

# TRUCKS



# Climbing Into Bed

## IDEAS FOR EASY ACCESS WHEN LOADING CARGO

**P**eople who buy trucks choose them for a reason: they have to haul stuff.

Trucks are built to carry things in the bed first and foremost. They're engineered entirely for that reason, especially around the rear suspension, where they have to be high enough and tough enough to carry incredibly heavy payloads. Four-wheel-drive trucks also have to ride high off the ground for good off-road clearance.

Unfortunately, the same traits that make trucks such good workhorses also make it tough to climb way up, high off the ground, into the truck's bed.

Here are some solutions from the big three truck makers.



### FORD

Ford came up with a great solution to solve this problem. Called the Tailgate Step, it was first introduced on the 2008 F-Series Super Duty, and now it's widely available across Ford's truck line-up.

Made of high-strength steel, this step is integrated into the tailgate and can be extended to offer an easier step up into the truck bed. It also has grab handles that help make the climb easier.



### CHEVY AND GMC

Starting with their new 2014 models, Chevrolet and GMC have an even simpler solution. The redesigned trucks have a step carved out of the corners of the rear bumper.

It's amazing that truck makers haven't done this before. The notched corners have rubberized bottoms to keep you from slipping, making it easy to get a footing and lift yourself up into the bed.



### RAM

For 2013, the Ram 1500 makes loading cargo easier with a simple solution: central power locking via a remote control.

The truck's keyless entry system will unlock the doors just like usual. In addition, though, it also activates the power locks in the tailgate and optional RamBox storage system, so you can lock or unlock all the cargo storage places with just one click.

# Efficiency and Power

## NEW PICKUPS GETTING GREAT GAS MILEAGE, CAPABILITY

One of the most amazing things about today's trucks isn't just how powerful they are, but how much power they make from a small amount of fuel.

Horsepower ratings are soaring through the roof these days, but fuel consumption simply isn't. The automakers are pouring all their engineering talent into producing more power from less gasoline or diesel fuel.

Here are two big ways they're doing it.

### TURBOCHARGERS

Ford made a big impression in the market with its turbocharged EcoBoost engine in the F-150.

By fitting a turbocharger to a V6 engine, Ford has effectively dispelled the notion that six-cylinder trucks are less capable than a "real," V8-powered truck.

The EcoBoost system offers the good fuel economy of a V6 along with towing and acceleration performance more commonly associated with V8s. It's basically like driving a V8 engine with better gas mileage.

Other manufacturers offer turbocharged diesel engines that get impressive mileage for long-haul towing. And they're reported to be working on turbocharged gasoline engines of their own for the future after seeing Ford's sales success with EcoBoost.

### CYLINDER DEACTIVATION

Another innovation is actually not so new: cylinder deactivation.

General Motors pioneered this concept decades ago, although early engineering glitches derailed it for a time. The idea is to only fire all eight cylinders of a V8 engine when they're needed — say, under heavy acceleration or when towing big loads of cargo — and running on four or six cylinders the rest of the time.

This concept makes sense. Realistically, when a truck is simply maintaining its speed and cruising down the highway, a four-cylinder engine would be perfectly adequate. It's just passing and accelerating where the V8 power really comes into play.

By deactivating cylinders when their power isn't necessary, today's newest engines can often act like a four-cylinder, six-cylinder or eight-cylinder powerplant depending on the conditions at any given moment, which can really help their fuel efficiency.



# Have Some Four-Thought



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## CONSIDER WHETHER YOU NEED FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE

**T**here's no disputing the fact that 4x4 trucks are some of the most fun vehicles on the planet.

The idea of driving through a mud bog, traversing untamed farmland or driving on snowy roads when everyone else is stuck at home is appealing. And if not for the go-anywhere capability of four-wheel drive, America would be a far different place.

If you're thinking about getting a truck that sends power to just the rear wheels or all four, here are some things to weigh.

### FUEL ECONOMY

Over the long haul, perhaps the biggest difference between four-wheel and two-wheel drive is how much fuel they use.

You should look up the fuel economy ratings on [FuelEconomy.gov](http://FuelEconomy.gov), which is the federal government's official website for posting EPA figures. Compare the exact drivetrain combinations you're considering to see how they stack up.

