



Definitive Guide to Buying a Trailer





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Introduction

Horse trailers are a cost-effective and hugely popular way of transporting horses from A to B.

Trailer manufacturers are increasingly utilising the same materials used by horsebox manufacturers making trailers even more robust, lightweight and versatile.

There's even a choice of configurations including herringbone and rear facing meaning there's a trailer out there for every horse and budget!



Buying A New Trailer

Weights and Measures

Just like horseboxes, trailers are plated to carry a legal weight and there are hefty fines if you are caught exceeding those limits as well as serious safety issues. Remember, it's not just the weight of the horses you need to consider but any additional equipment such as tack.

For detailed information on how to work out what your legal towing capacity visit the Vehicle and Operating Services Agency (VOSA) website. VOSA has also produced a useful guide on the technical and legal aspects of horse trailer ownership:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-horsebox-and-trailer-owners>.

Can I Pull in This?

Prospective buyers need to consider the legal towing capacity of their vehicle. So before buying your trailer make sure that the vehicle you intend to use can legally (as well as physically) pull a fully loaded trailer. Failure to do so could result in a fine as well as having to fit a new clutch!



Is it a Good Fit?

Good headroom and space is essential. Horses that travel in trailers without the correct headroom can often panic. The trailer also needs to have plenty of ventilation and light and strong, safe partitions.

Forward Facing v Herringbone v Rear Facing!

Buyers can now choose between three different travelling configurations. As well as offering a better option for nervous travellers, rear facing and herringbone (see picture, right) configurations have extra storage capacity - perfect for those who stay away weekends.





Certificate of Conformity

All trailers built after October 2012 have to be 'type approved' and supplied with a certificate of conformity. At JSW, all trailers have European Whole Vehicle Type Approval (you can tell this by the 'e' number is marked on the trailer plate).

Trailers now cannot be 'home-made' and sold without type approval. Hence, all new trailers should be purchased through legitimate companies.

The certificate can be used to register the trailer in any European country where registration is required (currently not necessary in the UK). If you are likely to travel the horse on the continent you will need this otherwise it be illegal to use the trailer.

In the UK this certificate must be kept and passed to the new owner if and when sold. We expect further legislation to follow within the next few years for the UK.

Insurance

Once you have purchased your trailer get it insured! You can either do this through your car insurance company or through an equine insurance specialist. Most reputable equine insurance firms offer a horse & trailer insurance package. Don't assume your household insurance covers the trailer - it won't!

Buying a Second Hand Trailer

There are plenty of second hand horse trailers on the market but choosing the right one can be tricky.

Buying from reputable dealers such as JSW can eliminate many of the headaches of buying privately as you can purchase a trailer in the knowledge it has been newly serviced and any issues have been fixed. The following tips will help ensure you can tell the difference between a bargain buy and a potential death trap.



Check for Lumps and Bumps

It's important to take the time to check every aspect of the horse trailer paying particular attention to the walls, partitions, ramps and roof. So get your hands dirty and lift up any matting to check for issues. Pay particular attention to the edges where the floor meets the trailer walls.

Older trailers with wooden floors needn't be discounted so long as they show no signs of deterioration. Leaky roofs and windows could cause rot so it's worth checking there are no issues.

Ensure that ramps are easy to open, close and secure and show no signs of damage. This also applies to jockey and over-ramp doors. It's also a good idea to view the trailer on a flat surface to make sure it's sitting level. Any leaning might be a sign that it has problems with the suspension.

A full service history will reassure buyers that the trailer has been properly looked after and maintained.

Problematic Chassis

Check that the trailer's chassis doesn't have any unusual levels of rust or signs of any damage.

Getting Hitched

Make sure that the jockey wheel is in working order and that the electric connection cable and breakaway cable (a vital safety feature) are in good condition. This offers a chance to check that brake, indicator and integral lights are in working order. While all jockey wheels and cables can be replaced any damage will affect the trailer's value and potentially faith in the vendor.





Tyres

All tyres should be in good condition including the spare with a minimum 1.6mm tread over the central 75% surface. Uneven wear could indicate a problem with the trailer's balance or suspension.

Don't be Ripped Off

Before parting with any cash, make sure that the trailer you're intending to buy hasn't been stolen. Ask for proof of ownership and check that the manufacturer's plate is still fitted and readable. If not, step back & leave it – it could be stolen!

It's now commonplace for horseboxes and trailers to be advertised on the internet. To help prevent becoming a victim of fraud, follow these simple tips:

- If the vendor wants to meet in a public place or the trailer is being sold cheap then beware. Try to speak to the vendor in person rather than communicating via email or social media.
- Agree to pay for the trailer on delivery or inspection rather than transferring any money prior to collection
- If the price seems too good to be true it probably is!



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