

HOW TO CHOOSE A TRAILER

Is a trailer worth the investment? For many owner-operators, the answer is yes. On average, it can take less than four years to earn back that investment, even when buying new equipment. Here are some tips on how to get the best bang for your buck when trailer shopping.

UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'LL HAUL

Sounds simple but if you're just starting out, make sure you know exactly what you'll be hauling. For example, heavy-footprint products (such as paper rolls) require higher trailer floor ratings. Automotive racks require interior designs that protect the trailer from damage during loading and unloading. Food transport requires a temperature-controlled trailer. These are only a few examples, but they highlight why tip number one is to understand fully what you'll be hauling.



MINIMIZE MAINTENANCE FROM THE START

We all want to save money, right? The higher upfront price of a quality item is hard to get past when a cheaper option is available, but if you look at the big picture, spending more at first can save you way more money across the life of your trailer.

Premium quality components such as long-life brake linings, wide brakes, long-life wheel ends, and seals can mean less money and time spent on maintenance and repair. Some trailer manufacturers also offer galvanizing to protect door frames, hinges, and the subframe. Additionally, you can reduce your cost per mile and maintenance costs by using special coatings that protect trailer parts.



HOW TO CHOOSE A TRAILER, CONTINUED:

CONSIDER WEIGHT

The biggest weight saver when it comes to trailer material is aluminum, which also is more corrosion-resistant than steel. Aluminum can be substituted for steel in cross members that support the floor and for hardwood flooring. Aluminum rims can also replace steel disc wheels. The weight-savings will add up: less fuel used to transport loads, less wear and tear on your tires and suspension, and less pull on your rig's engine.



DON'T FORGET FUEL SAVINGS

You could potentially add \$10,000 or more to your bottom line in one year by using a trailer with strong aerodynamic features. That means the trailer would pay for itself long before it wears out. The more aerodynamic the tractor, the more critical it is for the trailer to play a complementary role in streamlining airflow. Aerodynamic features include things like trailer tails (or boat tails) and side skirts. If you're a long-hauler, making your big rig aerodynamic can be a smart and cost-reducing choice. Studies have found adding aerodynamic features reduced drag by 26%.

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