



'Dinghy' Towing For 1991

Ford's popular Escort is off the list, but a variety of excellent choices remains

Brian Robertson

While it seems that towing compact cars and trucks behind motorhomes is more popular than ever, 1991 is a year of diminishing new-model choices due to vehicle design changes, new attitudes toward towing or lack of testing on which to base an affirmative towing rating.

Ford

The popular Escort was re-designed, and Ford took the car off their approved-for-towing list. The Escort was not only a good choice for towing, it is the company's all-time worldwide best seller. While the redesign process improved the appearance and performance of the Escort, it sidelined the car for towing on all four wheels due to transmission changes. At presstime, Ford announced that the lightweight Festiva is suitable for dinghy towing when equipped with a manual transmission. Although the owners manuals state otherwise, Ford engineers have informed us that the manuals will be changed and that Festivas can be towed without transmission damage.

Ford also retired another great towable by replacing the Bronco II with the Explorer, although fortunately the Explorer can be dinghy-towed using the same requirements as the Bronco II. The four-door Explorer is quite a bit heavier, but can be towed with either automatic or manual transmissions in four-wheel-drive (4WD) versions and with the stick shift in two-wheel drive (2WD). The Explorer 4x4 cannot be towed if it is equipped with an automatic transmission and the Touch Drive electric-shift transfer case.

Acura/Honda

The entire Acura/Honda line remains towable, although owners must continue to heed special, albeit simple, shift procedures for models that have automatic transmissions. When setting the transmission for towing, the lever must be moved from the drive position to the neutral position while the engine is running. A false neutral position that can result in transmission damage will be caused by moving the lever from reverse to neutral. It's also a good idea to start the car engine every 200 miles or so to circulate lubricant.

Honda/Acura is the only automobile line that approves of towing for all models regardless of transmission type.

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Chrysler Corporation

Chrysler Corporation offers a large selection of vehicles for towing throughout its Jeep, Dodge, Plymouth and Chrysler lines of cars and light trucks. The only automatics that can be dinghy towed are in Jeep models, but Chrysler has few restrictions when the car/trucks are equipped with manual transmissions.

Geo

The Geo Tracker (Suzuki) and Geo Prizm (Toyota Corolla) are the only vehicles marketed by General

Motors that are towable. Both offer excellent road manners and are lightweight and relatively inexpensive.

Mazda

Mazda Motors does not support the towing of any of its automotive or pickup-truck line except the Navajo, which is new for 1991. It's the Ford Explorer (two-door model) only with a Mazda nameplate. When equipped with a manual-shift transfer case, it can be towed following the same procedures as for the Explorer.

1991 TOWED-AUTO GUIDE

Make	Curb Weight	Speed Limit	Tow With Manual Tran	Tow With Auto Trans	Base Price
Acura					
Legend ^{a, b}	3139	55	yes	yes	\$26,800
Integra ^{a, b}	2350	55	yes	yes	13,025
Chrysler					
LeBaron	2850	55	yes	no	12,995
Dodge					
Colt	2296	55	yes	no	6,949
Colt Vista 4x4	2955	55	yes	no	13,167
Shadow	2642	55	yes	no	7,699
Daytona	2800	55	yes	no	10,450
Spirit	2799	55	yes	no	10,925
Ford					
Festiva	1750	55	yes	no	6,620
Plymouth					
Colt	2205	55	yes	no	6,949
Colt Vista 4x4	2955	55	yes	no	13,167
Laser	2524	55	yes	no	10,864
Sundance	2542	55	yes	no	10,099
Acclaim	2789	55	yes	no	10,825
Voyager Van	n/a	n/a	yes	no	13,215
Honda					
Civic ^{a, b}	2088	55	yes	yes	6,995
Civic Wagon 4x4 ^{a, b}	2515	55	yes	yes	12,590
CRX ^{a, b}	2048	55	yes	yes	9,550
Accord ^{a, b}	2513	55	yes	yes	12,525
Prelude ^{a, b}	2571	55	yes	yes	15,095
Mitsubishi					
Precis	2336	55	yes	no	n/a
Galant	2601	55	yes	no	10,999
Mirage	2271	55	yes	no	7,029
Suzuki					
Swift GT4	1768	55	yes	no	9,399
Swift GS4	1741	55	yes	no	8,599
Toyota					
Celica	2545	55	yes	no	12,698
Celica 4x4	3197	55	yes	no	21,408
Corolla	2372	55	yes	no	8,998
Corolla 4x4	2606	55	yes	no	12,368
Tercel	2025	55	yes	no	6,488

^a Transmission must be shifted into Drive before shifting into Neutral.

^b Recommend starting and idling engine for a few minutes every 200 miles to circulate oil in transmission.

