

Recovery 201



Towing and being towed;

As you are moving into more difficult trails and terrain, the time could arise that you need a tow or to tow another Jeep. If you or someone else breaks down on the trail and needs to get back, you will need to understand how to tow. There are safety considerations and knowledge you need to have to perform a safe tow. It is not as simple as just hooking one Jeep to another Jeep and driving off.

I want to breakdown all the pieces you need to know and understand. Time to set yourself up for success.

Of course, the most important piece to start with is keeping everyone safe. This includes the Jeep being towed, the Jeep towing, and others out on the trail as well. Safety should always be the number one focus.

Towing Safety;

1. Have The Right Equipment:

Do not improvise or cut corners. You want to make sure you keep damage from happening to your Jeep and keep yourself safe at the same time. The correct equipment greatly lessens that risk. That is why equipment is a number one piece of towing and recovery.

A tow strap is designed specifically to aid in towing a vehicle with another vehicle. Tow straps come in various lengths. The longer the strap, the more difficult a long-distance tow will be (with that said, we will talk about recovery strap length to pull someone out who is stuck versus a long-distance tow in the “Recovery 201 - pulling someone out” section). The focus for this section is towing a Jeep.

A strap that is short will also make a tow more difficult and adds the risk of Jeep contact. Usually the Jeep being pulled risks rear-ending the tow Jeep is the highest risk.

I recommend that your tow strap be 15 – 20 feet in length. Never use a tree saver or a strap that is not intended and designed as a tow strap.



The weight rating of your tow strap is also important. You want to make sure that all recovery equipment is rated at a minimal of 10,000 pounds. You can purchase a tow strap rated up to 30,000 or 40,000 pounds when looking for a tow strap specifically to add into your recovery gear.

Make sure to keep your recovery strap in good working condition. This includes looking over your strap for any frays or tears before you go out for a trail ride. You also need to clean your strap if it is used while you are on a trail ride. You can do this by using dawn

soap diluted with water in a bucket. Once you rinse your strap, you need to lay the strap out to dry before rolling it back up.

D-Rings are also important to have on your Jeep and in your recovery bag. You need a safe and secure way to attach the strap to the vehicle. The tow Jeep as well as the Jeep being towed need a safe recovery point to securely attach the tow rope onto the Jeep. When using a D-Ring, remember to tighten the D-Ring and then twist the pin back $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ turn rotation. That way, you will be able to undo the D-Ring to remove the tow rope without issue. If the D-Ring is tightened and left in that position the metal can expand with the added weight and force, making it unable to be unscrewed after use. You do not want to have to fight with your equipment, especially at the end of tow.



2. Only Hook to a Recovery Point



Know where your Jeeps recovery points are. Most aftermarket bumpers have recovery points that are specifically designed to attach your D-Ring to. This is your safest recovery point when doing a tow with your Jeep or to your Jeep.

On a stock bumper, there are hooks that are specifically for recovery. On the front bumper, you have two points that look like hooks made of metal. In the rear you have one tow hook on the driver side. You can hook your strap directly to these two points.





NEVER hook a strap to a ball on a receiver. A receiver hook with a ball on it was specifically designed for the weight of the trailer to sit down on the ball with the tongue of the trailer. It is not designed to have weight pulling back against the ball itself. It is dangerous to ever hook to a ball! Do Not Ever Do It!

If your Jeep has a tow package and hitch mounted to the frame, you can use the hitch without the receiver as a tow point. You will remove the receiver and place the strap directly into the hitch, using the pin to secure the strap inside the hitch.



Do not wrap straps around axles or components of your Jeep. You do not want to damage your Jeep. The added weight and stress of towing another Jeep is not something to take lightly.

3. Keep People Clear

There are danger areas when you are doing any type of recovery. Equipment can fail and cause danger or damage when it fails. Though the tow strap is nylon or synthetic rope, it still can go live due to the amount of tension and cause it to fly with force. Make sure no one is standing in an area next to either the tow Jeep or the Jeep being towed.

4. Safety -

Always make sure both the tow Jeep and the Jeep being towed are in park and secured while you are hooking them up. If the vehicle being towed is broken or in a bad position, you may need to chock a tire for added safety as you secure the Jeep. This is a safety practice to incorporate anytime you are doing something outside your vehicle.

5. Always Tow & Pull in Drive

Do Not tow or pull someone in reverse. Make sure you are always pulling or towing in a forward gear. In drive or shifting with a manual, you have multiple forward gears for your transmission. Your gears inside your differential are also milled to have the most strength in a forward moving position. You have a greater contact surface on the ring gear in forward rotation. The gear set inside your differential is a crucial component in your Jeep. You want to protect them as much as you can.

If you are on a trail, you want to tow in 4 wheel drive. This allows the strain to be divided between both the front and rear and alleviates all the strain on only the rear end. In 2 wheel drive, all the strain is put on the rear end only. You will chose 4 high or 4 low based on what speed you are towing. If you are driving 15 miles an hour or less you will use 4 low. If you are driving at a speed over 15 miles an hour you will use 4 High.

Time For A Tow:

For this scenario, the Jeep being towed runs, has steering and brakes, but no drive under its own power.

