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# BECOMING A TRUCKER: BOOK 2 GETTING YOUR CDL & TRUCK DRIVER TRAINING



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Trucking Made Easy

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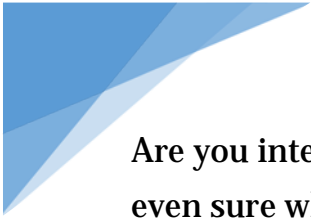
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# **SECTION ONE: GETTING YOUR CDL**

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Are you interested in getting your CDL but not sure exactly how to go about it? Not even sure what a CDL is? Whether this describes you or you're already familiar with trucking and just need a little help getting started, you're in the right place!

Trucking gives you a chance to make great money within your first year of driving! That's IF you get the right information, guidance, and training. And if you *wanna* be a trucker, you *gotta* have a CDL. Plain and simple. The good news is that it's not really that difficult... IF you take the right steps.

In this section, you'll find all the information and resources about the CDL you'll need to get started on a successful truck driving career. **The following information is covered in this section:**

- What is a CDL and why do you need one?
- Learn how to get a CDL, step-by-step.
- CDL regulations and the requirements to become a trucker. Includes federal and state CDL requirements.
- Information about CDL endorsements and which ones you need.
- CDL testing information. Learn which state exams you must pass and exactly how to pass them without endless hours studying the state CDL manual!

# Chapter 1: What's a CDL, a CMV, and What Type of CMV Can You Legally Drive?



## What's a CDL and a CMV?

## What's CLASS Got to Do with What Kind of Vehicle You Can Drive?

## What's a CDL and a CMV?

To become a professional truck driver and drive a semi-truck, you must get a CDL. A CDL is short for "Commercial Driver's License."

The CDL gives drivers permission to drive a CMV. A CMV is short for "Commercial Motor Vehicle."

A CDL has been a requirement for drivers to drive CMVs since 4/1/92. Before that, many drivers held driver's licenses from several states. The states seldom

communicated with each other, so drivers could hide the bad driving record they had in one state, and just produce evidence of a good record from another state.

Well, things have changed. The Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1986 was signed into law on October 27, 1986. This ended the multiple licensing practice and weeded out many of the unqualified drivers. This act was created to ensure that drivers of commercial trucks and buses were qualified to drive those types of vehicles. The federal government establishes the CDL requirements that the states must abide by when they issue the CDLs.

## What's *Class* Got to Do with It?

Classes determine what kind of vehicle you can drive. Let's examine the different classes.

### Class A: Combination Vehicle



Any combination of vehicles having a Gross Combination Weight Rating (GCWR) of 26,001 pounds or more (11,794 kilograms or more) whichever is greater, including a towed unit(s) with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) or gross vehicle weight of more than 10,000 pounds (4,536 kilograms) whichever is greater.

## Class B: Heavy Straight Vehicle



Any single vehicle which has a GVWR of 26,001 pounds or more (11,794 or more kilograms), or any such vehicle towing a vehicle with a GVWR that does not exceed 10,000 pounds (4,536 kilograms).

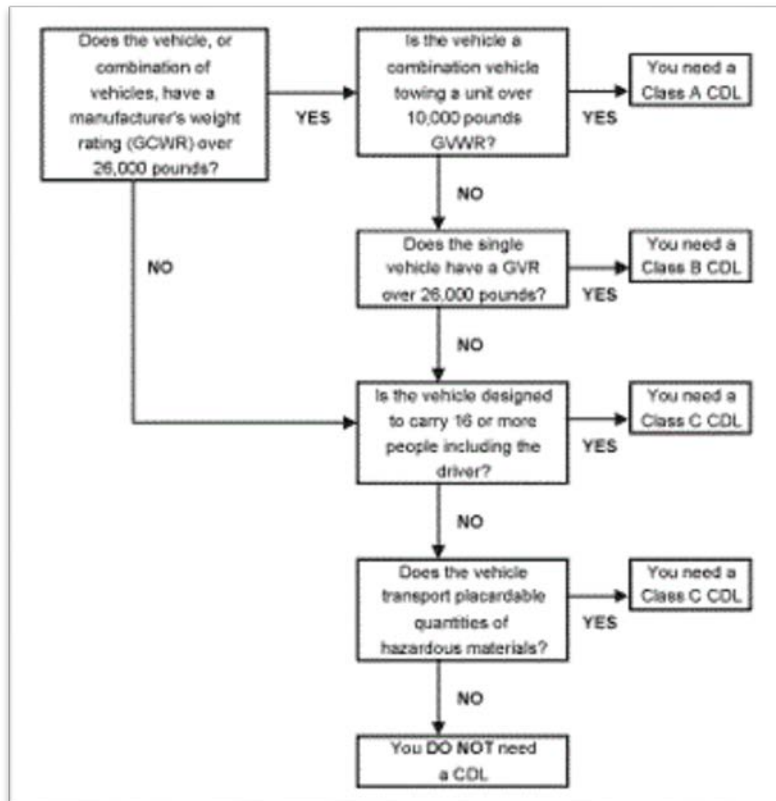
## Class C: Small Vehicle



Any single vehicle, or combination of vehicles, that does not meet the definition of Class A or Class B, but is either designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver, or is used in the transportation of materials found to be hazardous for the purposes of the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act and

which requires the motor vehicle to be placarded under the Hazardous Materials Regulations.

To drive a vehicle from any one of the vehicle classes in the following chart “Do You Need a CDL”, a driver must have a CDL if the vehicle is operated in interstate, intrastate, or foreign commerce.



**Note:** if a driver passes a skills test in a vehicle not consistent with the following vehicles, that driver must have a restriction placed on his CDL. For more information on these restrictions, [go to the source at the FMCSA](#).

Next, [see if you meet the Official CDL requirements to become a truck driver](#).

# Chapter 2: Do You Meet the Official Federal and State CDL Requirements?



You need to determine if you're going to have any problems getting your CDL. Understanding the CDL requirements is essential if you want to become a truck driver. These also apply to the CLP or Commercial Learner's Permit, which you'll need to get to train and before you get a CDL. The Federal CDL requirements (see below) apply to all U.S. states. Next, check out the CDL requirements in [your state](#). Each state has its own minimum standards for the licensing of commercial drivers, and they differ from state to state.

[Minimum Requirements to Apply for a CLP or CDL](#)

[New Federal CDL Requirements](#)

[Medical and Physical Requirements](#)

## CDL Self Certification

### Basic Physical Qualifications for Commercial Drivers

### Alcohol and Drug Use

### Written and Knowledge Exams

### Skill and Road Testing

### CDL Requirements in Your State

## Minimum Requirements to Apply for a CLP (Commercial Learner's Permit) Or CDL (Commercial Driver's License)

- ✓ Have a valid regular (non-commercial) driver's license and be at least 18 years old (in most states).
- ✓ Be at least 21 years old:
  - To drive a commercial motor vehicle across state lines (interstate).
  - To drive a commercial motor vehicle that contains hazardous materials.
- ✓ Have at least one or two years of driving experience (depending on the state).
- ✓ An applicant "must provide to the State proof of citizenship or lawful permanent residency" [per 49 CFR 383.71](#).
- ✓ Social security card, or proof of the number.



- ✓ Another document such as a birth certificate or green card.
- ✓ Pass all applicable background screens.
- ✓ The applicant “must provide the names of all States where the applicant has been licensed to drive any type of motor vehicle during the previous 10 years” – [FMCSA](#).
- ✓ Have no active driver’s license suspensions or revocations in any state.
- ✓ Must surrender regular state driver license once CDL is acquired.
- ✓ Not “subject to any disqualification under [FMCSA 383.51 \(complete list of disqualifications\)](#), or any license disqualification under State law, and not possessing driver’s license from more than one state or jurisdiction”.
- ✓ Must speak and read English to drive a CMV in the United States. well enough to understand traffic/road signs, prepare reports, and communicate with law enforcement officers and the public. In addition, the state written exams will only be given in English. [The FMCSA has more about this here.](#)

## New Federal CDL Requirements

Since the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1986, drivers cannot hold a CDL in more than one state. This ended the practice of drivers getting multiple driver’s licenses and hiding bad records they may have had in a different state.

In the last few years there have been several additional changes in the “compliance requirements” area by the FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration). Like their name implies, the FMCSA exists to keep U.S. roads safer, mainly by preventing commercial truck related accidents.



In late 2013, states had to start enforcing the texting prohibition rule.

Then, starting in 2014, commercial drivers had to [“self-certify”](#) medical information and were only allowed to use “authorized” medical examiners who are on the National Medical Registry.

More information about these changes can be found [from the FMCSA](#).

## Medical and Physical Requirements



The physical demands of the trucker's job depend on which type of driving he's doing. But no matter which type, a driver must be physically capable of operating a commercial motor vehicle and to perform the varied types of non-driving trucking duties. This includes handling long periods of driving, irregular sleep schedules, potential family and/or social challenges, and job-related stress. In addition, some jobs require heavy lifting in the loading and/or unloading process, twisting and bending, getting in and out of the truck many times a day, occasional (depending where you drive) installing of tire chains, as well as many other physical activities.

You must have a valid Medical Examiner's Certificate (DOT card), or a photographic copy of your valid Certificate, to receive a CDL or CLP. This is a federally mandated (U.S. Department of Transportation) document that certifies

you meet all physical and medical standards for operating a commercial motor vehicle and the original or photographic copy must be in your possession whenever you are driving.

## CDL Self Certification



**massDOT**  
Department of Transportation  
Registry of Motor Vehicles

**CDL SELF-CERTIFICATION FORM**

As a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) or permit holder, you are federally required to inform the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) of the type of commerce in which you operate (interstate or intrastate), and whether or not you are required to hold a US DOT Medical Examiner's Certificate (also referred to as a medical certificate or medical card). If you are an NI or NA categorized driver, you will need to re-certify, using this same form, prior to each expiration of your medical certificate. Depending on the validity period of your certificate, you will most likely have to re-certify every 1-2 years. Failure to complete your initial self-certification, or to re-certify by your self-certification expiration date thereafter, will result in the downgrade of your CDL to a Class D license. EI and EA categorized drivers will be required to re-certify every five years at the time of license renewal. A driver may also need to re-certify prior to an expiration date if the type of driving that is conducted has changed or if the driver has been issued a new medical certificate.

<b>COMMERCIAL DRIVER INFORMATION</b> (Please either print clearly or type)				
DRIVER NAME (last)		(first)	(middle)	BIRTHDATE (mm/dd/yyyy)
ADDRESS (street)		(city)	(state)	(zip code)
LICENSE/PERMIT NUMBER		DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER		EMAIL ADDRESS

Please select only one of the following self-certification categories. See page two (2) of this form for category definitions.

I certify my commercial driving is:

☐ **Non-Excepted Interstate (NI)\*** (copy of medical certificate required) - I engage in Interstate commerce and must

Starting in 2014, commercial drivers must “self-certify” medical information and are only allowed to use “authorized” medical examiners who are on the National Medical Registry. [This video by New England DOT Physicals](#) explains the self-certification process. To find a medical examiner who is certified by the FMCSA to perform DOT physical exams [click here](#).

All commercial drivers must now self-certify the type of vehicle they're going to operate in the following categories:

- **Non-Excepted Interstate:** This just means that you must meet the Federal DOT medical card requirements and operate across state lines.
- **Excepted Interstate:** You do NOT have to meet the Federal DOT medical card requirements and operate across state lines.