'DINGHY' TOWING FOR 1991

Mitsubishi

The Mitsubishi car and truck lines offer a great deal of variety for dinghy towing. The Montero sport utility is a 4WD multipurpose vehicle that seats five and offers good storage capacity. It is towable, regardless of transmission type.

The Mighty Max compact pickup trucks are available in 2WD or 4WD versions and can be towed with manual or automatic transmissions in the latter. Van enthusiasts who are willing to shift gears can tow the Van/Wagon, which offers a carlike ride and trucklike hauling capacity.

Suzuki

Supportive of towing, Suzuki offers selections from both its automotive and truck lines. The Suzuki Swift is a lightweight, low-cost car that is rated for very high fuel economy, yet it has seating for four. The Suzuki Samurai and upscale Sidekick 4x4s offer offroad capability and are very lightweight. Suzuki requires owners to start the engine every 200 miles to circulate lubricants.

Toyota

Toyota has enjoyed a long track record for having a complete line of small cars and trucks that can

be towed on all four wheels, as long as the vehicles are equipped with manual transmissions. Except for the early Corollas, the Toyotas track well behind motorhomes. The company's lightweight, very towable Tercel can be towed on all fours, provided it is equipped with manual transmission.

Selecting the Right Vehicle

Before selecting a suitable vehicle for towing, it is important that the owner knows the gross combined weight rating (gcwr) of the motorhome—and compares that figure to the actual loaded weight of the rig—to prevent possible overloading. It's equally important to choose towing equipment that is rated for the weight of a towed vehicle. Most receivers and tow bars are rated at 3500 pounds. If your towed car is heavier, you will need to opt for equipment with a 5000-pound rating.

The accompanying 1991 Towed-Vehicle Guide describes the models that are approved by the manufacturer for towing on all four wheels. Vehicles not approved by their manufacturers for dinghy towing—or those with restrictions that make them impractical to tow—are not included in our guide. Most towing information is included in owners manuals for specific models, although a few cars—such as the Honda—may not have all the data. Honda engineers have openly given their approval for towing all Hondas with either manual or automatic transmissions, even though owners manuals differ.

Among the many vehicles that are *not* listed in the accompanying guide—those whose manufacturers have declared them unsuitable—nearly all can be towed by choosing a towing method that eliminates any possibility of drivetrain damage. Use of a dolly or trailer that lifts the vehicle's drive wheels off the ground provides that protection, as does an Axle-Lock device (available for specific front-wheel-drive cars). Also, lubrication pump systems and driveshaft disconnects offer protection for automatic-transmission vehicles. Towing on all fours against the manufacturer's requirements can lead to damaged drivetrain parts—primarily the transmission—and forfeiture of the manufacturer's warranty coverage on that component. □

1991 TOWED-TRUCK/ SPORT-UTILITY GUIDE

Make	Curb Weight	Speed Limit	Tow With Manual Tran	Tow With Auto Trans	Base Price
Dodge					
Ram 50	2750	55	yes	no	\$ 8,159
Caravan	2858	55	yes	no	13,215
D Series P.U. ^b	3657	55	yes	no	11,950
Ford					
Explorer ^c	3680	55	yes	yes ^d	14,451
Bronco 4x4 ^b	4532	55	yes	yes	17,229
Ranger ^c	3050	55	yes	yes ^d	8,279
F-150 P.U. 4x4 ^b	4278	55	yes	yes	13,945
Geo					
Tracker ^a	2400	55	yes	no	12,835
Jeep					
Wrangler	3200	55	yes	yes ^a	10,995
Comanche P.U.	3175	55	yes	yes ^{a, d}	8,795
Cherokee	3400	55	yes	yes ^{a, d}	14,987
Wagoneer ^b	3400	55	yes	yes ^a	25,095
Grand Wagoneer ^b	4800	55	yes	yes	27,995
Mazda					
Navajo ^c	3680	n/a	yes	yes ^d	n/a
Mitsubishi					
Mighty Max	2735	55	yes	yes ^d	8,489
Montero	3115	55	yes	yes ^d	14,949
Van/Wagon	3285	55	yes	no	12,920
Suzuki					
Sidekick ^a	2304	55	yes	n/a	9,695
Samurai ^a	2094	55	yes	n/a	9,898
Toyota					
Vans	3205	55	yes	no	13,100
Pickups	2845	55	yes	no	8,498
4Runner	3635	55	yes	no	17,568
Land Cruiser ^b	4480	55	n/a	yes	21,898

^a Requires starting and idling engine for a few minutes every 200 miles to circulate oil in transmission

^b Heavy vehicle. Vehicle is towable but owner should be certain motorhome has adequate towing capacity—determined by comparing loaded coach weight with chassis gross combined weight rating.

^c Cannot be towed with Touch Drive electric transfer case shifter.

^d Four-wheel-drive models only.