

REAL Torque

October 2025

Contact maintenance for any questions on 0800 80 80 69

Towing Connections - Fifth Wheel Operation

Truck and trailer coupling is a critical task that leaves no room for complacency. It's essential that operators fully understand how the fifth wheel coupling functions, follow the correct procedures and know what to look for to confirm a safe and secure connection.

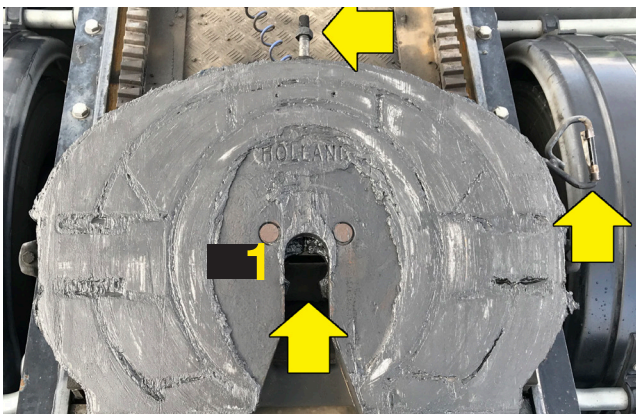
In some cases, the unit your driving may have been coupled by someone else. It's important to note that it's the **operators responsibility** to inspect the connection and ensure it is correctly and safely coupled before moving the vehicle.

There are several different fifth wheel makes and models within the TR fleet. While each operates in a similar way - they use a locking mechanism, a handle release and a contact surface to support the trailer weight - there are slight differences worth noting.

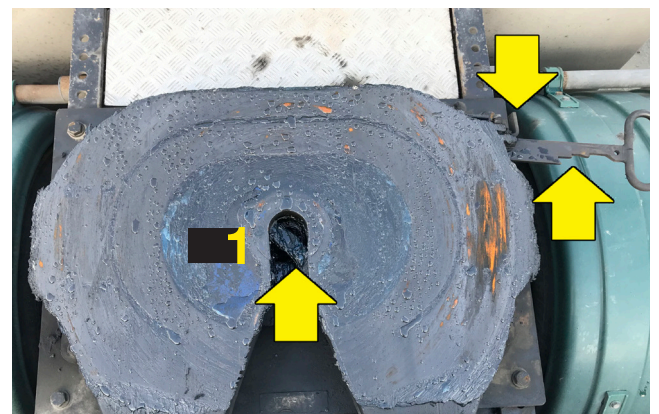
We will focus on the coupling and operating procedures of the two most common fifth wheel brands in our fleet – Holland & Jost. Both are operated in a similar way, however, the below images highlight key differences and what to look for to confirm a safe and proper connection.

Coupling And Operating Procedure

- 1** Check the fifth wheel jaws are open, lines are clear and the trailer is at the correct height and aligned properly.



Note the handle and jaw adjustment pin position for Holland.



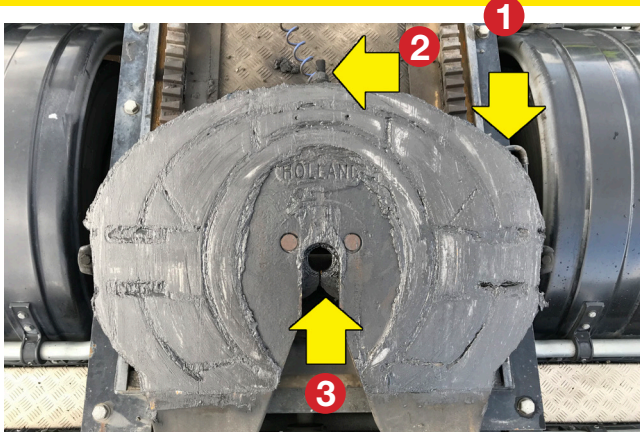
Note the handle and lock tab position on JOST.

- 2** Slowly reverse back until the fifth wheel is under the trailer skid-plate. **Adjust air suspension or trailer height** so there is no gap between the trailer skid plate and the fifth wheel – a gap can lead to a “high hitch”.
- 3** You should hear the spring mechanism lock into place which confirms proper engagement



4 Conduct what is known as a “tug test”. This is done before you have exited the cab, by gently maneuvering the truck forward and back. Engage forward and reverse and release the clutch until it “bites”. If the jaws of the fifth wheel have correctly locked around the trailer kingpin, the truck will feel firm and the truck may nearly stall when pulling forward.

5 Apply the park brake and carry out a full visual inspection to confirm a proper lock and secure connection.



Note the changed positions of the handle and jaw adjustment pin for Holland.

HOLLAND:

Ensure the handle has retracted fully inside the fifth wheel and the adjustment pin at the front of the fifth wheel is in against the fifth wheel platform (as indicated by the arrows 1 and 2 above).

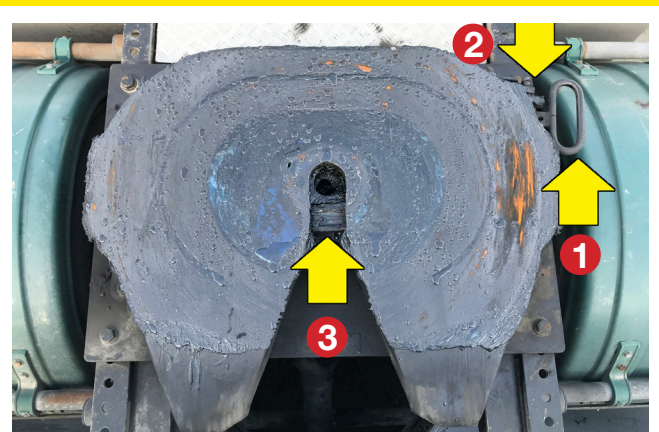
Ensure there is no gap between the fifth wheel and the trailer skidplate. If you are unsure it has connected correctly, you can also look at the jaws from the rear of the truck.

Always apply the park brake and confirm its safe before going underneath the vehicle. The jaws should be fully closed and locked around the trailer kingpin (see arrow 3).

6 Wind up landing legs fully and secure the handle.

7 Connect air, electrical, and any hydraulic lines.

8 Conduct a full pre-trip inspection of the trailer before departure.



Note the changed positions of the handle and jaw adjustment pin for JOST.

JOST:

Ensure the handle has retracted fully inside the fifth wheel and the lock tab is engaged (as indicated by arrows 1 and 2 above).

Ensure there is no gap between the fifth wheel and the trailer skidplate.

If you are unsure it has connected correctly, you can also look at the locking bar from the rear of the truck.

Always apply the park brake and confirm its safe before going underneath the vehicle. You will notice the locking bar is a solid bar locking the trailer kingpin in (see arrow 3).



Tips and Tricks

- ▶ Fifth wheels are simple and safe, if you take the correct precautions.
- ▶ Always check the connection visually to ensure the trailer has not “high hitched”.
- ▶ Fifth wheels need maintenance and care, if you notice any damage report it.
- ▶ If in doubt about the connection, stop and check with the maintenance team.
- ▶ Taking a few extra minutes to ensure a proper coupling connection can prevent breakdowns, trailer drops and serious injuries.

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