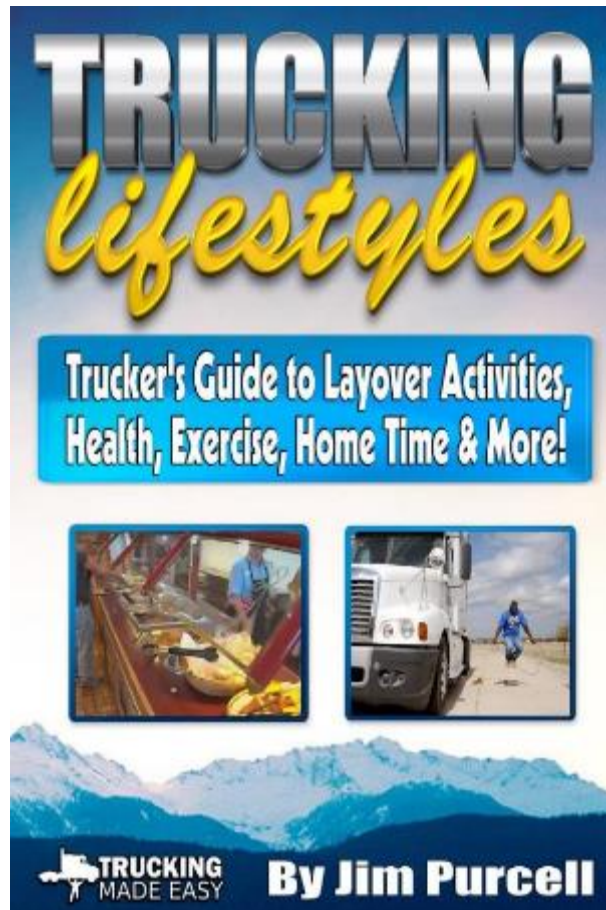

TRUCKING LIFESTYLES



Trucker's Guide to Layover Activities, Health, Exercise, Home Time & More!

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Trucking Made Easy

Trucking Lifestyles

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Table of Contents

Copyright	2
Table of Contents	3
About This Guide	7
Chapter 1: The Trucker's Guide to Layovers	9
What's a Layover?	9
Layover Activities, Resources, and Ideas	11
Play an Instrument (or Learn to Play One)	11
Go to the Movies	13
Go Shopping	15
Play Video Games	16
Read a Book or Magazine	17
Start Exercising	18
Play a Sport	19
Get on Your Bike and Ride!	20

Work on a Hobby or Craft	21
Take Pictures and/or Videos	22
Additional Outdoor Activities for Truckers	23
Chapter 2: Truckers Can Be Healthy.....	26
The Typical Trucker Diet	27
Some Healthier Diets and Ideas for Truckers	28
Eating Low-Fat Foods.....	28
The latest health trend: Eating low-carb	29
The Controlled/Varying Calorie Approach	30
So, which approach is best?.....	32
Step-by-step to starting a healthier routine on the road	33
Truckers and the Cigarette Habit.....	34
How to Save Money, Time, and Your Health by Being Self- Contained	35
Here are a few of the benefits you'll receive from living a self-contained lifestyle:	37
Meal Replacements for the Road	38

Truckers and Back Problems 40

A few things truckers can do to prevent problems.....40

Chapter 3: Truckers Can Also Be Fit! 43

The Trucker's Usual Routine 44

Exercise Ideas and Routines for the Truck..... 45

Stretching.....46

Exercise with Dumbbells.....46

Pushups, Sit-ups, Crunches.....50

Bodyweight leg exercises52

Rubber Resistance Bands.....55

Cardio (both in and out of the truck)56

Get Out of the Truck: Walking, Running, and Cycling58

Chapter 4: The Trucker's Life at Home 63

Truckers need to unwind when they get home!..... 64

Maintaining relationships..... 65

Appreciation for and understanding of the family at home	66
Keeping connected with the family.....	68
Recognizing and resolving family problems	70
More Truth About Life as a Trucker	71
Handling finances	74
 Chapter 5: Take Your Family Along for the Ride.	
Seriously!	75

About This Guide



Trucking Lifestyles was written Jim Purcell (that's me!), a veteran truck driver for over 20 years, and over 3 million miles behind the wheel.

In this section, I'm going to talk about things that are *not* about driving a truck. As I mentioned in *Becoming a Trucker*, trucking is not just a job, it's a lifestyle. This is especially true for OTR drivers that don't get home every day. They're living the trucking *life*. There's not a lot of information out there on this. Drivers are expected to just *do* the job, and figure out the rest. Come to think of it, that's what I had to do!

But I still see truck drivers out on the road and this is their routine:

- Drive for 11 hours.

- Go to the truck stop, fuel, park, etc.
- Go inside and eat, use the restrooms, shower, or other necessities.
- Maybe see a movie in the “movie theater.”
- Buy some overpriced *convenience* items.
- Go back to the truck and go to sleep.

Repeat. Every. Day.

This is a recipe for disaster. Physically, mentally, and emotionally. And financially. Probably some *other* ‘allys as well!

There has *got* to be a better way. And, thankfully...now there *is*!

Join me and we’ll look at some different areas that *are* in a driver’s control. You don’t have that much control in your usual trucking routine, especially if you’re a company driver. Go here, pick this up, and deliver here. That’s the job.

But when you’re *not* working, you *can* choose what to do with your time and what you think about. Go into trucking with the idea that this trucking life is what *you* make of it! And if you’re already a trucker, hopefully you’re willing to keep an open mind, and make some changes if you need to!

Chapter 1: The Trucker's Guide to Layovers



This section will give you plenty of ideas of things you can do when you are on a "layover." With some of the activities, you won't even have to leave your truck. Other activities require you to get out and away from the truck stop.

What's a Layover?

Layover: a flat rate (money) which is paid to a driver for being delayed by a shipper or receiver for at least 24 hours (usually), paid for by the company (usually) and reimbursed to the company by the shipper or receiver.

A layover is when a driver is not driving, either in-between load assignments or the truck's down for service or repairs. During a layover, a driver usually waits in a truck stop somewhere on the road. This is where they can safely and legally park the truck, and can easily access the truck stop's facilities. There are many conveniences for drivers at these truck stops.

However, a driver's options at a truck stop are limited, especially if the layover is going to last a couple of days or more. This chapter describes some of the things you can do when you're on a layover. Of course, exactly what you decide to do depends on how much time you have off. These are just suggestions to give you a few ideas, and to help you realize that there is more to do than just sit in your truck, or hang out in a truckstop.

If you want to SEE what it's like in a truck stop, [here's a video](#) taken in a Petro Truck Stop in Little Rock, Ar. At around the 8-minute mark, the driver goes into and starts walking around inside the truck stop. This will give you a good idea of the usual driver options. Keep in mind though, Petro is one of the bigger truck stops, which have lots of amenities. Smaller truck stops have even *less* options!

So, imagine yourself going into the truck stop *every hour* or so, walking around, maybe taking in a movie you've seen 20 times before or grabbing a(nother) bite to eat. And walking around, *looking* at stuff in the convenience store. *Now*, let's think of some much better things you could do with your time!

Some of the following activities can be done in the truck, and others require you to wander out a bit. I'll try to cover both options, but even the most dedicated trucker needs to get away from the truck occasionally!

Layover Activities, Resources, and Ideas

Play an Instrument (or Learn to Play One)



I picked up a used guitar in a Nashville pawnshop while I was waiting for a load during my first year on the road. It was kind of an impulse, but I had done too much time waiting in the truck, with nothing productive to do. It was a wise investment, as it has got me through countless hours of idle time.

I often look forward to layovers and days off on the road, because that gives me some needed playing time. If this sounds interesting, you can do the same!

Here's a [video](#) about how to buy a good used guitar (or another portable instrument) at a pawnshop.

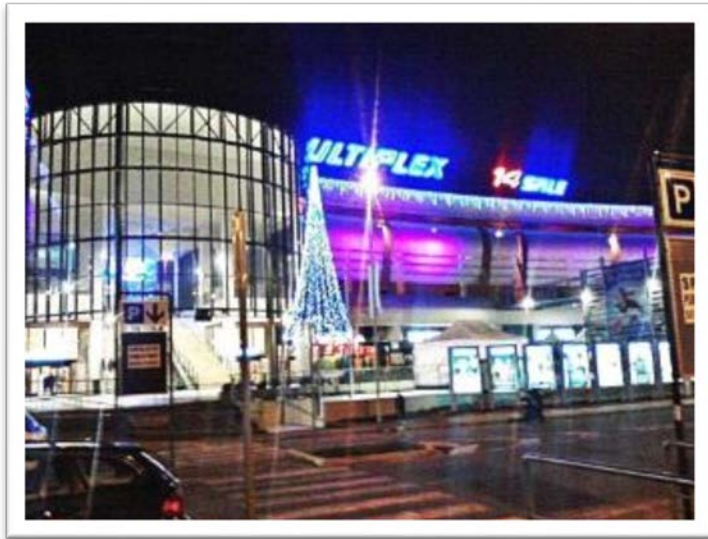


Next, pick up a [beginner's instruction book](#) and/or a [book on guitar chords](#), (or check out some websites with [guitar instruction programs](#) or products),

Now, get a few picks and a tuner, a strap, and you're all set. You don't even have to sit in your truck to play. Find a park or rest area and just start playing!