- **Non-Excepted Intrastate:** You must meet the Federal DOT medical card requirements and operate only in your home state.
- **Excepted Intrastate:** You do *not* have to meet the Federal DOT medical card requirements and operate only in your home state.

## Basic Physical Qualifications for Commercial Drivers

The [Medical Examination Report for Commercial Driver Fitness Determination](#) is a FMCSA form used by medical examiners. This form will give you a good idea of the medical qualifications for drivers, as will the complete list (from FMCSA 391.41) further down on that page.

You are now required to obtain this “Medical Examiner’s Certificate” to prove that you are physically capable of operating a commercial motor vehicle. Some of the requirements are as follows:

- **Standard:** At least 20/40 acuity (Snellen) in each eye with or without correction. At least 70 degrees’ peripheral in horizontal meridian measured in each eye. Eye glasses or contact lenses are acceptable, but the use of corrective lenses should be noted on the Medical Examiner’s Certificate.
- You cannot be a diabetic who requires insulin via needle injection. However, note that [certain drivers may be exempt](#).
- **Hearing:** Standard: a) Must first perceive forced whispered voice > 5 ft., with or without hearing aid, or b) average hearing loss in better ear < 40 dB

- Blood Pressure: Has no current clinical diagnosis of high blood pressure likely to interfere with his ability to operate a commercial motor vehicle safely
- Elevated Blood Sugar levels: 200 or above is considered “dangerous”. However, there appears to be no evidence to support that 200 or more (blood sugar level) is a disqualification, despite this being reported by many other websites. For a discussion of this likely inaccuracy, [see here](#).
- Other conditions like sleep apnea may also be a disqualification.

## Alcohol and Drug Use

Federal regulations require employers to test drivers for alcohol and drug use as a condition of employment. Even if you get hired and start working for a carrier, you must keep in mind that random drug tests are the norm now.

Therefore, if you do any kind of illegal drugs, or if you have a drinking problem, you should re-think a career in trucking.

In addition, no driver may:

- be under the influence of alcohol while driving.
- use any alcohol while on duty.
- use any alcohol within four hours of going on duty.
- use alcohol for minimum of eight hours after an accident, or until the driver has taken a post-accident alcohol test.
- use controlled substances unless approved by a driver's physician and the substance will not affect a driver's ability to drive safely.
- continue to drive if the driver tests positive for a controlled substance.

## Written and Knowledge Exams

To get a CDL, you must pass knowledge and skills tests. The [CDL manual](#) will help you pass the state exams. This manual is not a substitute for a truck driver training class or program. Formal training is the most reliable way to learn the many special skills required for safely driving a large commercial vehicle and becoming a professional driver in the trucking industry.

The person must have taken and passed a general knowledge test – get some [more info on which tests to take here](#) or just go to Trucker Country's [CDL Practice Test Center](#) for more information *and* to start practicing!

## Skill and Road Testing

For the road and skills test you must use the same class of commercial vehicle you need to get licensed for.

**The three-part driving test includes:**

- **Pre-Trip Vehicle Inspection** – You need to ensure that your vehicle is safe to drive. Sections 11, 12, and 13 of the CDL Manual covers how you need to explain what you are inspecting and for what reason.
- **Basic Vehicle Control** – You will be tested on your control of your vehicle. This includes moving vehicle forward, backward, and within a defined area.
- **On-Road Driving Exam** – You will have to demonstrate you can safely drive a commercial vehicle on the road in various traffic situations. (Left and right turns, stopping, curves, railroad crossings, etc.)

## CDL Requirements in Your State

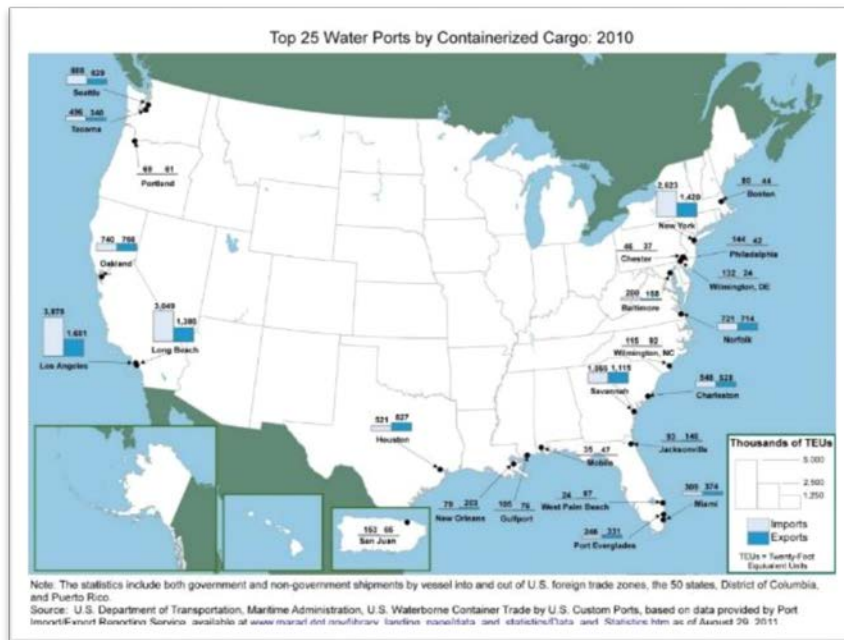
<a href="#"><u>Alabama</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Alaska</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Arizona</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Arkansas</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>California</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Colorado</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Connecticut</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Delaware</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Florida</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Georgia</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Hawaii</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Idaho</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Illinois</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Indiana</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Iowa</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Kansas</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Kentucky</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Louisiana</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Maine</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Maryland</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Massachusetts</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Michigan</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Minnesota</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Mississippi</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Missouri</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Montana</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Nebraska</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Nevada</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>New Hampshire</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>New Jersey</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>New Mexico</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>New York</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>North Carolina</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>North Dakota</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Ohio</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Oklahoma</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Oregon</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Pennsylvania</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Rhode Island</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>South Carolina</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>South Dakota</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Tennessee</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Texas</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Utah</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Vermont</u></a>

<a href="#">Virginia</a>	<a href="#">Washington</a>	<a href="#">West Virginia</a>
<a href="#">Wisconsin</a>	<a href="#">Wyoming</a>	<a href="#">Washington DC</a>

## Who Needs a TWIC Card?

Truck drivers who haul in and out of U.S. Ports (U.S. maritime facilities and vessels) need a TWIC card. The TWIC program was created to beef up security at ports after 9/11.

**These are the [Top 25 Water Ports](#) by Containerized Cargo:**



The Transportation Worker Identification Credential, also known as TWIC, is required by all truck drivers who need unescorted access to secure areas of the nation's maritime facilities and vessels. Even if your trucking company doesn't require you to have a TWIC card when you're hired, it's a good idea to go ahead and

get the card. You never know when you'll need it as many loads come out of these ports, so you'll be giving yourself more options when it comes time to being able to haul certain loads.

The TSA runs the background checks for both the TWIC and the Hazmat Endorsement. If you have gone through one of them, you may be eligible for a discount for the other one.

- Once you have a TWIC card, many states offer a discount on your [HTAP background check](#) when you apply for a Hazardous Materials Endorsement (HME).
- Also, this works the other way around (in many states). If you have your hazmat endorsement, you've already gone through the [TSA's HTAP background check](#), which will enable you to get your TWIC card at a discount.

From the [South Dakota DMV](#), *"If you currently hold a Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC), you may be eligible for a reduced rate on your Hazardous Material Endorsement (HME) background check. If your TWIC is valid and there is at least one year remaining before it expires, the cost for your HME background check can be reduced to (\$ check for prices). However, if you choose this reduced rate, your HME can only be issued for five years from the date you were issued a TWIC."*

- [Apply for a TWIC card.](#)
- [Find a TSA Enrollment Center near you to apply for a TWIC card in person.](#)



## **Next: CDL Endorsements: Which Ones Do You Need?**

A CDL endorsement is an authorization on an individual's CDL required to permit the individual to operate certain types of CMVs. Drivers who operate or expect to operate the type of motor vehicle described in the endorsement shall take and pass specialized tests. Get a helpful rundown of CDL Endorsements in the [next chapter](#).

# Chapter 3: CDL Endorsements: The Essentials



## What *IS* a CDL Endorsement?

An Endorsement is an authorization to an individual's CDL required to permit the individual to operate certain types of CMVs. Drivers who operate or expect to operate the type of motor vehicle described in the endorsement shall take and pass specialized tests. [Click here for more information by the FMCSA about CDL restrictions.](#)

## What are the Different Types of CDL Endorsements?

To obtain any one of the following CDL endorsements, a driver of CMVs must pass additional tests. A great way to prepare for the official CDL written exams is by

taking Trucker Country's [CDL practice tests](#). But first, learn [how to pass the official state CDL exams in chapter 5](#).

<b>Endorsement code</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>T</b>	<b>Double/Triple Trailers (Knowledge test only)</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>Passenger (Knowledge and Skills Tests)</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>Tank vehicles (Knowledge test only)</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>Hazardous materials (Knowledge test only)</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>Combination of tank vehicle and hazardous materials endorsements (Knowledge test only)</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>School Bus (Knowledge and Skills Tests)</b>

## Which CDL Endorsements Do You *Need*, or *Should* You Get?

You plan to exclusively haul dry goods and general freight. Or produce in a reefer. So why would you want extra endorsements on your CDL? Well, a CDL endorsement can be the difference in getting that ideal job or having to accept an average one. Like a local or regional driving job that gets you home more often. It could also mean a couple hundred extra dollars on your paycheck.

Here's my take on getting additional endorsements on your CDL, even if you don't think you'll need them.

If you do it correctly, and use the resources at Trucker Country, getting extra endorsements on your CDL will be easy. And since it's so easy, and not terribly expensive, you might as well get an endorsement for every type of product you could possibly haul with a truck. And just in case, because you never know, go ahead and get your Passenger endorsement as well.

**Here's an example from my driving career.** A while back, I was living in Las Vegas, NV, and got off the road because my wife was pregnant and *due soon*. My main job was refueling generators in construction sites. For that job, I needed a tanker and a hazmat (X) endorsement. But I also worked a part-time job at night driving a shuttle bus between the airport and casinos. That job required a passenger endorsement. I didn't plan it that way. The job just became available and I happened to have the right endorsements on my CDL. You might never need the extra endorsements. But it won't hurt to get them and it just might help!

## Steps to Get Your Hazmat Endorsement (HME)



To be able to haul hazardous materials, you must get a Hazardous Materials Endorsement on your CDL or CDL permit. All applicants must undergo the *Security Threat Assessment*, which includes a background check and fingerprinting, as part of the process.

For more info, see [How to Comply with Federal Hazardous Materials Regulations](#).

## HAZMAT Endorsement (HME) Threat Assessment Program (HTAP)

The [Hazardous Materials Endorsement Threat Assessment Program](#) conducts a threat assessment for any driver seeking to obtain, renew and transfer a hazardous materials endorsement on a state-issued commercial driver's license. You should apply if you have a state-issued CDL and you are required to transport materials that require placarding under the Department of Transportation hazardous materials regulations. To apply, go to [this page](#).

