



## Care and Use of Your Sherline Trailer Tongue Weight Scale

1. **Do not lift the scale by grabbing the piston.** Lifting by the piston can cause air to be pulled past the O-ring seal and into the hydraulic chamber. This will cause incorrect or inconsistent readings, just as getting air in a hydraulic brake line will cause braking problems. See page 11 of the Trailer Towing Guide booklet that came with your scale for instructions on how to bleed air from the system.
2. **Do not drop weight suddenly onto or off of the scale.** Lower the trailer onto and off the scale gently. Sudden shock loading can break the needle mechanism or cause it to skip teeth on the fine-toothed gear inside. This can cause the gauge to read outside the zero range with no weight on it.
3. **Do not leave the weight of the trailer resting on the scale** for longer than it takes to take a reading. The O-ring seal is not designed to support continuous pressure. If changing the load of the trailer, do so with the trailer on the hitch or jack and then re-weigh when done adjusting.
4. **Do not “peg” the gauge.** If more weight is put on the scale than the gauge range can handle, and the needle hits the stop peg, the needle can be bent, or the linkage can break. The gauge cannot be repaired.
5. **Make sure the scale is on level ground** and squarely under the load when taking a reading. A side load can cause the piston to bind on the sides of the cylinder, which will result in an underweight reading or readings that are not repeatable.
6. **Pack your scale securely** so it cannot be damaged in transit and handle it carefully. Store it upright. Do not let it bounce around loosely in your trunk, the bed of your truck or in a toolbox. An impact on the end of the gauge can bend the steel case in relation to the brass fitting, resulting in the metal number card inside to bend, thus obstructing the needle.
7. **We strongly advise that you use a piece of wood** (5/8" to 3/4" thick) and place it between the piston head and body when your scale is not in use. This will help protect the seals from leaking over time.
8. **This scale is a mechanical device.** Just like any other mechanical device, if it sits for an extended period of time without use, parts will lock up. Therefore, before using it, we recommend that you make the piston turn, and push it up and down a bit to free its motion to get a more accurate reading.
9. **CAUTION: DO NOT** store your scale on its side, or in temperatures under 32° F (0°C). Doing so may cause the O-ring seal to fail, causing air to enter into the hydraulic chamber.

## Key Points to Keep in Mind when Using Your Scale

1. **Ideal weight**—Most trailers that are towed using a standard rear hitch are designed to carry 10% to 15% of the total weight of the trailer and its contents resting on the hitch. We consider 12% an ideal figure to shoot for. Fifth-wheel trailers take a larger portion of the weight on the hitch—up to 25%.
  2. **Results of improper loading**—Too much tongue weight can damage a trailer tongue, hitch or tow vehicle. Too little tongue weight can result in a dangerous oscillation or “fishtailing” of the trailer.
  3. **Measuring at the jack rather than the hitch**—For most trailer loading purposes, the jack is close enough to the hitch that a reading at that point is sufficient. If you prefer more accuracy, measure the weight right at the hitch by using the screw-in extension provided with your scale or use the math formula on page 12 of your *Loading and Towing Guide* booklet to calculate exactly what the weight on the hitch will be when measured at the jack.
  4. **Use of weight distribution hitches**—These are great inventions to make your trailer tow more comfortably and provide better handling and braking for your rig. They do not, however, change the trailer tongue weight. They simply redistribute part of the tongue weight to the rear axle and part to the front axle of your tow vehicle. When taking a reading of the tongue weight, the weight distribution bars or chains should be loose or disconnected.
  5. **Read the booklet provided with your scale**—Whether you are new to towing or are fairly experienced, you should read all of the booklet that came with your scale to get familiar with all three elements of towing: the vehicle, the hitch, and the trailer—and how they are related. If the booklet is lost, you can view or print out a copy [here](#).
- Share your scale, and this information, with your friends who tow trailers to make the highways safer for us all.  
**Safe Trailering!**