[Tony Justice](#) is a truck driver who writes songs about truck driving and the road. Songs about truck driving used to be popular back in the 70s (see the section Truckers in Movies, Songs, etc. in Becoming a Trucker), but Tony's one driver who's helping to bring it back. Maybe you can join him!

Go to the Movies



Get a local newspaper and see if there are any movie theaters in the area where you're laid over. Sure, many truck stops have movies, and you may even have your own DVD collection and player in the truck. And you should do these things. But some movies must be seen on the big screen to be appreciated, with the full-blown audio experience. And, like I've said, you *need* to get out of the truck!

Just because you're on the road doesn't mean you have to miss out on all the comforts of home, so to speak. It's usually best to drop the trailer at a truck stop (inform the fuel desk or other personnel inside the truck stop!), and bobtail (like you see here!) to the movies, but it's worth it. Particularly if your schedule allows you to take in a matinee, the ticket price is typically reduced for the afternoon shows, and so are the crowds.



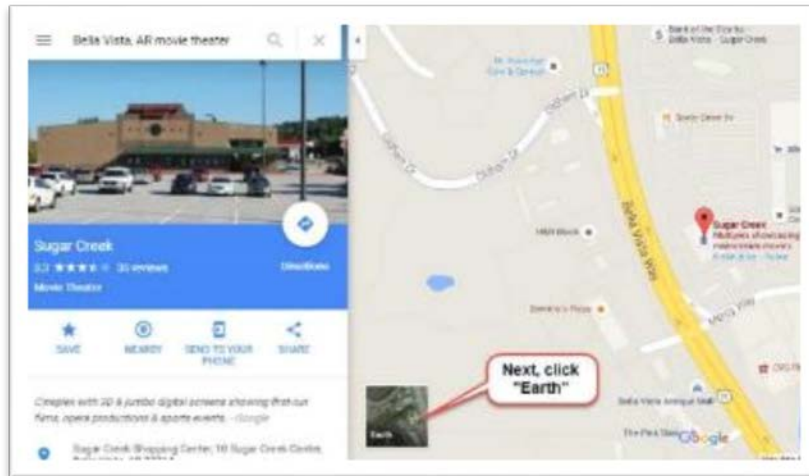
If you know the theater parking lot, and it is big enough, you may be able to park the tractor *and* trailer there. Just make sure you don't get blocked in behind other vehicles.

Perhaps you're interested in seeing a specific movie, but aren't too sure if it'll be any good. Reading [what other critics across the country have to say about that movie](#) may help you in your decision. But don't always believe the reviewer's "expert" opinions, though. I've really enjoyed some poorly reviewed movies!

And once you have a movie in mind, you can quickly find show times and theater locations right on Rotten Tomatoes, wherever in the country you may be. Just enter your zip code into the search box then click the GO button.

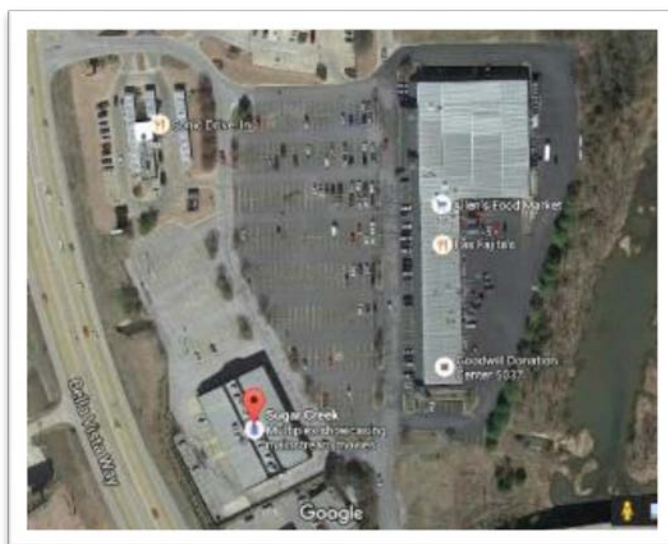
Before you know it, you'll be feeling like a *normal* human being again!

Here's an even better idea. That one's WAY too complicated! Just Google it! Search the city you're in, with "movie theater" after the city. **Like so...**



Boom! You have the map plus a picture of the theater. Now, just click “Earth.” Zoom in a bit. Now, you can see *exactly* how to get there *and* where to park! If you time it right, and it’s not too crowded, you may not have to drop the trailer at the truck stop at all. But in most cases, I would anyway. It takes less than 5 minutes to drop the trailer. Then you’ll have less to worry about!

Go Shopping



Going to a shopping mall, Walmart, or your favorite store. If you're parked at the truck stop, go find someone who works inside at the fuel desk or store, and ask if they know if those stores are nearby, and how to get to them. Or just look in the business section of the phone book to be able to find the store you're looking for. Truck stops usually have local maps available; there's often a big map up on the wall, with mall locations often shown on the map.

You can also just use the “find a movie theater” technique in the previous section to find shopping opportunities. Just input the type of store you want and the city in a Google search.

Play Video Games

If you have a laptop or PC in your truck, then there's no limit to the types of games you could play and entertain yourself with. You could also bring along a video game player or system to go along with an added big screen monitor to have even more game options.

Or, you can play video games at an arcade, which can usually still be found in bigger malls.

There are even video games for, and/or about truckers... or for anyone wants to just pretend to be a trucker... or for anyone who just love trucks and trucking. [American Truck Simulator](#) is a great one to check out!

Read a Book or Magazine



Books and magazines can provide entertainment for a couple of minutes while waiting on word from your dispatcher, or for hours and days while waiting to pick up your next load. You can check books out from your local library when you're home. Be sure you can get back before your books are due or that you're able to renew your books online or over the phone.

Check out the bookstores in the area. Many of the newer book stores such as [Barnes and Noble](#) (click for more info and to find a store location) encourage you to spend time in their stores reading their books.

Furthermore, many of these bookstores have **great cafes** with a wide variety of coffees and baked goods (just be aware that some of these are not the most cost-effective choices). Some offer other drinks and deli sandwiches also, or are often located in shopping centers with several restaurant options.

You can **order your books and magazines online**, where you can often get them much cheaper. Then just take them on the road with you to read when you have the time.

Many city libraries have begun offering a cafe-like atmosphere to compete with these bookstores, as well as available WiFi.

If you aren't an experienced reader, just talk with the librarians about some good books that can get you started. They are there to help and to encourage a love of reading.

Libraries frequently have lists available of books on certain subjects, or booklists from different types of book groups, university lists of books that all 'well-read' readers have read, or even just the New York Times Best-Seller list, all of which can get you started on a life-long love of reading.

Even if all you want to do is read the Sunday paper or flip through your favorite magazine, both libraries and bookstores are a nice change from the typical truck stop world, and usually have enough room for bobtails.

Start Exercising



If you make it to the library or mall, both will generally have great opportunities for walking (either indoors or outdoors). Walking's a good start, but you might want to go even further. Many health clubs will charge

you for a one-day pass if you don't have a membership. Or, just go ahead and get a membership!

Here's a good deal for road warriors. A membership with [Healthways](#) gives you access to 9,000+ Gyms nationwide for only \$25 per month. Check out the site and enter your city or zip code and see all the options they give you. It might be worth a look!

City pools are another place to spend an afternoon. If you're lucky enough to get a layover in a city on the coast, the beach is an obvious destination for both relaxing and exercise. Similarly, a mountain town will usually offer some short hikes that are easy and enjoyable. Find maps of biking and walking trails available at the City Hall, the Library, or Chamber of Commerce (or Google maps!).

Play a Sport



If you can throw it, or shoot it at a basket, bring it along. You never know when you'll come across a ballfield or park, or a basketball court, for example (one where you can park the truck nearby, or on the street out front). Get an all-surface basketball. Occasionally, you'll find shipper or receivers with a basket that'll let you shoot hoops.