***Note: Complete the online application or you can complete the entire process in person at an application center unless you are from any of the following states:***

***Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin, in which case, you should visit your local Department of Motor Vehicles for application and fingerprinting information.***

## ***Hazardous Materials Endorsement/Fingerprint-Based Background Checks***

*“Under the provisions of the USA Patriot Act (Public Law 107-56, § 1012), rules of the federal Transportation Security Administration (TSA) (49 CFR Part 1572) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) (Title 49 of Code of Federal Regulation 383.71(a)(9)), the Motor Vehicle Division may not issue a hazardous materials endorsement (HME) until the applicant has submitted to a fingerprint-based background check and TSA has determined that the applicant does not pose a security threat.”*

*“State motor vehicle agencies must notify CDL holders with the HAZMAT endorsement of the requirements within 60 days of the CDL expiration.”*

### ***Step 1 – Filling Out the Application***

You may complete the TSA HAZPRINT driver application on the [Hazardous Materials Endorsement Enrollment website](#) or by calling the HazPrint Help Desk at (855) 347-8371. The operator at the desk will guide you through the process and ensure the application is completed correctly. You can also call the help desk at any time if you have questions about the website. It is important to note that the application must be completed either online, or through the HazPrint Help Desk, prior to arriving at the fingerprint capture location. It cannot be done at the fingerprinting site.

### ***Step 2 – Getting Fingerprinted***

Your fingerprints can be collected at one of more than 200 fixed and mobile sites in the United States. The Hazardous Materials Endorsement Enrollment [website](#) and the HazPrint Help Desk, 855-DHS-UES1 (855-347-8371), are the best sources of information for [current site locations](#), operating hours, and driving directions to the site. Drivers from any of the participating agent states can be printed at any of

the agent's sites – even those in another state. You will be required to provide two forms of identification prior to being fingerprinted. Please refer to the “proper ID types” listed at Hazardous Materials Endorsement Enrollment [website](#). In addition to being fingerprinted, the driver will be asked to review and electronically sign the application to verify its accuracy.

*NOTE: The fingerprint capture location only collects and forwards the electronic application and fingerprints. They do not have specific information about the program, nor will they receive status reports after the submission is made.*

### **Step 3 – Security Threat Assessment**

Based on the data provided on the HAZPRINT application, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will perform a threat assessment for each driver applicant. The results of this assessment will be available to your State DMV through TSA's internet portal. The applicant will also receive a letter from TSA with the results of the assessment. Take this letter to the Motor Vehicle Division office as it will indicate that you have been cleared for issuance of the hazardous material endorsement.

### **Step 4 – Status**

TSA's target date for completion of a threat assessment is 30 days from the date your fingerprints are submitted. Issues with your eligibility or insufficient paperwork may delay this turnaround time. Please wait at least two weeks before calling the Driver Call Center at [855-347-8371](tel:855-347-8371), to make sure your fingerprints have been received and that your case is processing accordingly.

Check out the FAQs for more answers to common questions. If you are unable to find your answer in the FAQs and need assistance with a service, please call 855-DHS-UES1 ([855-347-8371](tel:855-347-8371)) 8am - 10pm Eastern, Monday - Friday.

*Applicants are encouraged to apply early.*

## What will the cost be?

Included with the application process is the payment of an **\$86.50** (current, October 2017) fee. There are two forms of payment accepted: credit card or money order. You may pay by credit card directly on the website or by providing the information to the operator at the HazPrint Help Desk. Electronic payments are not accepted at the fingerprint collection sites. Electronic payments are encouraged, as they are the most secure and convenient, and will save time at the fingerprint collection site. Drivers may also pay at the fingerprint collection sites with a money order in the amount of \$86.50, made out to Integrated Biometric Technology, LLC (TSA's agent for the HazPrint Program/a part of MorphoTrust USA.)

Remember, whatever payment method is chosen, you must complete the application online or by calling the Help Desk prior to being fingerprinted, as the fingerprint collection site cannot fingerprint a driver who has not completed the HAZPRINT application and paid the fee.

## Is a Knowledge test required?

Yes. The knowledge test must be taken at a Motor Vehicle Division office. It can only be taken after the TSA assessment has been completed. The knowledge test must be passed before issuance of the CDL license with the HAZMAT endorsement. Prepare for your state Hazmat exam with free CDL hazmat practice tests [here](#).



# Chapter 4: Learn Step-By-Step How to Get Your CDL



There are several steps in the process of getting a CDL. In many states, you must successfully complete a training course at an approved CDL truck driver training school before you can get a CDL. The days of getting trained by your uncle and getting your CDL are quickly coming to an end. Many trucking companies also require approved training from a school, so take this into consideration. Getting a CDL is an essential step, but if you can't get a good truck driving job, it hardly matters.

## Steps Involved in Getting Your CDL

*Getting Your CDL Permit (Commercial Learner's Permit or CLP for short)*

## 1. Make sure you meet the CDL requirements.

Go to Trucker Country make sure you meet minimum [federal and state requirements](#).

## 2. Get your state CDL manual.

Your [state CDL manual](#) is the basis for all your official state written CDL exams. In addition, the manual has specific information for your state such as age and medical requirements, as well as testing locations and fees.

*Note: If you already know what type of CDL you need, [proceed to step 4](#).*

## 3. Decide which types of CMVs you want to drive.

To proceed, you need to know your options. This will help you determine which tests you need to take to get your CLP (Commercial Learner's Permit) in Step 4 below.

- **General Knowledge.** This test must be taken by all CDL applicants get a CLP. Study the first 3 sections of your CDL manual to prepare to pass the General Knowledge exam. [Take General Knowledge practice tests here.](#)
- **Air Brakes.** You'll also need to pass this exam to demonstrate knowledge about the air-brake system and operating an air-braked vehicle. If you're going to be driving vehicles which have air brakes while at school, you must take this exam to get your CDL Permit. [Take Air Brakes practice tests here.](#)
- **Combination Vehicles.** This exam must be taken by all class A CDL applicants, or those who will drive tractor-trailer or tractor semi-trailer combinations. [Take Combination Vehicles practice tests here.](#)

For more information on the different CDL endorsements there are, plus advice on which ones you should get, go back to Chapter 3.

**A CLP authorizes...** the operation of any vehicle (except a motorcycle or a vehicle carrying hazardous materials), when accompanied by a person who:

- Is 21 years of age or more.
- Has a valid CDL for the class of vehicle being driven by the permit holder
- Has the proper endorsements for the type of vehicle being operated.
- Is sitting in the front seat next to the CLP holder.

To get a CLP, you'll need to pass the test for the type of vehicle that you plan to operate. See the following chart:

<b>Type of Vehicle</b>	<b>Test Required</b>
All commercial vehicles	<i>General Knowledge test</i>
Any CMV with Air Brakes	<i>Air Brakes test</i>
Combination Vehicles	<i>Combination Vehicles test</i>
CMV with Hazardous Materials	<i>Hazardous Materials test</i>

CMV with Bulk Liquids or Gases	<i>Tank Vehicles test</i>
CMV with Double or Triple Trailers	<i>Doubles and Triples test</i>
School Bus	<i>School bus endorsement test and passenger transport test</i>
Other Bus	<i>Passenger transport test</i>

[Go back to Step 3](#) above for more info about how to determine which tests you'll need to take to get your CLP.

## 4. Take your state CDL Exams

Once again, to be able to train in and drive most truck driving school's vehicles, you'll need to pass the General Knowledge, Air Brakes, and Combination Vehicles tests. You may need to pass additional endorsement tests (see below), depending on the school. For example, if it's a truck driving company sponsored school where that company hauls doubles/triples, or tankers, you'll need to pass those tests as well.

In most states, the issued CLP is only valid for a limited period of time, usually 180 days.

A CLP holder cannot operate a vehicle carrying hazardous materials. Also, obtaining a hazardous materials endorsement involves more than just passing the Hazmat written exam. See [more](#) about the requirements and procedure involved in this process.

## 5. Obtain your CLP (CDL Permit or Commercial Learner's Permit)

Before you can get behind the wheel of a big truck, you first need to get a state CDL Permit. To obtain a permit, you'll have to pass the each required written test (see below) with a score of at least 80%.

The CDL permit (and CDL) will be usually issued in the trucking school's state (if you attend a school, but this depends on the school's protocol). If this is the case, you'll have to transfer your CDL to your home state when you get back home. Check with your state first on this because some states require you to pass *all* the tests again to transfer your CDL.

Your permit authorizes you to drive a truck if a CDL licensed driver is in the passenger seat, which is, of course, what will happen at a truck driving school. The permit usually expires after 6 months, and some states may limit the amount of times you obtain a permit without then obtaining your CDL.

### ***General Guidelines on Getting Your CDL Permit***

For exact CDL permit information for *your* state, [go to Trucker Country's state CDL requirements directory](#). But generally, applicants must:

- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Hold a valid driver license.
- Pass the knowledge tests for the type of vehicle you will be driving.
- Have a valid federal medical card. Persons who do not have a valid federal medical card will be restricted to:
  - No CMV operation in interstate commerce.
  - No CMV operation in intrastate commerce unless exempted by federal or state law (for example, employed by a governmental agency or

operating a school bus). A state medical form is required for school bus operation.

### **Additional Information Regarding CLPs with Endorsements.**

Even with your endorsements, as a CLP holder, you cannot do the following things until you've acquired your CDL. Read more information about this from the [FMCSA](#).

- P (Passenger Endorsement): Cannot operate a CMV carrying passengers
- S (School Bus Endorsement): Cannot operate a school bus with passengers/students
- N (Tank Vehicles Endorsement): Can only operate an empty tank vehicle.

## **6. Get Your CDL (Commercial Driver's License)**

**Note:** *Many truck driving schools will help you prepare to take and pass the tests through their own CDL Preparation Course. But some schools expect you to study and get your permit on your own. Others do help you prepare somewhat, but only provide the bare minimum of preparation. Read [Section 2 for more information on Truck Driving Schools](#).*

## Skills Tests

### Pre-Trip Inspection Test



This is usually just a verbal test you do in the presence of the tester inside and outside of the truck. You're required to talk about how you'd perform the entire pre-trip inspection procedure as you're walking around the vehicle, looking under the hood, sitting behind the wheel, etc. The [CDL manual in your state](#) has the complete list of pre-inspection procedures and driver requirements. See Trucker Country's [Pre-Trip Inspection learning center](#) which includes a great video which will help you learn the procedure. Also, it's helpful to take our [free Pre-Trip Inspection practice tests](#).



## Basic Controls Test

Testing includes shifting, forward maneuvering, and several backing maneuvers. This part of the test takes place on a closed testing range, usually at the school training location. See the CDL skills test in action in this [video by Expert Driving School](#) in Chicago, Il.

## Road Test



The road test portion of the test takes place on public roads. This will be the final step on the road to getting your CDL.

During the road test, **you'll have to demonstrate the following basic skills** (which often begins with the Pre-Trip mentioned above, but the order of the tests can differ.):



- \_\_\_\_\_ Coupling and uncoupling of combination units, if the equipment he or she may drive includes combination units.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Placing the equipment in operation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use of vehicle's controls and emergency equipment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Operating the vehicle in traffic and while passing other vehicles
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turning the vehicle
- \_\_\_\_\_ Braking, and slowing the vehicle by means other than braking
- \_\_\_\_\_ Backing, and parking the vehicle

## ***Take Documentation to the DMV Counter for Processing.***



Once you have passed the Skills Tests, you need to take the documentation to the counter for processing. Some states will give you the CDL that same day, while others send it to you in the mail. Regardless, ensure that everything is correct before you leave the counter. It can be costly and embarrassing if you find a mistake later.

