

SHIFTR OWNER GUIDE | LOAD SECURING

TIE-DOWN AND STRAP TENSION

How to secure your vehicle on the SHIFTR slotted deck, how tight is right, and how to protect your deck and straps.

Read this guide before your first load. It forms part of your SHIFTR Owner's Manual and applies to every SHIFTR trailer. Watch the tie-down section of the SHIFTR Quick Start video here:

[SHIFTR Quick Start video \(tie-down section\)](#)

WARNING

An unsecured or poorly secured vehicle can shift, roll off or break free while towing. This can cause loss of control, serious injury or death.

Secure every vehicle with four SHIFTR over-the-tire straps, one per tire, before the trailer moves. Check them again after the first 5 to 10 miles (10 to 15 km) and at every stop.

NOTICE

Tighter is not safer. Over-tightening does not make the load more secure. It loads the deck slots far beyond what the load needs and can bend, lift or crack the slot edges and damage the straps.

Never use a bar, pipe, extension, power tool or your body weight on the ratchet handle. Damage caused by over-tensioning is not covered by the SHIFTR Limited Warranty.

1. HOW THE SHIFTR TIE-DOWN SYSTEM WORKS

Each strap goes over the top of the tire and hooks into a deck slot directly in front of and directly behind the tire. When the vehicle tries to move forward, back or sideways, the tire pushes against the strap and the strap holds it. This is called direct restraint.

What holds your vehicle is the strength of the strap, the hooks and the slots, not how hard you crank the ratchet. Four SHIFTR straps have far more restraint capacity than a typical car needs. Ratchet tension only has one job: take out the slack and keep the strap seated in the tire tread so it can't bounce loose.

Because the strap holds the tire and not the body, the vehicle's suspension is free to move as normal. There is no need to pull the car down onto its suspension.

2. WHAT YOU NEED

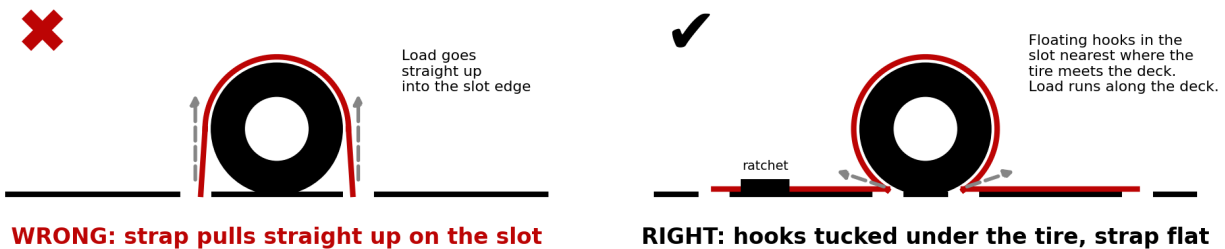
- Four SHIFTR over-the-tire tie-down straps with floating hooks and non-slip tire pads (one per tire).
- The standard ratchet handle, as supplied. Nothing else.
- A vehicle with inflated pneumatic rubber tires, parked in gear or Park with the parking brake on.

3. STEP BY STEP

1. Load the vehicle centred on the deck and as far forward as the Owner's Manual allows. Put it in gear or Park and apply the parking brake.
2. At each tire, place the two floating hooks as far under the tire as possible, one in front and one behind, in the slot nearest to where the tire touches the deck. Each hook must still drop fully into its slot. The strap wraps over the tire, down to the deck, and turns through these hooks so it runs flat along the deck.
3. Hook the ratchet end into a slot at the front, further out along the deck and away from the tire, and the strap end into a slot further out along the deck, in line with the tire, so both legs of the strap lie flat on the deck. Every hook drops fully into its slot, square and flat under the deck. Never on the edge of a slot, across two slots, or in a slot that is bent or cracked.

HOOK GEOMETRY MATTERS

Never hook a strap end into the slot right beside the tire so the strap runs straight up the side of the tire. That puts the full strap tension straight up into one slot edge. Repeated loads like this fatigue and crack the deck. Run the strap flat along the deck so the load is shared at an angle, as in the picture below.



