

StowAway2 Cargo Carriers

Hitch Guide

There are a number of capacity limitations and hitch-related issues to keep in mind when determining whether a StowAway2 Cargo Carrier will work with your vehicle. This document is a comprehensive guide to:

1) Tongue Weight Capacity	Page 1
2) Hitch Classes	Page 2
3) Hitch Sizes	Page 2
4) StowAway2 Hitch Compatibility	Page 3
5) Hitch Converters	Page 3
6) Hitch Extenders	Page 4
7) Installing a Hitch on Your Vehicle	Page 4
8) FOR MORE INFORMATION	Page 4

For information about accommodating rear-mounted spare tires and ladders, please refer to our **Spare Tire Clearance Guide**. For information regarding our Towing model or towing-related issues, please refer to our **Towing Guide**. Links to these guides can be found in the FAQ section of www.StowAway2.com. For more information about vehicles with compatibility issues, please refer to the **Vehicle Compatibility Guide**. This guide can also be found in the FAQ section of www.StowAway2.com.

1) Vehicle Tongue Weight Capacity

When determining whether a StowAway2 Cargo Carrier will work with your vehicle, the first issue to consider is Tongue Weight Capacity. Tongue Weight Capacity refers to the maximum vertical weight that a vehicle's frame can support in a normal driving environment.

Knowing your vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity is important because StowAway2 Cargo Carriers generally sit as close to your vehicle's rear bumper as possible and therefore apply a significant amount of vertical weight to your vehicle's frame.

Shorter, lighter vehicles tend to have lower Tongue Weight Capacities while larger, heavier vehicles tend to have higher Tongue Weight Capacities. To determine your vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity, consult your owner's manual or contact your manufacturer or dealer. A quick way to roughly estimate your vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity is to divide your vehicle's Towing Weight Capacity by 10.

2) Hitch Classes

Why do you need to know your Vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity? Because it is an important factor in determining the receiver hitch class that automobile manufacturers will install and recommend for use with their vehicles.

Trailer hitches are commonly divided into five classes, based upon the strength and size of the vehicle they are intended to be used on. Hitches range from Class I (Light Duty Hitches) to Class V (Extra-Heavy Duty Hitches). The most common factory-installed hitch sizes on SUVs, Vans and RVs are Class III (Heavy Duty) and Class IV (Heavy Duty). Many smaller SUVs come equipped with Class II (Medium Duty) hitches.

The following chart shows the Tongue Weight Capacities that different hitch classes are designed to support.

Hitch Class	Tongue Weight Capacity
Class I	50 - 200 lbs.
Class II	200 – 350 lbs.
Class III	350 – 500 lbs.
Class IV	500+ lbs.

Check your owner's manual or contact your dealer to confirm the class rating of your factory-installed hitch. **If you're considering installing an after-market trailer hitch, please see Section 7 below for more information.**

3) Hitch Sizes:

Hitches are sometimes identified by size rather than class. Hitch size refers to the inside diameter of a vehicle's hitch receiver opening. Class III and Class IV hitches have a diameter of 2 inches, thus they are often referred to as "2 inch receivers." Class I and Class II hitches generally have a diameter of 1 ¼ inch, thus they are often referred to as "1 ¼ inch receivers."

Note: Some manufacturers fabricate Class I and II hitches with a 2" hitch opening to accommodate a greater range of hitch accessories, so do not assume that a 2" opening equates to a Class III or Class IV receiver hitch.

Larger receiver openings will generally have greater Tongue Weight Capacities and smaller receiver openings will generally have smaller Tongue Weight Capacities. Check your owner's manual, contact your dealer or simply measure your receiver opening's diameter to determine the size of your hitch.

4) StowAway2 Hitch Compatibility

Every StowAway2 cargo carrier and rack slides directly into the hitch receiver that is mounted to your vehicle. StowAway2 carriers are designed for use with Class II (1 ¼ inch), III (2 inches) and IV (2 inches) hitches.