***Note:*** Additional information from the [\*FMCSA can be found here.\*](#)

## Additional CDL Endorsement Written Exams

The following tests are only required if you need a specific endorsement on the CDL. A trucking company will usually only require you to have those CDL endorsements that correspond to the type of loads they haul.

**However, it's a good idea to take these additional tests and get the endorsements now.** This way, you won't have to bother getting the additional endorsements when you're applying for a carrier which requires them. You won't be limiting your options, and you'll be able to take advantage of opportunities for better pay, etc. Also, if you'll be an owner-operator, having all the endorsements on your CDL will give you more options to choose from when searching for a load.

***Note:** Trucking Made Easy strives to provide accurate information to help you succeed, but assumes no liability for any errors in content. Reference your [state CDL manual](#) for any question or subject you have questions about.*

### Hazardous Materials Exam

If you're going to haul loads which have enough hazardous materials to require placards, then you must take this test. For most drivers, this is the most difficult test. In most states, you must re-take the test every time you transfer, or renew your license. [See here for more information about getting your hazmat endorsement.](#) Take free Hazardous Materials CDL practice tests [here](#).

### Tank Vehicles Exam

To haul tankers which hold liquid or gas, you must get your tank vehicles endorsement. Take free Tank Vehicles CDL practice tests [here](#).

## Doubles and Triples Exam

If you're going to pull double and/or triple trailer combinations, you must take this exam. Take free Doubles and Triples CDL practice tests [here](#).

## Passenger Vehicles

To drive a bus, you must pass this test. We have all the CDL test questions and answers to help you get your P-endorsement. Take free Passenger Vehicle practice tests [here](#).

## School Bus

To drive a school bus, you must get a passenger vehicles endorsement as well as a school bus endorsement on your CDL.

**Once you get your CDL Permit, you'll need to prepare for, and pass the state driving skills and Pre-Trip Inspection tests to get your CDL.**

After you've finished your training, you must take and pass the driving skills tests and the pre-inspection knowledge test which are administered by the state, or an authorized third-party tester. Get the [CDL manual in your state](#) for more information.

Next: Learn how to [pass your state CDL exams](#).

# Chapter 5: How to Pass the Official State CDL Exams



Trucker Country has been helping future truckers pass the official state CDL exams and get their commercial driver's license since 2004. Our [free CDL practice tests](#) are now being used by more prospective commercial drivers than any other site.

Going over your [CDL manual](#) at least once will get you started. But it can be tough to remember all the things you need to know to pass the official state tests. This is the reason why we designed our current 3 mode testing system. This system will have you understanding the material and passing the official exams without “normal” studying.

**Many test takers even say they have fun taking Trucker Country's CDL tests!**

## Use Trucker Country's 3 CDL Testing Mode System:

- **Classic mode.** Trucker Country's original tests since '04. Just click and answer for each question, and get your results at the bottom of the page.
- **Practice mode.** You receive instant results after each answered question. You get the correct answer along with the exact location of that answer in the CDL manual.
- **Exam mode.** Each test is timed just like the official state exams.

## How to Pass the State Exams – Quick Step-By-Step

1. **Download your [state CDL manual](#)** and open it into one tab of your browser. Read it over, but don't try to memorize it and don't stress out!
2. In another tab, open the first of our [CDL practice tests](#) in **Classic Mode**. Take note of how you did and don't worry if you had some mistakes.
3. Take the same test in **Practice Mode**. After you answer each question, you'll get the instant result along with the reference location in your CDL manual. Go to the CDL manual tab and look up the reference, especially if you didn't get it right or know it instantly. Repeat the process with that test until you feel like you know it better.
4. Take the same test in **Exam mode**. You won't get the results until that test is complete. Passing grade for the official state exams is 80%. But repeat this test until you get 100%. If you're having trouble, I suggest you go back and spend some time on Practice Mode before coming back to Exam Mode.
5. Congratulate yourself on a job well done!
6. Go to the next test and repeat steps 2 through 5.

When you've done all the tests and you feel like you're ready, it's time to **go to your local DMV/DPS with CDL services** – [find your state page here](#). You can also check your [CDL manual](#) for office locations near you. You'll need to bring some important things like a valid [Medical Examiner's Certificate](#) (DOT card) and all other necessary identification and documentation.

**See [here](#) for CDL requirements in your state, information about endorsements, and costs for licensing.**

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# **SECTION TWO: TRUCK DRIVER TRAINING**

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Have you decided to find a truck driving school and get on the road to a career as a truck driver?

Or are you just curious about how truck driving schools function?

Either way, congratulations on your decision to learn more about truck driving schools so you can make more informed decisions, and have a better chance at a successful truck driving career, if you go that route.

**In this section, you'll get the scoop about truck driving schools and CDL training, including:**

- Analyzing truck driving schools' claims, including free and guaranteed training, tuition reimbursement, and more.
- Learn about the different types of schools.
- Learn how to select the best schools.
- Find out if you're required to even attend an official truck driving school.
- Information about U.S. Military truck driver training.
- Finally, a look at time expectations and overall cost to become a truck driver.



# Chapter 1: The Truth about Truck Driving Schools



With so much wide-ranging information out there about truck driving schools, it's tough to know how to even proceed. You must know the truth about truck driving schools to be able to make the right decisions about your career.

You may have heard about "*free*" truck driving schools, schools which offer "*guaranteed*" employment upon graduation, and even schools which are considered "*CDL Mills*."

There are even some "*truck driving*" websites out there that claim that any truck driving school longer than a few weeks is *too long*, and calculate how much more money a driver would make if he'd been driving and earning money instead of still attending school.

Besides being untrue for most new drivers, this information is dangerous, considering the great responsibilities truck drivers have.

You need all the facts about truck driving schools so that you can make an informed decision and choose a high-quality truck driving school.

**The following are some of the more common things you're likely to come across as you start investigating truck driving schools:**

- [Schools Which Offer "Free" or "Paid" Training](#)
- [Schools Which Offer "Guaranteed" Employment](#)
- [Schools Which Are Merely "CDL Mills"](#)
- [Schools Which Offer "Tuition Reimbursement"](#)

## Schools Which Offer "Free" or "Paid" Training

In case you're interested, here's my official statement regarding ["FREE CDL TRAINING"](#).



[Driver Solutions](#) offers [Paid CDL Training](#) opportunities.

This is seriously the claim of many truck driving schools, often the company-sponsored CDL training programs. There *are* programs which allow you to get in with low, or even *no* up-front fees. But these programs

are *not free*. Ask yourself, how could a company be in the business of training truck drivers and do it for free? Free would mean that when you're done training, you owe no money *and* have no obligations.

With most schools, there is a specified amount of time that you're required to work for a certain carrier (typically one year), otherwise, the full tuition (plus interest, often at 18-21%) would be due and payable. The student must read the fine print before signing any school/financing contract. Some companies even stipulate that the cost is more (with some it may be doubled!) in the all too common event the student leaves the company early.

## Schools Which Offer "Guaranteed" Employment

Some truck driving schools "guarantee" a student a job upon completion of training. But this is a *conditional* guarantee, even with the company-sponsored schools, because the student doesn't even have a CDL yet.

I suggest that you get a [pre-hire letter](#). This letter states that the company will allow the student to attend a company orientation and be hired "if you apply and meet the requirements".

Obviously, though, this is conditional as well. The student must complete all the usual paperwork, including the standard company application, as well as get their CDL, and meet all DOT (and company) requirements.

## Schools Which Are Just "CDL Mills"



Have you heard of *diploma mills*, schools which give out diplomas (often for a hefty price), but not a *real* education?

CDL mills, though not as obvious, operate in a similar way.

These types of schools are considered *mills* because students are like pieces of wood in a sawmill, quickly run through a saw, and through to the other side. Churned out, if you will.

*CDL mill* type of schools are often private schools, but can also be *in-house* or *company-sponsored* schools. Yes, even some of the bigger, well-known carriers.

**Here are some indications that a school may be just a *CDL Mill*:**

- The short duration of their program, usually only 2 or 3 weeks long.  
There are not many drivers that can get behind the wheel of a big

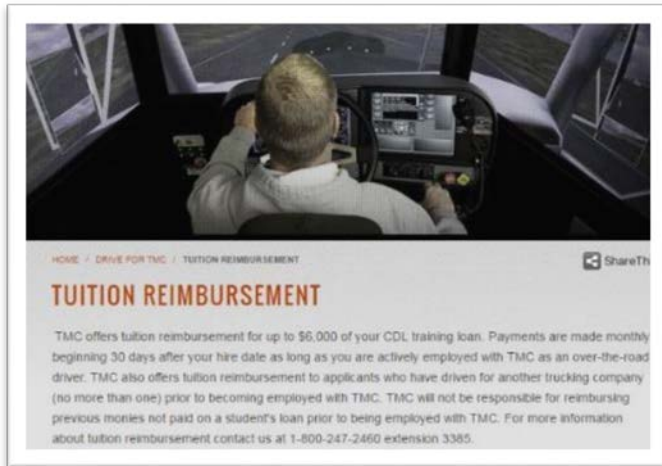
- truck and master even the most basic skills that quickly. And no, it doesn't matter how many times you've seen *Smokey and the Bandit*!
- An inadequate amount of time behind the wheel. Actual driving time is needed, not just sitting in the sleeper with 3 other students, waiting for your turn to drive. Some schools claim to train at least *50 hours behind the wheel*, but most of that may be time spent *observing* while the other students drive.
  - Weak or inadequate curriculum.

There are even [training programs](#) that charge only \$250 and training takes just 3-4 days (Texas seems to have *several* of them!).

These types of schools shouldn't be confused with CDL mills because they don't claim to offer complete CDL training. They're designed for the type of driver who can learn things extremely quickly, and perhaps grew up in a trucking family.

Drivers *have* got licensed this way, but, as I mentioned before, you may only learn to drive an automatic, perhaps "train" on a 28' pup trailer...basically, just the basics to get you licensed! You will have limited training as you begin a challenging career in trucking and limited options with companies that will hire you. But, if this isn't a problem, full steam ahead!

## Tuition Reimbursement



Many trucking companies offer tuition reimbursement to drivers who will work for them immediately following the completion of truck driving school. This is money the motor carrier pays either to the student/new driver (especially if the driver paid cash upfront for his training), or directly to the financing company the driver makes payments to. The motor carrier will do this reimbursement if you work for them immediately following school, and that you stay with them a certain period (at least until the loan is paid off).

## The Type of CDL Training You Choose Depends on Your Circumstances

While *free* CDL training doesn't *really* exist, companies offering these types of opportunities *are* valuable, and might be a good way for you to get started on a trucking career.

### Why? Well...

- Not *everyone* has \$4,000 (or more!) upfront to pay for school.

- Not *everyone* can get a grant or scholarship to pay for school.
- Not *everyone* has good credit to procure a loan to pay for school.

I got my start with a company sponsored school, a national household moving company that trained me without my having to put any money down.

You *do* need to do a *lot* of research into schools offering these types of programs. Remember some of the difficulties I talked about in *Book 1: Becoming a Trucker!*

But, done correctly, you *can* make it work. Of course, there will always be naysayers out there. Just follow the advice in this guide, and you *will* get started in trucking and on the road making good money!

## Chapter 2: The Different Types of Truck Driving Schools



**There are three types of truck driving schools:** public, private and company-sponsored.

Each type has its own way of doing things and training new drivers. It's important to understand these differences before deciding on a school. Each type of school will produce drivers that have different overall knowledge and skill levels.