Of course, it helps if you know the area. When you're at the truck stop, look on the local map. Park locations are usually shown, and you can just bobtail there to make it easier.

Get on Your Bike and Ride!



Bring along a road, hybrid, or mountain bike with you on the road. There's not a ton of room to store a full-size bike in the truck, but it can be done. Some drivers strap their bike behind the cab or on the catwalk, but that doesn't leave much room to maneuver. It could get in the way of the air and electrical lines, the reefer unit, and probably won't fit at all when you have your fifth wheel pushed up and the trailer's closer to the tractor.

The following are full-sized mountain bikes which amazingly fold up to fit under the bed (if you have the type that lifts up) or in a compartment in the sleeper! Examples of these types of bikes are Montague's [Hummer Tactical Folding Mountain Bike](#). It gets decent reviews, but it's a bit pricey.



The [Stowabike](#) is a bike some drivers have found success with. You can find these at Walmart or online on [Amazon](#). The cool thing here is its folding frame, which will help you store it more easily.

In this [video](#), a trucker demonstrates how he secures a bike behind the cab of his tractor, above the catwalk (as seen in the picture above).

If you take along your bike this way, it's essential that you keep it tight to the tractor, and far away from the trailer. When you turn the truck, the trailer will swing out closer to the tractor. You don't want a crushed bike, debris all over the highway, a possible accident, and a ticket because you didn't secure your bike properly.

Work on a Hobby or Craft

This one can be for men as well as for women truckers. Consider carving (soap, wood, soft stone), leather working kits, wood burning kits, model cars and aircraft, building a doll house for your daughter's birthday... the possibilities are limited only by your imagination and budget.

Craft stores such as Hobby Lobby and Michael's have a wide variety of supplies for everyone from the most experienced to the least. They also stock the old standbys: knitting and crocheting supplies, latch-hook rug kits, needlework, hand-sewing supplies, scrap booking ideas and more.

I'm sure you know someone who is expecting a Christmas or a birthday gift. You can go beyond the truck stop shopping options and surprise them with something you've put your own time and effort into.

Take Pictures and/or Videos

Truck drivers are uniquely qualified to take up photography and videography. Truckers get to see it all! How many sunsets, rainbows and mountain ranges have you seen that you wished you could share with your family and friends?

Personal suggestion: Get yourself in the images. I have plenty of scenery pictures, but no personal reference. I could just look on Google image search if I wanted random scenery pictures!

With an initial investment that varies depending on your particular needs and goals (camera, film, digital camera, photography instruction books, paints, brushes, canvas, instructional books, etc.) you can develop your eye and your portfolio. Framed and matted photographs or paintings of some of your most memorable trips can be great decoration for your home or gifts for your family. You could also take along a camcorder for some live action shots.

Additional Outdoor Activities for Truckers



Picnics

Many parks and rest areas, and some motels, have grills or fire pits available. Just bobtail down to the grocery store (if needed for ease of access), pick up some steak, (or fish fillets, shrimp, vegetables, chicken, etc.) some briquettes, kabob skewers, BBQ sauce, potato salad, lemonade... whatever ingredients make up *your* perfect picnic, and make it happen!

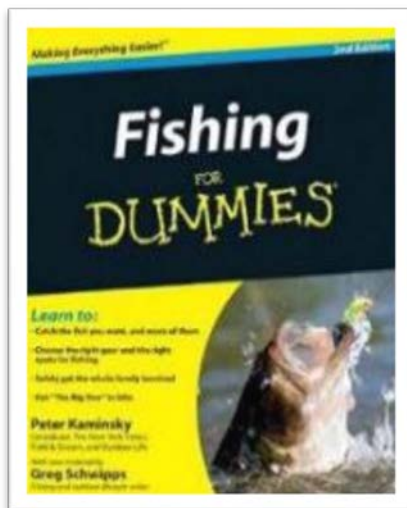
This is a great way to break up the *same old routine*. Even just picking up something special and different from the deli of a local grocery store can be cheaper and more interesting than going into the truck stop and ordering “the usual.”

Fishing, hiking, etc.



You may find yourself with enough time on your hands for some of these outdoor activities. Some equipment will be necessary, but if you play it smart, you should be able to fit it all in the truck. If you know the area you're in, you'll obviously know where to go. But, if you're in unfamiliar territory, there are many guides which will help you out.

Fishing for Dummies



For those of you who have never fished, you might find enough in this [book](#) to get you started. You don't have to learn everything all at once.

If you're already an "angler", there are plenty of tips and techniques in here that you can turn to right away *without* going through the basics all over again.

Even *master* anglers will also find this book a handy reference for all kinds of fishing questions you might need answers to.

Chapter 2: Truckers Can Be Healthy



The health of professional truck drivers is an often-neglected subject. But its effect on a trucker's job performance, as well as their quality of life, can't be overstated. **The following are some of the main topics covered in this chapter:**

- [The Typical Truckers Diet](#)
- [Some Healthier Diets and Routines](#)
- [The Controlled/Varying Calorie Approach](#)
- [Truckers and the Cigarette Habit](#)
- [Self-Contained Truckers](#)
- [Meal Replacements for the Road](#)

- [Truckers and Back Problems](#)

With just a little bit of helpful information and new ideas, as well as some extra effort and discipline, truckers can break out of their usual unhealthy routines. For information on trucker fitness, go to the [next chapter](#).

The Typical Trucker Diet



For many new drivers, part of the fun of trucking is living the *stereotypical trucker's routine*. That is, stopping at truck stop restaurants, buffets, always eating fast foods, and, of course, long periods of driving!

However, when you combine sitting behind the wheel all day, experiencing stress because of delivery deadlines, and hardly ever getting any exercise... and it won't be long before you start to notice the negative effects.

Too many truckers repeat daily what may be the worst possible routine:

- Eat a quick breakfast, usually full of excess fat and calories.
- Drive all day, stopping only when absolutely necessary.
- Eat a huge dinner just before going to bed.

Basically, your body has had no chance to work it off, and will have to deal with it as you sleep. This doesn't make for a very restful sleep. If not done right, the trucking lifestyle can be extremely tough on your health.

Some Healthier Diets and Ideas for Truckers

Eating Low-Fat Foods

Your average truck stop menu or buffet is still loaded with plenty of fried chicken and mashed potatoes and gravy, pancakes, sausage, and biscuits and gravy... you name it. Don't get me wrong, I LOVE all that!

But, even out on the road, there are healthier alternatives, even if you *do* have to search a little harder for them.

Many restaurants will allow you to order items that are not even on the menu. For example, in some truck stops, I'll just ask for a turkey sandwich on wheat, with lettuce and tomato, and they'll usually be able to hook me up, with a good price as well. Of course, fried foods should be avoided if at all possible.

An excellent guide is [Eating for Life: Your Guide to Great Health, Fat Loss and Increased Energy! \(Body for Life\)](#).

Also pick up [The Calorie King's Calorie, Fat & Carbohydrate Counter](#), which shows the fat and calorie content of many popular foods. This will help you determine the best foods to eat at a moment's glance. Perhaps even better, get an app on your smartphone. You can't go wrong with the app [MyFitnessPal](#).

The latest health trend: Eating low-carb

There are a few good books on the subject: one is [Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution](#), which advocates very low carbohydrates (at least during the initial phases of the diet) without limitations on calories or fat (it actually encourages high fat foods).

Another good one is [The South Beach Diet: The Delicious, Doctor-Designed, Foolproof Plan for Fast and Healthy Weight Loss](#), which advocates a similar approach, except there are more carbs allowed, and less high-fat foods allowed.

The idea behind these popular approaches is that it's not fat that's causing people to get fat; it's consumption of high amounts of carbs that does. It's already caught on like wildfire in fast food restaurants looking to cash in on the craze. However, if you haven't read the books, and become familiar with the diets (and the reasoning behind them), just going low-carb and high-fat can be dangerous, and cause you to gain even more weight. If you go high-fat and go too high on your carbs (the key is knowing exactly what your carb figure is, or the amount of carbs you could consume before gaining weight), you'll almost certainly gain weight.

One last type of low-carb diet is the Paleo Approach. It's based on the idea that in man's early days, he wasn't exactly smashing up grains and making breads and donuts. He was eating meat, vegetables, and fruits, and he *wasn't* fat.

Check out some paleo food ideas [here](#). Good thing is, there's tons of great food on this plan. You won't be starving yourself, believe me. Just food for thought!