4. Lay the strap over the centre of the tread, not the sidewall. Sit the non-slip pad in the tread. No twists in the webbing. Keep the strap and hooks clear of brake hoses, ABS sensor wires, steering parts and wheel spokes, which can rub through or break in transit.
5. **Snug:** thread the loose end through the slot in the ratchet spool and pull all the slack through by hand until the strap sits centred and flat over the tread. Leave enough webbing that it wraps the spool at least twice once tensioned, so it can't slip.
6. **Click:** start ratcheting with one hand. The first clicks come easy while the strap takes up the last of the slack. When the handle stops coming easy and starts to load, that is your starting point. Give it no more than 3 further clicks from there, then close the ratchet handle fully so it locks. This is the Snug and Click method (see section 4).
7. Set each ratchet on the outside of the wheel where you can reach it with one hand. The ratchet body must not sit on the tread, rub the wheel or hang over a slot edge.
8. Repeat on all four tires, then check each strap as described in section 4.
9. Tuck or tie off the loose tail so it can't flap, drag or catch a wheel.

4. HOW TIGHT IS RIGHT

There is no tension setting to hit. Your vehicle is held by the rated strength of the straps, hooks and slots, and four SHIFTR straps are many times stronger than a car needs. Ratchet tension has one job, which is to

take the slack out and keep the strap seated in the tread. Once the slack is gone, more tension adds nothing and starts loading the deck slots for no reason.

THE SNUG AND CLICK METHOD

- 1. Snug.** Pull all the slack through the ratchet by hand until the strap sits centred and flat over the tread.
- 2. Click.** Start ratcheting with one hand. The first clicks come easy. When the handle stops coming easy and starts to load, that is your starting point. No more than 3 further clicks from there, then close the handle fully so it locks.
- 3. Check.** You should not be able to slide the strap sideways across the tread by hand, and both legs should sit flat on the deck with no sag. If a strap slides or sags, take up a little more.

3 clicks is a limit, not a target. If the strap passes the check after 1 click, stop at 1 click. There is nothing to gain from the other two.

Why the starting point matters more than the count. The clicks multiply whatever tension you start with, so where you start decides where you finish. Our testing found that people asked to judge when a strap felt tight enough started as much as 12 times apart, and a high starting point at 2 clicks beat a low one at 3 clicks many times over. Letting the ratchet tell you when to start counting, rather than judging it by feel, is what keeps that under control. It is also why one hand matters: two hands reach that point at a far higher tension.

WHY 3 CLICKS IS THE LIMIT

Ratchet tension does not build gradually, it multiplies. Our own testing found that each extra click can more than double the tension already in the strap. A few clicks past the point you meant to stop is several times the load on the deck slot, not a little more.

That is why “a couple more for luck” is the wrong instinct on a ratchet, and why the standard handle, used with one hand, is the only tool you ever need.

TOO LOOSE

A slack strap is more dangerous than a lightly tensioned one, because the vehicle gets to move before the strap catches it. Go back and take up more if:

- You can slide the strap sideways across the tread by hand.
- Either leg of the strap sags, or the webbing can be lifted off the deck.
- The non-slip mat has shifted out of the tread.

TOO TIGHT

Stop, release the strap and start again if:

- You need two hands, your body weight, a second person, a bar or a tool to move the handle.
- The tire visibly bulges or squashes under the strap.
- The slot edge lifts, or the hook tilts or twists in its slot.
- The ratchet handle will not close and lock.

Check your hook placement first. A hook set beside the tire instead of under it (section 3) pulls straight up on the slot, so the strap feels tight long before it is doing its job, and that is the placement that damages decks.

5. NEVER DO THIS

- Never put a bar, pipe, wrench, extension or any other lever on the ratchet handle.
- Never stand on, kneel on or hang your body weight off the ratchet handle, and never use a second person to help ratchet.
- Never use power tools, impact drivers or winches to tension a strap.
- Never use chains, load binders, lever binders or straps and hooks that are not SHIFTR tie-downs in the deck slots.
- Never put more than one hook in a slot, or hook across two slots or onto the edge of a slot.
- Never strap to the vehicle body, suspension arms or bumpers through the deck slots.
- Never drill, cut or weld extra tie-down points into the deck or chassis. The slots are the tie-down points.
- Never use the recovery winch as a tie-down. It is for loading only. Release winch tension once the vehicle is strapped.
- Never keep using a strap, hook or slot that is damaged (see sections 7 and 8).

