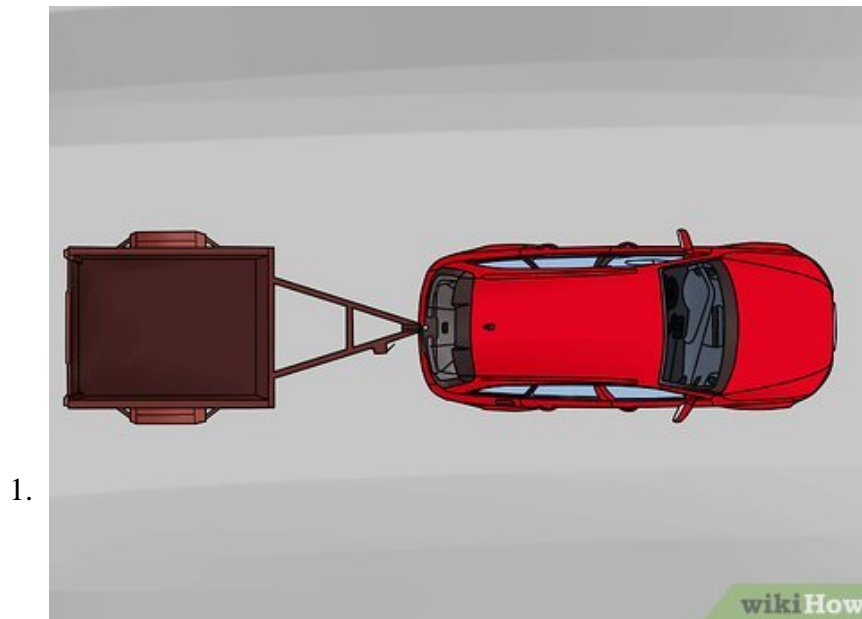


# How to Back a Trailer

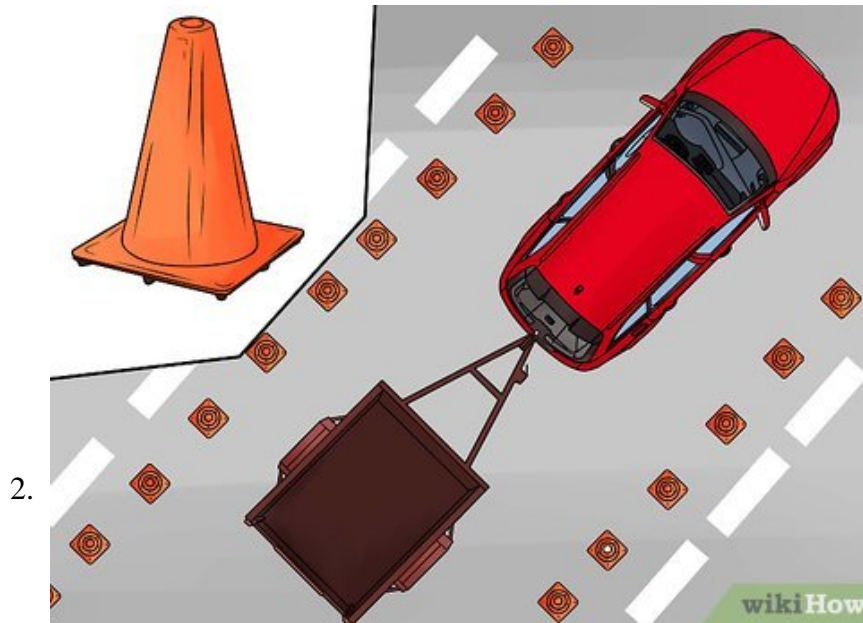
Backing up a car can sometimes be a stressful experience. When you have something attached to your car, it gets even more nerve wracking. However, backing (reversing) a trailer is relatively simple, especially with a little practice. As...