The Controlled/Varying Calorie Approach

The less active you are; the less calories you burn. This is true even for those with faster metabolisms, even if the rest of us can't tell! This gets *worse* as you get older, as the metabolism (your body's natural ability to burn calories and fat) starts to dwindle as you get past 30, 40, or beyond.

If you're a truck driver who doesn't burn a lot of calories, then it's even more important to watch your daily calorie consumption.

Here's a NY Times article entitled "[A Hard Turn: Better Health on the Highway](#)." You'll learn about what some truckers are doing to overcome the problem.

The main drawback to this approach is that you must count calories, which can be a hassle. However, truck drivers have plenty of time to make a few simple calculations. The only other thing they really need is a calorie book or app like previously mentioned.

One benefit you'll receive with this approach is that you'll see how the *little* things (snacks, condiments, desserts, extras of any kind, etc.) add up so quickly.

First, you need to recognize you have a problem, then you can do something about it.

With this approach, you use a calorie chart, find your height and weight and get your daily calorie figure which you use as a 'maintenance' figure. This is the amount of daily calorie consumption which would maintain your same weight. You'd neither gain nor lose weight, as long as you kept your calorie burning (exercise) at a moderate level, or close to what you've been doing.

Now, there's an even easier way. Go to active.com. As you can see in this image, it's easy to enter in your vital information to get back your daily calorie results. This is the recommended number of calories to consume during the day to maintain your weight for whatever level of activity you engage in.

For truckers, unless you follow the exercise recommendations in this chapter, you will most likely enter light exercise or sedentary. To *lose* weight, you consume *less* calories than the calorie result you receive.

The image shows a screenshot of the 'active.com' website's calculator interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons and labels for 'Body Fat', 'Body Mass Index', 'Caloric Needs & BMR' (which is highlighted in orange), 'Nutritional Needs', 'Ideal Weight', 'Heart Rate', and 'Running Pace'. Below the navigation bar, the 'Calculate:' section has two radio buttons: 'Caloric Needs' (selected) and 'Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)'. The form includes fields for 'Gender' (Male selected, Female unselected), 'Height' (5 feet 0 inches), 'Weight' (empty field), 'Age' (empty field), and 'Activity Level' (Active selected). At the bottom, there is a large orange 'CALCULATE' button and a smaller blue 'Reset' button.

I prefer to use an app like [My Fitness Pal](#). Simply install this on your phone. Any restaurant you go into, find the exact restaurant (if it's a well-known restaurant) or close approximation of what you want to eat to get the complete nutritional information. Add it to the daily record to keep track of your daily total, and to stay on track.

Just consuming less calories than your daily maintenance figure, unfortunately, isn't the answer, because your body will eventually adjust to the daily intake of calories consumed. For example, if your daily calorie maintenance figure is 2000 calories, and you only consumed 1400 calories a day, after several days (approximately) your body would adjust and only burn 1400 calories instead of 2000. This is because your body assumes you've got a problem and puts itself in starvation mode, burning less calories and storing fat. This is not the goal.

FYI: The Starvation Mode/Fat Storing concept is not agreed upon by all fitness experts. I believe it's true from my own experience, but it's key to try different things and see what works for YOU!

Instead, delegate one day out of four or five as a *light* day. Just consume 1400 calories, with the other days as maintenance days (2000 calories). Your body will not have had enough time to adjust to 1400 calories, and will still burn 2000. Therefore, you'll lose fat and/or weight.

Flip a coin every day, heads for a *maintenance* day, tails for a *light* day. This way, your body shouldn't be able to adjust to a pattern.

So, which approach is best?

A combination of the above approaches is probably best. Each method of eating seems to have its own benefits, but shouldn't be relied upon to cure a

lifetime of bad habits. Try to control your calories, keeping them within a certain range. Make up for a bad day (one where you ate all the buffets, desserts and all) with a good day the next day, or just add some extra exercise (a longer walk around the truck stop, etc.).

In addition to controlling your calories, keep your fat content down (unless you're in a full-blown low-carb routine), and your carbs down as well.

Balance is key, but is also sometimes the hardest thing to do. This is where your habits and routines can help. When you're done eating dinner, you go for a walk immediately afterwards, as a matter of course.

It's also important to consume daily vitamins and supplements. It's best to get a good percentage of your vitamins from your food content, so try to make a habit of eating colorful vegetables-something other than potatoes-with each meal. Also, take a daily multi-vitamin, and other supplements as needed (or as recommended by your doctor).

Step-by-step to starting a healthier routine on the road

- Get started. This can be the hardest step!
- Do it for the *right* reasons.
- Don't have unrealistic short-term goals.

- Turn it into a habit. It has been said that if you do anything for at least 21 days in a row, it becomes a habit.
- Desire. You've got to want it.
- What it's **not**... easy, a quick fix, a magic formula, no effort required, or instant gratification.

Truckers and the Cigarette Habit



Truckers may smoke cigarettes more than any other type of workers. Smoking and driving a truck just seem to go together. Throw in a good cup of coffee, and you're all set to get down the road.

But many years of smoking cigarettes can eventually catch up to you. **It happened to me.** I used to smoke a couple of packs in a 10-hour driving shift. I'd get slightly winded just getting in my truck, or walking to the truck stop restaurant.

I tried to quit many times. Have you heard the saying, "quitting smoking is easy...I've done it a thousand times!"?

Well, for me, it was true. I'd say, "This time, I've quit for GOOD." Then, after just a couple hours down the road, I'd go nuts and have to stop for cigarettes!

I tried different products to help me quit: nicotine patches, nicotine gum, even chewing tobacco! Well, that wasn't really *quitting* tobacco, was it? Well, they all *eventually* helped me to quit the habit. That was about 18 years ago, and I haven't gone back to smoking since. I still miss it occasionally, but I'm glad I made the decision to quit and *finally* got it done.

How to Save Money, Time, and Your Health by Being *Self-Contained*

If you really love buffets, or eating any big, hot meal after a long day of driving, this section *might* not be for you. But if you're just a little flexible, give this routine a try.

All that's required is a refrigerator, some basic food items, and plenty of water. A little persistence is also required, as the beginning of any new routine sometimes can be difficult. But I believe that many truckers will find this to be the perfect lifestyle choice.

Easy and Cheap Refrigerator Choice:



Try the Coleman PowerChill, a good sized (40 qt) cooler you simply plug in to the cigarette lighter. It doesn't have a freezer, but cools everything adequately as long as you don't let it get too hot in the cab. Walmart usually has them in stock or you can get it online.

[TruckerWho](#) gives an informative demonstration on using the Coleman cooler, including the good and the bad aspects about the unit.

If you want a normal (but smaller) refrigerator with a freezer, they're a bit [pricier](#). You'll have to run those off of AC current, provided by power from an APU.

Most newer trucks today have APUs. That's [Auxiliary Power Unit](#). The APU provides electricity, heat, and a/c to the inside of the tractor. These units run without the truck having to idle.

Here are a few of the benefits you'll receive from living a self-contained lifestyle:

You'll Save Plenty of Money

Eating out for three meals in a truck stop restaurant can cost you anywhere between \$20 to \$30 a day or more, depending upon how you like to eat. At that rate, your monthly food bill would be, at a minimum, between \$500 and \$750, not counting beverages or snacks. In contrast, a *self-contained* trucker will spend \$5-\$10 a day, or \$125-\$250 a month at the most. **I'm sure you could think of a few things you could do with an extra \$500 or more a month!**

You'll Also Save Plenty of Time

Truckers typically spend several hours per day just eating at truck stop restaurants. In contrast, the self-contained trucker spends less than an hour per day preparing and eating. That's possibly two hours earlier you could be finished driving every day.

There are many things you can do with that time like:

- exercising (which goes together with preserving your health)
- reading
- playing an instrument
- [writing a book](#)
- talking with your family on the phone
- or even getting some extra sleep!

I'm sure you could think of even more ideas!

Finally, You'll Be Much Healthier

Striving to be healthier will have short-term and long-term benefits.

Short-term benefits:

- you'll probably be eating less than you would've eaten in a truck stop restaurant.
 - you'll be less full after each meal
 - you won't have to fight the fatigue that usually follows big meals.
- Eating healthier will give you more energy, which will help you get down the road easier, make more miles, AND more money.

Long-term benefits:

- eating healthier will make you feel better about yourself, and generally be more confident.
- you'll be much less likely to sustain injuries while performing your job because you're in better condition.

Meal Replacements for the Road

Meal Replacement products are a great low-fat, high-protein source of food. They're a healthier way to eat, plus they're faster than eating in a restaurant. Lastly, they're also much cheaper.



A meal replacement powder can be a great idea for truckers, especially over-the-road truckers.

