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BECOMING A TRUCKER: BOOK 3 – STARTING YOUR NEW TRUCK DRIVING CAREER



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STARTING YOUR NEW TRUCK DRIVING CAREER



Chapter 1: Truck Driver Options and Opportunities



When you first thought about becoming a truck driver, did you envision any of the following?

- Sitting behind the wheel, enjoying the scenery and being out on the open road.
- Seeing the miles of corn fields go by.
- Smelling the pine trees up in the mountains.
- The excitement and challenges of driving in the big cities.
- The feeling of freedom as you do your job without a boss looking over your shoulder and telling you how to do your job.
- Earning a steady paycheck and great benefits for working hard making local deliveries all week, while going home to see your family every night.
- Hauling oversized or heavy haul loads...like an aircraft engine that gets loaded onto your drop deck trailer by crane and gets delivered right to an airport tarmac. All under *your* control, direction, and supervision. Everything depending on *you* to get valuable and expensive equipment safely to its destination.

The great news is that, as a truck driver, you can do *any* of these things. *Or*, you can do *all* these things! There are *so* many ways to *be* a trucker. In trucking, the sky's the limit! You can be *any* type of driver you want to be.

- ✓ Do you want to drive over-the-road, regional, or local?
- ✓ Would you prefer to haul vans, tankers, or flatbeds?
- ✓ What are your goals and what can you accomplish as a truck driver?

These and many other topics are discussed in this book. Of course, there's a learning curve if you want to do something in trucking that you have no experience doing. But, there is usually a realistic way to learn every new type of driving job and getting started doing it.

However, there are limitations at first. Taking this route will be a *lot* easier after you have a year or two behind the wheel. This is when you'll be able to *write your own ticket* in trucking.

The goal of this book is to help you find truck driving jobs, so in certain places I'm going to provide links to both Indeed and Craigslist. These alone will give you good results, but it depends on the type of job you're looking for and location you live in.

Of course, you can also use the trucking job board of your choice, as there are more than a few out there. My advice about keywords in your search will help you find the right job for your situation and can be used on most job boards.

You have plenty of options to choose from in the trucking industry which are discussed in this chapter:

- [HOW FAR DO YOU WANT TO DRIVE \(OTR, REGIONAL, OR LOCAL\)?](#)

- [HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU WANT TO MAKE?](#)
- [WHAT TRAILER TYPE AND CARGO DO YOU WANT TO HAUL?](#)
- [WHAT IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE FROM ONE TYPE OF TRUCK DRIVING TO ANOTHER.](#)
- [YOU MAY WANT TO RELOCATE TO A DIFFERENT AREA OF THE STATE OR COUNTRY.](#)

Finding Jobs Based on Distance and Time Away from Home

Do you want to drive OTR (over-the-road), regional, or local?

You might not know the answer to this until you've actually done that type of driving.

OTR Driving



If your situation allows, it's usually easiest to start out as an OTR driver. This will give you the greatest overall experience and the ability to learn trucking in a variety of different situations. Plus, there are many more OTR job opportunities than any other type of driving.

- You'll experience the Interstate, the U.S. highways, as well as the local roads and cities or towns leading to shippers and receivers.

- You'll travel to big cities, little towns, and everything in-between. Even villages!
- You'll experience different weather conditions and terrains. For example, you might start a trip in hot and sunny Arizona and end a trip in cool rainy Washington state. Overall, you drove across the desert, over and through many mountains, bypassed many fields of corn and wheat, saw rivers and lakes, and maybe even went by the ocean.

After you get some OTR experience, you'll be able to make more informed decisions about exactly *how* you want to drive. Also, when you're considered *experienced*, you'll be more hireable with more types of trucking operations. This is also when you'll be more likely to get a good regional or local job, if that's your goal.

To **find jobs in the category of “how far you want to drive”**, add the following keywords to your search for each category and add your location.

- ✓ [OTR \(over-the-road\)](#). For the long-haul jobs. **Average time away from home:** 2-3 weeks.
- ✓ [Regional](#) or [LTL](#). To stay a bit closer to home and get home more often. **Average time away from home:** Home weekly.
- ✓ [Local CDL drivers](#). To have a more “normal” life. **Average time away from home:** Home daily.

Jobs Based on Potential Money You Can Earn



Is being at home with your family your most important need, or can you make a sacrifice, at least for a while, and drive OTR? Or go to an area or industry that's hurting for drivers *and* paying them extremely well.

You're going to have to sacrifice *something* to make bigger bucks, especially when you're still new, like:

- Being away from home for long periods of time.
- Doing without your usual comforts like sleeping in your own bed, with your family, every night.
- Working extremely hard, difficult, or dangerous conditions, usually for long hours every day.
- Irregular schedules, being on-call, night shifts, hazardous loads, jobs with high levels of skill needed.

Starting to get the idea?

Most OTR jobs will give you the chance to earn more money than you would get with a local job. Even if you get just \$.30 per mile (and after your 1st year, you'll be able to earn more than that!) while running 3000 miles a

week, you'll gross \$900 per week. If you only run 2500 miles, you'll earn a bit less, closer to \$750.

If you drive locally, you'll usually get paid by the hour, although in construction or aggregate hauling you might get a percentage of the load pay. And most driving jobs will start you in the \$13-16 per hour range, unless you're able to secure a union job, in which case you can earn more. A lot also depends on how many hours you'll be working during the week. For a conservative estimate, \$13 per hour for 40 hours per week equals only \$520 for the week.

Do you want to make and save enough money to buy your own truck and be an owner-operator, or even to start your own non-trucking business? Of course, this is possible, but be sure to check out the *section on owner-operators in Book 1* before you *jump in*.



Of course, much depends upon what your goals are. If your goal is to make as much money as possible, without regard for home and family time, OTR driving will usually give you the best chance to make great money. But there are other jobs, like [driving in the oil fields](#) (again, see *Becoming a Trucker Book 1* for more on oil field operations), that can also pay extremely well, though very often in less than desirable conditions.

Jobs by Type of Trailer and Cargo You Would Like to Haul



Another way to ask this is what type of work do you want to do? Most drivers get started in the dry van or reefer van sector of trucking. Usually, *what* you start hauling depends on *how you get trained*. There are several motor carriers with their own truck driving schools that are in the household moving sector (though not all of them). If you choose this type of school, then naturally you'd likely start hauling household goods. Some other company-sponsored schools may just haul flatbed, or tanker, etc. Some companies haul a variety of cargo on different types of trailers.

But generally, most trucking companies haul general freight with dry van trailers. General freight is anything that can get hauled in a dry van. Palletized loads, boxes directly on floor, furniture, most brands of beer and soft drinks, even some food type products like carrots or potatoes (though some of these loads need dry vans equipped with produce vents), and much more. Basically, anything that doesn't need to be refrigerated and can be properly secured can be hauled in a dry van (commonly called a *dry box*).

Generally, when you're just getting started in trucking, you'll have much less ability to choose the exact type of trucking you want to do. But you *can* get started *how* you want, mainly because drivers are in such demand. Plus, many company-sponsored schools are specific to a certain type of trucking. You'll just be stuck with the type of trucking you chose for a year or two. After that, you'll have much more value to a great number of trucking companies, even ones that haul cargo you're unfamiliar with. When you sign on with them, they'll train you to haul whatever it is they haul.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each type of hauling. For example, flatbed drivers usually don't have to wait very long to get unloaded at customer's docks. [Flatbed drivers](#) also need to enjoy doing more physically demanding work like securing and tarping. Or, maybe you love flatbed, but *hate* tarping. [There are jobs for you as well!](#)

There are drivers who want to be as "hand-off" as possible. If this sounds like you, and all you want to do is drive, look for jobs that mention "[no touch](#)", or "[drop and hook](#)". This will usually be in the OTR dry van jobs category.

Want to haul heavy haul or oversized? Most companies will want drivers with this type of experience, but if you search thoroughly enough, there are [companies who will train you](#). Not all the companies on any given search will be just what you're looking for, so check out a bunch of them. Just one good one is all you need.

Can You Change from One Type of Truck Driving to Another?

Sure you can! Some possible scenarios:

- If you've started at one type of trucking job, like pulling a flatbed, you could decide later on that you want to try your hand at hauling a reefer van.
- You've had *enough* strapping and tarping of loads! You just *long* for freezing cold loading docks and dealing with lumpers.
- Maybe you want to work locally after driving over-the-road for a long time. You feel you've "paid your dues" and need to make up lost time with your loved ones.
- Perhaps you're just kind of burned out from the road. It can happen!

I was in a team operation for a few years, hauling produce from Salinas, Ca to the East Coast. Coast to coast in 48 hours flat, pick up a general freight load and back in L.A. in 48 more hours. Usually, with the heading up to shippers and getting loaded factored in, it worked out to approximately 5800 miles in 5 days (which we'd split for 2900 each, times \$.35 per mile in case you're doing the math for a quick estimate of my paycheck), then having a few days at home before going back out and doing it all over again.



So, there are 2 types of trucking I'm doing a case study on here. Team driving and hauling produce in a reefer trailer. The best part of it was, 5 days out and 2 days off.

Just like "real" jobs everywhere! *Big difference*, though, is that those 5 days out were in a truck and that truck was moving 99.9% of the time. And there

was another driver in the truck with you... the *whole* time! Without a doubt, you earn your days off when driving as a team. Here's a [glimpse of team driving from a video by Schneider](#).

Eventually, I got tired of team driving. I needed a break from it, at least for a while. So, while grabbing a bite to eat in a truck stop, I started scanning those driver jobs magazines (this was before smart phones and WiFi practically everywhere) and calling up trucking companies...

Companies where I could run *solo*. By *myself*.

Jobs where I could decide when and where I wanted to stop, *without* telling my team partner about it. FREEEEDOOOOOMMM!

No, I'm *not* slamming team driving. I eventually did another team job years later, this time hauling doubles for an LTL company. Terminal to terminal, but not home quite as often. As a matter of fact, I was home so infrequently, I didn't have a chance to spend any money, and I didn't rent a house or apartment. I just stayed in motels whenever I got a day off. So, I saved quite a bit of money in a short amount of time.

It's just that sometimes, you *need* a change. Well, *I* do anyway!

In trucking, it's certainly possible to make these types of changes. However, it's important not to make these changes too frequently. Trucking companies will start to view this activity as *job hopping* and then you're back to having limited options again. See the [driving record and job history](#) section for more on this.

What If You Want to Relocate to a Different Area of the State or Country?



Where you live has a big impact on your options, as well as your income. If you're going to work locally, you need to understand that certain areas of the country pay local truck drivers better than others.

Jobs in bigger cities, especially on the East Coast, will tend to pay better than rural areas. Of course, that's because the driving in bigger cities is much different than anywhere else. Drivers from other areas of the country rarely consider the constant traffic, smaller streets, and other conditions in big cities worth the extra income they can make.

However, OTR drivers make OTR money *regardless* of where they live. For company drivers, this is usually by the mile. Since you'll make the same money either way, if you *could* live in an area where the cost of living is a lot cheaper, you would save a lot more money.



Feeling Adventurous? Consider relocating. Research different areas of the country. Investigate the area's house sales or rental prices. "Walk" the streets on Google street view. See what else the area has that would interest you. Like things you like to do. Movies, sports, malls, types of restaurants you like, or whatever it is that you can think of. Imagine yourself living there.

Next, find a good trucking company that's either located in or near the area you've chosen. Or at the very least, a company that has their main route or lanes regularly go through the area. Obviously, there are a lot more jobs in more populated areas of the U.S., so take this into consideration when doing your research and choosing an area in which to live.