Method 1 of 2:

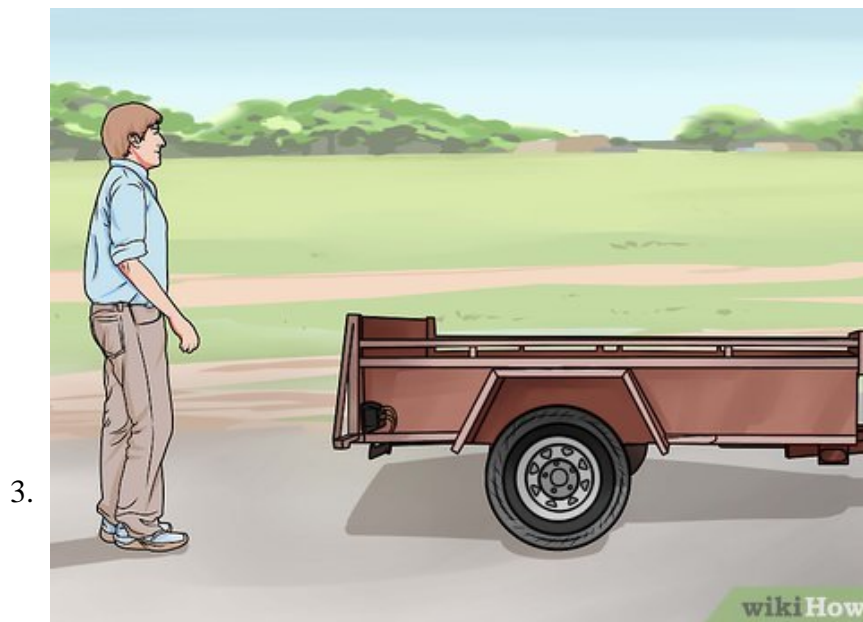
## Preparing to Back Up Your Trailer



**Devise a strategy.** <sup>[1]</sup> Recognize that backing up a trailer requires preemptive motion of the towing vehicle to move the trailer in the correct direction. A pre-planned route is required, keeping in mind the direction of the trailer, the direction of the towing vehicle, any object in the immediate vicinity of the driving path, and the relative motion between all involved objects.

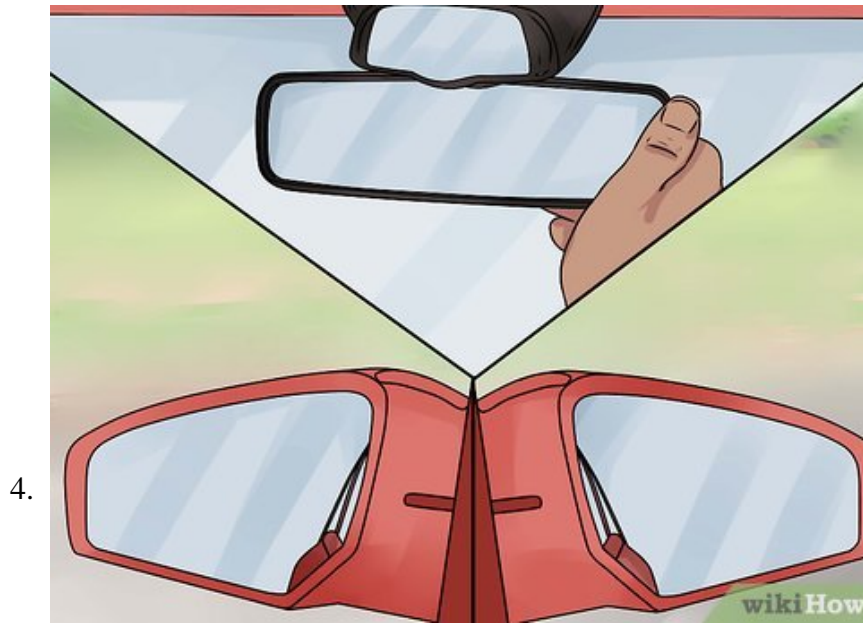


**Practice in an empty space such as a parking lot.** Buy some small orange cones to help spot you. Try learning with a long trailer, and then attempt a small trailer. Whenever you are learning be sure to take it slow. <sup>[2]</sup> Short trailers are more maneuverable and responsive, thus more difficult to reverse. Longer trailers are more forgiving of mistakes, but will take more work to get around a corner.



**Get a spotter.** <sup>[3]</sup> A spotter may be helpful as another pair of eyes behind the trailer will be able to see things you (as the driver) cannot. You can even invest in a set of short-range 2-way radios. This will make communications a lot easier than yelling and/or trying to watch a spotter.

1. The spotter needs to remember to look up! It's easy to become so preoccupied with obstacles on the ground that you forget to check overhead for tree limbs and wires. Always watch for leaning trees you may miss the base of the trunk just fine, but if that tree is leaning toward your trailer, it will take a bite out of your rig high up on the roofline!