Pay close attention to how different engine and transmission choices affect the fuel consumption. You may find that a 4x4 with a smaller V8 engine displacement gets similar mileage to a 4x2 with the monster V8.

### RESALE VALUE

Another thing to consider is how much the truck will be worth when you sell it.

Four-wheel-drive trucks typically command

higher prices on the resale market. While they do cost more up front, if you can offset this cost by selling it for a higher price in a few years, it may help you make up your mind.

Compare the residual values of different drivetrains just like you do their fuel economy. If you can get a good price on a 4x4 diesel now, chances are it will be easier to sell down the road.

### HOW YOU USE IT

Finally, you've got to consider how you really use the truck in everyday life.

For people who do lots of long-haul towing, the better fuel economy of rear-wheel drive can make a huge difference. But if you stay close to home, the difference between 4x4 and 4x2 fuel economy may not make much of a dent in your budget.

In the end, your truck has to do the job that's required of it. That's the bottom line.

# Horsepower Wars

## TRUCKS UPPING THE ANTE WITH ENGINE CHOICES

If you like powerful engines, now is a great time to be a truck buyer.

Pickup manufacturers have seen a string of years where they each try to up the ante with bigger, more powerful and more high-tech engines. That means today's new trucks are more powerful and capable than ever before.

To be sure, trucks are about a lot more than raw horsepower numbers. Depending on how

they're geared and the strength of their suspension and chassis, having the most powerful engine doesn't necessarily mean a truck can do the most work.

That said, here's a look at the horsepower and torque specifications for the 2013 full-size, half-ton trucks on the market today.



### FORD F-150

3.5L Turbo V6: 365 hp, 420 lb.-ft.  
3.7L V6: 302 hp, 278 lb.-ft.  
5.0L V8: 360 hp, 380 lb.-ft.  
6.2L V8: 411 hp, 434 lb.-ft.



### CHEVY SILVERADO/GMC SIERRA

4.3L V6: 195 hp, 260 lb.-ft.  
4.8L V8: 302 hp, 305 lb.-ft.  
5.3L V8: 315 hp, 335 lb.-ft.  
6.2L V8: 403 hp, 417 lb.-ft.



### RAM 1500

3.6L V6: 305 hp, 269 lb.-ft.  
4.7L V8: 310 hp, 330 lb.-ft.  
5.7L V8: 395 hp, 407 lb.-ft.



### TOYOTA TUNDRA

4.0L V6: 270 hp, 278 lb.-ft.  
4.6L V8: 310 hp, 327 lb.-ft.  
5.7L V8: 381 hp, 401 lb.-ft.



### NISSAN TITAN

5.6L V8: 317 hp, 385 lb.-ft.

# Choosing a Trailer Hitch

## WHAT TO KNOW WHEN OUTFITTING YOUR TRUCK FOR TOWING

Nothing takes the intimidation out of towing a trailer behind a truck like selecting the right hitch for the job.

All it comes down to is having a firm understanding of your towing needs. This means not only evaluating the situation from the viewpoint of the truck but the trailer as well.

Today's trucks — including compact models — are built with the muscle to haul surprisingly heavy payloads. That means truck and SUV owners are more likely to find themselves needing a trailer hitch in one of the last three classes where weight distribution systems are available.

To determine which class of trailer hitch to use, it will first be necessary to know your truck's maximum towing capacity and tongue weight in addition to the weight of the load being pulled.

To illustrate:

A Class III trailer hitch is for trucks that can pull a maximum of 5,000 pounds and have a tongue weight of up to 500 pounds.

A Class IV trailer hitch is for trucks that can pull a maximum of 10,000 pounds and have a tongue weight of up to 1,200 pounds.

A Class V trailer hitch is for trucks that can pull a maximum of 17,000 pounds and have a tongue weight of up to 1,700 pounds.

For extra heavy-duty towing, there is the fifth-wheel trailer hitch that handles up to 24,000 pounds and gooseneck hitches that handle up to 30,000 pounds. Unlike traditional trailer hitches that attach to a vehicle's rear chassis, these types of trailer



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hitches are mounted in the bed of a pickup truck in order to provide added stability and support.

