

8 Ways to Make the Most of Your Trailer Hitch

So, you have a receiver hitch. Have you ever used it? Do you know how handy your trailer hitch can be, even if you don't have a trailer to haul? What do you need to get the most out of your trailer hitch? First, let's talk about the receiver. It's a square hole located below your bumper. It's called a receiver because it "receives" the stuff you stick into it. Makes sense, right? Your receiver is either 1.25 or 2 inches square. The smaller receivers are either class I or class II hitches depending on how much weight they can handle. The 2 inch receivers are class III, or IV; as the class number increases so do the weight limits. For example, a class I hitch can tow up to 2000 lbs. and handle up to 200 lbs. downward pressure on the actual hitch (that's called tongue weight), while a class IV hitch can tow up to 10,000 lbs. and handle 1,000 to 1,200 lbs. tongue weight. Equally important to the trailer hitch's weight specifications are the towing specs for your vehicle. You can find these in your owner's manual and they should always be respected. Overloading your trailer hitch will not only risk damage to your vehicle, but it will also make steering and braking more difficult, making you a danger on the road. So, what can you do with your receiver hitch? Obviously, you can tow a trailer. If it falls under the weight specs for your hitch and vehicle, you'll just need a ball mount and a hitch ball. The ball mount is the square metal shaft that slides into the receiver. The hitch ball mounts onto the ball mount and sticks out behind your vehicle when properly installed. You can tow cargo trailers, camping trailers, utility trailers, just about anything that you want. Beyond towing, you can use your receiver hitch for cargo carriers, bike racks, boat carriers, ATV ramps, ski racks, hitch mounted grills, hitch steps, and to display your personality with a custom hitch cover. The bike racks, cargo carriers, and ski racks are all generally mounted to a shaft that slides into your receiver. These racks offer great convenience as they allow you to safely carry bulky and/or dirty items outside your car. Many of them fold for easier access to the rear of your vehicle and to require less storage space. Sports racks and cargo carriers are a great use for your receiver hitch. You can also get bed extenders and hitch mounted boat racks that allow you to put one end of a ladder or canoe on top of your pickup cab and support the other end with a rack that mounts to your hitch. Similarly, hitch mounted ramp supports are available to allow you to attach ramps to the back of your pickup so you can drive what ever you need to right into the bed without fear of damaging the tailgate. A hitch mounted step is a great way to access the rear of your vehicle; they are simple to install and fold to be out of the way when you're not using them. They often double as hitch covers which keep your receiver clean. If you're a tailgater, you will love a hitch mounted grill. Forget hauling the mess of a charcoal grill or dealing with the small rack on a portable grill; with a hitch mounted grill you can bring the comforts of your back patio with you--it's easy and awesome. Even if you don't go with a hitch grill, you'll want a tailgater hitch cover. It displays the logo of your favorite team and has a built in bottle opener for your convenience. Whatever trailer accessories you choose, make sure you get a hitch lock to keep your stuff safe. This handy little lock replaces the tow pin you use to keep the ball mount in your receiver hitch and will give you peace of mind as you make the most of your trailer hitch.

About the Author

Jeremy loads his family's bike on hitch bike racks when they're headed out for quality family time. You can read more of his work by visiting: <http://www.trailerhitchuniverse.com>.

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