**Adjust your mirrors.** It's going to be very important that you can see behind you, since you're going backwards with a big rig attached to your truck. Make sure that the mirrors are adjusted so that you can clearly see the rear of the trailer. <sup>[4]</sup>



**Try to set yourself up so that you're backing up towards the driver's side of your vehicle.** <sup>[5]</sup> You will be able to see the rig and the site much better in your driver's side mirrors and can also glance back over your shoulder and see the rear of the rig. If you need to drive a loop around the campground to be able to approach the spot on your left side, then do so!

6.



**Place one hand on the steering wheel and turn your body and head to look behind you and at your trailer.** Put place your right hand on the bottom of the steering wheel (6 O-Clock position). That way when you're ready to move you'll simply move your hand in the direction that you want the rear of the trailer to go! Try it! If you use this hand position, it will all but eliminate turning the wheels the wrong way while backing up.

Method 2 of 2:

## Backing Up Your Trailer

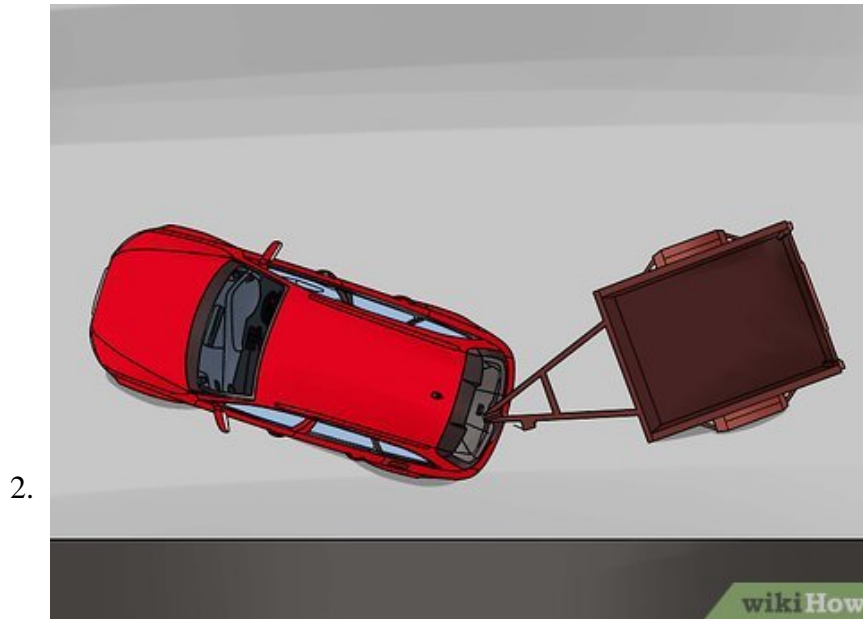
1.



**Turn the wheel to the right to make the trailer go left (as you are looking toward the front of the vehicle).** Another way to look at it is, the bottom of the steering wheel directs the trailer. Facing

backwards tends to help the backwards feel of steering the trailer. [6]

1. If you need to turn the trailer around a corner, steer the trailer toward the corner. Then you must steer slightly in the opposite direction to maintain the turning angle.



**Back the trailer to the driver's side (e.g. to the left in a left-hand drive car) not the passenger side, which is harder to see.** The most common backup is a right angle.



**Pull past as you approach the space and turn right to the middle of the road.** This is assuming that you are attempting a left-hand drive. Now turn the vehicle sharply left, so that you are positioned at an angle. You should be at less than 180 degrees on the left hand side as if you have been driving forwards around a left hand bend.

4.



**Place your hands at the bottom of the wheel.** As you reverse adjust the steering wheel to keep the trailer traveling in the right direction. Remember to go slow. Don't be afraid to step out of the vehicle and check out the progress you've made. There's not use trying to do it in one try to keep your pride if you end up wrecking your trailer. [7]

1. It is important not to get the truck and trailer jackknifed, so do not let the turn go too far. Ideally, you can back into the space in one smooth motion. You almost always will have to stop, pull forward to achieve a more straight reverse.

5.



**Back up and pull forward as often as necessary until your trailer is in place.** Sometimes the hardest part of the process is having many people watch you. Try not to stress out if there are a lot of people checking out your progress. They aren't invested in the outcome, and you are. Keep your focus.

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