The StowAway2 LT models are designed for use with Class II (1 ¼ inch) hitches. These models are intended for use on minivans and lighter-duty SUVs and have a carrying capacity of 125 pounds. There is a fixed frame LT model (Item #032.0) and an LT Swingaway model (Item #032.1).

Besides the LT models, all other StowAway2 carriers and racks are designed for use with Class III (2 inches) and Class IV (2 inches) hitches. These carriers are intended for use on most SUVs, RVs and Vans and have a carrying capacity of 200 pounds.

Models designed for use with Class III (2 inches) and Class IV (2 inches) hitches include:

- Swingaway models
 - Standard Swingaway (Item #022.3), MAX Swingaway (Item #024.3)
- Fixed Frame models
 - Basic Model (Item #021.1), Sport Model (Item #021.0), Sport Plus Model (Item #022.0), MAX Sport Plus Model (Item #024.0), Towing Model (Item #022.2), Spare Tire Model (Item #022.1)
- Racks
 - Swingaway Cargo Rack (Item #025.3), Swingaway Bike Rack (Item #025.7), Swingaway Bike/Cargo Rack (Item #025.6), Swingaway Rod Rack (Item #025.4)
- Tailgate Stations
 - Tailgate Station (Item #042.0) and Tailgate Station w/ Grill (Item #042.1)

5) Hitch Converters

Hitch Converters are hitch accessory items designed to change the size of the hitch receiver opening. The most common hitch converter for use with SUVs, Vans and RVs is the 1 ¼” to 2” hitch expander. The 1 ¼” to 2” hitch expander enlarges your hitch receiver opening from the smaller 1 ¼” opening to the larger 2” opening.

Note: using a Hitch Expander does not change the hitch’s class rating or Tongue Weight Capacity, it only changes the size of the receiver opening. For this reason, we do not recommend using a 1 ¼” to 2” hitch expander with any of our StowAway2 carriers. Attempting to use such a converter with one of our carriers could place undue stress on your vehicle’s frame and/or hitch.

Another common hitch converter is the 2" to 1 1/4" hitch reducer. This converter shrinks the larger 2" opening to the smaller 1 1/4" opening. These reducers will allow you to safely use one of our LT models on a vehicle with a 2" hitch receiver opening.

6) Hitch Extenders

Hitch Extenders are hitch accessory items that increase the distance between the back end of your vehicle and the hitch receiver opening. Often, they are used to accommodate rear-mounted spare tires and ladders or to increase the turning clearance of a towed vehicle. In general, we do not recommend using a Hitch Extender longer than 7" in length under any circumstances. For more information about Hitch Extenders, see our Hitch Extenders Guide.

7) Installing a Hitch on Your Vehicle

If you intend to purchase an after-market trailer hitch, be sure to take into account your vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity. It is important to avoid purchasing and using a hitch that is designed for a heavier duty vehicle than the one you plan to use it with. A common misconception is that by placing a Class III or IV (2 inch) hitch on a lighter-duty SUV or even a car, the vehicle will be able to support the Tongue Weight Capacity that these heavier-duty hitches are designed to support.

This is an incorrect assumption that could very easily place undue stress on your vehicle's frame and/or hitch if you were to max out your hitch's Tongue Weight capacity. **Your vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity will not increase when you install a hitch, even if the hitch is designed to support a weight greater than your vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity.**

As a general rule, if your vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity is between 200 and 300 pounds, only consider purchasing and installing a Class II hitch. If your vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity is between 300 and 500 pounds, you can consider a class III or Class IV hitch. If your vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity is over 500 pounds, a Class IV hitch would be best.

8) FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Do you have a question about hitches, hitch-mounted carriers, or one of the issues covered in this document? Please email info@stowaway2.com with the subject line: "Hitch Inquiry." In the body of the email, be sure to include your full name, your vehicle's make and model, your vehicle's Tongue Weight Capacity, and any other relevant information such as hitch class and size if applicable. To speak with StowAway2 Customer Service by telephone, please call 800 943-5377.