There are differences in *overall cost and financing options, length of training, training methods, and quality of training*. Which type of school you decide on depends on your needs and situation. Scroll down to learn more about the different types of schools.

- [Private Truck Driving Schools](#)



- [Training Programs in Public Education Institutions](#)
- [Company-Sponsored Truck Driving Schools](#)

## Private Truck Driving Schools



*[Roadmaster](#) is an example of a private trucking school*

Private schools are independently-owned schools and are not owned and operated by private, for-profit entities (such as partnerships, corporations, etc.). These schools aren't associated with any trucking companies, but are solely in the business of training individuals to become professional truck drivers with *any* trucking company.

So, choosing the right private school can be a great choice because you know they'll give you the best training possible. They wouldn't stay in business long if they didn't. But make sure the school is a qualified one first. See our list of requirements for schools in later chapters.

If you can, get your Class A CDL, even if you're not sure you will ever drive tractor-trailers. The requirements and cost of Class A vs Class B are similar and you will cover more bases.

However, maybe you already have a job lined up and that's all you want to do. For example, you want to drive a dump truck locally, and be home every day. Or you simply have no desire to ever drive a tractor-trailer. In this case, it's easier, takes less time, and is cheaper if you just get your Class B CDL.

Many private truck driving schools will train future truckers from all over the U.S. In addition, many of these schools offer financial assistance to qualified applicants, and in some cases, you'll have an extended time, often several months or even up to a year, before you'll have to begin making payments.

Another possibility is tuition reimbursement which trucking companies will offer to graduates of a certain school. Most if not all your training cost you paid will be reimbursed to you when you go to work for them.

Another thing you should look for in a private school is a job placement program. Trucking companies are hurting for drivers right now and work together with a given school to fill their positions. When you graduate from one of these schools, it should be easy to jump right into a driving job.

### **Cost of Private Schools**

The cost of private truck driving schools can range anywhere between \$2000 and \$7500. One disadvantage of private schools is the higher cost, both overall and the upfront money needed. But there are ways to get the funds if you don't have the money saved up, like financial assistance offered to those who qualify.

There are high-quality private schools out there, and then there are *not* so high-quality ones. Some schools will have the best trainers, with the best training to prepare new drivers for an exciting and challenging new career.

Unfortunately, other private schools will merely focus on getting the student a CDL and quickly on the road with a motor carrier, but neglecting key areas of the new trucker's education in the process. It's important to learn the facts about truck driving schools because there are often obvious differences in quality of training from one school to another.

Ask local trucking companies if they hire graduates from that school. Talk to recent graduates and ask their opinion. Most schools with a good track record will happily refer you to graduates of their program to help you decide.

In states which regulate schools, truck driving schools are licensed by the state. These schools have been checked out by a state agency and have been found to meet certain minimum standards. Of course, you'll want much more than the minimum. It's important to learn what characteristics the best schools have ([see chapter 3](#)).

## Training Programs in Public Education Institutions



*[Hagerstown Community College](#) is an example of commercial truck driver training at a public education institution.*

These programs/schools are run (owned, operated, funded) by the state or local government. Some examples of these types of schools are community colleges, other state colleges, and vocational technical (vo-tech) schools, all of which may offer truck driver training courses. Of course, these schools usually offer many other non-trucking classes as well.

The courses are usually longer in duration (sometimes several months long) than the other types of schools. This can be good, but only if they are thorough, and include adequate driving and practice time. These types of schools are often not very flexible. The classes continue on a set schedule, regardless of your needs or unique situation. Missing classes for whatever reason could cause you to have to re-take the course at the next session.

If you need to get working as soon as possible, and you're in need of a paycheck quickly, this type of school may not be your best option.

The cost can be much less than at the private schools, but be sure to do your homework and compare.

If your financial situation is questionable, public schools may be able to steer you towards financial aid, or a federal student loan. Go [here](#) for more information about Pell Grants, WIA Grants, State Grants, Student Loans and more.

## Company-Sponsored Truck Driving Schools



*[Premier Truck Driving School](#) is an example of a **company-sponsored** school*

To secure more drivers for their high volume of freight, some carriers (mainly the largest, most recognizable carriers) have adopted their own in-house training programs. These programs can be brief, perhaps only 2-3 weeks, although some will be up to 8 weeks. If you have limited funds, and need a paycheck quickly, these schools may be your best bet. You won't need to come up with as much money, if any at all, to get completely trained and on the road making bucks.

However, payments will usually be taken out of your checks until the training cost is paid off. Since these are payments on a loan, payments will continue, even if you leave the company.

Some schools, often the most popular ones, are sponsored by trucking companies. This means that when you complete your training at the school, you will continue to work for the sponsoring company. This is good in that you'll either get reduced tuition, or other type of tuition reimbursement.

One potential problem with these types of schools is that you may end up limited to what that individual school is training you for. Their freight,

their equipment, their entire way of doing things. For example, a school may only have trucks with automatic transmissions. So, if you ever want to go to another company and that company has manual transmissions, you probably won't get hired because of your inability to drive their trucks!

The school may not even train you to fill out your logbook properly because the company has ELDs (electronic logging devices) installed in the trucks. This one won't be a problem for very much longer however, because soon *all* trucks will be so equipped.

Be careful, because some of these schools have been reported to give you the minimum training you need just to get your CDL. You're simply expected to learn *their* way of doing things, and then you're on the road hauling their freight. Some of these companies have "churned out" too many poorly trained drivers (see "[CDL Mills](#)").

Of course, not every one of these programs operate this way. Many in-house/company-sponsored programs will be much more thorough in preparing you for a career as a professional truck driver.

**Trucking Truth** is a good resource for getting [more information about these schools](#). Among the companies they review are Swift, FFE, Celadon, Prime, Roehl, Knight, Carter Express, PAM, USA Truck, CR England, CRST, Maverick, Jim Palmer, Millis Transfer, Driver Solutions, Stevens Transport, Central Refrigerated, MCT, and Raider Express. You must thoroughly investigate these companies yourself, but Trucking Truth gives you a big head start with information about cost, location, requirements, and more.

There are many other advocates to company-sponsored training. Their claim is that community colleges and many private schools will only teach you how to drive a truck, but not much about the rest of the trucking

profession. They recommend motor carrier (company-sponsored) training programs because many of them are up to five weeks in duration, with tests throughout their program to ensure that the future driver will be able to go it alone.

In addition, a motor carrier can complete the last part of the driver's training *on the job*. The driver will be driving, making pickups and deliveries, and learning trucking alongside an experienced and qualified driver-trainer. The distance is usually either *regional* or *over the road*.

Bottom line; company-sponsored schools can be a great way to get started in the trucking industry, regardless of what you may hear. You just need to go in with your eyes wide open and know what's expected of you, your limitations, etc.

Now it's time to do your homework and make sure the school is a qualified one following the advice in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3: Learn How to Select a High-Quality Truck Driving School



*Celadon Driving Simulator*

If you're going to go on to a successful trucking career, it's essential that you get started on the right foot. Selecting a truck driving school is not as simple as just picking one that's closest to you. And it's not as easy as picking the cheapest school you come across.

**Your whole truck driving career will be built upon the training you receive.**

**There are many things to consider when searching for the ideal school for you:** location of school, cost of training and financial assistance, job placement and assistance, length of course, time spent behind the wheel, instructor observation time, and training curriculum are just a few of the key considerations.



Your goal as a student should be to get the best training possible. Remember, the quality of training you receive is *the* most important factor in determining just how successful you'll be as a truck driver.

**The following information is covered in this chapter:**

- [What is School Certification?](#)
- [What are the Essential Elements of a High-Quality Truck Driving School?](#)

## What is School *Certification*?



The [Professional Truck Driver Institute \(PTDI\)](#) is a national, nonprofit organization sponsored by the trucking industry to advance truck driving proficiency, safety and professional standards among drivers. It certifies truck driver training programs, which ensures that they meet [industry safety standards](#).

Many training schools voluntarily certify that their courses meet PTDI standards, but not all schools have chosen to do so. Graduates from "PTDI Certified" courses may have a better chance at getting hired by the highest quality trucking companies.

# What Are the Essential Elements of a High-Quality Truck Driving School?

## Length of course

Most trucking experts believe that the average new truck driver needs at least 4 weeks of training to be considered a safe, entry-level driver.

## Instruction time

The minimum total hours of instruction are 148 hours. The PTDI recommended program consists of 104 hours of class and lab time and 44 hours of driving time (actual behind the wheel time). The training day should be at least 10 hours long.

## Observation time

This should not count towards instruction time, but unfortunately, it does with many schools. How this can work when done incorrectly: a school will pile 4-8 student drivers into the back of the cab or sleeper who will take turns getting behind the wheel. Observation is key to learning, but is *not* an acceptable substitute for actual time behind the wheel.

## Condition of equipment (tractors, trailers, etc.)



Vehicles must be in good mechanical condition, and meet all safety requirements. They should be comparable in age, weight/size, and power to that which a new driver will experience on the road. But don't expect tractors to be all shiny and chrome. They should be properly up kept and maintained, but keep in mind that students are very hard on trucks (think of the constant grinding of gears and running over curbs, not to mention hitting objects).

Conventional tractors are highly recommended to train on, as there will be quite the adjustment required if all training is done on a cabover type of tractor. Using forward space is one of the keys to safely maneuvering a semi-truck and is so much easier in a cabover that transitioning to a conventional can be a costly learning experience! Of course, training on *both* types of tractors would be even better! National Truck Drivers School is shown [here](#) using both types in their training.

In addition, trucks should be equipped with manual transmissions to prepare a future driver for a career with different types of trucking companies. In the future, *all* trucks will (most likely) have automatic transmissions, but that day has not yet arrived!

Practice should include a variety of trailer lengths including 28' pups, and the more standardized 48' and/or 53' trailers. How you back up a trailer will vary depending on its length.

## Conditions of classroom facilities and truck lab



Are conditions clean, comfortable, and safe? Well-lit, heated, air-conditioned? Are they up-to-date and modern?

In many schools these days, it's becoming more common to find driving simulators like one [shown here](#). Driving and shifting simulators give students an awesome opportunity to practice in real-life situations *without* risking life and property in the real world. However, due to the still high cost of these simulators, not all schools have them.

Different conditions like slippery roads and inclines can be simulated as well as the ability to practice on different types of transmissions.

## Range conditions



Is the range large enough to provide for a variety of obstacles and maneuvers? There are some schools with ranges too small to duplicate situations drivers will have to face out there in the real world. Practice needs to include different types of backing maneuvers, forward serpentine type of driving, enough room to get up to speed and enable drivers enough shifting practice, among many other situations drivers regularly encounter.

Also, the range should be free from obstructions and hazards and the driving practice area should be closed to public traffic. Ranges can be either dirt, gravel, or paved.

## Street instruction



Does practice time include driving a loaded trailer at times? Is practice done under a variety of conditions, including night driving? Different types of road conditions including winter driving would also be ideal, although obviously not always possible, except with the simulator like mentioned previously.

## Instructor education and experience

There are two types of truck driving instructors: Classroom instructors and Skills instructors. Instructors should have verifiable tractor-trailer experience along with a good driving record. They should also meet [state requirements of Part 391 of the FMCSR](#).

Having a CDL, a high school diploma or its equivalent, as well as having good teaching skills are essential. Some states require instructors to complete an instructor training course, as well as additional continuing education requirements. Other states will also only accept either specified years behind the wheel as a commercial driver or a certain number of miles of experience.

