

AWNINGS

This leaflet is prepared by The Caravan Club as part of its service to members. The contents are believed to be correct at the time of publication, but the current position may be checked with The Club's Information Office. The Club does not endorse the listed products and you should satisfy yourself as to their suitability. As always check that the installation of an after-market accessory does not invalidate your Warranty.

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1. What Type?

Awnings come in all shapes and sizes, from a simple canopy to a full awning with add-on bedroom annexes. So before choosing, ask yourself some questions to decide exactly what you want the awning to do. For example:

- Is it a sunshade/wind break (for those holidays abroad)?
- Is it a place to store wet clothes and wellington boots (for those holidays at home)?
- Will the family want to eat and/or sleep in the awning?
- Will it be put up by one person, or will several 'hands' be available?
- Are you restricted by the amount of weight you can carry in car or caravan?
- Is the awning just for the caravan you have now, or might you want to keep it for another caravan?

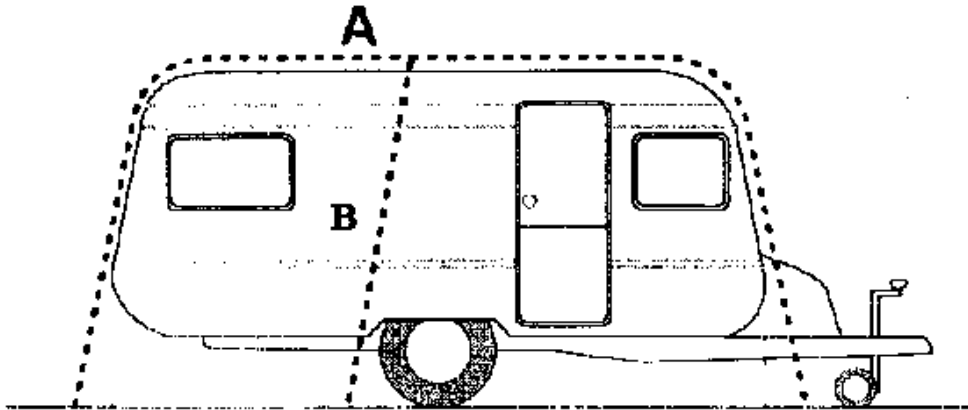
Often your awning will have to serve several functions, so if you want a sunshade on some occasions, but a full awning for longer stops, look for one where the front and side panels can be removed.

2. What size?

Most caravan manufacturers give the awning size in the caravan handbook but if they do not, make sure the caravan is level then thread some non-stretch cord up through the awning channel so that it reaches the ground on both sides and measure this (length 'A' in the diagram). It is worth doing this as a double-check anyway. Most awnings have the ability to accommodate a caravan within 10cm or so of its quoted size, but if in doubt study the awning design carefully against your caravan shape, to decide whether it would be better to opt for a size up or down. The sizes tend to go up in increments of 25cm and depths are generally from 2.0m to 3.5m. The awning manufacturer may be able to offer some advice on this point. If choosing a porch or half awning (length B in the diagram), make sure the portion that runs vertically down the side of the caravan does not foul the refrigerator vent or window etc.

Length A = full awning

Length B = porch or combi awning



3. What Material?

Acrylic, polyester or cotton tends to be the choice, and some awnings have the roof made of one material and the sides of another. Acrylic is generally considered to be superior as it does not shrink, rot or fade. However, it is more expensive and sometimes prone to condensation, whereas cotton 'breathes'. Polyester is not as hardwearing as acrylic, but has some of the breathability of cotton. You tend to get what you pay for, with the cheaper awnings being made of coarsely woven fabric; the spaces filled with proofing liquid. The better material will be reasonably light closely woven fabric with the crisp texture of a hotel laundered sheet (top quality of course!). Another sign of quality is careful, even stitching with reinforced areas around zips, windows and doorways. All seams should be generously cut. Nylon zips are now the industry standard. Spiral zips give a smooth action especially round corners.

4. What Colour?

Largely a matter of personal preference as there are pros and cons for light and dark colours. Light colours tend to complement most caravan colours, reflect more heat than dark colours and generally give a light, airy impression. However, they do show every little mark.

5. What Type of Fixing?

Some awnings require their fixing points to be screwed into the caravan sidewall, which is fine if the caravan manufacturer provides strengthened areas for this purpose and more importantly, lets you know where they are!

Many awnings have pads which locate on special awning profile rails - purpose designed so that the caravan sides are protected, and held in position for easy assembly. Other awnings have pads/suckers which press against the caravan sidewall and generally the larger the pad the less likely it will be to cause any indentation.

Some manufacturers include the pads in the price while others regard them as extra's.