All you need is:

- a refrigerator/cooler for milk, juice, and/or water.
- a blender or mixer of some kind (I use a one-quart shaker I purchased at Walmart for a few bucks).
- a [meal replacement supplement](#) or
- [whey protein](#)
- I also recommend adding in some [fiber powder](#). This will fill you up better, and keep things moving along!

I wouldn't recommend eating ALL your meals this way. Instead, try 1 or 2 meals a day, and see how you feel.

Even better than normal meal replacement powders are SuperGreens and SuperBerry from [Living Fuel](#). You *could* drink these shakes every day, but since it's a bit more expensive (about \$5 per serving, but that's still less than your average truck stop meal!), 1 or 2 a day would suffice. This is the best stuff I've found for shake-based nutrition. FYI, the SuperBerry tastes WAY better. Check it out.

In addition, add in any extra ingredients that you prefer, like liquid egg whites, peanut butter powder, sweetener, etc.

Truckers and Back Problems

OTR drivers must endure long periods of sitting behind the wheel, sometimes up to 11 hours at a stretch, with limited breaks in-between. The last thing on most driver's minds is maintaining good posture while sitting and driving (at least until the driver starts to experience problems because of it). It often starts with minor lower back pain, and gradually gets worse over the years.

The driver may not notice any ill-effects for their first few years of driving, so naturally they won't consider it a big problem. Then, suddenly, the aches and pains begin. Whether you're already experiencing pain or not, it's best to do some things *now* to prevent or help to lesson back and neck pain later.

A few things truckers can do to prevent problems

- **Get out of the truck every couple of hours, and do some stretching.** Make one break during the day an exercise break, and do 15-30 minutes of stretching and light exercise.

[Here's Eric Banter with Healthy Trucker](#) quickly demonstrating some stretches drivers can do to help prevent lower back pain that develops from sitting for long stretches at a time.

- **Sit up straight in the seat while driving.**

Make sure you have good lumbar and middle back support. The newer trucks have seats which have adjustable lumbar support. At first it helps to keep conscious of your posture, because you may have been unconsciously sitting the wrong way for years. Do something to remind yourself to sit right because it's that important.

[Here's Eric again](#) with a quick demonstration of proper sitting while in the truck.

- **Get a good mattress or mattress topper.**



Another thing which can cause back or neck problems is the generic mattresses that are provided in the truck's sleeper. However, there is a simple solution. Top your regular mattress with a mattress topper, a thick cushion you can purchase separately which will help you sleep in comfort! This will help you wake up free of aches, pains and stiffness!

Make sure you size your mattress before purchasing a topper. Many mattresses in standard sleepers are twin size, but not all of them! The [Mattress Insider](#) is a great site that has mattresses and toppers **specifically**

for truck sleepers! Highly recommended. Also, Walmart should have these in stock, though only in common twin, full, queen, king sizes.

One last recommendation on mattresses. If you've been assigned to a truck that had a previous driver, make sure the mattress is still in good condition, *and* doesn't smell bad. That driver could have been a smoker, *or* just didn't like to shower very often! If it's at all questionable, ask your company for a new mattress. They'll probably throw a new one in there for you! Then you can just add a topper and you'll be sleeping like a baby.

Chapter 3: Truckers Can Also Be Fit!



This section is geared towards helping drivers get and stay in shape while on the road. I know, it's a lot easier said than done. The words trucker and fitness aren't heard together too often in the same sentence.

These are the main subjects covered in this chapter:

- [The Trucker's Usual Routine](#)
- [Exercise Ideas and Routines for the Truck](#)

Consult your physician before doing this or any exercises recommended in Trucking Lifestyles! Start out with walking, then add in a little jogging, THEN you can try the other ideas!

The Trucker's Usual Routine



Truckers, depending on the type of trucking they do, often have a hard time getting regular (if any!) exercise. The reality is, most of the driver's working day is spent sitting behind the steering wheel.

Typically, a trucker may have to climb up into the trailer and secure the load with a load bar several times a week, plus get up into the tractor several times a day. They may walk some 20-100 yards from their truck to the truck stop, then back to the truck again. That's about the most exercise *most* drivers get all day.

So, do any truckers exercise? Are any of them in shape?

You must have persistence and be disciplined to stick to an exercise routine, *especially* as a driver. An over-the-road trucker often faces delivery deadlines and unfamiliar routes, which make it tough.

Let's face it, when you've driven all day, or night, the last thing you want to do is exercise. You just want to get something to eat, relax and watch some television.

However, this lack of exercise, along with the typical trucker's diet, is a bad combination, if done for a long enough time. I was in this routine myself for *years*.

Exercise Ideas and Routines for the Truck

Fellow truckers, there *is* a better way! With a little effort on your part, there are many things you can do to break the cycle and really improve both how you look, and more importantly, how you *feel*.

Matter of fact, don't *break* the cycle, get *on* it and ride!

It's important that drivers take advantage of the stops they regularly have to make. After they check the truck and the load (or any other time the driver *has* the time), a driver has the chance to do some quick exercises and stretching.

Note: *Before starting any exercise program (or any exercise at all), it is important to get a complete check up by your physician. Take it slow at first, especially if it's been a while since you've done any exercise.*

The following exercises can be done from inside your truck. If you have a rubber floor, get an exercise mat to make it easier and more comfortable. If you have carpet, you may be able to do without the mat.

Move everything off the floor to give yourself as much room as possible. You may feel more comfortable if you're able to exercise in private, so use the cab curtains (if they're installed), or get a sunshade for the windshield (you can use curtains or shades for the side windows as well).

Stretching

It's key to do some stretching every day, especially before and after driving, and before doing any exercise. Stretching helps prepare your body for exercise, and helps to prevent injury.

Every time you stop, try touching your toes (in the truck or outside), and stretch the back of your legs and your back. Doing this will help your back from getting too sore from sitting and driving for long periods of time (remember to maintain good posture while driving). Don't stretch too vigorously or bounce at all when you're extending the stretch. Do it slowly and carefully, and listen to your body!

Exercise with Dumbbells

Dumbbells are an ideal way to stay or get in shape, especially considering the limited space truckers have in the cab/sleeper. Adjustable dumbbells avoid the problem of having bunches of different weighted dumbbells rolling around the truck.

Every major muscle group can be exercised using just two adjustable dumbbells. **Here are a few great dumbbell sets for the truck:**

[The PowerBlock SportBlock Personal Set](#) has a maximum weight of 50 lbs. per hand. It replaces 10 pair or 20 fixed dumbbells that would have a combined weight of 500 lbs.

The [PowerBlock Travel Bench](#) has a detainer pin that -- when removed from each leg -- allows the legs to be folded for storage or travel purposes, great for inside the cab of the truck. The bench also has a built-in shoulder strap

which allows it to be easily carried. It is constructed of 14 gauge, 2" x 3" steel tubing for long-lasting and reliable use.

If these adjustable dumbbells are a bit too expensive, [this type](#) is a cheaper option. You'll just need to add plates as needed for resistance.

Dumbbell exercises you can do in the cab of your truck: (Click links to see video demonstration)

- [Military Press](#) (shoulders)



- [Bicep Curl](#) (biceps and forearms)



- [Tricep Extensions](#) (triceps)



- [Bench Press](#) (chest/pectoral)



- [Bent-Over Row](#) (back muscles)



- [Squats](#) (lower body – glutes, hamstrings, quadriceps)

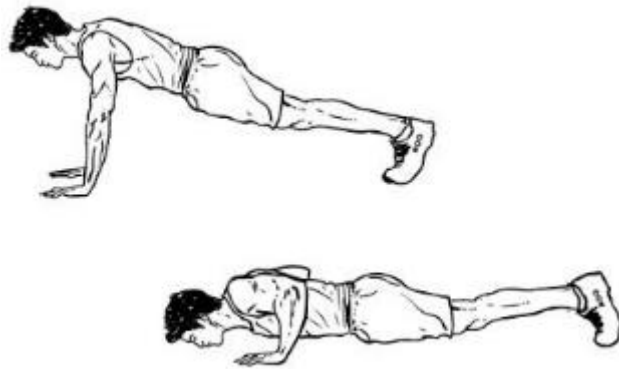


- [Calf Raises](#) – Both or single leg (calves)

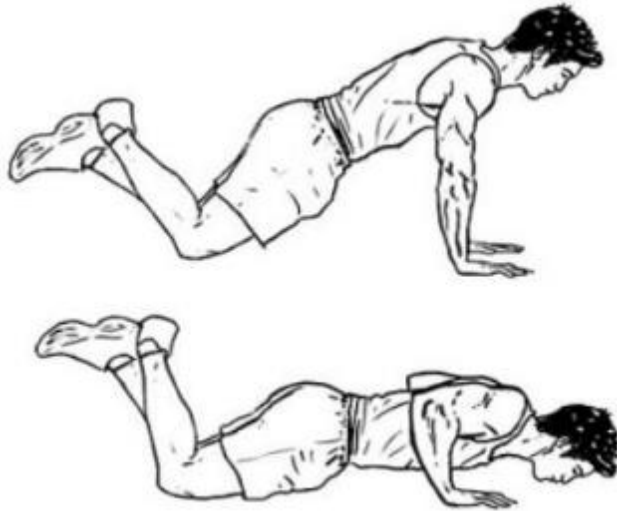


Pushups, Sit-ups, Crunches

Pushups



You may want to start with *modified* push-ups. This type of push-up is done with your knees on the ground. Extend your arms to the floor with your palms down, and hands shoulder width apart. Suck in your abdomen to take some strain off of your back. Don't do too many the first time, and just do one set. Wait to see how sore you get the next couple of days before you do more. Eventually, do multiple sets, resting a minute between sets. Doing a few sets every other day will show a big improvement in your upper body before too long.