## Student-to-instructor ratio

This ratio is about how much personal attention a student will receive. There should be at least one instructor for every 20 students for classroom and truck lab instruction. This is not as important in a typical classroom setting, but is more important in the driving simulator or truck lab, and especially on the driving range and in the truck.

## Student-to-truck ratio

There should be at least one instructor for every three trucks when on the range, and one instructor per truck with no more than four students (preferably only 1-3 students), when off the range.

## Course information

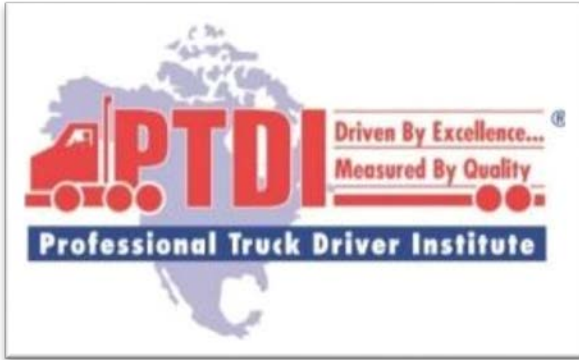
Is there a course outline or catalog which identifies each lesson? Does instruction include the use of training aids including: up-to-date books, audio/video equipment, and model? Are materials provided to students? Is there extra work/homework/testing? What about the school's tuition and financing?

Almost all schools will require you to sign a contract before attending. The contract will make it clear what's expected of the school and you, obligations each is expected to meet, cost of tuition, refunds, etc.

Before you sign a contract, make sure you read and understand it, and understand everything. Don't be afraid to ask questions you have about anything...what's expected of you, contracts, or any other course information.

There also should be mention of the diploma or certificate you will earn upon successful completion of training.

## Training curriculum



**The school's training curriculum should include the following (at a minimum), derived from [PTDI Standards](#):**

- **CDL preparation class.** Should include instruction and training on General Knowledge, Air Brakes, Combination Vehicles, Doubles & Triples, Tank Vehicles, and Hazardous Materials. Of course, [Trucker Country's CDL Practice Tests](#) will thoroughly prepare you to pass the official exams in no time. Many schools across the country already recommend our tests to their students.
- **Introduction to trucking.**
- **Basic skills (controlling the vehicle, backing, shifting, etc.).**
- **Trip planning to include map reading, GPS, etc.**
- **Winter, mountain, city, and night driving.**
- **Hazard perception and emergency maneuvers and accident procedures.**
- **Federal regulations including the Hours of Service and the log book.**
- **Safety and defensive driving.**
- **Paperwork, dispatch and company relations.**
- **Information about shippers, receivers, cargo handling.**
- **Managing Life on the Road/Personal Resources**



- **Interpersonal Communication Skills**

## Completion of course and records



Is there a diploma or certificate of completion given upon completion of the course? Does the student receive his CDL before completion? Are transcripts provided? Is there a record kept which documents training received, including time driver spent behind the wheel?

## Externship

This is an option which allows a school to defer up to 14 hours of the 44 required “behind the wheel” hours to a motor carrier, who completes the driver's training. The carriers which give this option must adhere to a minimum standard of education and training. An externship is the continuing of education in a truck, while being paid. Company-sponsored school training does not usually qualify as an externship.

## Financial Aid

Many top truck driving schools have their own financial aid departments. They may simply give you the usual options, recommend you to government grant websites, etc. Or, they may provide in-house financing to qualified individuals. This is an option worth checking out if you're short on cash.

Just remember, nothing is free, including school financing, or any financing for that matter. You will end up paying way more than the initial tuition amount over the course of the loan. But, obviously, it'll be worth it when you land a high paying job as a trucker! Just do your homework, and know just how much you'll be paying.

More information about paying for truck driving school or getting trained without having to come up with large amounts of cash upfront is in the next chapter [Schools Are Expensive! How Do I Get the Money?](#)

## Placement program/employer interviews

The school should assist you in finding a suitable job. In addition, recruiters from several different motor carriers may visit the school and talk about their job opportunities. However, only the best schools offer adequate employer placement assistance. Some schools will tell you their "placement rate." If a school has a placement rate of 90%, that means that 90% of its graduates found trucking jobs immediately following school.

This placement rate should be documented and verifiable. The best schools will be able to show you this, plus help you determine which companies will be best to work for. They may even help you with putting together a resume and cover letter.

**If you get trained, but are unable to find a good job, then that training wasn't worth much!**

# Chapter 4: Truck Driving Schools Are Expensive! How Do I Get the Money?



If you're a bit short on cash (as I mentioned previously, I didn't happen to have a few extra thousand dollars laying around), you don't have to give up on your dream of becoming a truck driver. There are several options still available to you. You may even be able to qualify for tuition assistance. In this chapter, we'll look at several options to get financial assistance to pay for your CDL training.

Many truck driving schools are only 2-5 weeks long and therefore, don't qualify for financial assistance, but many schools *do* qualify. Public educational institutions usually have truck driver training programs which are longer, often up to 12 weeks long. Most of the schools which qualify for tuition assistance are public schools.

A few of your options are: grants, student loans, scholarships, military benefits, tuition reimbursement, and traditional loans, all of which, we'll discuss thoroughly. Also, as we've mentioned in a previous chapter, choosing training from a [company-sponsored truck driving school](#) may still be your best bet, especially if you have credit issues in addition to lacking available cash. If you do your research and select the best from these types of schools, you'll give yourself a much better chance at succeeding!

## Should You Find the Cheapest CDL Training Possible?

When you get started in a career as tough as trucking, you obviously want the best and most thorough education and training you can receive.

**Why? It will enable you to get the best job with the best companies.** This usually means more money, better benefits, better and safer equipment, great routes and home time... you name it!

**Another even more important reason is your safety while going down the road, at times in an 80,000-lb. vehicle.** On steep mountain inclines. In the snow and ice. In big cities with cars buzzing around, and just a few inches on the sides of your trailer as you're going over a bridge, or through a toll booth.

Driving a big truck carries a lot of responsibility, so do yourself and everyone else you meet out there on the road a favor...**get the best possible trucking education you can.** Don't skimp on training, and this begins with your selection of training right now!

# Grants

**There are several different types of grants we'll be looking at.**

There are federal grants from the government, each having their own criteria. For example, you might have to be below a certain economic level, or be from a specific place in the country (often specific poorer neighborhoods in bigger cities) to qualify.

Some trucking companies have grants available to certain individuals, although, like company-sponsored programs, they require an agreed amount of time the driver needs to work for the company.

**The best thing about grants, regardless of type, is that they do not have to be repaid. Ever.**

**Quick warning:** As we've discussed in another chapter on CDL mills, there are companies out there who are only interested in taking your money (*No, surely not!*), and getting you out there on the road, usually making money for *them*. Not all of them though. Some *just* want your money!

There are **2 main ways** you can go about getting financing for you truck driver training:

1. You can choose the school first, using the guidance previously mentioned here (see [Essential Elements of a High-Quality Truck Driving School](#)). Like discussed, many schools have financial aid departments, however, not all schools do.
2. Investigate all your financial assistance options first, then select from schools which will fall into the narrower list of schools which will fit your financial assistance categories or criteria.

Either way, it will really help you to know about the different types of financial aid before you talk to specific truck driving schools, *and* take their word for any of it!

## Pell Grants



The Pell Grant, originally the “Basic Educational Opportunity Grant” was started in 1972 and named after former US Senator Claiborne Pell from Rhode Island. This grant is the largest federal aid program. These Pell Grants were created to help people from poorer backgrounds get college or vocational education and/or training.

To determine if you qualify for a Pell Grant, you must [start here](#) and fill out a FAFSA or Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Just remember that, like mentioned above, many if not most truck driving schools will *not* qualify for Pell Grants because of the short duration of these courses.

If you’re interested, fill out the application and see if you qualify, and if you do, find out how much grant money you’ll receive. Then, find a truck driving school that will accept Pell Grants. Your best bet will be to check

schools with longer duration CDL training courses, like community colleges or technical schools.

**The following truck driving schools accept Pell Grants:**

[Bates Technical College](#) has a commercial truck driving program and on its site mentions

“We offer Title IV Financial Aid Pell Grant, SEOG, federal work study, student loans and Opportunity Grants to qualifying students. You will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible. To ensure a rapid response time, financial aid applications may be [completed online](#). Financial aid staff members are available to assist you with the application process.” They also have a page about [Workforce services](#) (WIAO, see below for more information on this act).

[Danville Area Community College](#)

They also have this additional information for those planning on taking advantage of the Pell Grant:

“Students attending this program using Pell Grant funding (16 credit hours) are required to do a 10-week externship in addition to the 6 weeks training on campus.”

An externship (mentioned earlier [here](#)) is the part of your trucking education that takes place in a working trucking environment with a driver-trainer/instructor.

[AIT Truck Driver Training](#)



### Savannah Technical College

Community College of Baltimore Country. This school is undergoing Pell Experimental Funding which focuses on schools which have shorter programs that aren't usually accepting for Pell Grants.

Illinois Valley Community College. According to the site,

“Students who want to utilize Financial Aid\*\* (Pell Grant, MAP Grant, or student loans) *must* pursue the Advanced Truck Driver Training Proficiency Certificate. The Basic TDT program is not eligible for financial aid or student loans, but eligible veterans may utilize their educational benefits for this program.”

### National Tractor-trailer School (NTTS)

### New England Tractor-trailer School (NETTS)

Do a search for schools in your area. Either use Google and combine the school plus Pell Grant in the search, or use Trucker Country's exhaustive list of [truck driving schools in your state](#).

Like I've said, you may want to start with community colleges and technical schools which will give you the best chance of getting approved for these types of programs.

## WIOA Grants



The [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) has taken the place of the similar Workforce Investment Act (WIA) a 1998 law. The WIOA “is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.” [Watch a short WIOA video here.](#)

The act provides training for people who’ve been laid off, who want to change careers and acquire the necessary skills to land a new job.

According to the [CVTA](#), “Over the years, WIA/WIOA grants have allowed thousands of individuals to attend truck driver training and begin anew careers as commercial drivers.”

Trucking Truth has a forum discussion on the WIA Grants [here](#). Read it all as it has quite a bit on good info. One experienced driver who goes by “RedGator” has this to say about WIA Grants:

*“It took about a month to a month and half start to finish before I was awarded the grant money. I had to take 3 seminars, provide 5 weeks of work search (which can be back dated), and take a 3-part test and score so much on each section before they move you along to your case worker. Then you have to fill out tons of paperwork. They provide you with a list of schools and you pick which you would like. WIA pays for you CDL, all your endorsement including your hazmat and background check plus they pay for any related items needed for training up to \$6000 in total. You have to do a year follow up with them solely by email afterwards.”*

Here's another more recent [forum thread from Trucking Truth](#) about the newer WIOA. It has information specific to Arizona, but you'll find the process similar in your state.

To learn about these opportunities in your area, just Google “WIOA in ‘your state’.” Replace “*your state*” with *YOUR state*.

