

ARB JACK

JACK

Words by John Rogers



Ever since man first attempted to lift objects by mechanical means, he or she has been up against a constant force called gravity. The heavier the object, the greater the force needed to move or lift it. First was probably a simple tree branch or handy log, then the discovery of using another log or rock as a fulcrum that multiplied the force exerted on an object to be lifted, enabling heavier objects such as buildings made of heavy logs, then stone, to rise above the landscape.



The Beginnings of the Jack

Even with the invention of the wheel, things didn't progress all that much other than the use of pulley blocks for a millennia or two until the industrial age. With the invention of cast iron, products of all descriptions could be made relatively cheaply and thanks to clever moulding techniques, hundreds – if not thousands – of the same product could be produced, enabling the industrial revolution to change the world.

First, steam power began to revolutionise the way products were made en masse. Then, as technology progressed even more and the internal combustion engine was invented, the first attempts at motorised transport were made in the mid to late 1800s.

As time progressed, the pneumatic tyre was invented and inevitably punctures would occur, so the need for a portable means to lift the vehicle was needed. In 1905, the Automatic Combination Tool, also known as the Handyman or Shepherd's Jack was invented, a predecessor of what just about every off roader knows today as a hi-lift jack.

Hi-Lift to JACK

My history with the hi-lift goes back to 1978. I purchased one not long after buying my first 4WD and it has been with me ever since and has served me well... up until now. One of my gripes with the hi-lift style jack was the amount of physical effort needed to lift a heavy modern-day vehicle loaded down with all the necessities of camping and/or touring. Getting under the vehicle with a bottle jack or hydraulic jack in the middle of a boggy track doesn't appeal to a lot of off roaders, me included, so there had to be a better way to get the wheels off the ground.

A little over a year ago, my wife and I purchased a full off road capable caravan and quickly discovered the jacking points were far too high for a bottle jack and the trusty hi-lift took quite an effort to lift the van. On one of my visits to my local ARB store, I spied what would turn out to be my new best mate.

JACK the Jack

Yes, that's its name, plain and simple, JACK. Being a hydraulic jack, lifting effort was relatively light when pumping the hydraulic arm, even when the full weight of either the 4WD or caravan was taken up. I found I could



easily lift the vehicle or van using just one hand to push JACK to its required height.

With a working load limit of 2,000 kilograms, JACK will easily lift your vehicle off the ground with minimum effort, so let's have a closer look.

The first thing you notice is the protective carry bag that is supplied. As JACK is a piece of precision hydraulic engineering and not a lump of cast iron, the bag is designed to protect JACK from the ravages of the often abusive four wheel environment. When out of the bag, I strongly suggest you acquaint yourself with the owner's instruction manual as there are a few things to remember to safely lift your vehicle.

JACK out of the Box

Now that you've read the manual, let's do a test run before you go bush, just to acquaint yourself with JACK's operation and, quite importantly, to bed in the hydraulic seals.

When I first tested JACK at home, I easily lifted the caravan but then could barely get JACK to retract all the way to its base. After much cursing and frustration, I contacted the engineers at ARB who suggested I cycle JACK six to ten times by lifting my vehicle then lowering it, then lifting it and lowering it again and again. This did the trick and the seals were now much more free and by depressing the red pressure release valve and using some body weight on the hook, the piston fully retracted into the body when I needed to put it back into its protective bag after use.

So let's have a good look at JACK's features. At its fully raised height, JACK's hook tops out at 122 centimetres off the ground, so no problems here for those with modified vehicle sporting lift kits. JACK weighs in at a healthy 10.6 kilograms according to my scales, which is fairly comparable to that of a hi-lift jack.

On the jack body is a large clamp with the lifting hook attached. This can be moved up and down the jack body to the desired height, then fixed in place by closing the integral quick-release lever. The very sturdy alloy base is 160 millimetres in diameter and quite good for firm ground, but the large plastic base plate accessory is a necessity for sandy and loose soils and from experience I can thoroughly recommend that you also purchase one. Something I really like is the rubber body bumper, which can be slid up or down the jack body to protect the vehicle and the jack from any contact between the two.

The very sturdy alloy foot of the jack has a pivot that will allow you to use JACK on uneven and slightly sloping surfaces by rotating the angle between the base and the jack body to suit the terrain.





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How to JACK

Once you have found the correct lifting point on your vehicle, undo the quick-release lever and slide the hook up the jack body to the height required, then firmly close the quick-release lever, ensuring that the base of the hook is in one of the grooves, and you are ready to start using the handle to raise your vehicle to the desired height.

Remember that all lifting devices have an element of danger so before lifting ensure that all safety precautions are taken such as engine off, hand brake firmly on, vehicle in park or in gear if a manual and wheels firmly chocked. If on severe slopes, I have often attached my winch cable to a tree to prevent

the possibility of the vehicle moving during the lift. Using the handle to raise the vehicle is a piece of cake as the benefit of hydraulics means only minimum effort is required to lift heavy loads, so you don't have to be a champion weightlifter to operate the JACK.

To lower the vehicle is pure joy compared to the effort of using a hi-lift style or mechanical jack, which still requires strength to lower the vehicle. With JACK, all one has to do is gently depress the red lowering lever and the weight of the vehicle will depress the jack until the wheels are back on the ground. This truly is a one-finger operation! Be careful not to press the lowering lever all the way to the black pressure relief button as the vehicle will drop very rapidly if this is done.

Back in the Box

Once you are ready to pack JACK back into his protective bag, I suggest you depress the lowering lever all the way to the black pressure relief button and simply put some body weight onto the hook and the jack body will go to its retracted length. All in all I'm very happy to have JACK riding in the back of my vehicle as I have found him to be far more user friendly than a host of other jacks I have used and often verbally abused over the years.