There are *many* great things about driving a truck for a living. These are just a few of the possibilities to give you some ideas. Sometimes, all it takes is one good idea, and suddenly you get that "A HA!" moment, realizing you don't have to do things the same way everybody else does them. You should do what works for *you*.

And don't get discouraged and give up when one idea doesn't work out just how you envisioned. Just move on to your *next* idea!

Chapter 2: Your Driving Record and Work History



Public safety is the most important factor considered in regulating trucking and truck drivers. Gone are the days of getting another driver's license in different state just to hide your bad record. That started with the implementation of the CDL in 1986.

Now, there's more and more regulations and accountability for truck drivers. Hours of service regulations have dramatically changed trucking. And as we'll see in this chapter, there's more information collected on drivers than ever on many new reports which are designed to weed out bad drivers.

It's vitally important that you keep your driving record clean, both by driving in a professional and responsible manner, and by regularly getting your reports and ensuring they're accurate.

A clean driving record will enable you to get a driving job with some of the best companies, better pay, and succeed in your trucking career. It *also* means keeping your livelihood. Trucking companies can make up information to hurt your career just because they're unhappy you decided to quit and go work for another company. I'll discuss this more later in the chapter.

There are two major reports about a person's driving record: the MVR and the DAC report. You must make sure that your driving record is accurate, and up-to-date. It's also imperative that you keep your driving record clean. This will enable you to get a driving job with the best companies, which will more easily translate into more pay and having more success in your career.

Essentials discussed in this chapter:

[THE MVR \(MOTOR VEHICLE REPORT\)](#)

[THE DAC REPORT \(DRIVE-A-CHECK REPORT\)](#)

[THE CSA PROGRAM](#)

[THE PSP REPORT](#)

[NEGATIVE ITEMS ON YOUR DRIVING RECORD YOU MUST AVOID](#)

[MAKING FREQUENT JOB CHANGES \(AKA, JOB HOPPING\)](#)

[KEEPING A RECORD OF YOUR WORK HISTORY](#)

The Motor Vehicle Report (MVR)



The MVR is your official driving record collected from U.S. State DMVs, whether in commercial or personal vehicle/s. It includes all accident history, as well as information on the applicant's driver's license, license class and type, endorsements, restrictions, driving violations, suspensions and DUIs when available.

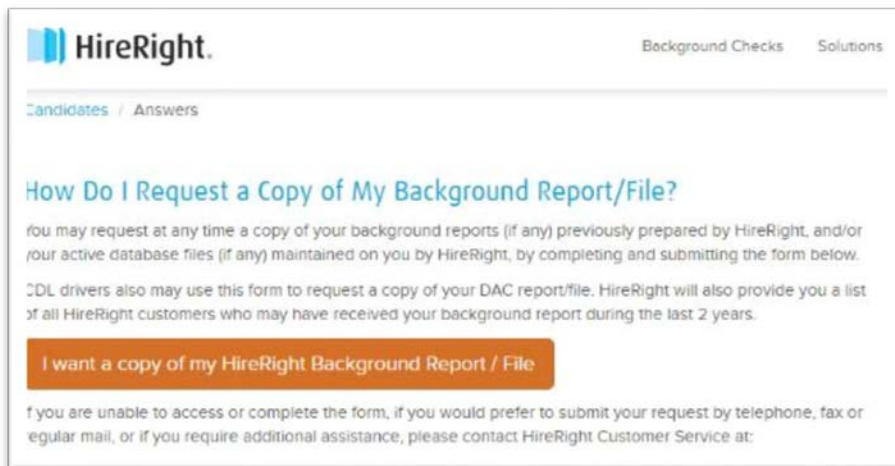
The shorter your MVR, the better. Individual states vary on how long they keep an offense on your record. After a certain period of time, the offense "goes away", never to be seen again. Most motor carriers will want to see your MVR, and it will probably be the most important factor as to whether they hire you or not.

Note: Most trucking companies will now run a DAC Report before hiring you. This includes your MVR, plus other things like employment history, criminal background, etc.

A motor carrier may ask you to provide a current copy of your MVR, which you can get at your local Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV or DPS),

usually free of charge. Go to Trucker Country's [Truck Driving Schools State Directory](#) to find your state's DMV/DPS website and/or branch information.

The DAC Report



The screenshot shows the HireRight website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Background Checks' and 'Solutions'. Below that, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Candidates / Answers'. The main heading is 'How Do I Request a Copy of My Background Report/File?'. The text explains that users can request a copy of their background reports or active database files by completing a form. It also mentions that CDL drivers can use this form to request a copy of their DAC report/file, and that HireRight will provide a list of all customers who received a background report in the last 2 years. A prominent orange button says 'I want a copy of my HireRight Background Report / File'. At the bottom, it provides contact information for HireRight Customer Service if the form cannot be accessed or completed.

DAC stands for “Drive A Check”. [HireRight Dac](#) is now the company running the report and is “the most-trusted background screening solution provider in the trucking industry”.

According to [Trucking Truth](#), “Approximately 90% of the long-haul OTR carriers use DAC reports as part of their pre-hire screening process.”

The first part of the DAC report is your MVR ([go back for more info](#)). **The remaining parts of the report are:**

CDLIS, DAC Employment History File, Drug/Alcohol History Database, [Pre-Employment Screening Program \(PSP\)](#), 3-year Employment and Drug/Alcohol Violation History Verifications, Widescreen Plus, “County Criminal, Felony and Misdemeanor Records Search”, DOT Pre-

Employment Drug Testing, DOT Alcohol Testing, DOT Physical Exam, and U.S. Employment Eligibility Verification Solutions.

In other words, **the DAC Report checks everything**. This includes your entire work history that your present and former employers have reported.

Some of the information gathered may include:

- The driver's MVR, which includes past accidents and infractions.
- Criminal record.
- Employment information, including your past employment history, reasons for termination or separation, type of operations performed and/or types of trucks driven.
- A record of worker's compensation claims, and any relevant health information.

Many drivers have been denied a job due to background issues the motor carrier discovered on the driver's DAC Report. If you have been recently denied employment as a driver or owner-operator, you are entitled to a free DAC report. Call HireRight at 800-381-0645 (toll-free) and request your copy - or [go to their website](#).

If you discover false or erroneous information on your record, you are entitled to a rebuttal. HireRight will instruct you on how to rebut false or misleading information.

It's important to keep your DAC Report in a safe place with your other important information and paperwork.

Most trucking companies use DAC reports as part of their hiring and background check process. It is extremely important that drivers verify that the information contained in it is correct, and try to have it fixed if it's not. There have been *many* reports of trucking companies filing false information on the DAC after a driver left their employ.

[Truth About Trucking](#) gives the example:

"we all know that there have been drivers who have given the trucking company their two-week notice and the company then tells them to drop off the truck/trailer at a certain location. The driver does as he/she is told, does everything correctly and professionally, insures that all freight loads have been delivered, etc., and yet, later they discover that the trucking company has placed an "abandoned vehicle" on their DAC Report. If the driver chooses to sue the company for this false report . . . how does he/she prove it?"

It's extremely hard for drivers to prove their innocence in these situations. The burden of proof is all on the driver. But you *can* do a few things to protect your record. One, stay on top of things and regularly [Request a copy of your DAC Report](#). Then, if you find any information you believe to be false, you can [File a Dispute on Your DAC Report](#).

Another measure you could take is to contact [DAC Repair](#) who offers:

"services include obtaining, review and cleanup of professional driver DAC Reports. A Driver Advocate is assigned to your case and works to remove incorrect or inconsistent information from your Job History, Motor Vehicle & Criminal Record reports. Most of our customers purchase our DAC Repair Service."

CSA Program



CSA is *“a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) initiative to improve large truck and bus safety and ultimately reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities that are related to commercial motor vehicles.”*

CSA stands for “Compliance, Safety, Administration”.

A company’s safety information is recorded from the following: roadside inspections, official crash reports, results from any investigation and registration details. If a company has a bad enough score, they’re targeted for an “intervention” which *“offer an expanded suite of tools ranging from warning letters to onsite comprehensive investigations.”*

The CSA ranks and gives a “CSA score” to trucking companies and owner-operators according to the following 7 safety related categories:

CSA BASICS:



- **Unsafe Driving** — Operation of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) by drivers in a dangerous or careless manner. *Example violations:* Speeding, reckless driving, improper lane change, and inattention. (FMCSR Parts [392](#) and [397](#))



- **Hours-of-Service (HOS) Compliance** — Operation of CMVs by drivers who are ill, fatigued, or in non-compliance with the HOS regulations. This BASIC includes violations of regulations pertaining to records of duty status (RODS) as they relate to HOS requirements and the management of CMV driver fatigue. *Example violations:* HOS RODS, and operating a CMV while ill or fatigued. (FMCSR Parts [392](#) and [395](#))



- **Driver Fitness** — Operation of CMVs by drivers who are unfit to operate a CMV due to lack of training, experience, or medical qualifications. *Example violations:* Failure to have a valid and appropriate commercial driver's license (CDL) and being medically unqualified to operate a CMV. (FMCSR Parts [383](#) and [391](#))



- **Controlled Substances/Alcohol** — Operation of CMVs by drivers who are impaired due to alcohol, illegal drugs, and misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medications. *Example violations:* Use or possession of controlled substances/alcohol. (FMCSR Parts [382](#) and [392](#))



- **Vehicle Maintenance** — Failure to properly maintain a CMV and/or properly prevent shifting loads. *Example violations:* Brakes, lights, and other mechanical defects, failure to



make required repairs, and improper load securement. (FMCSR Parts [392](#), [393](#) and [396](#))

- **Hazardous Materials (HM) Compliance** — Unsafe handling of HM on a CMV. *Example violations:* Release of HM from package, no shipping papers (carrier), and no placards/markings when required. (FMCSR Part [397](#) and Hazardous Materials Regulations Parts 171, 172, 173, 177, 178, 179, and 180)



- **Crash Indicator** — Histories or patterns of high crash involvement, including frequency and severity. It is based on information from State-reported crashes

The FMCSA has more information on the [“BASICS” here](#).

While the CSA score is a “company score”, it is of primary concern to drivers as well. It is, after all, the record and performance of a company’s drivers that determines a given company’s CSA score. You’ll notice that the “BASICS” mentioned above are concerned with driver characteristics and performance. So, if a company’s score is affected by a driver’s performance, that company will A) possibly be dealt with by an “intervention”, and B) have to deal with that driver by an escalation of measures from verbal warnings, suspensions, and termination.

PSP Report



The Pre-Employment Screening Program (PSP) allows motor carriers to obtain five years of crash data and three years of roadside inspection data on prospective drivers. The PSP information comes from the same system that creates a trucking company’s [CSA scores](#).

A driver’s PSP record includes a five-year crash and three-year inspection history from FMCSA’s MCMIS database and costs \$10. You should get one and know what’s on there. [Review your PSP record today!](#)

HireRight has an informative [article on the difference between a PSP Report and the MVR](#). In it, they state:

“Remember that a PSP report is only one of the many tools an organization should use to determine the qualifications of a driver. The combination of an MVR, DAC Employment History File review, and a PSP can be very insightful, particularly when combined with other screening solutions such as a criminal history check and national sex offender registry check.”

Unlike the DAC, a motor carrier must get a driver’s permission to request a PSP report and inform the driver that any information received will help determine if the driver will be hired.

Drivers have little choice here. Either they give the company this permission, or they’ll have no chance of being hired.