1. Secure the tow strap at a secure and safe recovery point at the front of the Jeep being towed. For a straight line pull back to camp, you will secure your recovery strap same side to same side of the Jeeps. In other words, left side of Jeep being towed to left side of Jeep towing. Make sure the strap is straight and flat. You do not want twists in the rope once it is straight under tension. Secure the other end of the strap to a safe and secure recovery point on the tow vehicle.



(Secure the vehicle being towed to front recovery points)



(Secure the strap to a safe recovery point on the rear of the tow vehicle)

2. Have the Jeep being towed in neutral with the emergency brake off. The driver will hold the brake as you add tension to tighten the strap. The tow vehicle will be in drive or 1st gear in a manual. Very slowly have the tow Jeep roll forward. Make sure all people are clear of the danger area. Once the strap is tight with tension on it, the Jeep being towed will let off the brake as the tow Jeep slowly drives forward. Both drivers will need to work together to keep tension on the strap as they move forward.



3. The driver of the tow Jeeps' job is to maintain an even speed the entire tow. This makes it easier to keep tension on the line. You do not want to have slack in the line and have it snap or jerk. A smooth pull is the goal. The even speed also helps the job of the driver in the Jeep being pulled. As a driver in the tow Jeep you must also accommodate for turns. That means taking turns wider as to not pull the towing Jeep into anything. You need to watch the strap through turns as well, especially if there are trees or obstacles.

- 4 The driver in the Jeep being towed is responsible to help keep consistent tension on the line. When going downhill, or any change of speed that cause a loss of tension on the strap, the driver must softly and lightly apply brakes. The goal is to keep the same even tension on the line for the entire pull. This creates a smooth pull on both Jeeps.



Handheld radios or CB are a great way for both drivers to communicate while towing back. I also recommend that the driver of the tow Jeep use hand signals for trail terrain change, breaking and turns.

Pulling A Stuck Jeep or Vehicle Out

Most of the scenario and the most important things will be the same for towing as well as pulling a stuck Jeep out.

One of the biggest mistakes I see in this scenario is the pull vehicle keeping the line slack and then “gunning” the gas. This causes the line to jerk with the momentum which in turn jerks on both vehicles. This is where serious damage to either vehicle can occur. Do Not getting a full running start to jerk the stuck vehicle out!

If you are not able to do an “easy pull” as we outlined in the towing section to get the Jeep or vehicle out, you can do a bump. That is different than a full speed run or “snatch.” You will back up slightly with the tow Jeep. This creates a little slack in the line. You will then slowly accelerate forward in drive to “bump” the line as it tightens with tension. Be prepared that will be a jerk on both vehicles as the line tightens and then snaps back slightly. **IT IS CRUCIAL YOU ARE USING A RECOVERY STRAP OR SNATCH STRAP IF YOU DO THIS!** Those straps are designed specifically with elasticity in the strap itself. A “dead” strap or a chain has no elasticity and has a larger failure rate in this situation.

If the Jeep/vehicle that is stuck will not free up at this point in the recovery, you need to add a second tow or pull vehicle/Jeep. You are better to add a second vehicle/Jeep in this scenario than to start pulling, bumping, and snatching hard. We want to always keep the risk of vehicle damage to a minimum in a recovery situation. You have two options on adding a second recovery/tow vehicle at this point. The access to the stuck vehicle will determine where you add the second vehicle at this time. If the vehicle that is stuck is in an open enough area that you can get a second vehicle attached to the front of the stuck vehicle that is the best plan of action. If the stuck vehicle is in a narrow situation where a second vehicle cannot get to the front of the stuck vehicle than you will add a second tow vehicle to the front of the recovery vehicle. That way you now have a second pull source to help with power and weight. You are making a chain at this point. You would hook up the second recovery vehicle as a “tow” vehicle just as we did in the previous section.

Safety While Pulling A Stuck Vehicle Out:

Follow the safety guidelines for towing a vehicle.

If you add a second tow vehicle, make sure the straps are secured safely. Do not ever run a second recovery strap to the front of the stuck vehicle and then alongside a vehicle to add a second vehicle. The straps should have no interference. Do not let the recovery strap run up against another vehicle, under another vehicle, or around a tree. A winch would be the best option in a scenario where you need to run any line at an angle or create a turn (basic Winch and Recovery is covered in-depth in the Jeeping In A Weekend 101 Course for you).

When choosing the recovery vehicle to aid the stuck vehicle, make sure to use the largest Jeep if possible. Make sure the recovery vehicle has secure recovery points.

Have everyone stand clear! Both vehicles will be moving forward and have momentum, so everyone needs to be "all clear." Respect the safety zone of the strap as well. Failure of equipment can occur at any time and it is better to always be safe.

In any recovery situation you need to remember that **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN VEHICLE!** You need to understand where and how to hook your vehicle up in any recovery situation. If you are stuck and someone else is securing the strap to your vehicle, it is your decision on where your vehicle is secured. You are taking the responsibility if any damage occurs to your vehicle, so do not hesitate to speak up if you are not comfortable with the recovery situation.