6. The Frame

Frames are generally available in steel, aluminium and fibreglass. The latter two are desirable in terms of weight saving, but aluminium is not as robust as steel and fibreglass and is better in use in smaller awnings, such as a porch awning. The advantage of fibreglass is that it will not corrode. Isabella also has CarbonX, which they say is lighter, absorbs impact and is corrosion resistant.

7. Awning Channel

Before putting up the awning make sure the awning channel is open all the way along and that there are no sharp projections which may tear the material. If the awning channel gap has collapsed at any point (it should be 3.5mm wide + or - 0.5mm), open it up gently with a piece of wedge shaped wood, or use an awning rail spreader – see Appendix B. Never use a screwdriver, chisel etc as this may well damage the fairly thin aluminium strip. Any sharp projections can be filed down with sandpaper or emery board. If too wide, insert a 3.5mm strip of wood and, supporting the opposite side with a wooden block, tap the channel with a wooden mallet until back to the correct size (if too wide the awning cord will slip out). If the awning channel is badly damaged, it may be easier to replace the complete strip.

8. Putting it up

Each awning has its own way of going up so always read the user instructions carefully. Remember the first try will be the worst so do not despair! Realistically it is a two-person job though not impossible single handed, especially with a small porch-type awning.

Generally you first thread the awning cord through the channel, starting at the end or one of the widened entry points. The easiest way is to have one person feed the awning cord in at the start point (usually the rear end of the caravan is best), and the other help it along to the end (unless that person is tall a step will be needed). Never force the awning through, and co-ordinate efforts! Some lubricants are available to help thread through a particularly stubborn awning - see Appendix B - or a spray of furniture polish along the awning channel might help.

Once the awning is completely through and positioned centrally where you want, leave it hanging and sort out the poles. Place them in the appropriate position alongside the caravan and have a run through to ensure everything fits together. Leave legs retracted to make life easier.

Once you know which pole goes where, start by creating the centre apex, attach the centreroof pole to the caravan, connect this to the centre leg pole and adjust the leg height so that you can work in the warm and dry. Repeat this process under the canvas and at this stage the more hands you can find to hold the poles the better! Finally tension the whole lot in small steps and evenly throughout. If the poles are not link connected and you are on your own it may help to temporarily stick poles together with broad masking tape. If it is windy beware gusts that come up and under the awning roof – this is the most likely time the awning will blow over the top of the caravan! Add the guy ropes as soon as possible and tension as recommended (they are often left slightly slack to permit some awning movement). Peg out the mudwall/skirt starting nearest to the caravan and drive the pegs at an angle to get the best

grip in the soil. Take the strain off zips by cross pegging at the base. Finally add the draught skirt, wheel arch cover (if separate) and curtains.

9. Taking it down

Far easier than putting it up and done exactly in reverse. However, remember that as soon as you slacken off some poles others will immediately decide to collapse so make sure someone grabs them before they damage the caravan sidewall or windows.

If the poles are damp, wipe them down before putting away and if the awning is wet, dry it out at the earliest opportunity. Never leave more than 24 hrs in this condition. Even if the weather is still wet, it would be better to put the awning back up in the rain than leave it packed wet.

10. Windy Conditions

Be sure to attach the storm guys if windy and tension as specified to protect both awning and caravan from damage. If very windy it is advisable to take the awning down altogether.

11. Rain and Snow

If there is slack in the roof, water and snow could pool, waiting to drench some unsuspecting passer-by, or at worst saturate and damage the awning fabric. If you are likely to be using an awning in these conditions, choose one that offers additional roof supports to keep it taut and look for a more steeply sloping roof that will discourage any water or snow from collecting.

12. Awning Care

The golden rule is never to pack an awning away when wet or even slightly damp, or mildew will result. It should be stored in a dry, well-aired place; the caravan is fine in summer but too damp for the winter. An attic is ideal, or even a dry garage providing the awning is kept off the concrete floor and out of reach of vermin. Store poles and canvas separately and although you can wipe steel poles with a lightly oiled cloth to prevent corrosion, all traces of oil **must** be removed before the poles come into contact with the awning again.

13. Cleaning

Always wait until the canvas is dry before dealing with mud or dirt, when it can usually be removed with a stiff brush. Stubborn marks can be tackled with plain water, but anything stronger should be avoided if possible. If too unsightly, try soap and water but never detergent. Any area touched by the soap solution will have to be reproofed. Some specialist cleaners are also available - see Appendix B.

14. Windows

Can be cleaned with water and wiped with a soft cloth to remove drips.