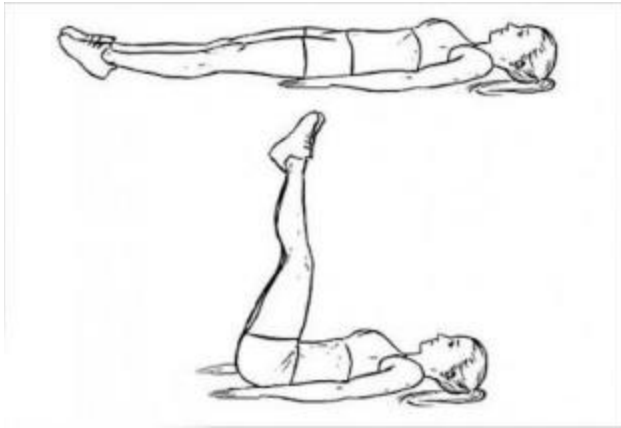


A *push up bar* will help you get more out of your pushups. It enables you to more thoroughly work your chest muscles. You can also do triceps exercises with them as well.



[These push up bars](#) have foam covered handle grips for comfort, and are also great for stretching. They'll improve the strength in your upper body, arms, legs and stomach.

Sit-Ups, Crunches, Leg Raises



Some people prefer to do sit ups, others prefer crunches. Crunches tend to concentrate more on your abdomen and can be less of a strain on your back. Don't pull up on your neck with your hands (to prevent from doing so, try keeping your hands on your chest), and let your abs do the work.

Again, start out slowly, stopping before it gets too difficult. Just do one set at first. Be aware of how your back feels and quit at the first sign of strain.

Bodyweight leg exercises

There are many different types of leg exercises you can do. Doing these also come with a needed bonus for truckers: they will also increase your heart rate and work your lungs.

Here are a just a few ideas:

- Running in place
- Squats
- Lunges
- Jumping rope

Start with just one exercise, and see how your body responds in the days that follow. Try holding on to something in the sleeper for stability, and do some squats (without any weights at first).

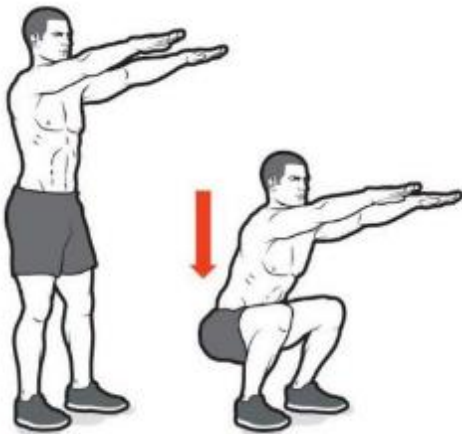
Be warned, doing squats also affects your heart rate and your wind (your cardiovascular system). You'll especially get winded if you haven't done much exercising recently.

Your goal should be to keep in shape, and maybe lose some weight; not necessarily to pack on muscle, at least when you first get started. You may be surprised at how difficult it is, even without weights. Squats don't require any equipment, and you can do them in your sleeper.

Squat basics:

- Face your sleeper, hold on to something for balance (the side walls, the cabinets, the upper bed if you have it folded down, etc.).
- Slowly bend your knees while keeping your back straight and facing straight ahead. Don't bend your knees past a 90-degree angle. Don't even go that far down if this is your first time!
- Suck in your stomach to support your back.
- Do just one set at first, and stop before you get too out of breath or if your legs start to give out.

Don't get too frustrated if you can't do too many. You'll gradually be able to do more before very long. Remember, wait a day or two and see how the squats affected your body before doing more.



After a while, **you can do these squats with the dumbbells** mentioned previously - you did get some, didn't you? - either at your shoulders or down at your sides. Start with very light weight and gradually work your way up over the coming weeks and months.

Rubber Resistance Bands



[Fit For Trucking](#) (above) showing how it's done!

Using BIG rubber bands are a great and inexpensive exercise option for the trucker, especially considering the small confines of the truck. You can work every major muscle group with these bands, and do practically any exercise you can do with dumbbells or weights. They can also help you when you stretch, and they're completely portable.

There are different types of bands, and they come in different strengths. Some exercises you can do by stepping on the band and performing the exercise. Others can be done by hooking the bands onto a part of the cab (seat supports, etc.).

There are many different types of bands and [Amazon](#) has quite a few of them. After only a few short weeks of using these bands, you will discover improvements in muscle building, toning, posture and overall confidence.

You can use these bands many ways, but when you keep moving, and combine several different exercises without taking a break, you're doing a

full-body exercise. This may be the best possible type of exercising you can do given the lifestyle and limitations of the OTR driver. It's a routine that drivers can do right in the comfort and privacy of their own trucks

Cardio (both in and out of the truck)

Mini-Steppers

It can be hard for truckers to find the time or a place for cardiovascular exercise during an average day of driving. But there are ways if you're willing to expend a little effort. I've included some equipment here more suitable to a driver's sometimes limited situation in the truck.



If you have about \$400 to spend on your health, the absolute best portable stepper is the [Xiser stairmaster](#). This is a high-quality, commercial type of equipment, designed to REALLY give you a good workout in a limited space and not easily break or wear out! I'll bet you'll wear out long before it does!

Kettlebells



Kettlebells are a great exercise you can do with very little equipment and very little space... but with *much* benefit! And not only are they cardio, they'll work your muscles, especially as you increase the weight.

Trucker Cisco (as seen in the above image) shows a variety of exercises truckers can do while out on the road and get the truck stopped. He demonstrates the kettlebell swing at about the 4:30 mark in [this video](#). If you do them in your truck, be careful not to take out your windows or windshield! If you have a “condo” sleeper, you should be fine.

Jump Rope



There's a reason why boxers jump rope. It's one of the best exercises you can do. It works your whole body; strength, wind, coordination, etc. Depending on the size of your truck, you may have to do this outside the truck. Find a rest area, truck stop, etc. Just find a place and get to jumping! If I had to, I could even stop on a shoulder (where legal), and park so the truck would shield me from traffic and give me a bit of privacy.

You can use any old jump rope, but I use a [speed cable type](#).

Get Out of the Truck: Walking, Running, and Cycling

As with any exercise, start slowly at first. It's important to get into the habit of doing these cardiovascular types of activities every day. Try to find the time, even if it's only 15 minutes of exercise, or walking around the loading dock, etc.



If you're walking or running, you may find it helpful to carry a [pedometer](#) with you as you go. These are great ways to keep track of your progress, and to help you stay on your goals. Or, simply add a pedometer app on your smartphone.

[Fitbit](#) is another great option to help you keep track of your fitness goals.

Some of the Fitbit Features (Charge 2):

- PurePulse Heart Rate
- Multi-Sport Tracking & Connected GPS
- Call, Text & Calendar Alerts
- Cardio Fitness Level
- Guided Breathing Sessions

Walking

This can be as minimal as a few laps around the truck, to a little more intensive like a few laps around the truck stop. The quicker the pace the better, but work up to it if you're not used to it.

Walking is one thing you should do *every* day. Make a habit of it! It's also something that you can do practically *anywhere* and *anytime*.

For example:

- Park the truck farther away when you stop at truck stops.
- Take a walk back and forth on the dock while you're waiting to get loaded or unloaded.
- Walk around the rest area.
- Go for a walk with your family when you're at home, etc.