Negative Driving Record Items Truckers Must Avoid

Not all trucking companies feel the same way about the following offenses, but they’re *all* considered negative items on your DAC. They can affect your employment and earning potential. **The better companies who can pick from the best applicants are likely to deny your application for the following offenses:**

Abandonments



Take the truck back to the terminal!

When you quit a driving job, always return the truck to the employer's terminal, if possible. Don't leave the truck at a truck stop, or any other location, because it could go down on your record as an abandonment. Most companies won't hire you if you have an abandonment on your record. Watch out for this one as it can show up on your report even if you have never abandoned a vehicle. Like mentioned in the [previous section](#), get a copy of your DAC report and thoroughly check it out!

Preventable Accidents



Many carriers won't hire a driver or owner-operator who's had a preventable accident within the past year. So, what's a *preventable* accident?

The FMCSA provides a helpful guide for motor carriers to incorporate into their training of drivers which includes “[A Guide to Determining Preventability of Accidents](#)”. In it, there are different types of accidents broken down by type.

Under the category “All Types of Accidents,” an accident is determined as preventable if:

- Driver was not operating at a speed suitable for the existing conditions of road, weather, and traffic
- Driver failed to control speed so that he/she could stop within assured clear distance
- Driver misjudged available clearance
- Driver failed to yield right-of-way to avoid accident
- Driver failed to accurately observe existing conditions
- Driver was in violation of company operating rules or special instructions, the regulations of any Federal or State regulatory agency, or any applicable traffic laws or ordinances

Rollovers are almost always considered preventable. If you have a rollover, it almost certainly needs to be at least two years old before most carriers will consider hiring you.

One major problem with CSA scores is that there is no distinction between preventable and non-preventable accidents. In either type of accident, it goes against the motor carrier's record. Hopefully this gets remedied soon. [Read more about this apparent flaw in the system.](#)

Speeding tickets above 15 mph

This is considered careless or reckless driving by many insurance companies. Therefore, your potential new employer may deny your application because it would affect their insurance rates and standing. This type of speeding infraction has a CSA severity weight of 10 (as does “speeding in a work/construction zone”).



Failed/refused alcohol or drug tests

If you've failed or refused a drug or alcohol test in the past 5 years, it'll be tough to find a driving job. If you've received a DUI/DWI or failed or refused the test while operating a CMV (commercial motor vehicle), no reputable company will hire you.

Many trucking companies will put in their job requirements, “No failed or refused drug or alcohol tests within past 7 years” as well as “No DUIs, DWIs and BACs in a commercial vehicle.” Ever. This gives you a good idea of the importance of not allowing this to happen to you and having it end up on your driving record.

Making Frequent Job Changes (AKA “Job Hopping”)

Job hopping is a practice, especially common in the trucking industry, where "the grass is greener on the other side of the street". Or, it may just be the nature of the truck driver's job. There has been close to [100% turnover rate in the trucking industry for quite some time](#). This means that drivers voluntarily change jobs an average of once per year.

It's best to take your time and find a good job, then try to stay with that job for a while, if possible. If your resume shows stability, with a low number of jobs, you'll be more hireable and have many more options. Options are good. Lack of options means you're limited to working for the “sub-par” companies that will hire practically anyone.

When you work for a marginal company you end up with lower pay, crap routes, irritating dispatchers, lack of home time, and then what? Yeah, you start looking for another job. This is considered a *vicious cycle*. Remember, [don't wake up in a roadside ditch!](#)



The first few years are the all-important learning years, as well as the time to establish yourself in the industry. Some companies even specify the maximum number of jobs you can have had recently. For example, many trucking companies today will not hire an applicant who's had more than 7 jobs in the past 3 years (some companies might allow more, some less).

The first year or two will be the hardest, no matter where you start working. The good news is, once you get through it, your future is bright. Get out your shades!

Keeping a Record of Your Work History

It's key to keep records of all your employment (especially driving jobs) history for future reference. The best idea is to simply have a resume and keep it updated regularly, like each time you make a job change or add titles, awards, or achievements.

You can also list your CDL information, including your endorsements, as well as the how many miles you've driven if you're a veteran road warrior and you want to emphasize that fact.

There are several types of resumes, but chronological is the simplest and is what most employers will look for.

Keep your resume and/or records in a file on your computer, or on paper in a file with your other important records. Store your files on some type of cloud, like [Dropbox](#), just in case your computer dies. This way you'll always have it when you need it, regardless of which computer you're on.

For just \$10, Dropbox gives you 1 TB (1,000 GB) of space. That's a *lot* of space. They also have a free plan if you don't *need* a lot of space.

Create a Professional Trucking Resume

Use a Word Resume Template

If you have Microsoft Word, they have a bunch of resume templates you can use. It can be extremely simple or as fancy as you want it to be. Simple is best. If you don't have Word, you can get it for \$9.99 per month now

with [Office 365](#). That's much better than dishing out several hundred dollars for it.

Google ResumeBuilder

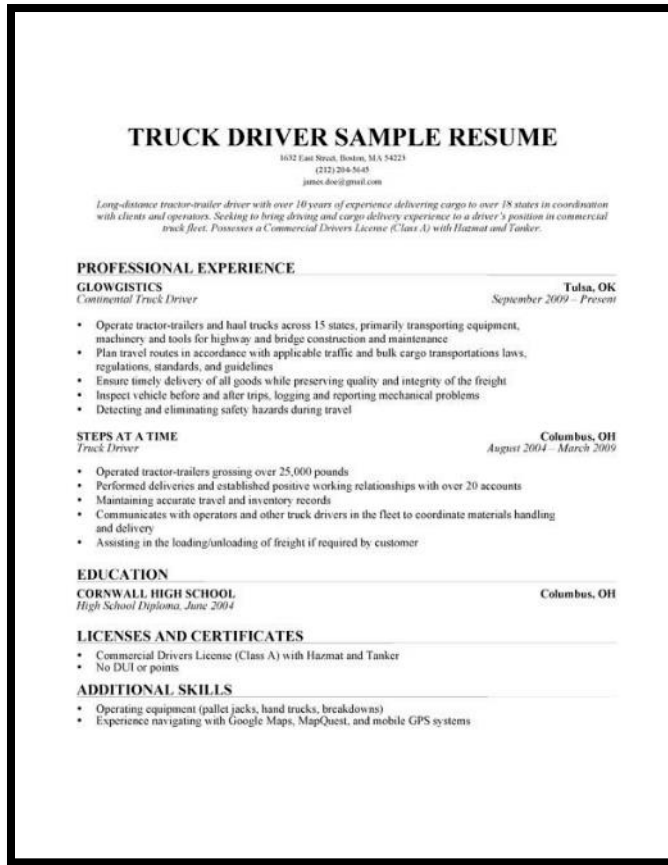
If you have [Google Drive](#) (an alternative to Dropbox, at a similar price), you can also use their [free resume service](#).

Free Resume Options

[Google Docs](#) has free resume templates as well. Just enter resume into the search bar at the top. This should be fine for your purposes and I *did* say simple was best, right?

Lastly, you can just Google "[create resume](#)" and there's a bunch of free and paid options. The following is an example resume for truck drivers by [Resume Companion](#) who offer a free resume builder with optional additional paid services. Use this resume as a guide when creating your professional trucking resume.

Sample Trucking Resume



View resume templates [online](#).

Important Information You Should Record and Keep on Your Resume

- Past trucking companies you've worked for.
 - Keep key information for each company you've worked for, including: the firm's name, address, phone numbers, other contact information,
 - Name of supervisor or dispatcher who can verify your employment and job performance, what type of trucking

you did, states you drove in, and reason why you left the company.

- Recent DOT physical exams.
- Recent MVR.
- Copy of your DAC Report (which includes your MVR).
- Recent employment applications.
- Accident Reports: If you've been involved in (any kind of) an accident in the past 3 years, keep a copy of the accident report and submit it with your future job applications.
- Gaps in Employment: It's important to document all gaps of unemployment between jobs (driving or other jobs). In many cases, if you have a gap of more than 30 days between jobs, you'll need to account for that period. Times where you were self-employed may need to be documented by tax records.
- CDL information including endorsements.
- Personal achievements and awards.

How to Retrieve Your Forgotten or Lost Employment Record

Have you forgotten some of your past employment information? **No problem, they're a few ways you can retrieve it:**

Check with Your State Unemployment Office

Just perform an online search for “(whatever your past *employer’s state was*)” *plus (+)* “unemployment office” to find the state unemployment office’s official website. These agencies may be able to release employment history for you. If the website doesn’t make it easy enough, call the office and ask them if they will do it for you.

Get Your Employment History from Social Security

You can make a [Request for Social Security Earnings Information online](#). However, it’s not free. There’s a fee for providing this information. Also, it takes up to 120 days to get the information. Ah yes, dealing with the government!

Tax Returns

Check your previous W-2s for company information.

Call Past Employers

Once you have all the names of the companies you worked for, call them up and ask them for the information you need.

Chapter 3: How Do You Find Truck Driving Jobs?



OK, you *should* have a good idea of your options in trucking and you *might* even have a good idea about what type of driving job and situation you want to go for.

But how do you even *find* those truck driving jobs?!

There is still a shortage of truck drivers in the U.S., but this gives qualified drivers a lot of leverage when it comes to searching for and landing a great driving job.

There are practically truck driving jobs everywhere, most likely plenty right in your area!

If there *isn't* an abundance of jobs in your immediate area, all hope isn't lost. You'll just have to either:

- Travel a little further away from your home to get to the company yard or terminal.
- Hire on with a major carrier that has many terminals and/or running lanes. With many carriers, being even remotely nearby will qualify you. The one obvious downside here is you won't get home that often.
- Consider moving to an area with more trucking opportunities.

With all the technological advances these last 10-15 years, finding a trucking job has become much easier for truckers.

Remember not that long ago, when people used pay phones? Or standard phones *connected to wires*? You had to either look in your local newspaper classifieds and call trucking companies, or you went to a truck stop and browsed through the trucking magazines. *Then* you made the calls.



Now, through WiFi, or 3/4G phone service, the internet can be accessed in many more places *and* a lot faster. Basically, any smartphone and/or laptop will suffice. Instant job searching is right at your fingertips!

To make it even easier, there are now *tons* of truck driving job websites. Everyone and their brother has one. *But*, it can get very confusing. Just about every one of those websites claims they're the "*best*" and the "*only one you need.*"

Well, truth is, they're *all very similar*. Many job sites and job boards share jobs with other boards and websites. And trucking companies, especially the bigger ones, usually use multiple sites and post the same jobs to all of them. So, if you use several sites, you'll see a lot of duplicate jobs postings.

There Are Many Ways to Get Started and Find Trucking Jobs

Some of the following methods may seem obvious, but I don't want to leave anything out. The one you select will depend upon many factors, like; where you live, what type of trucking you want to do, or what your goals are. Try to gather as many driving job possibilities in your area as possible, in your preferred type of trucking.

After you've gathered plenty of potential jobs together, you'll need to learn how to [evaluate those job opportunities](#), which will help you pick one you're more likely to be happy with for a long time.

Search for Jobs by Type of Freight

With some drivers, it just doesn't matter. You'll hear, "I'll haul anything as long as the price is right!" But many other drivers prefer hauling one type of freight versus another.

Whether it's general freight of all kinds you prefer to haul, or specialty trucking like oversized and/or heavy haul, it's all doable in trucking.

You just need to do your homework when searching for and investigating trucking companies. Find companies that haul the type of freight you're

interested in, narrow down the list and choose your top contender, then do what it takes to get hired by that company!