Because there is a potential for disaster for you and everyone on the road should something go wrong, it is imperative to never use a substandard or improperly installed trailer hitch. Investing a good amount of money in a well-built, transferable hitch not only contributes to safety. It also means getting your money's worth in the long run.

### FOR SAFE TOWING:

Be sure to know your truck's exact towing capacity. This information can be located in the vehicle owner's manual or sometimes on a tag located just inside a truck's driver side door.

Make sure tires are properly inflated and all lights and brakes are working on both your truck and the trailer.

Only haul loads that have been properly balanced.

Maintain a reasonable speed and avoid sudden stops.

Take safety up a notch by installing back-up cameras or opting for a trailer hitch specifically designed to decrease trailer sway.

When it comes time to move your car, boat or camper, it is paying attention to detail and safety that will get you moving down the road "without a hitch."

# It's an App Invasion

## ONLINE SOFTWARE ENTERING THE CABIN IN TODAY'S TRUCKS

One marketing phrase sums up today's world: "There's an app for that." Thanks to the influx of smartphones and tablets — and in no small part due to Apple's domination of tech trends — small but useful software programs seem to be everywhere.

That includes today's newest trucks.

Most 2013 pickups include technology that lets you connect your smartphone to play music and run special apps directly from a digital screen on the dash. Here's a look at a few of the most popular in-car apps available today.

### MUSIC

One of the most widely available music apps is Pandora. Just like the Pandora available on the Web and on smartphones, the in-car version streams music that fits your musical taste.

For example, you could tell it to play Diana Ross, and Pandora would find songs by Diana Ross and other Motown singers with a similar sound. It's a fun way to find sounds that you like and discover great music that you'd never heard before.

It works beautifully in a car for several reasons. It's simple to use, making it easy to operate while driving. And it feels very famil-



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iar, since most drivers are used to listening to music while on the road.

Another app that's becoming available in vehicles is iHeartRadio. It streams the same programs

that are available over broadcast stations and lets you listen to radio programming from across the nation, no matter where you're driving.

### SERVICES

Some new in-car apps make finding entertainment easier, too.

OpenTable is a popular service for securing reser-

vations at restaurants across the country, and it's becoming available in many vehicles today. MovieTickets.com has an in-car app that lets you buy tickets and see movie listings from the truck's digital screen.

Yelp is a service that lets users review restaurants and businesses, and it's now available in some vehicles. And Microsoft's Bing search engine has an in-car version that's being adopted.

### INTO THE FUTURE

It's important to remember that we're in the early stages of a tech revolution happening in vehicle cabins. Not all these apps are available in every truck.

Looking forward, though, not only are apps likely to become more popular in trucks, but the auto manufacturers are opening up their systems to developers who can create new and innovative apps that we couldn't even imagine today.

# Finding the Right Look

## ADD STYLE AND PERFORMANCE WITH CUSTOM WHEELS

**A**s long as there have been trucks, there have been people trying to customize them.

Today, truck customization is more popular than ever. An entire industry has cropped up to make it easy to change the look of your vehicle.

Where can you get the most bang for your customizing buck? Most people would say it's by installing custom wheels. Here are some things to consider before choosing new shoes for your pickup.

### STEEL OR ALLOY?

One of the biggest decisions you'll have to make is whether you want steel or alloy wheels.

Steel wheels are typically the most durable because they're tough and hard. If you're outfitting a true work truck, you'll want to stick with tried-and-true steel designs.

The downside of steel is that because it's so hard, it's also heavy and difficult to shape into interesting designs.

If you want the better road handling of lightweight wheels and a more custom design, your best bet will be choosing alloy wheels.

### STYLE VS. PERFORMANCE

The next decision is how to balance the style of a custom wheel with its driving performance.

One great example of this is whether to choose huge rims with low-profile tires. There's no disputing that it's a popular look — lots of flashy chrome with a thin strip of rubber meeting the road — but it's also a look that can have a big, negative impact on your truck's ride if you're not careful. Low-profile tires don't have thick sidewalls to absorb shock, so they tend to transmit more vibrations and sometimes road noise into the cabin.

Finding that magic tradeoff is the tough part. Wheels and tires can make a huge difference to your truck's driving feel, so try to find wheels with a look that you love and an everyday driving experience you can live with.

