

# Prepping Your Trailer for Work and Play



When you need to tow materials, machinery and other items, our personal vehicles may not fit everything you need. That's where a **trailer** comes in – giving you the capability to haul whatever comes your way, from taking **lawn mowers** to your friends' house to hauling **ATVs** to your favorite riding area. But before breaking out your trailer for the spring and summer season, you must inspect and repair a variety of parts, ensuring everything works well after a winter of little to no use. Learn more about the different spring trailer maintenance tasks from Tractor Supply.

### **Look at Trailer Wheels**

As trailers sit through the winter, wheels can lose air, meaning you must start by checking the tire pressure on your **trailer tires**. When tires are underinflated, they can easily overheat and blowout on the road, as well as make driving more challenging by adding sway. Overinflated tires can also affect how drivers handle their load, and easily wear down sooner than expected. You should follow the instructions provided by your owner's manual, which will tell you the right tire pressure for your trailer, and inflate or deflate them as needed with an **air compressor** or **tire inflator**.

In addition to checking the tire pressure, inspect trailer wheels for signs of extensive wear and tear, which include uneven wear on the tread, as well as cracks or bulges. It can also help to examine the tires on your personal or commercial vehicles to ensure they are suitable for towing, as trailering items with flat or damaged tires can contribute to extensive vehicle damage.

### **Check Lighting and Electrical Systems**

All trailers must have the right **lighting system** to allow visibility on the road and warn other drivers that there's a trailer, including **tail, reflector, clearance and side marker lights**. However, the requirements for these lights can vary depending on your state's regulations. Before inspecting your trailer's lighting and electrical systems, it can benefit to research about your state's requirements, as well as those of the Department of Transportation (DOT), to ensure you're complying with all standards.

To start, you should inspect all **wiring** and look for signs of corrosion or fraying, including on connector-plug prongs and receptacles, ground connections, light bulb sockets and wire splices, to check that they're free from damage. Consider coating electrical terminal connections with a nonconducting and waterproof **grease**, which helps to shield electronic components from moisture and other elements.

Next, you must make sure wiring is connected correctly, and ensure it's not dragging along the road as you drive. However, wiring should still be loose enough that you can make turns without damaging or disconnecting them.

### **Inspect Trailer Wheel Bearings**

The **wheel bearings** on trailers can be made with a variety of materials, from **steel** to **synthetic** to **zinc** and other **metals**. They allow tires to rotate smoothly, as well as support your trailer and cargo weight. Through long wear, these parts can become damaged or clogged with debris, especially after sitting in garages or **sheds** through harsh winters, which can affect the tire's ability to turn. That's why it's important to inspect wheel bearings before using trailers in the spring or summer.

The best way to inspect your trailer's wheel bearings is by removing wheels, allowing you to reach bearings and other components. With wheels removed, be sure to check for grease leaks and other issues. If you find that your wheel bearings are not damaged, you should still give them a thorough cleaning, re-greasing parts to ensure smooth rotation. This also helps to avoid future problems you may encounter with damaged wheel bearing parts, such as tire failure under large loads.

Alongside inspecting wheel bearings, you should tighten wheel lug nuts, helping to ensure wheels stay secured to your trailer while driving. It can benefit to browse your owner's manual for more specific maintenance information about wheel bearing and lug nut repairs and replacements.

## Look at Brake Systems

The **braking system** on your trailer is essential to the safety of yourself and others on the road. It shows other drivers that your vehicle and trailer are stopping on the road, helping to prevent fender benders and more serious accidents. Before using your trailer after winter, you should look at all parts of your brake system, including the hydraulic lines, brake pads and **drums**. When it comes to brake pads, you want to see how much material is leftover, and decide if they need replacing. Other parts require you to check for signs of damage, which can indicate the need for replacement.

You should look at your trailer's brake systems frequently throughout the year, not just in the spring. This ensures they always work as they should and avoids incidents where brakes fail. However, the best time to replace your brakes and other components is during the spring, right before summer hits, giving you a fresh set of brakes to handle warm weather and a variety of road conditions.

## Check Trailer Axle Parts

**Trailer axles** are parts that connect from wheel to wheel, allowing for even weight dispersion across tires and providing support for the trailer's weight and load. When inspecting trailers for spring and summer use, you don't want to forget about these parts, as they play a role in maintaining the longevity of your trailer.

Start by inspecting the trailer axle and additional components for rust growth or other damage. You must also check that screws and nuts are tightened, ensuring wheels are properly connected, to avoid breakdowns and other issues associated with loose parts.

## Examine Trailer Hitches, Couplers and Drawbars

Your trailer's **hitch**, **coupler** and **drawbar** are responsible for ensuring secure, tight connections between your trailer and tow vehicle. Before the first use of the season, check these parts for signs of damage, as secure trailer-to-vehicle connection is important for the safety of all drivers on the road (and getting loads where they need to go).

Additionally, you should also ensure all **bolts**, **nuts**, **couplers** and other **fasteners** are secure to trailers and not loose, keeping setups attached and safe for road use. Consider lubricating connection points to allow for freer **coupler** to **hitch ball** movements, and make sure to look at the coupler ball socket for signs of bends, dents or other damages, which can cause trailers to detach from their tow vehicles.

## Inspect Trailer Welds

Welds are what hold trailer materials together, giving you a reliable, durable means for transporting heavy-duty loads and objects. However, these welds can become weakened and damaged over time, especially if your trailer frequently hauls large, heavy loads.

After storing it through a long winter, you want to do a visual sweep of your trailer, looking for signs of cracks or damages in the welds before driving it. Even the smallest of cracks can cause issues with hauls, so you want to be mindful of all damages to your trailer before putting large loads onto it. It can help to look at stress points of your trailer, especially where the **spring hangers** weld to the frame, as well as where the tongue molds to the trailer, as cracks in these areas are more susceptible to failure under heavy loads.

## Check Your Ramps, Tailgates and Hoist Mechanisms

While most trailer setups come with tailgates to keep items secured inside trailers while driving, some feature tailgates that double as **ramps**, or separate ramp components. This makes it easier to load and unload items from your trailer. If your trailer has these features, you'll want to add inspecting these parts to your spring maintenance checklist.

Start by taking out ramps and ensure they still secure easily to trailers with **pins** or other locking devices. Tailgates should also be secure while still allowing for liberal movements in terms of opening and closing their doors. Consider lubricating the hinges and other parts if you find it

challenging to move them, giving you smooth, well-working tailgates and ramps that make easy work of loading and unloading.

If you have a trailer with a **dump** or hoist mechanism, it's essential you check these parts, as well. This allows for smooth dumping operation, especially in commercial or agricultural applications. Be sure to look at batteries and electrical wires for wear and corrosion, as well as clean the hoist power unit, which can build up with debris and dirt, to ensure trailer beds lift with ease. Additionally, make sure to inspect the hoist unit, fluid levels and **hydraulic hoses**. If needed, replace damaged parts and grease up hoist **grease fittings** or zerks before driving trailers for the season.

### **Find the Trailer Supplies You Need at Tractor Supply**

Professional workers and DIY homeowners alike understand the convenience that having a trailer provides, as well as the amount of maintenance that goes into ensuring you make the most out of your investment. When it comes to finding replacement trailer parts and tools, rely on our abundant selection in-store and online. To learn more about the trailer accessories we offer, visit your **local Tractor Supply store** today or browse online.