Quick Walking Tip:

There are times when it's just you and your truck on the side of a road somewhere. It would be nice if you could just go for a walk, right? Well, you CAN! AND you'll know exactly how much you just walked. If you walk around your tractor and trailer 35 times, you just walked 1mile!

And ignore other drivers who may be thinking, “just where in the heck is he **going**, anyway?”

Just do that once a day, and you’ll be “miles” ahead of the average truck driver out there!

Running

After you’ve started to build up endurance by walking for a while, then maybe it’s time you tried to add in a bit of running. But take it easy at first! Slowly jog a short distance, while keeping your heart rate from skyrocketing. This site will give you a good idea of your [target heart rate](#).

Also, be aware of your altitude. Just running two hundred yards up high in Flagstaff, AZ will feel like two miles you can run on flat surfaces, like in Huntington Beach, CA.

Get some good running shoes to help support and cushion your feet. But this is optional because, as we’ve mentioned, walking is sufficient, at least at first, for maintaining good health (both physical and mental). Start with a slow jog (remembering to stretch first, especially the calves and hamstrings) and go only a short distance.

There’s no need to push it, because you’re not going to be able to get back into shape in one day. What’s important is that you establish a routine that you’ll be able to continue indefinitely. Make sure you do some light exercise every day, and don’t forget to stretch. Set realistic goals and you won’t be easily discouraged or prone to just quit exercising altogether.

Even better, with the added benefit of not needing as much space, **is sprinting**. I mean ALL OUT! This is part of HIIT training, in which you alternate doing a high intensity exercise (like sprinting) with rest. For example, with [Tabata training](#), you do 20 seconds all out, then 10 seconds rest, then you repeat for 4 minutes. It's much harder than it sounds, and you can get a great workout in, even when you're on a tight schedule.

Quick reminder: Consult your physician before doing this or any exercises recommended in Trucking Lifestyles! Start out with walking, then add in a little jogging, THEN you can try the other ideas!

You sprint as far as you can, perhaps 100 yards or so. Then walk back. During this time, you'll get your wind back. Then, *do it AGAIN!* This is another example of HIIT training and it has *many* benefits and advantages over the usual slow 20-minute jog, or standard cardio.

Another benefit is that your body will actually burn fat the rest of the day. Burning fat **while** you're driving? You can't beat that!

Cycling

See earlier in this guide where I talk more about [bringing a bike along!](#)

Chapter 4: The Trucker's Life at Home



A truck driver, even an OTR truck driver, is still a trucker when they get back home. The trucking life has a big effect on the trucker's family and personal relationships at home.

Perhaps you've never thought about how the following topics, but they need to be considered before you decide to become a trucker:

- [Truckers need to unwind when they get home!](#)
- [Maintaining relationships](#)
- [Appreciation for and understanding of the family at home](#)
- [Keeping connected with the family](#)

- [Recognizing and resolving family problems](#)
- [More truth about life as a trucker](#)
- [Handling finances](#)

Truckers need to unwind when they get home!



Until you've done it, it's hard to understand just how draining driving 600-700 miles a day can be. Managing a tractor-trailer is considerably more demanding than keeping your average four-wheeler between the lines.

Don't be surprised if all you want to do on your first day off after a typical trip is sit and stare at the TV and just relax.

When one day off is all you have, you will have to work out a compromise between you and your family to balance your:

- a) Your need to unwind from a demanding few days or few weeks on the road, and
- b) Their need to spend time with you in an enjoyable way.

Maintaining relationships



When you spend most of your time on the road, maintaining a social and/or family life can be difficult. Regardless of scheduling, both professionally and personally, things will often come up that will prevent you from attending events that are meaningful to you and your friends.

A little understanding from both sides is essential. If you can help them to understand that you will do everything in your power to be home when you're needed, and reassure them that the events in their lives are still a

priority to you, it will be easier for them to understand when things don't work out.

When both parties choose to do things like videotape special events or shows and watch them together, or hold off on that great new movie that just came out until you can all go together, it really helps to build the relationship, while giving everyone something special to look forward to when you make it home.

Appreciation for and understanding of the family at home



My family gets to have ALL the fun!

Like I've mentioned, it can be even more difficult on the spouse at home than on the spouse behind the wheel. This is true in almost any relationship that involves one spouse leaving regularly for a lengthy period of time. Military spouses often have a much harder time coping with the absence of their partner than the military member has with being away from home. Wives

whose husbands take regular business trips often feel like the man is getting off easy, and it's no different with trucking families.

Whoever stays home is the one that must deal with all the little details of day to day life. No matter how difficult it is for you to get in the truck to drive away, or how long the miles feel to you, you can bet your spouse will probably feel that *your* job is considerably more enjoyable and glamorous than *theirs*.

You get to escape into your truck and your miles, but they're home doing dishes, mowing the lawn, deciding what to make for dinner and making it, maybe even changing the diapers and getting up in the middle of the night with sick children, if you have little ones.

Allow your children to keep their commitments to their friends, and if time permits, try to give your spouse a well-deserved couple of hours *off-duty*. It will go a long way towards boosting her enthusiasm for giving you some undisturbed relaxation time.

Keeping connected with the family



Creating simple traditions will build a sense of family and connection that is truly important to maintain, both for you and the family at home. Knowing you will always talk first thing in the morning and last thing at night, or at least leave a message, is reassuring to everyone.

Try going out for pizza or Chinese food the night you get home, or just make your favorite dinner as a “welcome home.” It’ll put everyone in a better mood and even make you feel appreciated for the work you do and the miles you put in.

If you’re stuck on a layover, miles away from home, you can all go see the same movie together (though separately), and talk about it on the phone afterwards.

Make audio or video tapes of yourself reading books or singing lullabies for your children to listen to or watch every night, or video tapes of everyone playing together.

You can call and tell your children stories over the phone, or just talk about your days. Make sure your children have pictures of the two of you together, both to look at and to hold. (Even little ones can enjoy this with a little clear contact paper and cardboard) These images can be very reassuring to children of all ages.

Let your children know that you have pictures of them in prominent places in your truck. Sending postcards from your destinations, even if all you do is sign it with “Love, Mom or Dad or Honey” lets your children and your spouse know that you are thinking of them.

Bringing home inexpensive gifts, even a greeting card or chocolate bar, is a great way to tell them you thought of them while you were away.

When you’ve been on the road on a particularly long trip, both you and your family will need time to readjust to your presence at home. It’s particularly important to spend quality one-on-one time with your spouse. This will show both your spouse and any children you may have just how important that relationship is to you, which will in turn re-establish the sense of security children get from seeing their parents together and happy. Even if you’re not able to spend extra time with the children, putting the relationship you have with their other parent first will confirm their priority in your life to them.

One of the many benefits of being a trucker is the possibility of having time off in the middle of the week. This can represent significant savings during certain activities, such as going to the movies, or being able to have lunch at a nice restaurant instead of at the more expensive dinner time, or visiting a theme park.

Do this sparingly, however, as the cost can still add up! It's best not to establish a routine of expensive outings (concerts, shopping and other purchases, etc.) every time you get home, just to make up for being away from home. If truck driving is how you intend to make your living, it's helpful to view your coming and going as just part the normal routine. Instead, focus on inexpensive traditions to maintain a sense of family connection.

If you'd like to do something a little bit different, try to limit it to once a month or so, and it will be easier on everyone (if it's something with a lot of flexibility that doesn't require a lot of planning). Picnics or movie nights at home are family activities that you can schedule. Clear everyone's calendar for that day, then do your best to make it home when you said you would. If you plan something you can't reschedule, such as a concert, it may be best to see if you can't take a couple of days of vacation time to ensure that you'll be able to meet your family's expectations.

Recognizing and resolving family problems

If you find that, regardless of your efforts to soothe your spouse, an undercurrent of anger and/or resentment runs through your relationship (with spouse, child, etc.), it's best that you deal with this ASAP. There's nothing harder than coming home to a house that's uncomfortable because of unresolved anger, *except* maybe leaving that home on another run without being able to figure out what's wrong.

An explosion of emotion and words spoken in anger rarely do a relationship good. You'll all feel better if you can tell each other honestly what's going on in your hearts and minds.

Even if the decision to go into trucking was one you made together, it's important to evaluate the feelings of your loved ones regularly. If they're having a hard time with your long absences, counseling can make a big difference in how you relate to each other. If you can't make it home for regular appointments, it will still benefit your spouse to have an objective party to vent their feelings of frustration at, and keep them from yelling at you the minute you get home about all the problems they've had while you were gone.

