

## Hitch accessory aids access

**By Chris Barge, Camera Staff Writer  
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They loom high above traffic, looking down on pedestrians and Japanese hatchbacks.

Let's face it, those SUVs are tall.

Which often presents a problem for drivers and passengers trying to pull a toy off the roof rack. Many a canine lummock has also struggled with its owner's command to "Load up, boy!" into the waist-high rear.

An engineer from Seattle may have solved that problem. Dan Knodle was staring into traffic two years ago from the perch inside his Ford Explorer when he thought of his invention.

"Why not just attach a platform to the trailer hitch?" he thought. "One that swings out of the way under the truck when it's not in use?"

The Twistep was born.

The three-in-one device is a step for pets and a platform and seat for humans.

"This thing has been great," said Brian Kirsh, who owns 90-pound malamutes that use the Twistep to compensate for the fact that they just can't jump at all. "It lets us use our SUV again."

Brenda Ford, whose Leonbergers Euric and Merlin weigh 128 pounds and 150 pounds, offered similar praise.

"It's bad for big dogs to jump in and out of cars," she said.

The Twistep appeared in some pet catalogues last Christmas. By the spring, Knodle and his business partner Gary Bang began marketing it for the outdoor industry.

"We're starting to build awareness for the product," Knodle said.

The Twistep sells for \$179.99 at the Boulder Petsmart. The REI flagship store in Seattle also sells it, and, according to Knodle, REI is considering it for national distribution.

For more information, go to [www.twistep.com](http://www.twistep.com).

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Photo courtesy Twistep

Twistep uses a trailer hitch to give both dogs and humans a boost into SUVs.