

## What to consider when buying a trailer.



When you are thinking about buying a trailer, you have many choices. You can look at many different trailer manufacturers and different types of trailers. Don't be afraid – we'll help you choose.

Before looking into different types of trailers, you should understand that trailers are considered vehicles on the road and require a vehicle registration, state (and local) taxes and must conform to state laws. Your local trailer dealer will assist you in getting your trailer on the road, but you may need to change your insurance and license in some states.

Once you are ready to get your gear on the road, one of the first considerations is to choose an established brand trailer manufacturer. As with most everything, you usually get what you paid for, so try to choose the best trailer that you can afford.

Deciding on what type of trailer you need for your application will help in narrowing down the manufacturers. There are trailers for almost every type of cargo, from camping items, to motorcycles and snowmobiles.

After choosing a manufacturer, figure out what size trailer you'll need. Trailers come in different widths and lengths. If you're considering an enclosed trailer, you'll also need to consider the height of the interior. If your trailer towing needs require that you spend very much time inside the trailer, choose one with enough interior height to keep you from bending your neck or back when standing.

Another choice is material. Trailers are made from steel, aluminum, and even wood! Again, you get what you paid for, so try to choose the best trailer that you can afford.

### Open or Enclosed Trailers

The next step in choosing a trailer is figuring out whether you will need an open or an enclosed trailer. An open trailer is one, which exposes the cargo to the outside elements. If inclement weather isn't a factor for your cargo, then an open trailer may be the most economical choice. Open trailers can range in price from about \$900 to \$2500 new.

Open trailers are well suited for many applications including small landscaping businesses that are just starting out and need a way to haul their landscape equipment. As their business grows and they decide to move up to an enclosed trailer, the open trailer will still be incredibly useful for hauling all sorts of material such as mulch, rock and plants.

Another plus for open trailers is their weight. Open trailers tend to be lighter and provide less aerodynamic drag than enclosed trailers.

While open trailers are economical and very useful, they do not provide the protection from the outside environment that an enclosed trailer will. Enclosed trailers also offer an added measure of security because the trailer functions as a portable, lockable storage building.

Enclosed trailers tend to be heavier and less aerodynamic than open trailers. Enclosed trailers usually cost in the \$2500 to \$7500 range new, but can go much higher.

### Single or Tandem Axle Trailer

Once you've decided on either an open trailer or an enclosed cargo trailer, you'll need to decide whether the trailer should have a single axle, dual axle or possibly even three to four axles.

Single axle trailers have just one load bearing axle. Trailers with single axles come with and without brakes, but as a general rule of thumb, most single axle open and enclosed trailers come without brakes. If you plan on hauling more than 3000 lbs, trailer brakes need to be considered. In fact, it's a legal requirement in most states.

Anything heavier than 3000 lbs should be hauled on a dual axle trailer, be it an open or enclosed trailer. Dual axle trailers use two load bearing axles and usually feature either leaf springs or independent torsion bar suspensions. Brakes are recommended for dual axle trailers and again may be required depending upon where you live. Also, dual axle trailers tend to track more accurately than single axle trailers over varying road surfaces.

If you decide on an enclosed trailer, next you have to decide on either a ramp rear door, double rear doors or one single barn-type door. Choosing the type of rear access will greatly depend on the cargo you intend to haul. If you're going to be hauling a motorcycle, atv, snowmobile or any other type vehicle, then a ramp rear door will provide the easiest loading and unloading method.

Be sure though when purchasing a trailer with a ramp door that the ramp is spring assisted, as some of the ramp doors can be very heavy. Ramps are also nice for hauling furniture or other heavy items where you'll be using a dolly to load and unload them.

If you will be using the trailer quite often and will be in and out of it, then a ramp can become rather cumbersome. Enter double door trailers. It is much easier to open the doors, step in and get

the tool or item you need and then step out and close the door than it is to drop a ramp every time you need access. Too, you have to consider the clearance needed for opening a ramp rear door.

Single barn type rear doors are usually found on smaller enclosed trailers and are comparable in convenience to double rear doors.

Trailer manufacturers are aware of the ramp issue and most now add a side door for access to their enclosed trailers giving those that require a ramp the best of both worlds.