In this type of category search, you'll enter in the type of trailer used to haul your preferred type of freight, like **flatbed, reefer, dry van, or tanker.**

Search for Jobs by Your Preferred Type of Driving

- **Student drivers, jobs with CDL training, inexperienced truck drivers.**

This could be geared towards anyone inexperienced and needing to get CDL training, to those already graduated from a truck driving school and needing to find companies who will hire drivers with no experience behind the wheel.

- **Company drivers**
- **Owner operators**
- **Lease purchase opportunities**

Expedited and Hot Shot Trucking

For more information about expedited trucking, refer to Book 1. This type of trucking involves moving freight “at a moment’s notice.”

The following companies specialize in hauling expedited loads:

- [FedEx Custom Critical](#) (hiring only owner-operators)
- [Landstar Express America](#)
- [Express-1 Expedited Solutions](#)
- [Panther Premium Logistics](#)

- [Averitt Express](#)
- [YRC Freight Time Critical](#)
- [Bolt](#)
- [Load One Transportation and Logistics](#)
- [All State Express](#)
- [Square One Transport](#)
- [Tri-State Expedited Services](#)
- [Roadrunner Expedite](#)
- [CTSX Expediting and Logistics](#)
- [DKP Express](#)
- [Holland Guaranteed & Expedited Services](#)

Local Driving Jobs

Depending on where you live, the following are some of the more common local jobs for truck drivers.

- UPS, FedEx, USPS (often seasonal)
- Union jobs
- Construction

Local jobs (and intrastate regional) are also the only type of jobs that drivers under 21 can get.

Since we're still experiencing a driver shortage, even inexperienced drivers can get a good local job in many areas of the country.

List of Resources in Finding a Driving Job

Basic Internet Keyword Search

Do a simple internet search for “[truck driving jobs](#)” or “[trucking job boards](#)” using Google, Bing, or your favorite search engine. Whether you’re looking for OTR jobs with a big carrier, or a local driving job with a small company in your town, a simple search should produce results.

Some other simple searches you can do for different situations:

[Jobs with CDL Training](#)

[Truck Driving Jobs Inexperienced](#)

[Truck Driving Jobs for Experienced Drivers](#)

This is the most simple and obvious method of finding truck driving jobs. No degree in rocket science is required. These results will give you a bunch of websites that have trucking jobs. But like I mentioned, you’ll find search results with headlines like “we are the best,” “highest paying trucking jobs,” “browse thousands of driving jobs and apply to *all* of them with one click!” and so on.

You get the idea!

You might be doing this already and maybe you’re frustrated with the results you’ve found. But you *will* find trucking jobs on these websites.

The main problem with many of these types of trucking job sites is that *they* want to control the entire process. They want to lock you in to *their* way of doing things. And maybe this is just what *you* need. Many

people need a push in a certain direction before they'll act. Maybe filling out just one application and having a *ton* of trucking company recruiters call you and/or email you is what you want. Or *need*.

But I highly recommend that you be *proactive* in the process, even if you choose finding a job this “one application” way.

Proactive: controlling a situation by making things happen or by preparing for possible future problems.

Don't get stuck with the wrong company just because you believed a strong sales pitch and promises of all the best features you could ever want in a job. Using the recommendations in the [next chapter on evaluating trucking companies and job opportunities](#) will help you take control of your future.

A “2 Sources” Approach to Finding Trucking Jobs

In [Chapter 1](#), I went over how to search for the exact job description you're looking for (among many other things!). Simply using the following 2 sources will most likely get you more results than you can handle.

1. [Indeed](#). A big job board which “aggregates” jobs from many sites. Many jobs have company reviews by drivers, which is a nice feature.
2. [Craigslist](#). The biggest classifieds type of website.

Using these 2 sources should be enough to find any type of driving job you want. It always worked for me.

When using this method, you'll get much better results if you're more specific and use advanced search queries.

Indeed is a meta search engine that searches for jobs. They're a job *aggregator*, which means they get their job postings from a large variety of sources, many of the same sources such as the ones you found when you Googled "truck driving jobs." The job postings on *many* trucking job sites get imported into Indeed.

Here are several more ways for you to find your next truck driving job!

Job Finder at a "Trucking" Website

These are many websites where you can find information about trucking companies and submit an application to them. This application can be automatically sent to several (or even hundreds) of motor carriers, if you choose. This is a type of "fishing with a wide net" for finding employment with motor carriers.

Depending upon your experience and qualifications, you may get a bunch of responses. Then, you can choose the ones that seem to suit you the best. You can also just choose to have your application sent to a list of motor carriers you're already interested in.

If you haven't been to truck driving school yet, this type of website is also a good way to find motor carriers who have their own training programs. Just be sure that you know what to look for in a truck driving school, and which recruiter promises and claims you should believe (see Book 2).

This type of website allows drivers to select from the following important categories to narrow down the job search.

- **Area:** just select your home state and search.
- **Type of trucking:** flatbed, tanker, van, reefer, etc.

- **Company driver or owner/operator** positions.
- **Pay Desired.**
- **Local, Regional, or OTR** preferences.

You also can **find trucking companies that hire and train inexperienced drivers**: Many of these companies either have their own schools or sponsor select schools.

Truck Driving Job Apps (Mobile Applications)

The following Apps make it easy to search for jobs while on the go. From researching driver job information like driver pay, benefits, and hiring states to contacting or applying to a company, these apps can do it all.

Check each app for reviews to determine if it will do what you need it to do. Again, follow the rest of the advice in this chapter when it comes to these apps. It's essential that you be *proactive* and thoroughly research these companies and not simply take the word of each sales pitch from trucking company recruiters!

- [Truck Driver Job List of Apps](#) (Android)
- [Big Truck Driving Jobs](#) (iPhone, iPad, iPod touch)
- [Trucker JOBS](#) (iPhone, iPad, iPod touch)

Truck Driver Magazines and Publications (Printed and Digital Versions)



Whether it's pictures of cool custom trucks, current industry news, or driving jobs you're looking for, don't forget trucking magazines. But we're mainly interested in those magazines that have job information for truck drivers. Usually, this means a full-page job description complete with pictures.

Until recently, you had to be in a truck stop, truck dealership, or truck service center waiting area to find one. But now these same publications are offering digital versions, which you can find below.

One of the limitations of some of these publications is that they list mostly OTR opportunities that are offered by the bigger motor carriers. To find smaller companies or jobs where you live, you'll probably have more luck using other job finding methods in this chapter.

How to Find Printed Versions of These Magazines

Truck Stops



You'll find trucking magazines in several locations in most truck stops. When you're entering the main building, there are often magazine racks. But they can be found just about anywhere inside, depending on the truck stop. This includes: the fuel desk, laundry areas, driver's lounge, theaters, restaurant, or in the main lobby area.

National or Local Bookstores and Public Libraries

This can be another place to find these trucking magazines and periodicals, some of which have jobs for truck drivers. But being up-to-date is especially important, so check for the publication date.

The bigger bookstores are also online, including the exclusively online [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). But the magazines and publications you'll find there are more a source for trucking industry news, education, and general trucking information. Not too many jobs, but it can't hurt to check. You never know!

Online Digital Publications

The following publications provide easy access to archived versions, plus all jobs have links to website information and/or job applications.

Company Driver Digital

- [Website](#)

Hiring Truck Drivers

- [Website](#)
- [Digital Magazine](#)

Owner Operator

- [Digital Magazine](#)

Company Driver

- [Digital Magazine](#)

Drive Regional

- [Digital Magazine](#)

Changing Lanes

- [Digital Magazine](#)

Best Driver Jobs

- [Digital Magazine](#)

Driving Force

- [Digital Magazine](#)

Big Rig Owner

- [Digital Magazine](#)

Visit Trucking Company Websites Directly

If you are interested in working for a specific company, you can visit their site directly to find more information about the different positions they have available.

If it's bigger companies you want, google search a company's **job information pages**. Trucking company pages have a *lot* more job detail than you'll find in these trucking publications.

There are over 250,000 trucking companies that operate with interstate authority. That's a lot of opportunities that'll materialize with consistent phone calls or a visit to the company website.

- Quick Transport Solutions has trucking companies organized by state [here](#).
- For a state and alphabetical list, [Fleet Directory](#) is also a good choice.

These are the best lists I've found without having to pay for a complete directory.

Truck Driver Forums

Forums can be a good way to find out more about a trucking company you're interested in. You'll hear the good, the bad, and the ugly about almost any decent-sized company out there. Either enter in the company in the forum search, or search for the category or hauling type and read the posts for each.

3 forums I'd highly recommend are:

- [The Truckers Report](#)
- [Trucking Truth](#)
- [TruckersForum.Net](#)

Your Local Newspaper Classified Ads

Hey, remember newspapers? Back in the day, before the internet (yeah, I know, this was a *long* time ago!), the help wanted section of the classifieds was the easiest way to find driving jobs. Many newspapers, especially those in bigger cities, usually have a "driving opportunities," "drivers wanted," or a section just for drivers.

You can find local carriers (either those who only operate locally or who operate over-the-road or regional, and are just based locally) in these classified sections.

Word of mouth (AKA, "Shooting the Breeze" with Fellow Drivers)

Other truck drivers you meet out on the road are a good way to find out about job opportunities. Go to a truck stop and you'll find plenty of drivers who'll probably be more than happy to talk to you, and give you advice.

Just try to use good judgment, and don't believe everything a driver tells you. Many carriers pay their drivers a nice "finder's fee" (typically \$500.00 with the bigger carriers) for recommending their company to another driver, payable once that driver hires on, and stays a minimum amount of time with the carrier.

When you're eating at a truck stop, or just small talking at the fuel desk, take advantage of your time and talk to a few drivers about their job. If a driver seems reasonable at all, ask if they know anything about a company you're interested in.

Of course, take all information with a grain of salt. Truck drivers can be known to tell some tall tales, badmouth a good company out of spite, or recommend a bad company just to lead you down the primrose path. All the while, they're laughing at the latest "sucker" to listen to their noise.

Local-area telephone directories

Here's an oldie but a goodie! Whether you're looking for local, regional, or over-the-road opportunities, you may want to start looking in the yellow pages of your local telephone directory. Look under trucking: heavy hauling and motor freight. You can also look under "moving and storage," or just "movers."

You should find plenty of trucking companies under those headings. Then, look up those companies online to find out more information before making any calls. This will save you a lot of time and breath.

Local or state employment offices

First, do an online search for "employment" or "jobs" plus "your state." You'll probably notice results in cities and/or towns near you, but if not, you can add the city/town keyword to your search terms.

Results will vary from state to state, but you should notice results such as "Department of Workforce Services," "JobLink," "Employment Office," "Department of Labor", and other similar phrases. Some of these sites will have their own search engine where you can input "cdl" or "truck driver," for example.

This can be a good way to find out about local types of driving job opportunities, but all types of trucking jobs may show up.

Job Placement and Company Recruiters at Your Truck Driving School

Trucking company recruiters often visit truck driving schools to talk to future truckers about job opportunities with their company. This is where

you find out which companies are hiring students who graduate from the school.

This method has one advantage over the others because the representatives of trucking companies already know that you've just graduated (or, are about to graduate) from school, and won't be expecting you to have any driving experience. Also, you can talk to them face-to-face and ask them any questions you need answered.

Recruiters often visit truck driving schools near graduation, and are part of the "placement assistance" you're guaranteed by the school.

Chapter 4: How to Evaluate Trucking Companies and Choose the Right Job Opportunity



Trucking companies are obviously the ones in control of the hiring process. After all, they're making the key decisions about whether to hire a driver or not, based on *their* set of qualifications. It's the trucking company that ultimately makes this decision.

