606
Sunfire (four-speed automatic only)	✓		Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,606

## \* SATURN

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
L Series Sedan	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,944
LW Series Wagon	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	3,081
SC Series Coupe	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,367
SL Series Sedan	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,331
SW Series Wagon	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	65/None	2,461

\* Certain fuses must be removed before towing. See owners manuals for details.

continued

## LOOKING TOWARD 2002 . . .

Early indications from Saturn are that the 2002 VUE sport-utility vehicle, when equipped with a manual transmission and a 2.2-liter four-cylinder engine, is towable four wheels down.

However, four-cylinder VUE models equipped with a European-built continuously variable transmission (CVT) are not towable, according to Saturn officials.

The VUE also comes in all-wheel drive with a six-cylinder engine and an automatic transmission, but so far, only the front-wheel-drive four-cylinder model with manual transmission is recommended for towing four wheels down.

Designed with a carlike unibody for smoother rides and better handling, the VUE figures to compete with smaller SUVs such as the Honda CR-V and the Mazda Tribute. VUE features include a car-height bumper and an inside-mounted spare tire.

The VUE is expected to be on dealers' lots this fall, with base models priced under \$20,000.

DaimlerChrysler has indicated that the 2002 Jeep Liberty Limited Edition with automatic transmission only and the Liberty Sport with automatic and manual transmission are towable four wheels down. Part-time four-wheel drive is standard on these models; full-time four-wheel drive is optional. The approximate base curb weight of the Limited Edition is 3,857 pounds; the Liberty Sport, 3,692 pounds.

The Liberty models, touted to "go anywhere, do anything," are available with a 3.7-liter Power Tech V-6 engine or a 2.4-liter Power Tech I-4. 🚗



SATURN VUE

## \*SUBARU

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Impreza L Sedan		✓	All-Wheel Drive	None	2,735
Impreza L Sport Wagon		✓	All-Wheel Drive	None	2,835
Legacy L Wagon		✓	All-Wheel Drive	None	3,345
Outback Sport		✓	All-Wheel Drive	None	2,860
Forester L, S		✓	All-Wheel Drive	None	3,140
Outback Limited Wagon		✓	All-Wheel Drive	None	3,510
Outback Wagon		✓	All-Wheel Drive	None	3,425

\* When towing, the steering wheel must NOT be locked. Move the ignition key to the first position away from "lock" and confirm that the steering wheel can be turned from one side to the other.

## SUZUKI

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Grand Vitara	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	*Legal/200	3,197
Vitara 4 Door	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	*Legal/200	3,020
Vitara 2 Door	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	*Legal/200	2,844

\* Automatic transmission: Stop towing the vehicle after 200 miles and leave transfer lever in "neutral." Start the engine, shift into "drive," and rev the engine for one minute to circulate oil in the transfer case. Shift into "park" before next towing.

\* Manual transmission: Stop towing after 200 miles and leave the transmission in second gear. With the transfer lever still in "neutral," start the engine and rev it for one minute with the clutch engaged to circulate oil in the transfer case.



SUBARU IMPREZA L SPORT WAGON



SUZUKI GRAND VITARA

## \*TOYOTA

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
Camry		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,998
Celica GT		✓	Front-wheel drive	**55/200	2,460
Celica GT-S	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	**55/200	2,580
Corolla		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,405
Echo		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	2,020
Highlander 2WD	✓	N/A	Front-wheel drive	**55/200	3,483
Highlander 4WD	✓	N/A	Four-wheel drive	**55/200	3,660
MR2	N/A	✓	Rear-wheel drive	None	2,195
RAV4 2WD	✓	✓	Front-wheel drive	**55/200	2,877
RAV4 4WD	✓	✓	Four-wheel drive	**55/200	2,943
Solara (including convertible)		✓	Front-wheel drive	None	3,120

\* Toyota notes that these vehicles will not sustain internal damage to the transmission or transfer components when towed, but towing these vehicles does not eliminate the possibility of damage to other vehicle systems (body, chassis, electrical systems, etc.). The transmission must be placed in the "neutral" position when flat towing.

\*\* After towing the vehicle for the recommended distance limit, let the engine idle for more than three minutes before driving the vehicle or resuming towing.

## VOLVO

	Transmission		Drive Configuration	Speed/Distance Limits (mph/mi.)	Approx. Curb Weight (lb.)
	Auto	Manual			
S60 2.4		✓	Front-wheel drive	Legal/None	3,230
S60 T5		✓	Front-wheel drive	Legal/None	3,377
V70 2.4		✓	Front-wheel drive	Legal/None	3,342
V70 T5		✓	Front-wheel drive	Legal/None	3,490

### Honda/Acura Towing

Currently, the only vehicles officially recommended by Honda/Acura for towing four wheels down are the CR-V and the Acura MDX. For information about towing those vehicles, see their respective owners manuals. The following letter, provided by American Honda Motor Co. Inc., pertains to all other models except the Insight, S2000, Passport, and NSX.

Honda owners manuals advise against towing at more than 35 mph or for more than 50 miles. However, this recommendation exists primarily because Honda has not conducted formal towing tests of their cars at higher speeds and for greater distances.

Honda is not aware of any particular problems being caused by motorhome towing of Honda automobiles, with either manual or automatic transmission, as long as pre-towing preparations are made and the vehicle is towed at legal highway speeds.

When preparing to tow your vehicle, make sure the transmission is full of fluid; do not overfill.

#### Manual transmission models:

- Release the parking brake.
- Shift the transmission to "neutral."
- Turn the ignition key to the "Accessory (I)" position to release the steering wheel lock. Make sure the radio and all accessories are turned off.

#### Automatic transmission models:

Do the following every day immediately before you begin towing. Follow the procedure exactly. Otherwise, severe automatic transmission damage will occur.

- Start the engine.
- Press on the brake pedal. Shift the lever through all positions (P, R, N, D, 2, 1).
- Shift to D, then to N. Let the engine run for at least three minutes, then turn off the engine.
- Release the parking brake.
- Leave the ignition switch in the "Accessory (I)" position so that the steering wheel does not lock. Make sure the radio and any items plugged into the accessory power sockets are turned off so you do not run down the battery.

If you tow the vehicle more than eight hours in a day (including stopping time), you must stop and repeat the above procedures.

NOTICE: The steering system can be damaged if the steering wheel is locked. Always leave the key in the Accessory (I) position to prevent damage to the steering system when towing behind another vehicle.

CAUTION: SEVERE AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION DAMAGE WILL OCCUR IF THE CAR IS SHIFTED FROM REVERSE TO NEUTRAL AND THEN TOWED WITH THE DRIVE WHEELS ON THE GROUND.

NOTICE: Improper towing preparation will damage the transmission. If you cannot shift the transmission or start the engine, your vehicle must be transported on a flat-bed truck or trailer.

If you tow a Honda vehicle with an automatic transmission, the transmission fluid must be changed every two years or 30,000 miles, whichever comes first.

Although experience has shown that the Honda/Acura transmission and power train are capable of being "motorhome towed," American Honda does not assume responsibility for any vehicle damage or liabilities incurred due to the towing device, towing vehicle, lighting hookup, or other towing equipment or towing procedures; any responsibility for these items is assumed by the owner/operator.

For more information, contact Honda at (800) 999-1009. 🚗