More Truth About Life as a Trucker

When you're a brand-new driver, and going out on your first load is the first time you've really left home, you might notice a change in the way things look and feel when you get back - especially if you've been gone for a few weeks, vs a few days.

When you find out that home doesn't feel quite like "home" anymore, it's a strange feeling!

First, this is a good sign! It means you're adjusting well to your chosen profession, and lifestyle. When the road *feels* like home, or if you find that you're looking forward to the *big reveal* of your next destination, and looking forward to your favorite on-the-road meal (whether you prepare it yourself, or have a preferred truck stop) you know you've hit your stride, and have made the right choice for you.

Now that I work online, my wife and I both miss being on the road, and look forward to road trips - maybe a little more than we should!

We had a coffee *recipe*, if you can call it that, and it involved packets of hot chocolate and the dark roast coffee options of a certain truck stop chain (I think it was Pilot and they have a [lot of coffee options!](#)). She called it “Truck Stop Coffee Nirvana.” We couldn’t do it *every* day, but it was something to look forward to when we were on the right stretches of highway.

Taking pleasure in the little things can make all the difference when you’re out on the road.

Second, coming home to everything feeling *slightly off* is less about trucking and more about *something else*. Maybe it’s the experience of exploring the world. It helps you develop a broader understanding of this great nation, the world around you, and the people in it. This is something you would notice after traveling in any travel-heavy occupation, or even just after a move away from your home to a new area - it’s not exclusive to trucking. So, don’t let that throw you, it’s good sign!

Third, will this affect your relationships? Absolutely, but it doesn’t have to *damage* them. As excited as you are about the new and interesting life you’re leading, your friends and family back home are just as excited about the way *their* lives are changing... or even how they’re *not* changing! Make sure you reach out to them, and ask about their day to day lives, rather than merely anticipating that they’ll all want to gather around and hear your *road warrior* stories.

Of course, some of your friends will want to do just that! And not only can you tell them all about it, if you’re able to take some pictures, or make some videos of your experiences, they’ll love that too. Just like staying in touch with family can be so much easier these days, maintaining connections through social media posts, blogs, and online videos can make your transitions from the road to back home feel less abrupt and go more smoothly.

Will you slowly lose touch with some friends? Sure, but that’s natural - some relationships don’t do so well at a distance. However, some will even grow stronger. Trucking can be the kind of situation that shows you who your true

friends are, but keep in mind, the relationships in your life will change as you change, regardless of whether you're a trucker or not. Try not to be critical or bitter about the people that aren't quite sure how to respond to your comings and goings, and to the ways that travel is expanding your horizons. Be friendly when you have the opportunity, and don't worry about it when you don't. That's not necessarily trucking advice so much as it's just a better way to live life. Bitterness weighs you down, and as a truck driver, shouldn't you be enjoying your freedom?



If you're married, only you and your spouse know if you can handle the time apart, or, perhaps more importantly, if you can handle the time together. These are things you need to stop and think about before diving in with both feet. As many military families will tell you, the only thing harder than saying goodbye can be saying hello again. It takes effort to reconnect and re-establish your routine as a couple, and reset the way you live together, after weeks, and sometimes months, of living separately.

You may be coming home, eager to be taken care of by your "significant other." They may be eagerly awaiting your arrival, hoping to finally get a break from the kids, their annoying boss, or just the drudgery of day to day living on their own.

All you want is to relax and sleep in your own bed. All they want is dinner out and a good time.

As always, communication is key to creating the realistic expectations that will allow you both to enjoy being back together again. Communication, compromise, and expectations are everything when working through the challenges of being a trucking family!

Being an OTR driver truly is a lifestyle, not merely a job. It changes you, and how you relate to the rest of the world on many levels that are hard to spell out in print. But whether you're on your own or have a spouse or family members with you, you do *find your groove* and figure out not just the easier and better way to do things, but the easiest and best way for *you* to get *your* job done.

Handling finances

Working together to create a budget you can agree on can really help ease tension in a relationship where you are often apart. When communication is limited (for any number of reasons, from not having a cell phone to not having a signal), it's important to have ground rules solidly established when questions of larger expenditures come up.

Your spouse may be in a store with a cart full of pointless purchases because they are subconsciously angry that you are gone, as well as just feeling lonely. [Creating a budget](#) that will help your family work towards goals you all agree on (a vacation, new car, new house, new entertainment center, etc.) is a great way to keep such splurges in check.

This [trucking site page](#) is a good place to get started. There are a lot of good ideas there that drivers can use to get started, *and* to get in control of their finances!

Chapter 5: Take Your Family Along for the Ride. Seriously!



Our kids eating in the sleeper. Memories!

If you find the time apart is just too hard on your family, you might consider the option of trucking together, *as a family*. There are several schools of thought here, both for and against, having your family with you in the truck.

You may come across well-intentioned strangers who feel they need to tell you why *they* think your choice to truck as a family is *wrong*.

However, if you're keeping it legal and safe, there is no reason for you to concern yourself with the opinions of others who don't know what types of circumstances your family is dealing with. Simply thank them for their

concern, and get on with your life. You know what works best for your family.

While homeschooling may seem like a radical choice, I don't view it as any more radical than driving a truck for a living, or choosing to keep your family in the truck with you.

There are trucking companies out there that allow you to keep your spouse and even your children in the truck with you.

A little research can help you find which companies will support this decision. After you've gained some valuable experience, you may find that an alternative option is to become an owner-operator. This way, you'll be able to have more control of your schedule and routes, as well as get the necessary insurance you'll need to take extra passengers in the truck with you.

Another option is to have your spouse be your team driving partner. While it can still involve long hours alone while one of you is sleeping, team driving with your spouse is a great way to build your relationship and your savings.

You will get to know each other unlike any couple who spend their time at separate jobs all day and only get a few hours to spend together in the evenings. Living in such close and constant proximity will quickly break down any walls remaining between the two of you before trucking together, and such intensity is often a "make or break" experience.

Of course, if you find it difficult to cope with such close quarters, one or both of you can always get off the road before the long hours together take the

ultimate toll on your relationship. If it turns into something you enjoy after you've conquered the initial obstacles, it can be a very rewarding way to spend time together while making money and traveling across the country.

Having your children with you in the truck can be both extremely rewarding and extremely challenging. Depending on their age(s), keeping them occupied during the long hours you will have to drive to make money can be as simple as giving them a book to read. It can also be as difficult as driving down the road with a crying baby because they're tired of being in the truck, but you still HAVE TO make it to the shipper early the next morning.

If you're a single parent, having your children with you in the truck can be the option you're looking for if you prefer not to put them in daycare, as long as your children are school-aged and able to perform simple tasks for themselves.

You may be tempted to bring younger children, such as infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with you in the truck. Keep in mind how difficult it is for little ones to sit still for long periods of time (such as in a child safety seat) as you're driving down the road, and the safety concerns it could raise if you're unable to attend to their needs due to traffic, weather, or just not having a safe place to pull over.

Clearly, different things work for different families, but consider your child and their temperament before you commit to keeping them in the truck for long hours. If you have joint custody or just summer and holiday visitation with your children, they may view it as a special privilege to be able to spend time with you in your truck.

For any family, single or two-parent, trucking or non, state school attendance requirements can be an obstacle for spending time with your children. What many families aren't aware of is the key difference between compulsory attendance laws and compulsory education laws. Compulsory attendance is what we all must abide by, and it simply means that your child must attend *school*.

School, however, can be defined in various ways. For some families, anything but traditional public or private education is just not an option, but homeschooling is a legal choice in all 50 states, with rules varying from state-to-state.

Finding out what is required in your home state, or just exploring the possibilities, can easily be done [online](#) and/or at your local library. Librarians typically know of any local homeschooling families or groups, who are usually eager to share their personal experiences with beginners.

Whether you are on the road full-time or just seasonally, many trucking families have found that “home” schooling their children is the answer to staying together. I put *home* in quotes, because a more accurate description would be *education without schools*. *Home* so rarely describes where any homeschooler learns. It may sound intimidating, but, like trucking, once you've researched it, you'll be better able to decide if homeschooling is a good idea for you and your family.

Clearly, taking children on the road is not a decision you can make lightly. Carefully and truthfully consider all your options and the needs of both you and your children before committing to having them on the road in a long-term, full-time capacity. Make sure you're abiding by all the applicable laws

and have insurance coverage that will cover your children in case of an accident.

Make a list of possibilities and play ***What if?*** with each one so that you'll be prepared to respond appropriately if your plans fall through.

Nothing is ever simple where children are concerned! This is not to discourage you, but to encourage you to be absolutely prepared for the ups and downs having children in the truck will undoubtedly cause.