But up until that point, it's the *driver* who's in control. After finding what appears to be the best companies to work for (that fit a driver's own criteria), drivers must thoroughly check out each company, narrowing the field as they go.

So, once you've gathered your list of truck driving job opportunities, you must then evaluate each one to find the best possible job opportunity for

you. You must take the time and effort to make sure a company will be the right company for you, *plus* weed out the bad ones.

This may all seem like a lot of effort, and it may be tempting to just skip this step and hope for the best. But, trust me, it's a lot easier to spend a few days of extra company investigation than having a terrible experience with the wrong company, and possibly having to make a subsequent job change.

The information here is primarily geared towards company drivers. But most of it will also apply to owner-operators who lease on their trucks with a motor carrier as well as lease-purchase drivers. Independent owner-operators function very differently, and therefore, are not part of this discussion.

Ensuring You Meet Trucking Company Hiring Requirements

Trucking companies have their own requirements for the hiring of new drivers. In many cases, these companies have decided to hold their drivers to more than just the minimum standard.

The following are some of these requirements:

Commercial Driver's License

This one will probably be obvious to you by now. A driver must obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), which can only be issued by one state. Depending on the type of loads hauled and trailers they have, additional CDL endorsements may be required.

Go to the *CDL Section in Book Two* for detailed information and qualifications on getting your CDL.

Driving Record

Most motor carriers will not hire new drivers who have had three or more moving violations in the last two to three years. A driver must provide an employing motor carrier with a list of all motor vehicle violations in the past 12 months (or sign a statement saying that they've had no motor vehicle violations during the past 12 months).

Education

There are no formal education requirements in becoming a truck driver, but it is highly recommended that a new driver go through a high-quality truck driving school as discussed in *Book 2: Getting your CDL & Truck Driver Training*.

Minimum Age

Depending upon the state you live in, you can legally obtain a commercial driver's license at 18 or 19 years of age. At this point, your best chance at employment is local hauling, often in construction, because you cannot drive interstate unless you are at least 21 years old. Many carriers won't hire you unless you're 23 to 25 years old.

The main reason for this is because of insurance regulations. Statistically, the younger the driver, the higher the accident rate. Between the price of tractors (newer ones are typically \$50,000 to more than \$100,000), trailers (up to \$50,000), and cargo of up to \$1 million or more, insurance companies want to limit their liability by lessening the likelihood of an accident.

Criminal Record

Canada will not allow drivers who have felonies on their records to enter the country, regardless of how long ago it was. Because of this, any trucking

company which regularly goes into Canada is not likely to hire you if you have a felony conviction(s) on your record.

The details about past criminal convictions and legally entering Canada can be a little confusing. Click [here for more information on criminal inadmissibility in Canada](#). But you may have options in certain cases, so check out "[Overcoming Criminal Inadmissibility](#)".

A driver must not have been convicted of...

- a felony involving the use of a commercial motor vehicle.
- using a truck in the commission of a crime involving drugs.
- driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- leaving the scene of an accident involving a commercial motor vehicle.

Work History

Obviously, the more stable your previous work history is, the better. But most motor carriers will understand that you're starting a new career, and will give you a chance (if you meet the other requirements in this section). The main requirement most trucking companies have is that you've successfully completed a training program at a truck driving school, and that you demonstrate a willingness, and an aptitude to learn.

Physical Requirements

Generally, a potential driver must be in good health, and be able to perform all necessary duties of a truck driver. For more information, see Book 2: Getting Your CDL, Chapter 2: Do You Meet the Official Federal and State CDL Requirements.

Gather Key Information and Start Investigating Companies

Every motor carrier has their own way of running their business, and company policies regarding most issues. It's important for a driver to know about and approve of these policies before committing to work for them. If you're interested in succeeding, these policies should be just as important as how much a company pays by the mile, or what kind of trucks they have in their fleet.

Furthermore, each carrier provides unique features that they provide to their drivers. You'll need to compare company policies and features which are most important to you to make the best decision and find the right job for you.

There is plenty of information to gather and compare on each company. Consider writing down a list of policies and features that are most important to you, and make many copies (plenty, like 50-100) to use as you call and gather information from each of the trucking companies. Place all pages in a folder or punch holes in pages and place in a 3-ring binder.

Another option is to use a note gathering organizational tool like [Evernote](#). It would be worth your time to learn about this invaluable tool. You can easily create a note for each company that has all the information you need to gather as a template you can use over and over. Then process all notes into a special folder you can access quickly and easily.

Once you've gathered all the information, you must decide which companies have the most attractive policies, and whatever other features you're looking for in a driving job.

Compile a List of Potential Trucking Companies

Keeping organized cannot be overstated when gathering information on trucking companies. This way, when it's getting closer to decision time, you'll be able to look back and quickly compare features from company to company. You'll be able to weigh what's most important to *you* as well as see the pros and cons of each company at a glance.

Add each company to your list, or to a tool such as the chart in the next section.

What Important Features Should You Compare?

Pay information

This is usually the first thing drivers want to know. How much is the pay? Is it by-the-mile (this is usually the case with over-the-road companies), by-the-load, by-the-hour, or by-a-percentage? Also, what is their pay structure for each year of experience a driver has. This is how most companies figure driver pay by cents per mile or CPM.

For example:

- up to one year of experience \$.26 per mile,
- over one year of experience \$.28 per mile,
- over two years of experience \$.30 per mile, etc.

Note: *some companies pay this way, except the experience must be with their company. If you have 10 years of experience with other trucking companies, they may still pay you the lowest rate to start as if you were a driver just coming out of school.*

Ask the company if CPM is for all miles driven, or just for loaded miles, with empty miles being either unpaid (not preferable, unless the loaded miles really pay well), or at a lower CPM. Also find out if the paid miles are hub (actual miles driven), or factored by another method (like PC Miler or the Household Movers Guide), which is usually a little less than actual miles.

Does the company pay vacation pay (typically after one year of employment), and major holiday pay?

Average miles per week

Miles are, by far, the most important factor in the trucking business! It matters little that you're getting an extra two cents per mile if the company doesn't have the miles to offer. A good barometer to go by is the 3,000 miles a week plateau. That's a realistic goal to shoot for, for the average truck driver. At 30 cents per mile (which is average for a driver with a year or two of experience), that comes to \$900.00 a week gross pay, without extra pay or bonuses of any kind.

Also, ask how many trips or load assignments each driver must complete on average to get the quoted average miles per week. Completing ten separate 300-mile trips will be a lot more difficult than doing three 1000 mile trips per week, especially if there's any waiting time involved in-between trips (waiting, loading, unloading, waiting for new load, etc.). Or just ask them what is their average length of haul.

Extra pay opportunities and bonuses

Does the company pay extra for multiple deliveries (drops)? Many motor carriers consider the first and last drops to be part of a normal delivery. Over and above that, they'll pay extra for each stop after the second one.

Do they pay for layovers (usually over 24 hours), and/or provide hotels during layovers? Are there bonuses for safety (no accidents, tickets, or company violations, possibly quarterly), low idle percentage, or for mileage (over 12,000 miles a month, for example)?

Expense reimbursement, advances, etc.

Ask about how the company expects you to pay for expenses on the road, and how they'll reimburse you. This includes truck expenses (oil, other fluids), as well as unloading expenses (paying lumpers to unload), tolls, etc. Also, ask about the company's cash advance policy. How do drivers receive cash advances on the road, how much advance on pay is allowed per week, etc.

Does the company issue fuel cards?

Does the company issue fuel card to their drivers? Does the company fuel through a fuel network, or at a regular truck stop? Many companies do this because they can get a fuel discount for purchasing in volume. For drivers, there are advantages to this system. It can make your fuel planning easier, and it can enable you to take advantage of frequent fueler programs.

Tractor idling and speeds

Most trucking companies have installed APUs (auxiliary power units) in their tractors to limit idling, while allowing drivers to run temperature controls in the cab all year long.

But many companies without APUs still offer bonuses if the driver keeps the truck's idling time down. This usually means the driver must turn the truck off whenever it's stopped. In extreme cold or hot temperatures, however, this is not very practical. Therefore, these bonuses are often very hard to get.

Another thing companies do is to have their tractors automatically turn off and off as needed, reducing idling time. However, this can be a very annoying feature to drivers, with truck not maintaining a consistent temperature, and the disturbing noise of truck cranking and shutting down.

Another thing companies do to improve safety and fuel efficiency is limit the truck's maximum road speed, using a governor. Ask the company at what speed they govern their trucks. For example, Crete Carrier governs their trucks at 65 mph, which was recently raised from their previous 62!

Benefit Packages

Medical, dental, and life insurance. Most non-unionized trucking companies will offer insurance to their drivers at a reduced rate, which usually doesn't begin until 90 days after the hiring date. This insurance is usually for the driver only, not for their family. They'll offer the option of adding a driver's family to the coverage, but often at a very expensive rate.

In this situation, it seems to be a good idea to take the insurance for yourself only, and shop around for the best rates for the rest of your family. Unionized trucking companies usually offer very good insurance coverage for the entire family. Also ask about company retirement plans.

Home-time and days-off policy

Many companies will give drivers so many days off in proportion to the amount of time the driver spent on the road, away from home. For example, it is common to give a day off for every week on the road (3 weeks out, 3 days off), but each company will vary slightly.

How and where a company does most of its routes will have a big effect on how often you'll be able to get home. If you live on a major freight lane (usually a major interstate), choosing to work for a company which travels

that freight lane regularly will probably enable you to get home more often. Many companies are "irregular route" carriers, and can travel on any route, at any time. However, with these companies, it may be harder to get home.

Some companies have "dedicated routes" which could mean good, consistent miles plus a better chance of getting home regularly. These routes can be tough to get for newer drivers, however.

One advantage of driving regionally is that you'll probably be able to get home regularly. This type of company may only service the 10 western states, or a smaller geographic area within one or several states.

Find out if you'll be able to get home for major holidays, if that's a concern to you. Also, what about personal time, including special days like anniversaries, and birthdays, etc.

If you need to get home, you must give as much notice to dispatch as possible. Several weeks' notice is minimum, unless there's an emergency. This allows dispatch to plan ahead. Just don't make a habit of always needing to get home.

OTR, regional, or local driving

Obviously, you'll need to find out in what manner the company operates. This will probably be explained in the newspaper, website advertisement, or presentation from a recruiter, etc.

Solo or team driving

Some companies only run a certain way, while others will give you a choice about how you want to drive. Find out if the company ever requires you to drive with a partner. There's a world of difference between driving by yourself and driving with a partner. For example, sleeping in a moving

truck, possibly with a driver you're unsure of, can be extremely difficult for some drivers to get used to.

Drop and hook percentage

A company should be able to tell you the percentage of drop and hook loads the company hauls. This is when drivers simply unhook the trailer for one load assignment, and pick up another one. At a shipper, the driver will may drop an empty trailer and pick up a loaded one. At a receiver, the driver will often drop the loaded trailer and pick up an empty one.

The more time you spend driving down the road (big wheels, keep on turnin'), the more money you'll make. Loading and unloading takes time (as does waiting to get loaded, unloaded, for a new load, etc.), which is not usually paid for. However, it's usually tough to find a company with mostly (or all) drop and hook, unless you drive in a team operation and/or in a doubles and triples operation.

No-touch freight percentage

This is the percentage of freight that you don't have to physically touch (load or unload). You either open the trailer doors and back up to a dock (and wait while the customer moves the freight), or simply drop and hook.