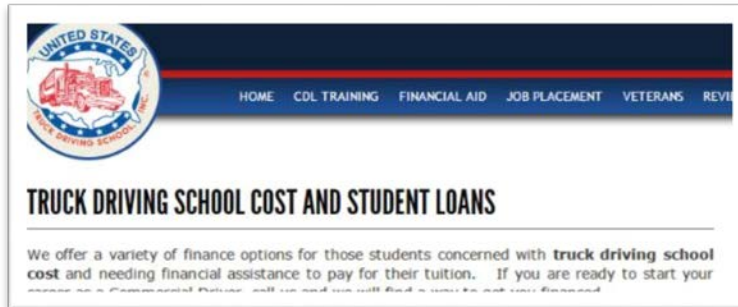
### **Additional Grants resources:**

[Federal Student Aid](#). General information about financial aid from the U.S. Department of Education.

Starting page to [Start a New FAFSA](#). This is where you submit a free application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

The [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) General resource and jumping off point to get you up to speed on the act.

## Student Loans from Truck Driving Schools



Many truck driving schools offer their own in-house loans to “qualified” students going through their course. Of course, they’re not going to offer loans to just anyone. You’ll need at least semi-decent credit, and possibly some money of your own up front before they’ll agree to finance you. *Or*, you’ll get the loan if you agree to work for a certain trucking company, discussed more below.

There may be advantages to loans offered directly from the school. One is that payments may be deferred until you’ve graduated and are on the road making money, often several months in the future. The likelihood of these loans being offered to you *and* possibly with deferred payments will increase if you agree to work for a certain company when you graduate. In this way, this type of loan is like a company-sponsored school relationship and/or tuition reimbursement offered by many companies.

In any of these cases, you’ll have to sign a contract that will give the school some security to prevent students using their school to get trained, then promptly dump the school and trucking company, not intending on ever making payments.

## Veterans



Certain truck driving schools may be eligible to accept benefits from the [Post 9/11 GI Bill](#). This is for veterans of the military who “have at least 90 days of aggregate active duty service after Sept. 10, 2001, and are still on active duty, or if you are an honorably discharged Veteran or were discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days, you may be eligible for this VA-administered program.”

You can use this money for short-term trucking programs as well as longer-term programs, like those offered at community colleges. Learn more on their [Education and Training page about the Post-9/11 GI Bill](#).

There are additional programs assisting veterans to get financial aid for truck driving schools [here](#).

For more information about military truck driver training go to [Chapter 6](#).

## Scholarships

Scholarships, like grants, don’t have to be repaid. Many truck driving schools have scholarships available to prospective truck drivers, and often have a financial aid office. Call the school or visit their website and ask if they have scholarships and how to qualify.

Many states have trucking associations and websites. For example, the Minnesota Trucking Association (MTA) has a [“Drive to Thrive” Scholarship Program](#) for students aspiring to become truck drivers.

Google “trucking association, your state” for the trucking association in *your* state.

**Women in Trucking** also offers a [scholarship program for prospective truckers](#).

The [Truckload Carriers Association \(TCA\)](#) is another organization that offers scholarship to trucking students. “Since 1973, Truckload Carriers Association has been helping students associated with the truckload industry reach their dreams. Our Scholarship Fund awards up to \$6,250 per year to full-time college students. Much of our program's support comes from within the truckload family—companies and individuals who are committed to our community's future.”

## Tuition Reimbursement



Many trucking companies will make the payments on your student loan, or repay money you paid upfront to a truck driving school...*if* you agree to work for them for a certain period. This can be a great incentive to work for a company, or even stay with a company. But do your homework. You

*really* need to like the company to stay with it long term. Truck driving schools only cost a few thousand dollars in most cases, and you can make that money quickly when you're out on the road driving for yourself.

For example, Prime Inc. offers a [tuition reimbursement program](#) of up to \$1500 of the amount you paid for your CDL training. [TMC](#) offers up to \$6k reimbursement while [US Xpress](#) offers up to \$7k. Many other trucking companies offer similar programs, so shop around!

## Traditional Financing

Of course, you have the option to pay cash up front. Yes, cash is still king. Brilliant solution, right? But if you had cash, you would've already skipped this chapter! But, it's an option, and I've mentioned it.



**Take out a loan.** You could go down to your local bank, and if you have good credit and a relationship with the bank, your chances are good. But, you'll pay some high interest, unless the loan is secured by property or equity of some kind.

**Pay with your credit card.** Of course, to have thousands of dollars in credit available, you'd need a good credit rating, so it would be similar to the bank loan, except higher interest rates.

Only use these high-interest methods if you intend to pay off the loan quickly. I mean, ASAP. You don't want to drive a lot of miles as a rookie driver (which means less money to start) and continually make big payments on your loan or credit card.

It may seem like a big PITA (pain in the you know what!), but take the time to do your research and investigate these programs. Look around the websites we've provided plus do your own searching. Then fill out the applications, and wait, in many cases, possibly several weeks for an answer.

When you're short on cash, and don't have great credit, this (along with [company-sponsored schools](#)) may be your only option! Take your time, and think far enough ahead so you don't get stuck with a bad situation, such as; paying too much for the tuition, signing contracts that invest too much time with a company, or paying too high interest rates, etc. Remember, trucking companies *need* you. Use this knowledge to your advantage!



*Endeavor to Persevere!*

**Bottom line:** Don't Give Up, Keep Your Eye on the Prize, and [Endeavor to Persevere!](#)



## Chapter 5: Is Attending a Truck Driving School Mandatory?



Are you *required* to attend a truck driving school to get your CDL and a job as a truck driver?

**Nope.** Technically, attendance at a truck driving school is not a requirement to get licensed. However, a truck driving school is the preferred method of preparing for a career in truck driving and for obtaining a CDL, and it's one I would recommend as well. For *most* people, anyway!

If you *don't* go through a truck driving school, but *do* want to get licensed, you may be putting yourself at a disadvantage:

You might have **limited options** in getting employed by a motor carrier. Most OTR trucking companies require either that their drivers must have

attended a course of 160 hours of certified professional training (which any high-quality truck driving school will have), OR they must have a certain amount of actual experience as a truck driver.

If you don't have family or friends or somebody desperate for drivers as your main source of a job, just *getting* that experience will be difficult.

**But I'm going to lay out the steps you must take if you *really* want to go down that path and forego the school process.** Just take note, it's gonna be a long haul. An uphill climb. A bumpy road. OK, enough trucking analogies!

***To get your CDL "On Your Own," you must:***

- ✓ Pass the written test to get your CDL permit.
- ✓ Have a tractor and a trailer at your disposal to learn to drive. There are places where you (well, a person with a CDL) can rent a tractor and trailer, but this could cost you quite a bit of money when considering how long it'll take you to learn all the necessary skills and pass the skills/driving tests.
- ✓ Have another person with a CDL available who can be in the vehicle while you're practicing and learning, and who can teach you to drive as well as everything else you need to know about truck driving, if necessary.
- ✓ Pass the written, skills, and driving CDL tests.

**Note:** If you've gotten this far, congratulations. But now, you've still got to either get employed by a motor carrier, or purchase a truck and become an owner-operator.

- ✓ Find a motor carrier who will employ you. No major carrier will hire you if you haven't gone through an approved truck driving school. So, you need to find a small motor carrier, or possibly an owner-operator with a small number of trucks, who will employ you. Not many will though, especially because of the high insurance rates any company which would hire you will have to pay. Usually, the only drivers who can find success going this route are the ones who have family in the trucking business who will train and/or hire them.
- ✓ Or, purchase a tractor and/or trailer, and become an independent owner/operator. There's a lot to do in just this one step and more than I can explain here. Even if you have a big pile of money to do all that's required for just this one step, I *still* wouldn't recommend starting your trucking career this way.

This is a tough way to go even if you've had years of experience as a company driver. Unless you have a lot of cash and can purchase a tractor outright (or have a little cash and purchase a cheap tractor outright!), you may have difficulty getting financed without going through normal training. Insurance rates will be extremely high as well. Again, unless you have family in the trucking business who can guide you through this whole process, you have a tough road ahead, literally and figuratively.

Before truck driving schools became the norm, this process was basically how drivers got into trucking, along with companies who would be more likely to hire such drivers. But now, there are much easier ways. Most schools have financing, and many motor carriers will put you through a company-sponsored school themselves.

**My recommendation? Most drivers should get their training through an approved truck driving school.**

# Chapter 6: Military Truck Driver Training and Finding Jobs for Veterans



## Why Should Veterans Consider a Career in Trucking?

If you're a veteran of any branch of the military; Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guards, or Reserves of any branch, you might want to consider a career as a truck driver. Many major trucking companies would love to hire you and help you get started in the industry.

Mainly, it's because your skill set and character is a perfect fit for the best of those companies. They're looking for individuals who are no stranger to hard work and discipline. These qualities are essential in trucking because it takes effort, determination, patience, and self-motivation (just to name a

few things) to professionally complete the many tasks necessary to move freight safely and timely to its destination.

It goes without saying that your ability to perform under demanding situations can be applied to many different trucking functions and every day duties. Truck drivers regularly must perform under pressure and have many organizational and technical requirements that military veterans should be equipped to handle.

Another key trait military members have is a strong sense of teamwork. This is vital in trucking, even though at first glance, a trucker's job is a solitary one. But even solo drivers are constantly in contact with many people on the road while driving, as well as regular communication with employers, dispatchers, shippers and receivers, mechanics, just to name a few. Also, there are *team drivers* who must work together to accomplish a common mission. This at times can be challenging, and requires skills many drivers don't have.

**Job security** is another reason to consider trucking. As we mention in earlier chapters, there is a huge driver shortage in the country right now, and professional drivers are in demand. For these reasons, and many more, trucking companies are more than willing to help you get licensed and employed as a truck driver.

## Military Waiver or Troops to Trucks Program



If you're a veteran who received training on, and drove, a tractor-trailer (CMV or the military equivalent of commercial motor vehicle) while in the military, listen up. Your training and experience should be sufficient to enable you to bypass a civilian truck driving school, and get your CDL right away. This is because of the [Military Skills Test Waiver Program](#) (or "Troops to Trucks" in some states) initiated by the FMCSA.

This program enables veterans who drove trucks in the military to skip the driving skills portion of the tests (and possibly, skip truck driving school) and get their CDL a little easier. Military drivers must apply within one year of separation from active duty.

There are many companies who will hire veterans as soon as they get their CDL. But first, go to their websites (info and links below) and/or call a recruiter to get all the facts.

All state Department of Transportation offices plus the District of Columbia now offer the waiver for CDL applicants who plan to drive vehicles similar to those they drove in the military. So, if qualified, all you'd need to do is pass the written exams to get your CDL.

Go [here to see the qualifications and fill out an application for the Military Skills Test Waiver](#). **According to the form:**

*“The Commercial Driver License (CDL) skills test waiver form may be used by service members who are currently licensed and who are or were employed within the past year (12 months) in a military position requiring the operation of a military motor vehicle equivalent to a Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV). This waiver allows a qualified service member to apply for a CDL without skills testing. CDL knowledge (written) test(s) cannot be waived. The transfer of School Bus(S) and/or Passenger (P) endorsements under this Waiver Program are prohibited.”*

## Trucking Companies that Facilitate the Hiring of Veteran Drivers

The following trucking companies have programs assisting veterans wanting to transition into a career in trucking. **The ones that have an (MF) designation besides their name are considered “Military Friendly” and are on the list of military friendly trucking companies on the [MilitaryFriendly.com website](#).** They “work with thousands of schools and employers to help them assess their efforts to attract and support this group of talented individuals. Military Friendly® schools and employers represent the top tier of institutions who provide the best opportunities for military service members and spouses.”



