

## Winching 101 - Part 1

A while back, Mike Acosta bought a winch for his truck, and he asked me if we could go out someday and do some practice winching so that he would have a better idea of what to do if he ever had to do it for real. That got me to thinking about putting together a “Winching 101” run. Unfortunately, this run will have to wait until after the first of the year, but it will happen. In the meantime, here are some things to think about, whether you have a winch or not. NOTE: I mention some specific brand names in this article. This is not meant to be an endorsement of these brands, nor is it a pan of any other brand’s products. I’m simply stating what I have in and on my Jeep and what I use. Also, I don’t know anything about hydraulic winches. My experience is all based on electric winches.

First, just bolting the winch to your truck, attaching the hook, and connecting the battery leads does not make you ready to winch. Warn recommends unspooling your cable and rewinding it under tension before you use it for real, and I agree with that. Why? Well, it gives you a chance to inspect your cable and make sure it a) didn’t come from the factory with any kinks, and b) is securely attached to the drum. Also, by spooling it in under tension, you make sure that the wraps are tight and that they won’t move around or collapse in a real winching situation. It doesn’t take much tension; whenever I respool my cable I just set the parking brake partway and pull the Jeep against that.

Second, you should check the condition of your electrical system. You don’t have to have a zillion-dollar, high-output-alternator, multi-battery system in order to use your winch, but you do have to remember that a winch under load uses a \*lot\* of juice in a hurry. If your system isn’t up to the task, you could very quickly wind up with a dead battery. Even if you have a high-output alternator, you’ll be drawing battery power, so keep that in mind. Another thing to think about is that sometimes you won’t be able to run your engine while you’re winching. For example, if you’ve tipped your rig over and need to winch yourself upright, you’ll have to do it on battery power alone. This also suggests that you should have a gel-cell battery (I use an Optima) that can be mounted, and will therefore work, in any orientation. There are few things worse than having battery acid leaking all over your truck while you’re trying to get it upright again.

Third, you need to consider accessories. I have a Warn winch accessory kit that I carry all the time, and I’ve used every piece of equipment in it. I recommend one for everybody that has a winch.

The first item to have is a good pair of heavy leather gloves. You need these when handling your winch cable, because no matter how careful you are, it will develop kinks and frays, both of which can slice you open without you even hardly noticing it. So \*always\* wear leather gloves when you’re winching. I’ll get into the rest of the accessories in next month’s article.

In future articles, I plan to cover such topics as avoiding cable damage, where (and how) to hook your winch to other objects, winch control (it’s like spotting), safety precautions, and more. If you have ideas, suggestions, or questions, please let me know. Call 298-5641 or email [gonzodave@yahoo.com](mailto:gonzodave@yahoo.com).

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