15. Reproofing

Small patches can be treated with an aerosol proofer and should be applied when the awning is dry and in a well ventilated place. Note the proofer contains solvents which are highly flammable. For larger areas it may be better to use a soft paint brush. Ideal conditions are a warm, dry day, but avoid hot sun which will dry the proofer out too quickly. Do not forget to protect vinyl windows, mudwalls, grass and tarmac while using products which contain spirit-based solvents. Do not pack the awning away until the solvent has completely dried out. For names of proofers, see Appendix B.

16. Mildew and other stains

Trees, birds, seaspray, car exhaust, mould and dogs are just some of the culprits for staining awnings, so as far as is practicable, protect your awning from trouble.

Hydrogen peroxide may remove some stains, like mildew or dog urine, and there are proprietary agents, like Stain Devils, that can work on all sorts of marks. However, these are strong cleaners that may affect awning colour (so test first), and if used repeatedly will weaken the fabric. Only use if absolutely necessary and reproof afterwards.

17. Leaks

Cotton awnings especially need to 'weather' before becoming fully waterproof, so bear this in mind when first using. A few heavy dews, or a day of persistent drizzle is probably sufficient to swell and 'seal' the cotton fibres, but if this would be a great inconvenience when on holiday, soak with the garden hose (and dry) before you go.

18. Mudwalls

The mudwall protects the canvas from wet and dirt and generally extends into a rain-water skirt. However it may not be as robust as the canvas so take care not to stick pegs through it (other than at designated points), tread on it or tug impatiently at it when erecting the awning. Never use it to help remove pegs from the ground; either use an upturned metal peg for this purpose or a proper peg extractor. The skirt can either be pegged to the outside to deflect water or inside, tucked under the groundsheet, to prevent draughts.

19. Groundsheets

If groundsheets are used The Club recommends the type that allows the grass to 'breathe'. Whilst these will still have to be lifted from time to time, damage to the grass is less severe than with conventional groundsheets. Results of tests carried out by The Club some years ago on a selection of these 'breathable' sheets showed that some were better than others and could therefore be left down longer with minimal damage to the grass. In case you have difficulty in obtaining a breathable groundsheet from your caravan dealer/accessory shop, details of some manufacturers are given in Appendix B. A few Club Sites have restrictions on groundsheet use - refer to individual site entries in the Club's Sites Directory & Handbook.

20. Rock pegs

Any type of peg similar to the Club's standard rock pegs (in essence a hardened nine-inch nail, approximately a quarter-inch diameter) would be acceptable, but The Club does not approve of pegs that are substantially greater in thickness or in length because they are capable of causing loosening and damage to the foundation of the pitch. The site warden will normally have some in stock available for purchase.

21. Safety

Awning poles often have clips or clamps with sharp edges. To avoid impact with your head, care should be taken to ensure that the sharp points are directed so as not to cause injury.

APPENDIX A SOME AWNING MANUFACTURERS/IMPORTERS

NAME	ADDRESS/TELEPHONE		KEY
Apache	PO Box 373 Newcastle-under-Lyme Staffs ST5 1UD	Tel/Fax:01782 713099 www.cabanon.com	1,2,3,4 (excludes combi)
Bradcot	Hillam Road Canal Road Industrial Estate Bradford BD2 1QN	Tel: 01274 306811 www.bradcot-awnings.co.uk	3,4
Dorema	Dorema UK Ltd Pioneer Way Castleford West Yorkshire WF10 5QU	Tel: 01977 555215 www.dorema.co.uk	1,2,3,4 (excludes combi)
Isabella International Camping Ltd	Isabella House Drakes Farm Drakes Drive Long Crendon Buckinghamshire HP18 9BA	Tel: 01844 202099 www.isabella.net	1,3,4 (excludes combi)
Ventura	Long Crendon Buckinghamshire HP18 9BA	www.ventura-camping.com	1,2,3,4 (excludes combi)
NR Components	Der Street Todmorden Lancs OL14 5QY	Tel: 01706 815821 www.nrawnings.net	1, 3,4
Trio Sport International A/S	YC Leisure Ltd (Yorkshire Caravans) Doncaster Road Bawtry Doncaster DN10 6DG	Tel: 01302 710366 www.yorkshirecaravans.com	3,4
Eurovent			1,2,3,4

KEY

- 1 Canopy
- 2 Free-standing
- 3 Porch/Combi
- 4 Full

APPENDIX B AWNING ACCESSORIES

CLEANERS AND PROOFERS

- Nikwax (waterproofer) Unit F, Durgates Industrial Estate
Wadhurst
East Sussex TN5 6DF tel: 01892 786400
www.nikwax.com
- Tent & Awning Cleaner Grangers International Ltd
Grange Close
Clover Nook Industrial Park
Alfreton
Derbyshire DE55 4QT tel: 01773 521521
www.grangers.co.uk
- McKLords Waterproofer McKLords
Bodelwyddan Business Park
Abergele Road
Bodelwyddan
LL18 5SY tel: 01745 585995
www.mcklords.com
- CaraProof BioPro
PO Box23
Kirkleys House
Kirk Langley
Ashbourne
Derbyshire
DE6 4ZY tel: 01332 824848
www.carapak.co.uk
- Aquatex
(proofer & lubricant) Isabella International Camping Ltd
(see page 7 Awning manufacturers)
- Alpha 123 (cleaner) See above