Do drivers "slip seat"?

Are tractors assigned to each driver or does the company "slip seat?" Many companies utilize the practice of slip-seating. Drivers who slip-seat (not all drivers within the company necessarily slip-seat) are not assigned permanently to a tractor. When the driver shows up for their shift, they're assigned a tractor for the day. This practice is more prevalent with companies which operate locally. However, the occasional over-the-road (OTR) company will use slip-seating as well.

Newer drivers are more prone to having to slip-seat, especially with OTR operations. There are obvious disadvantages to this practice. If OTR, the driver must load or unload all their necessary belongings and supplies each time they start or finish a trip.

Also, the condition of the tractor may not be the best. Drivers are encouraged to be considerate of the next assigned driver and keep the truck clean, fuel the truck if necessary, and report any known problems.

With other operations, drivers may get assigned permanently to a tractor, but will have to share it with another driver who works a different shift. This is how many local carriers operate.

Home-time use of tractors

If drivers are assigned tractors, do tractors stay in the yard/terminal (if there is one where the driver lives), or can the driver drive it home? If allowed, do you have a place to park it? Sometimes you'll have a trailer to consider as well. Do you have a truck stop near your home where you can park it (sometimes for several days)?

Type and Condition of Equipment

- *Tractor Make:* Freightliner, Kenworth, Peterbilt, Mack, Volvo, other.
- *Tractor Style:* conventional or cabover
- *Tractor Engine:* Detroit, Cummins, Caterpillar (Cat)
- *Tractor Transmission:* 9, 10, Super 10, 13, 15, 18-speed? Automatic?
Is the speed governed (the engine limited to a certain speed)?
- *Tractor Amenities:* Condo, stand up, mid-roof, flat top
- *Tractor Age:* How old is tractor. The newer, the better.
- *Tractor Overall Condition:* For a company to be successful, they must first enable drivers to be successful. Having newer and well-maintained tractors is a must to accomplish these goals.

- *Trailers:* As a company driver, you could be assigned different tractors on different trips or loads, though this obviously varies from company to company. So, get an overall idea of the age, condition, and type of fleet trailers.

You'll also be able to deduce certain things from the safety report ([see below](#)). If the safety rating is high, it's a good bet that the company's equipment will be newer and maintained regularly.

Rider and pet policy

Does the company allow you to take an authorized passenger with you in the truck? Many companies allow you to take someone with you on the road.

Usually, you must document the rider's information with the company and bring a company form stating that the person is allowed to be in the truck with you (to be presented to law enforcement or DOT personnel at weigh stations, if requested). Most companies require children to be at least a certain age (7-10 years is common) to be allowed to come along.

If you like animals, maybe you'd like to take your pet with you on the road. A lot of drivers enjoy the companionship, and the fun an animal can be.

However, not all trucking companies allow drivers to have pets in their trucks. Many companies will, but may require the driver to put down a pet deposit, in case there's damage to the truck. This is another question you'll need to ask prospective companies you are considering working for.

Check out this article on [“Tips for Trucking with Pets.”](#)

Dispatch Functionality

Are drivers assigned to a dispatcher, or does each dispatcher handle drivers within specific geographic areas? Do drivers have a choice of accepting and refusing loads or is it a "forced dispatch" system (most companies run a forced dispatch system). How does communication between driver and dispatch take place? Via Qualcomm, daily check calls, etc.? Is dispatch available 24 hours?

Carrier Safety Rating

This is important for several reasons. You don't want to sign on with a company that doesn't upkeep their equipment or keeps drivers with records of unsafe driving practices. Safety is paramount!

Furthermore, when a company's safety rating is weak, it's more likely that, as a driver, you'll be pulled over and checked out while on the road. Not that you'd have anything to hide (I hope!), but it does take up valuable time you could be spending racking up miles.

Company safety ratings can be viewed [on the SAFER website](#). You can view the safety rating of any motor carrier with an active US DOT number. Click on "Company Snapshot" and search for a carrier by USDOT Number, MC Number or Name.

Helpful Comparison Chart to Aid Your Investigation

The following chart includes most information you'll need to gather to help you decide between companies. Go to our [resources page](#) to download the chart. You can then edit it to suit your preferences, fill out as you gather information, or just print out if and fill out by hand if you prefer.

Trucking Company Comparison List

Feature to Compare	Company 1	Company 2	Company 3	Company 4	Company 5
Carrier Safety Rating					
Pay Information					
Average miles per week					
Extra pay/bonuses					
Expense reimbursement					
Fuel Cards					
Tractor Idling/Speed Bonus					
Benefits					
Home Time / Days Off Policy					
Type of Driving (OTR, Regional, Local)					
Solo or Team					
Drop/Hook Percentage					
No-Touch Freight Percentage					
Slip Seating?					
Take Tractors Home?					
Equipment Condition					
Rider Policy					
Pet Policy					
Dispatch Functionality					

How to Vet a Trucking Company You're Interested In

You should check out each trucking company at least as thoroughly as they're going to check you out. There are many more drivers who quit because of dissatisfaction with the company (they go on to find another driving job), than there are incidents where trucking companies terminate drivers because of unsatisfactory performance. This suggests that perhaps drivers are not checking out trucking companies as thoroughly as they should.

Search the Web

Do an online search (on Google, Bing, etc.) of the trucking companies you're interested in. The results should include plenty of websites that have discussions about a given company. You may be surprised at how much information you can find. You'll probably find both good and bad information, so you'll have to use your judgment to decide.

Remember, *every* company has its fans and detractors, even the best ones. A driver may want to vent about a bad experience they had, but it *could* just be that the *driver* was at fault and is trying to “get back” at the company with a negative review.

Truckers Forums

There are several trucking forums online where you can gather a lot of “inside information” about a trucking company. The Truckers Report forum has a [page where you can request information on specific trucking companies](#). Drivers will talk back and forth about a given company exhaustively. This “inside scoop” you can gather on a company can give you a big advantage when deciding whether a company is what it claims to be.

Just remember to try to hear all sides to each discussion. Sometimes you'll hear one person say something that makes you want to cross them off your list, but continue reading the thread and try to get a more complete feel for what *really* is the truth.

Trucking company recruiters

If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. I've had recruiters of well-known companies tell me everything I wanted to hear: \$.37 per mile, over 3000 miles per week, 90% drop and hook, 100% no-touch freight, company paid benefits, etc. Then when I got to orientation, hardly any of it was true.

Another common tactic of company recruiters is telling you you've been hired, paying for and sending you to orientation, just for you to find out that they haven't even begun to check out your application/job history information yet.

If everything checks out O.K. and you're interested in the company, try getting all the key information (pay, miles, etc.) in writing, possibly faxed to you before you make a final decision.

Ex-drivers for the company

Take every bit of advice you get with a grain of salt. The driver who says they resigned from a certain company may have been fired, or had a problem with *one* individual and then represents the whole company as bad. Very often, drivers go to a new company with unrealistic expectations (although sometimes the company is partially to blame for this), then they inevitably end up leaving unhappy, in search of yet another company.

There are plenty of bitter truck drivers out there. Ultimately, you are searching for truth and are going to have to use your judgment to discern

good advice from bad. And remember, trite as this may seem, **there are no perfect companies.**

Current drivers for the company

Drivers of most companies get a referral bonus if they recommend their company to a driver, and that driver goes to work for the company and stays at least six months (on average). These bonuses often can be \$500 or \$1000.

Therefore, if a driver highly recommends their own company, it may be the greatest company in the world to work for, *or* the driver simply wants to make some extra cash. Try to investigate as many different sources as you can before *you* decide upon a company to work for.

Making Your Final Selection and Applying to the Company

You narrowed down your list after vetting every company that fit your job criteria. Then you applied to the companies, either individually or with one application as described above.

Well, you're almost there! But now may be the most important step of all; making your final selection.

You may get callbacks from several companies who accept your qualifications. But it's important to not respond too quickly. Do not agree to work for the first company who calls you with the good news, as tempting as that may be! Be patient, take your time, and wait at least a week.

Now, you'll have one last list of companies to consider. Once again, compare the pros and cons of each remaining company, remembering to

add in any final information you gathered about the company when they accepted you, if any.

Let important people in your life in on your decision. In most cases, spouses and children are directly impacted by your job decisions. Tell them what your choices are and ask them their opinions. The decision will, of course, be yours to make. But trucking can be tough on families. If you decide on an OTR position, one where you may be gone for several weeks at a time, it may help your family to know that it's only for a limited time. After a year, for example, you may be able to transition to a regional or local position. There's light at the end of the tunnel!

Applying to Multiple Trucking Companies at Once

A site like [EveryTruckJob](#) can save you a lot of time when you're ready to apply to your remaining list of potential companies to drive for.

With these types of websites, a future driver can fill out just one application, have it submitted to it several or all companies at once, and just sit back and wait for them to email and/or call you with information.

This is a valuable tool if you have a long list of companies!

Chapter 5: Starting a New Truck Driving Job



Starting a new truck driving job? It's easier if you know what to expect. The procedures will vary depending on if you're a new or experienced driver, and from company to company.

After you've chosen a trucking company to work for, there are many things you should know about starting a job with a new trucking company.

The following information is covered in this section:

- [On-The-Job Training for New Drivers](#)
- [Information About Driver Orientations](#)

On-the-Job Training for New Drivers

At this point, most new drivers still need to learn from a qualified driver-trainer. Many motor carriers will put drivers fresh out of school into their

on-the-job training program. For new drivers, training can be anywhere from 2-6 weeks, but how long this training lasts usually depends upon how fast a driver learns the basics and progresses in their trucking knowledge.

The driver-trainer's goal should be to provide the new driver with real world, practical guidance and instruction to prepare the new driver for a successful career in trucking.

In the real world of trucking, there are often several ways to accomplish the same task. One driver-trainer may do things very differently than another would. Take mental and written notes during your training, and observe how the driver-trainer performs each task, whether they seem they're the right ways to do things or not. The company won't let you out on the road yourself until the driver-trainer says you're ready.

You and your trainer will seem like a team, but shouldn't function as one. In a typical team operation, one person drives while the other is sleeping, and then they switch.

But when still in training, a trainer-trainee team should only be given solo load assignments, so that the team doesn't have to rush the load, and the trainer is able to observe everything the trainee does.

The trainer shouldn't be sleeping while the trainee drives. The trainee should drive and perform other functions of the job while the trainer observes, instructs, and comments. Then, the trainee should observe and take notes while the trainer drives, stops, backs up, fuels the truck, loads and unloads, etc.

Unfortunately, there are trucking companies who will run a trainer-trainee team like a regular team from the start of training, before the trainee is really ready to go it alone.

Information About Driver Orientations

Most decent-sized trucking companies give “driver orientation” to its new drivers. In most situations, new drivers with their first driving job will receive an orientation with their new company, as well as the complete, on-the-job training, described above.

Orientations are also for experienced drivers, who are making a change from one company to another. Company orientations will vary in length, but are usually anywhere from three days to a week in duration. In this case, drivers will usually be given hotel rooms to stay in for the duration of the orientation.

Here’s an idea about what takes place during these company orientations:

1. An introduction to the company

New drivers are shown the terminal and all facilities, yard, etc. Also, drivers will meet key personnel they’ll be in contact with: the dispatcher(s), fleet manager, a member of the safety department, etc.

2. Evaluating and testing potential new drivers

Even though this is called “orientation,” as if the driver has already secured a job, it is also more of an audition and/or interview, in which you must give a practical demonstration of your truck driving skills.

