# COUPLING/DE-COUPLING PROCEDURE

**PRIOR TO CARRYING OUT THESE TASKS PLEASE REFER TO PRECAUTIONS**

## COUPLING TRAILER TO TOW VEHICLE

### Braked / Unbraked

Wherever possible trailers should only be coupled and uncoupled on level ground.

Wherever possible couple with the trailer un-laden, particularly where livestock/horses are concerned.

Ensure that the trailer handbrake is firmly applied or chocks prevent movement of the trailer.

Check that the coupling head and towing vehicle ball are lubricated and free from grit and contamination. Where an eye and jaw is used check for wear.

Use the jockey wheel or propstand to raise the coupling head above the height of the towing vehicle ball.

Position the towing vehicle such that the ball is directly below the coupling head or the eye is within the towing vehicle jaw. Ensure that the tow vehicle is parked with engine off, in gear and handbrake applied.

Check the condition of the break-away cable (braked trailers). Ensure it passes through its guide at the front of the drawbar and secure to the tow vehicle in the approved manner. Where a secondary coupling (unbraked trailers) is used connect it.

Operate the coupling head mechanism and lift the handle to give clearance for the ball and lower the jockey wheel to engage. Release the handle and check to see that the coupling head is securely engaged on the ball and that any wear indicator shows that the engagement is correct. Where an eye is fitted ensure that the tow vehicle jaw is compatible with the trailer eye and that the pin and securing mechanism is correctly retained in accordance with the jaw manufacturer's recommendations.

Retract the jockey until it is fully wound up and release the clamp and lift the whole assembly to its highest position and re-clamp.

Make the electrical connections to the towing vehicle and confirm that lights function correctly.

Note: when loading ensure that the noseweight on the trailer is within the limits defined by the towing vehicle, towbar, and trailer manufacturers.

Ensure that the nominal heights of the ball on the towing vehicle and the coupling head (or eye and jaw) on the trailer are compatible. Where possible adjust the ball height to ensure that the trailer is towed level.

Release the trailer handbrake. Note: whenever possible have a driver in the towing vehicle applying the footbrake, this is particularly important when releasing a trailer handbrake on an incline.

## PARKING AND UNCOUPLING

Wherever possible trailers should only be coupled and uncoupled on level ground.

Wherever possible uncouple with the trailer un-laden, particularly where livestock/horses are concerned.

When parking on a public road be aware of the highway regulations particularly regarding lighting, direction of travel and any local restrictions. Avoid leaving a parked trailer on public highways.

Always be alert to the possibility of individuals tampering with a parked trailer and the safety implications.

Avoid uncoupling a trailer on busy roads.

Note for added safety it is good practice when leaving the vehicle to take the ignition keys with you. Ensure that other people around you are aware of what you are doing and do not attempt to move the vehicle.

Always ensure that if some unexpected movement occurs that it will not cause personal injury.

# COUPLING/DE-COUPLING PROCEDURE

**Level ground**

Apply the towing vehicle handbrake, turn the engine off and leave in gear.

Release the jockey wheel clamp and re-clamp lower down. Wind out the jockey until it just touches the ground. Where a prop stand is fitted clamp it in contact with the ground.

Apply the trailer handbrake (where fitted) taking note that over-centre handbrakes need to be "pulled" on to achieve optimum effectiveness.

Release the handle on the coupling head and continue to wind the jockey wheel lifting the head clear of the towing vehicle ball. Where a towing eye is fitted raise the eye to the middle of the jaw and remove the pin. If a propstand only is fitted lift the drawbar but be extra careful to ensure that there is not an excessive weight on the drawbar.

Disconnect the electrical connection and the break-away cable (braked trailers) or secondary coupling (unbraked trailers).

Move the towing vehicle clear and lower the jockey wheel until the trailer is horizontal. This avoids leaving extra load on the tyres and jockeys for extended periods. Lightweight unloaded trailers can usually be easily pushed clear depending upon the state of the ground.

As a safeguard the trailer wheels should be chocked. If the trailer is to remain in position for some time the recommendation is to use chocks and release the handbrake to minimise the risk of brakes sticking, cables stretching and someone inadvertently releasing the handbrake.

**Facing uphill**

Apply the towing vehicle handbrake, turn the engine off and leave in gear. If there is any doubt that the towing vehicle handbrake will hold because the trailer is heavily laden or the hill is very steep keep the engine running apply the handbrake and footbrake as an alternative (assistant required).

Braked trailers only: apply trailer handbrake, with everyone clear start the towing vehicle engine, hold the vehicle on the foot brake release the towing vehicle handbrake and gently release the footbrake allowing the trailer and tow vehicle to move back slowly as the trailer brakes move into auto-reverse, this can be observed as additional movement of the handbrake lever. Re-apply the tow vehicle handbrake, stop the engine and engage gear.

Place chocks behind one wheel on each side of the trailer.

Release the jockey wheel clamp and re-clamp lower down. Wind out the jockey until it just touches the ground. Where a prop stand is fitted clamp it in contact with the ground.

Release the handle on the coupling head and continue to wind the jockey wheel lifting the head clear of the tow vehicle ball coupling. Where a towing eye is fitted raise the eye to the middle of the jaw and remove the pin. If a propstand only is fitted lift the drawbar but be extra careful to ensure that there is not an excessive weight on the drawbar. Note: the front of the trailer may be light or there may be a negative noseweight due to the angle of the hill forcing the centre of gravity behind the axle, this is particularly noticeable with single axle trailers.

Disconnect the electrical connection and the break-away cable (braked trailers) or secondary coupling (unbraked trailers).

Move the towing vehicle clear and lower the jockey wheel until the trailer is parallel to the ground. This avoids leaving extra loads on the tyres and jockeys for extended periods.

We do not recommend leaving a trailer unattended on a steep hill.

# COUPLING/DE-COUPLING PROCEDURE

**Facing downhill**

Apply the towing vehicle handbrake, turn the engine off and leave in gear. If there is any doubt that the tow vehicle handbrake will hold because the trailer is heavily laden or the hill is very steep keep the engine running apply the handbrake and footbrake as an alternative (assistant required).

Place chocks in front of one wheel on each side of the trailer.

Apply the trailer handbrake (where fitted) taking note that over-centre handbrakes need to be "pulled" on to achieve optimum effectiveness.

Release the jockey wheel clamp and re-clamp lower down. Wind out the jockey until it just touches the ground. Where a prop stand is fitted clamp it in contact with the ground.

Release the handle on the coupling head and continue to wind the jockey wheel lifting the head clear of the tow vehicle ball coupling. . Where a towing eye is fitted raise the eye to the middle of the jaw and remove the pin. If a propstand only is fitted lift the drawbar. Be extra careful to ensure that there is not an excessive weight on the front of the trailer, more so than on level ground as the hill will tend to increase the drawbar noseweight, this is particularly noticeable with single axle trailers.

Disconnect the electrical connection and the break-away cable (braked trailers) or secondary coupling (unbraked trailers).

Move the tow vehicle clear and lower the jockey wheel until the trailer is parallel to the ground. This avoids leaving extra loads on the tyres and jockeys for extended periods.

**Towing Speeds**

NB maximum towing speeds permitted on UK roads are as follows:-

On Motorways 60MPH (trailers are not permitted in the 3rd lane)
Duel Carriageway 60MPH, other roads 50MPH, provided no lower limit is in force