## Schneider (MF)

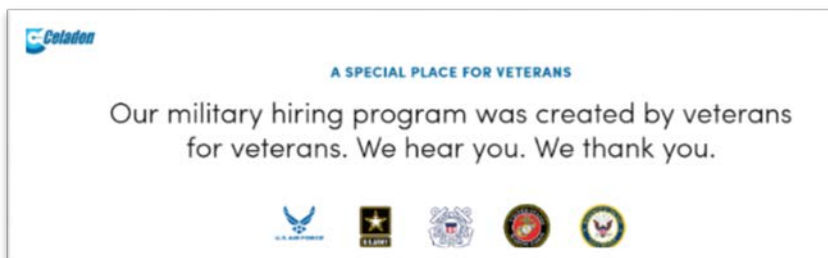


Schneider has a Military Apprenticeship Program to assist veterans in transitioning into a career as a truck driver.

*“Put your VA benefits to better use.*

*Let the experience you’ve gained and the benefits you’ve earned in the military open the door to a new career with Schneider. Your disciplined approach and work ethic makes you a great candidate for Schneider and someone we’d be proud to call one of our own.”*

## Celadon





*“Serving in our military is something we honor at [Celadon](#) every day, not just veteran’s day. We have members of every branch of service among our ranks, all the way up to our senior leaders. We’ve served and we understand. We want every veteran to know they have a place with us to start a great career or build an even better one. Whether you’re about to exit the service or a veteran for some time, we welcome you with open arms and open hearts.”*

## Crete



*“[Crete Carrier](#) wants to say thank you to all military personnel and their families. We recognize the strain that is added to you and your family during your service to our great country. With your transition back to civilian life we would like to provide you with a stable career opportunity with a debt-free company.”*

## JB Hunt (MF)



With career opportunities at over 300 locations nationwide, [J.B. Hunt](#) understands the value a military background brings to our mission. In 2014, we announced a company-wide commitment to hire 10,000 U.S. military veterans by the year 2020. We continue to honor that pledge, and today nearly one in five employees at J.B. Hunt is a military veteran.

*“By offering a fast-track to a meaningful career in the transportation industry, J.B. Hunt continues to demonstrate leadership in finding, hiring and empowering Veterans and transitioning military service members. We are committed to hiring 10,000 Veterans by 2020 and our employee-centric culture is evident throughout our daily operations, and it signifies why over 15% of J.B. Hunt employees are Veterans.*

*Our recent renewal of our ESGR commitment and continued company growth, coupled with the expansion of our Hunt’s Heroes hiring program, allows us to maintain a multi-faceted approach by providing support and full training for office, maintenance and driving positions.”*

## Werner Enterprises (MF)



*“Take advantage of your VA education benefits and invest in your future with [Werner Enterprises’ industry-leading apprenticeship program](#). Designed to support and attract talented, motivated military veterans as they transition to a new career, Werner’s highly successful Professional Truck Driver Apprenticeship Program has helped more than 4,500 students. Master your professional driving skills during training school while earning a stipend for financial assistance. Join our team today to discover the opportunities waiting for you at Werner.”*

## TMC (MF)



*TMC has a long history of hiring current and former military personnel into every job category we have. TMC recently pledged to hire 500 military veterans by 2016 in conjunction with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce "Hiring Our Heroes" program.*

*Currently, over 35% of TMC's Flatbed trucking fleet is comprised of veterans. Military veterans will find that TMC genuinely appreciates the skills, knowledge and attributes learned during your time in service to our country."*

## YRC Freight (MF)



YRC Freight announced its newest ranking in G.I. Jobs® magazine, which places the company among the top 100 military-friendly employers, according to the 12th Annual Military Friendly Employers® 2015 edition.

With over 26,000 employees, Overland Park, KS-based YRC Freight is the largest operating unit of YRC Worldwide, and with a 10 percent veteran hiring level in 2014, YRC Freight continues to prove its commitment to the nation's military.

*“YRC Freight is determined to help those who have protected America find their place as professionals in the transportation industry, recognizing the valuable knowledge and work ethic gained through military service,” said Darren Hawkins, president of YRC Freight. “We strongly believe in the career equity gained through time spent in the military and the value of skills possessed by those transferring into civilian service.”*

## CRST Expedited (MF)



*“[CRST](#), one of the top 25 largest transportation companies in the nation, is looking for Military personnel (former or current) to be Over the Road drivers for our organization. We know what we get with our Veterans – commitment, determination, and an all-round team player. In return, we make sure you get excellent pay, great benefits and a team that supports you. CRST recognizes your service to the country and is approved to honor your G.I. Bill™ benefits through the V.A. Earn an additional \$900-\$1200 monthly tax free. We also provide credit towards your pay for your previous Military service.”*

## Stevens Transport (MF)



*[Stevens Transport](#) is looking for leadership and technical talent departing the United States Military.*

*Stevens Transport is forever indebted to all United States veterans for heroically serving our country. As a military-friendly employer since 1980, Stevens Transport has always actively pursued military talent returning from active duty or seeking employment in a rewarding civilian occupation. Apply to work at Stevens Transport and join countless other military veterans who have called Stevens home for the past several years.”*

## USA Truck (MF)



[USA Truck's](#) “Choose Your Hometown” program is a really unique part of being on the USA Truck team. Veterans know what it’s like to be away from

family, even for extended periods. Now, with this program, you won't miss any family time because you'll choose when and where to take your time off. They also have a weekly home time option!

*“Recent Vets are now eligible for our \$1,000 Hiring Heroes Bonus! It's our way of saying thank you for your service while getting you started on a great career. Vets also receive an upgraded pay package with .37-.42 cents per mile with quarterly performance bonuses. USA has even more ways for Vets to earn, like layover, detention, breakdown, extra stop, and NYC pay. When you add it all up it makes a great weekly paycheck and we have the miles to run that keep it coming.”*

## Roehl Transport (MF)



*“The transition from the military world to civilian life can be overwhelming. [Roehl](#) understands that. The Roehl Honor Program gives you and your family real and immediate security. A truck driving career will provide you and your family prosperity and stability well into the future. Roehl Transport is in it with you for the long haul.*



*The Roehl Honor Program™ is a two-part program. It begins by giving you the recognition you deserve. The second phase is an apprenticeship. We've developed a training program that helps you not only take advantage of your GI Bill benefits, but also become successful in the transportation industry."*

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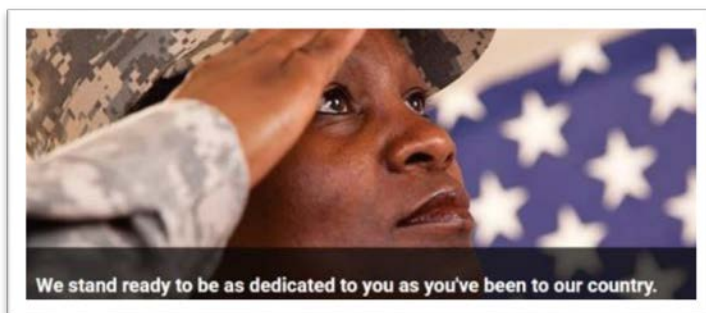
*Roehl Transport has three times been named a Military Friendly Employer by the publisher of [GI Jobs magazine](#).*

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## Groendyke Transport (MF)

*"At [Groendyke](#), we appreciate your service to our great country. Which is why we work hard to provide exceptional opportunities to returning and active military personnel. Your spirit of character, discipline and leadership skills easily translate into our workplace environment. More importantly, as a tanker driver for us, you will continue to make a difference in the lives of the communities we serve across this nation."*

## XPO Logistics





*“At [XPO](#), we’re proud to support our military veteran employees. The qualities ingrained in military service are the same qualities we value at XPO: integrity, commitment, a strong work ethic and a team mentality. We stand ready to support you in your civilian career.*

*We currently have over 500 military veteran employees working not only in OTR truck driving, but also in the other areas of transportation, logistics and corporate services we provide. We’re dedicated to supporting our veterans and all our employees by providing a supportive environment that rewards excellence and offers opportunities for growth.”*

## Averitt Express



*“[Averitt](#) has many career opportunities available for military veterans. If you've served in the military, we'd love for you to consider working with us. Your leadership and professional experiences have prepared you to overcome great challenges. You know more than anyone what it means to work as a team and value others. You believe in what you do, and you're willing to work to make it great. We think you'd make a great fit here, and we would be proud to work alongside you.”*

## C.R. England



*“You’ve finished serving and are entering civilian life. So why not carry your service forward by entering an industry that is the lifeblood of America? C.R. England is proud to participate with the Department of Labor and VA in an apprenticeship program called Service to Semis. This program allows GI Bill® eligible veterans to receive a tax-free monthly stipend in addition to their regular pay from C.R. England for the first year. Join us and continue your career in transportation today!*

*GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by the VA is available at the official U.S. government website: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>*

## Additional Information and Resources for Veterans

### Information to Collect and Have Available

If you're a military truck driver and are going to be in the Military or DoD Civilian Outplacement Process, and desire a career as a civilian truck driver, the following information should be collected. Just collect all that apply to you:

- A copy of an [American Council on Education/Army Registry Transcript System transcript](#). This form equates Army training with college credits.
- A copy of [DA Form 348](#), Equipment Operators Qualification Record.
- A copy of [DD Form 214](#), Report of Separation from Active Duty.
- A copy of your 201 file, and a notarized copy of your last efficiency and performance reports. The [National Archives website](#) is recommended for accessing your records.
  - A 201 file is set of documents maintained by the US government for members of the United States armed forces. 201 files usually contain documents describing the member's military and civilian education history. A 201 file may also contain personal information such as home of record, and awards documents.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/201\\_file](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/201_file)Wikipedia
- Commercial Driver's License (CDL), if applicable.
- A letter from last commanding officer or civilian supervisor certifying job performance.
- A copy of civilian driving record.
- A copy of the D.O.T. physical form, completed within the last 12 months.

## The Post-9/11 GI Bill



*“The [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#) can be used to pay for non-degree programs such as truck driving school, and is potentially an avenue to help veterans break into the field or compete for better paying jobs. Other programs, such as Vocational Rehab, may be available for some veterans, so always make sure to check with the VA to see what you qualify for “!*

If you have at least 90 days of aggregate active duty service after Sept. 10, 2001, and are still on active duty, or if you are an honorably discharged Veteran or were discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days, you may be eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill, a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ administered program, according to [www.benefits.va.gov](http://www.benefits.va.gov).

## Chapter 7: In Conclusion, Good Luck in Your New Trucking Career!



You've now have the essential facts and information to help you select a qualified truck driving school. This should thoroughly prepare you to have a successful start of your career as a truck driver.

Depending on the type and quality of training you received, you may be ready to go it on your own with a trucking company. But, if your training was just enough to get you licensed (like mine was, unfortunately), you may still have a bit of learning left to do! The good thing is that many companies take your training much further, all the way to learning on-the-job with a driver-trainer, often as much as several months or even 40,000-50,000 miles. They won't let you out on the road by yourself until you can demonstrate you're ready.

Now, let's move on to finding a great truck driving job in **Book 3: Starting Your New Truck Driving Career!** You'll learn much more about how to evaluate jobs, how trucking companies work, essentials about your driving record, and much more.

**Good luck in your training and drive safely out there (future) driver!**

Thanks again!

Jim Purcell

[www.TruckerCountry.com](http://www.TruckerCountry.com)

[www.TruckingMadeEasy.com](http://www.TruckingMadeEasy.com)