During orientation, the potential driver must pass a road and basic skills test, including a pre-trip inspection, backing, and other maneuvers.

In addition, there may be written tests to pass (hazmat, if the company hauls it), as well as a continuation of the potential driver's background and past employer investigation. This investigation *should be* the first step

when a driver gets to orientation, so that drivers found to be unqualified won't waste company time with the rest of the orientation, training, and paperwork, etc.

3. Completion of company paperwork.

This includes payroll information, personal information, and possibly other related information.

4. Miscellaneous training.

Training on a variety of subjects relating to the type of trucking the company does. For example, a household moving company will have classes on how to create an inventory of items, how to handle different types of furniture and appliances, and much more.

5. Completion of orientation

Drivers who successfully complete orientation are assigned trucks, given employee and fuel cards, more procedural information, and finally, given a load assignment, and sent out on the road.

Chapter 6: How Trucking Companies Operate



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It is important for a driver to understand the basics of how trucking companies operate, from individual job descriptions to how they perform together as a team.

The size of the company will often determine who performs different jobs.

- Independent owner-operators do *everything* themselves.
- With smaller companies, the dispatcher may also be the rater, planner, and even do the company marketing.
- Larger companies will usually have separate departments with each handling at least one major function.

It's also important for the driver to understand a company's primary goals, as well as how a company driver fits into the big picture.

Perhaps *the* most important thing is to understand how trucks are routed and dispatched.

For most drivers, the dispatcher (though there are often several dispatchers a driver might have to communicate with) is the person they're going to communicate with the most.

The job of dispatcher will be examined later, and in more detail, although *all* the jobs described here are integral to the operation of trucking companies.

Trucking Company Roles and Job Descriptions

The Dispatcher

The dispatcher is the person the company driver will be most in contact with, usually every working day.

The dispatcher is the one who tells the driver when and where to pick up a load, and when and where to take it to. But the duties of a dispatcher go way beyond that, which the driver needs to realize.

The bottom line is, a company is in business to make a profit. Without profit, the company will cease to exist. Because of this, the job of a dispatcher can often be a stressful one.

The dispatcher must see to it that the trucks under their control (which we'll look at in the next section) are kept moving, and operating profitably. For example, one way this can be accomplished is by limiting excessive amounts of deadheading (driving with an empty trailer).

Simultaneously, the dispatcher must be able to keep shippers, receivers, and the drivers under their control relatively happy.

Depending on the size and operating style of a company, a dispatcher can be assigned differently. In one scenario, the dispatcher has control over specific trucks

and drivers (an assigned dispatcher). In another, they control a specific geographic area (a regional dispatcher), which is more common with the larger trucking companies.

How Dispatchers Function

When a load becomes available, the information is placed on a “load board.” In the past, this was an actual board with slots (arranged by factors such as geographic area, pickup dates, and delivery information), in which a planner placed a 3x5 index card containing load information.

These days, load information is usually accessed by computer. Although technically different, it still functions similarly to the physical load board, which is still used today in many smaller company offices.

From the information on the load board, the dispatcher organizes customer’s orders into a delivery schedule. After developing the schedule, the dispatcher assigns loads to drivers (based upon many factors which are listed below), and attempts to see that the schedule is met.

When dispatching loads to drivers, the dispatcher must take many factors under consideration:

- Determining which drivers in a certain area were empty and available first. Loads also can be assigned based on a first come, first serve basis or based upon other factors, like driver seniority or even reliability).
- A driver’s hours of service. To determine if a driver has enough hours of service available to complete the trip on time, plus possibly successive trips).
- How long a driver has been away from home (plus, a driver may have requested to be home on a certain day... a holiday, birthday, family event or issues, etc.).

- A driver's past performance (on-time pickups and deliveries, safe operation, limited damage claims, etc.).
- How high priority or urgent the load or customer is.
- When the truck was last serviced.
- Which driver is the dispatcher's favorite (just kidding, this *never* happens!) Seriously though, there are many other factors that must be considered.

Forced Dispatch

Under a "forced dispatch" system, a driver is not given a choice of load assignments, but is simply forced to accept whatever load is given to him. Although it doesn't *sound* right, this is the default setting for most companies. Drivers cannot just take their pick of the best available loads and accept the "good" ones.

If drivers could pick and choose their own loads and routes, no loads would ever get to New York City!

When you build a relationship with your dispatcher, and have a record of on-time deliveries and no refused loads, etc., then you may occasionally be given choices from a selection of loads.



This is a situation in which good communication and people skills come into play for the dispatcher.

The dispatcher is not always able to accommodate every driver. They must make the driver understand why a load hasn't been located yet, or be able to articulate to the receiver just why a load is late for delivery, for example.

A dispatcher may have promised the customer that a load would be there by a certain time, and now has to just hope that a driver will make good on the promise.

In trucking, if one thing goes wrong, it can have a domino effect.

Dispatching: A Case Study

Suppose a driver is scheduled to deliver a load in Austin, Texas on Friday morning at 5 A.M. The dispatcher knows the driver has been on the road for 3 weeks and *really* needs to get home.

Before the driver even gets to Texas, the dispatcher has found a load through a broker that picks up in Dallas, Texas at 1 P.M. that same day. Travel time to Dallas is approximately 3 hours. The load goes to the driver's home in Denver, Colorado.

The driver arrives on time, backs to the dock, and waits in their truck as it's unloaded. At 8 o'clock the driver goes up to the receiver and asks how much longer it will be before the truck is empty. They're told that because the load is not palletized (some products are loaded on cardboard "slip sheets" instead of on wooden pallets, or loaded directly on the floor, which entails longer loading time), it will be at least a few more hours.

The driver contacts the broker (though in some companies, the driver would contact their dispatcher, who would contact the broker himself) and lets them know about the delay in unloading and possible late arrival for the pickup in Dallas. If delayed long enough, some shippers would have the broker search for another truck to pick up the load instead.

In this situation, there was a window of several hours in which to pick up the load. The driver arrived in Dallas later that afternoon and picked up the load headed for

Denver. But if the pickup in Dallas was an urgent one, the broker would have been instructed to find another available truck in closer proximity, and find the driver currently delivering in Austin a different load. This would possibly delay the driver in getting home to Denver.

Routing Considerations

Brokered loads are procured with the aid of brokers, who find loads for a fee. Also, common these days are loads found through online broker services. These methods are used to procure loads in the event the company's marketing department can't find a suitable load through their own efforts (although many companies operate exclusively on brokered loads).

Trip leasing is the term used for the practice of contacting other trucking companies in an area where a driver needs a load, and selecting from available "overbooked" loads.

LTL (less than a load) loads are loads that only partially fill a trailer. As we mentioned, the goal of a company is to make a profit. A partial shipment will obviously not pay as much as a full load (although several LTL loads may pay even better than a full load from one customer).

For the company, an LTL load is usually better than deadheading, if it doesn't cause a chain event of missing more desirable loads. The dispatcher will often attempt to find, and group additional LTL loads headed to the desired area. There are many companies, especially short-haul ones, that are exclusively LTL carriers.

Ex-truckers as dispatchers

As important as it is for drivers to understand the role of the dispatcher, it is equally as important for dispatchers to know the job of a trucker. I have found some of the best dispatchers to be ex-truck drivers. They understand what it's like to have been out on the road, and all that truckers go through.

Ex-drivers should understand what a driver can realistically accomplish. But what's most important is for a dispatcher to be at least be *somewhat* knowledgeable, and maybe empathetic, about a truck drivers job and life. Most drivers will notice this, and appreciate it.

This is just an overview of the dispatcher's job, but is certainly not exhaustive. But just this glimpse should help drivers to be more patient and understanding when dealing with dispatchers.

Marketing Department

Marketing is the sales arm of the trucking company. A marketer must call on shippers and receivers of commodities, and sell the services of the company. They must be knowledgeable about their company and be able to use certain information (on- time delivery percentage, the rates to charge, etc.) to gain a customer's business.

The marketer often works on a commission basis and often has a very stressful job. Much of a company's success depends on how successful the marketing department is.

Raters and Planners

As noted in the section on dispatchers, in smaller companies, rating and planning are sometimes additional duties of the dispatcher. But in larger companies these are their sole job. A planner gets load information from the marketing department and must decide how to disperse them. A rater must figure a rate to charge for the loads.

The Load Planner

In contrast to a dispatcher, who sees and controls individual areas and loads, the planner must see the "big picture" and make certain that heavy traffic areas have

enough trucks to cover all available loads. They must try and minimize empty miles and waiting time and keep trucks moving, maximizing loaded miles.

For example, a planner may see that in 3 days, they'll have 50 trucks delivering in the Southern California area. They then realize there are 30 loads available for those trucks when they empty out. They contact the marketing department to see if they can sell an additional 20 loads by that time. Other options include using brokers and trip leasing.

Other times there may be an abundance of loads, and a lack of trucks in the area. If possible, more trucks need to be sent there (sometimes by costly deadheading), or they may have to be trip leased out to other carriers.

Another option would be to see if the shipper could change the load date.

A planner must be proficient at factoring time and distances. In addition, with LTL loads (often several partial shipments), it gets much more complicated. They must also factor in the weight of the load and the amount of space it takes up.

Poor planning results in:

- Companies losing revenue
- Unhappy customers and drivers
- Loads not covered in one area, and empty trucks in another

The Rater

The Rater decides how much to charge to ship a load. The amount must be high enough to make sufficient profit, while low enough to be competitive and attract new business. A minimum figure is set as a guide for marketing to use as the lowest amount to charge for a load.

There is usually much more to rating than merely factoring the mileage plus the size or weight of the load. There are often special handling charges and hauling

permits required. How urgent a load is and how much notice was given are factors. In addition, rates are often discounted to get a shipper's business.

Overall, rating can be extremely complicated, and is key to a company's success.

Fleet Management

Motor carriers which have multiple terminals often have a "Fleet Manager" in charge of a fleet of trucks at one terminal. They sometimes interact directly with the drivers, and handle such things as alcohol and drug testing, personal problems, hiring and firing, truck assignments, etc. Other times, they will oversee and manage the dispatchers of the terminal. It just depends upon how the individual motor carrier runs things.

Some of the responsibilities of fleet managers include:

- Selecting Vehicles
- Keeping Records
- Vehicle Maintenance
- Driver Management
- Accounting and Financial Management

For more information about the role of the fleet manager, see [this resource](#).

Safety Department

The Safety Department is responsible for ensuring the company operates in a legal and safe manner. It must ensure that each truck and driver comply with state and federal regulations.

At times, the safety department can seem like the driver's worst enemy, right along with the DOT and other law enforcement entities. However, this is not the case. Safety can prevent a dispatcher from forcing a driver to run illegally just to make a delivery on time.

This used to be common practice, and many drivers got “burnt out” and/or ended up having an accident, or receiving costly fines for running illegally. This no longer happens regularly with legitimate companies.

The DOT can audit a company at any time. This audit includes checking log books going back six months. Fines for hours of service infractions, for example, can be up to thousands of dollars per occurrence. Therefore, safety will usually be “by the book” when dealing with drivers.

Some of the responsibilities of the safety department include:

- Maintaining records of, and inspecting, log books.
- Accident avoidance and investigations.
- Ensuring state and federal regulations are met.
- *(Including mandatory drug screening, background checks, annual record of moving violations, and DOT physicals)*
- Works with Maintenance Department to ensure compliance.
- Conducts driver training.
- Works together with all departments within the company as well as with outside agencies.