PULLERS & SPREADERS

- Ease-It W4 Ltd
Ford Lane Industrial Estate
Arundel
W Sussex BN18 ODF tel: 01243 553355
www.w4limited.com
- Awning Rail Spreader
- Awning Companion M J Lewis Retail
29 Beeches Road
Bayston Hill
Shrewsbury
SY3 0PG tel: 0800 8047174
www.awningcompanion.com

PEGS

- Rock pegs Available from some Club Sites
- W4 Awning Peg Available from caravan accessory shops or contact W4 Ltd (see above)

LUBRICANTS

- Easy Slide Pegasus Products (Leeds) Ltd
17 Holt Park Grange
Leeds LS16 7RD tel: 01132 611586
- W4 Awning Rail Lubricant W4 Ltd (see above)

AWNING CARPET/GROUNDSHEETS (Allow The Grass To 'Breathe')

- Questex Quest Leisure Products
Firtree House
Claybrook Drive
Heming Road
Washford Industrial Estate
Redditch
B98 0DT
www.questleisure.com tel: 01527 516518
- Carpetina Milenco Limited
Blackhill Drive
Wolverton Mill
Milton Keynes
MK12 5TS tel: 01908 220102
www.milenco.com
- Softex Pyramid Products Limited
Byron Avenue
Kirkby in Ashfield
Nottinghamshire
NG17 7LA tel: 01623 754567
www.pyramid-products.co.uk
- Royal Eco-Mat Available from caravan accessory shops
- Bolon Halland Available from Isabella Camping
Tel: 01844 202099

APPENDIX C

AWNING REPAIRS AND ALTERATIONS

<p>Trident UK South Shore Road Gateshead NE8 3AE sales@trident.co.uk tel: 01914 901736 fax: 01914 782122</p>	<p>CIT Camping 97 Hersham Road Walton on Thames Surrey KT12 1RJ tel: 01932 244311</p>
<p>Brian Park Camping Unit 1 Chattisham Place Chattisham Ipswich IP8 3QD tel: 01473 652404 www.brianparkcamping.co.uk</p>	<p>Discover Chapel Lane Coppull Chorley Lancs PR7 4NJ tel: 01257 793008 www.coppullawnings@barrons.co.uk</p>
<p>Trio Pair Unit 5, Baileygate Industrial Estate South Bailey Pontefract West Yorkshire WF8 2LN tel: 01977 708688 www.triopair.com</p>	<p>Tent Valeting Services Ltd Egerton Street Farnworth Bolton Lancs BL4 7LH tel: 01204 708131 www.tentvaletingservices.co.uk</p>
<p>S Robb & Son New Road St Ives Camb PE17 4BG tel: 01480 462150 www.srobb.co.uk</p>	<p>Canvas Repair Centre 121 Branston Road Burton on Trent Staffs DE14 3DD tel: 01283 541721 www.canvasrepaircentre.co.uk</p>
<p>Kingswood Canvas Ltd Units 8/9 Douglas Road Industrial Park Kingswood Bristol BS15 8NH tel: 01179 601281</p>	<p>Cardiff Tent Services 85a Wells Street Canton Cardiff CF11 6DY tel: 02920 395392</p>
<p>Canvas Works Unit 1 Lower Basset Down Hay Lane, Salthrop Swindon, Wiltshire SN4 9QP tel: 01793 814774 www.canvasworks.co.uk</p>	<p>West Country Tent Repair Specialists 22 Ashford Close Mannamead Plymouth PL3 5AG tel: 01752 660317</p>
<p>Scottish Mountain Gear Ltd Unit 19 Fisherrow Industrial Estate Newhailes Road Musselburgh East Lothian EH21 6RU tel: 0131 653 1310 www.scottishmountaingear.com</p>	<p>Isabella International Camping Ltd Isabella House Drakes Drive Long Crendon Buckinghamshire HP18 9BA tel: 01844 202099 fax: 01844 202111 www.isabella.net info@isabella.co.uk</p>
<p>Sail and Cover Ltd Woolverstone Marina Ipswich Suffolk, IP9 1AS tel: 01473 780075 www.sailandcover.co.uk (awning cleaning)</p>	