6. ON THE ROAD

- Check all four straps after the first 5 to 10 miles (10 to 15 km), then at every fuel or rest stop, and in any case at least every 150 miles (240 km) or 2 hours of driving, whichever comes first.
- Tires settle and straps can ease. If a strap has loosened, re-tension it with Snug and Click. Do not crank it tighter than before.
- Tightening harder at the start is not a substitute for checking at the first stop. An over-tightened strap still eases off, and it has been loading your deck the whole way.
- Polyester webbing stretches a few percent under load, and new straps stretch most. On a strap leg about a metre long that is enough to leave the strap slack. With new straps, check more often on the first trip, for example every 10 to 20 miles (15 to 30 km), until they stop moving.
- Check the straps again after any hard braking, sudden swerve or heavy pothole, even if you have just checked them.
- Track day or hot tires: a tire loaded straight off the track shrinks as it cools and the straps go slack. Re-check once the tires are cold. Very soft or sticky tires can let the strap slide, so make sure the pad sits in the tread.
- If the vehicle will sit on the trailer for more than a day, ease the straps off so the tires are not held squashed. Snug and Click again before you move.
- If a strap keeps loosening, stop and find out why. Check the hook seating, the ratchet and the webbing.

RELEASING THE STRAPS

Pull the release tab on the ratchet and open the handle fully flat. The strap will let go under tension, so keep your hands and face clear of the handle as it opens. Pull the webbing back through the spool, then unhook from the deck slots. Release all four straps before you start to unload.

7. STRAP CARE AND REPLACEMENT

Inspect every strap before each use. Replace it straight away if you find any of these:

- Cuts, tears, holes, fraying, snags or abrasion on the webbing or edges.
- Burns, melting, chemical damage, or webbing that is stiff, faded or brittle from sunlight.
- Broken or pulled stitching.
- Knots in the webbing. Never knot a strap to shorten it.
- A hook that is bent, opened up, twisted, cracked or heavily worn.
- A ratchet that is bent, cracked, corroded, slips or won't lock.
- The rating label is missing or can't be read.

Store straps clean, dry and out of the sun. Replace them with genuine SHIFTR tie-downs from your dealer or the SHIFTR accessories page.

8. LOOK AFTER YOUR DECK

The slots in the SHIFTR deck give tire grip and a tie-down point wherever the vehicle sits. Each slot is designed for one SHIFTR strap tensioned by hand. Check the slots you use before each load.

Stop using a slot and contact your dealer or SHIFTR if you see:

- A slot edge that has bent, lifted or rolled upward.
- A crack at the end or edge of a slot.
- A slot that has stretched or gone out of shape.
- Bare metal, bright marks or gouges where a hook sits (a sign it is working too hard).

Move to an undamaged slot for that load and report the damage promptly, with photos. Keeping on loading a damaged slot makes the damage worse and can affect warranty cover.

9. COMMERCIAL AND FLEET USERS

If you carry vehicles for work, your deck sees many more load cycles than a private owner's. Make these part of your routine:

- Check the tie-down slots and straps at the start of every working day and record it.
- Train every driver on this guide. Anyone who secures a load must use the one-hand rule.
- Retire straps on a fixed schedule as well as on condition.
- Your own load restraint obligations under road transport law still apply, and they may be stricter than this guide. In the United States, drivers of commercial motor vehicles must inspect the cargo and securement devices within the first 50 miles of a trip, then re-examine at whichever comes first of a

change of duty status, 3 hours driven, or 150 miles driven (49 CFR 392.9). In New Zealand and Australia the NZ Truck Loading Code and the Load Restraint Guide set out the equivalent duties.

10. WARRANTY

The SHIFTR Limited Warranty covers defects in materials and workmanship. It does not cover damage to the deck, deck slots, tie-down points or straps caused by over-tensioning, tensioning aids, non-SHIFTR tie-down equipment, incorrect hook placement, or continued use after damage is visible. The full terms are in the Limited Warranty for your country at shifttrailers.com or futratrailers.com.

The vehicle you carry stays in your care at all times. Securing it correctly is the operator's responsibility.

QUESTIONS

Talk to your SHIFTR dealer, or email trailers@futratrailers.com.