Maintenance and Service Department



Major motor carriers usually have their own Maintenance and Service Department, in each terminal location. Only the major carriers can justify the expense of

running these departments in each terminal, instead of having it done at truck stops, service centers, or dealerships. The smaller carriers usually have no choice but to have the maintenance and service done at these other locations.

Other departments within the company

- Recruiting Department
- Payroll Department
- Claims Department
- Permits Department
- Warehousing, Inventory, and Control
- Accident and Breakdown Handling
- Buyers

Ownership and management

In smaller motor carriers and fleets, the owner may also directly manage the company business. Some owners are still owner-operators, even when they own many trucks. With bigger fleets, the owner will often just oversee the operations, and delegate responsibilities to management accordingly.

Chapter 7: Communicating with the Company



Drivers must stay in communication with all parties during each trip, keeping key people, especially the dispatcher, informed of their progress.

Reasons to contact the company

Company drivers are expected to keep in daily contact with the company (usually their dispatcher), either by phone (check calls or texts) or by Qualcomm. In addition, (depending upon the company), the driver may have to inform the company of every change of duty status.

Examples of changes of status:

- Off-duty at home
- Layover on the road (note whether waiting for next load assignment or taking time off)
- Assigned on a trip

- At company terminal
- On route to shipper
- Arrived at shipper
- Waiting to get loaded
- Currently being loaded
- Loading complete or hooked up to loaded trailer
- On route to receiver
- Arrived at receiver
- Waiting to get unloaded
- Currently being unloaded
- Unloading complete or dropped loaded trailer
- Paperwork signed, trip complete
- Problems of any kind (delays, accidents, breakdowns, etc.).

Making check calls

Dispatchers need to be kept informed of your progress, usually daily. They'll want to know if you're on schedule to make your delivery on time, and if there are any problems. Some companies have their drivers call an 800-number to an automated voice-mail system, in lieu of talking to an actual dispatcher. If your truck is equipped with the Qualcomm system, you may not have to make these check calls via phone.

Using the Qualcomm system



primeinc.com

Qualcomm is an on-board, installed satellite and computer, which lets the dispatcher know within a few miles where the truck is. It also shows the truck's speed, RPMs, how long the truck idled during the day, fuel consumption, engine performance, as well as other vital information. Most of the larger carriers use Qualcomm. Here's an article that talks more about the [Qualcomm system for drivers](#).

Many drivers object to this, claiming “big brother” is watching and infringing on their autonomy and freedom, even bringing into question their skills as a driver. The best drivers probably don't need to worry about being monitored because all it will do is validate their worth to the company. The only ones that need to worry are the drivers who want to do it “their” way.

There are advantages to having Qualcomm which include; the convenience it offers, not having to search for a payphone to check in, getting load assignments, directions, weather reports, etc. These things can be done simply and easily through the Qualcomm system.

Drivers needing information can easily communicate with their dispatcher to discuss changes in delivery schedules, delays, what to do in the event of mechanical problems, etc. With Qualcomm, you often don't have to check in, because the dispatcher can monitor your progress and check on you himself, saving you time. But, if this is the case, the driver will be so informed ahead of time.

Working together with the dispatcher

Dispatchers are often assigned to manage a group of different drivers. One of the goals of a good dispatcher is to get to know each of their drivers personally. They should keep a record on file for each driver to include key information to be used to help him in their role as a dispatcher.

Key information dispatchers may need:

Personal information

Name, address, phone number, place of residence, and other key personal/family information.

Job & driving performance

On-time record, complaints of any kind from customers, driving record to include accidents and any citations/violations, average miles/load assignments per week/month/year, day and time of last time at home/days off, amount of time spent at home this month/year, notable incidents of complaining (whining, insubordination, etc.), and or any load assignment refusals.

The best drivers should try to prove to the dispatcher that they can consistently do a good job, and be trusted with all types of load assignments.

Basically, this means drivers should try to accept *any* load, regardless of the length of haul, time of pickup or delivery, or locations/destinations, and do so without complaint.

By accomplishing the above goal, the driver should then be able to accomplish their own goals, which will probably include getting more miles to drive, more desirable load assignments, and making more money.

In trucking, sometimes you must give in order to receive.

Other Company Policies

Traffic violations

Any violations you receive out on the road will have to be paid yourself. This includes any moving violations, or traffic offenses. If you get an overweight ticket, the company should pay it if they were aware of your weight (it may have been questionably close, or the freight paid good enough to offset any possible tickets).

If you get too many violations, especially moving ones, you could endanger your job and livelihood. A trucking company may want to keep you as a driver, but the company's insurance policy may not allow drivers with a certain number of violations to be able to continue as drivers for the company. It will also be tougher to find another company that *can* hire you.

Accident procedures

Most companies today have similar accident procedures, which they will go over with the driver during orientation.



New drivers should receive an accident kit which includes:

- An instruction sheet.
- Forms for the driver to complete in the event of an accident, including a preliminary accident report card.
- Vehicle and cargo damage reports.
- A camera to take pictures of the accident.

There are several key things drivers should do whenever they're involved in an accident:

1. *Stop.* This may seem obvious, but needs to be stated because it is a criminal offense to leave the scene of an accident.
2. *Set out Emergency Warning Devices.* Put the three emergency triangles out within 10 minutes. Place them:
 - **2-lane undivided highway:** 100 feet in front, 10 feet behind and 100 feet behind.
 - **4-lane divided highway/one-lane road:** 10 feet behind, 100 feet behind and 100 feet behind.
 - **Near the top of a hill:** 10 feet behind, 100 feet behind and between 100 to 500 feet behind, depending upon sight distance.

- **Near a curve:** 100 feet in front, 10 feet behind and between 100 to 500 feet behind, depending on sight distance.
3. Turn on your emergency flashers
 4. Help any injured people, but don't move them unless absolutely necessary
 5. Notify the police.

If no phone is available, attempt to get a motorist to deliver a message to police.

6. Notify your company

In the event of a serious injury or fatality, your company will need to let the insurance company know about the accident as soon as possible.

7. Don't leave your cargo if possible
8. Document the scene taking pictures, drawing a diagram of the scene, etc.

Chapter 8: Examining Driver Pay



Money is why we do it all, right? The bottom line. How to make money and get paid for all your hard work, is perhaps the most important area drivers need to understand. The following is general information regarding earning a paycheck which should be of interest to drivers.

Paycheck advances and getting cash on the road

A cash advance is money you receive out on the road which is in advance, or "a draw" against your upcoming pay. Companies usually have different maximum amounts they'll let you take in each cash advance. With some companies, you may be limited to a certain amount, like \$100 - \$200 per week or per trip. Others may let you draw out much more, but if you're not careful, you'll spend all your next paycheck before you even receive it.



Cash advances are usually received at the fuel desk of the truck stop. Usually, drivers take care their cash advances at the same time as paying for their fuel. Cash advances will normally be free provided you've fueled a minimum amount, usually about 50 gallons. Otherwise, you may have to pay a small fee for the transaction.

Through Comdata, drivers can receive their cash advances with the same fuel card they use for fuel, or with a "Comcheck," which are blank checks issued by your company.

It's not a good idea to make a habit of taking cash advances. But, in the beginning of your career, when you're just starting with a new company, these advances are a godsend that can hold you over until you get a regular paycheck.

How to get more miles *and* make more money!

Regularly getting higher miles per week, with limited layovers and downtime, may be more important than getting a few more cents per mile.

These are a few ways you'll be able to get more miles, and then more pay:

- By demonstrating good job performance (see "[Working together with the dispatcher](#)").

- Saving time on the road by condensing tasks, not stopping any longer than necessary, etc.
- Keeping the truck regularly and properly maintained helps avoid unnecessary breakdown and delays, and the subsequent loss of miles and pay.
- Limiting your time off at home. Don't focus on having to get a certain number of days off every time you get home.
- Learning from the experiences and wisdom of veteran drivers (like you'll learn throughout this guide.)

Handling non-driving trucking duties efficiently to increase bottom line.

Many drivers complain that the following trucking duties go unpaid for, at least directly. It's self-defeating, though, because if driver do these things correctly and efficiently, they'll be able to make more money. They'll either save time immediately, or over the long haul (as is the case with vehicle inspections and properly maintaining the vehicles).

On the surface, it seems that drivers who get paid by the mile don't get paid for *all* the other duties they must perform. Technically, unless specified otherwise, these drivers only get paid for each mile they drive. But, drivers *do* get paid for doing these duties. It just doesn't *seem* like it at first glance. It is more obvious for those drivers who get paid by a different method: by a percentage, by the load, or by the hour.

I'm NOT saying there aren't trucking companies out there that will take advantage of their drivers by getting them to do as much without paying them for it!

Fueling and servicing the tractor at the smartest times.

Companies will often have you service the tractor (typically every 20-25,000 miles, depending upon the company) while you're on the road. Often, you will not have any other choice, but if you *are* close to home, maybe you could fuel the truck and have maintenance/repairs done (depending how your company services its tractors) while you are at home, saving you time (as you know, time is money).

Performing adequate and regular pre-trip and post-trip inspections.

Obviously, these inspections are mandatory for all drivers, for safety reasons. It's also important because noticing defects as soon as possible will prevent you from unnecessary downtime, as well as saving expenses on service trucks, added repairs, etc. It's important that you do these inspections as thoroughly as possible, not just for the companies benefit, but for your own.

Limiting your stops at weigh and inspection stations.

The most important and obvious way to limit or prevent delays at official inspection stations, is to make sure you remain legal on your gross and axle weights, permits, licenses, and your hours of service. Doing all this will prevent you from being detained by weigh station personnel.

Anytime you are directed to come inside to the scale house, make sure you bring everything that the officials may need to see, including the above items plus any paperwork/bills of lading pertaining to your cargo. This will help you avoid having to go back to the truck to get the necessary items and documents.

Preventing or mitigating delays by knowing about traffic, construction, and more.

Listen to the CB while you're going down the road to learn about traffic conditions ahead of you. If you know about the conditions ahead of time, you may be able to avoid them by taking an alternate route, or instead by taking a meal or sleep break (if it seems like the delay is long enough), etc.

A driver's home location greatly determines the amount of money they can earn. For local drivers, the pay seems to be much lower in small towns and areas out in the country. This is the case with most of the jobs in these areas, because the cost of living is also much lower. In contrast, a driver in New York City, or many other big cities, can often make much more money. The problem is that the higher cost of living in these areas usually more than offsets the extra pay earned driving.

For over-the-road drivers, the pay doesn't vary that much across the country.

- First year drivers often earn between \$.25 - .30 per mile
- Drivers with over a year or two of experience can earn between \$.30 - .34 per mile
- veteran drivers, \$.34 or more per mile is possible.

Of course, these are all just approximations. Mileage may vary!

Chapter 9: Last Words on Starting Your Trucking Career



Becoming a trucker is not for the timid or faint of heart. It has as many challenges and difficulties as it has rewards and benefits.

I had many difficulties in the beginning stages of my career and made a lot of poor decisions. I can't go back and do it all over again, but I believe I went through those hard times for a reason. It was so I could experience, first hand, what so many drivers across the country were experiencing. It then allowed me to use that experience in creating these guides to help new drivers succeed in a tough industry.

Getting off on the right foot is important in any endeavor. But in trucking, it can be **the** difference between success and failure. I hope you've found this book and the entire *Becoming a Trucker* series helpful and enlightening.

If you're continuing to *Trucking Mastery*, I'll see you when you get there!

I wish you all the best in your new career. Remember to reach out to us for all your trucking needs. Thanks for reading!

Jim Purcell

www.TruckerCountry.com

www.TruckingMadeEasy.com

