



## Choosing a Career as a Bus Driver

One of the most common **transportation jobs** is that of a bus driver. Bus drivers are necessary for several different sectors of the transport industry. **Jobs in transportation** for bus drivers include school bus drivers and specialty bus drivers such as those that drive chartered buses or provide transport services for the disabled or elderly.

The most common bus drivers, though, are those that drive city and intercity bus routes. These bus drivers transport passengers to and from work within a particular city, or may drive from one state to another. These buses run on fixed timetables and have specifically assigned routes. In some cases, bus drivers have regular routes that they do day after day. In other cases, they receive assignments every day, and these assignments change from day to day.

### Other duties

Bus drivers are also responsible for making sure their vehicles are safe to drive; they examine the brakes, lights, safety equipment, and tires, and also check the oil, fuel, and water levels before they take the bus out on a route.

While on the route, bus drivers accept fares and/or tickets from passengers, help them with luggage as applicable (for long trips), and may take care of small bus repairs if needed during the trips. If a bus should happen to need repairs that render it undrivable, the bus driver is responsible for arranging another bus or for moving the passengers to other buses so that they can complete their trips.

### Paperwork

Even though the main duties of the bus drivers are driving, taking care of passengers, and making sure the vehicle is operable, they also have to do quite a lot of paperwork. They must keep logs of fares they've taken, the stops they've made, the miles they've driven, and hours they've worked. In addition, if the bus itself is involved in any accident during the driver's shift, the driver has to file a detailed report about the accident.

### Training

In most cases, bus drivers have to be 21 years old; in some cases, they have to be older than 24 years. They have to be in

good health and their eyesight and hearing have to be good, too. Their corrected vision (with or without glasses) has to be at least 20/40. They must also be able to write, read, and understand English well enough to communicate effectively.

Bus drivers don't necessarily have to have finished high school, but some companies do require them to do so. They must hold commercial driver's license, and they must have good driving records. To obtain a commercial driver's license, they have to pass driving and written tests that show they are capable of holding one. Bus companies usually also have applicants take physical examinations to ensure that they are fit for the job.

### If you're newly hired

Often, when a company newly hires you, you need to take a training course that teaches you that company's procedures specifically. In addition, you'll have to learn federal and state laws, how to do minor bus repairs, and how to keep records. Initially you may go through a period when you will be observing more experienced drivers instead of driving. You are also likely to "practice" bus runs without passengers. After that, you'll make trips with passengers but be closely supervised.

Once you've gotten past your initial "new driver" period of introduction and training, you'll be given the opportunity to fill in for drivers who are sick or otherwise absent. It may be some time, maybe even years, before you get a regular run of your own.

### Getting the experience to become a bus driver

If you have a desire to become a bus driver, working as a taxi driver, a truck driver, or a bus driver for shorter routes can give you the experience to become a bus driver for longer routes. If you wish, you can apply directly to bus companies that may be advertising for drivers. In addition, employment



## Transportation Job Feature

services and newspaper ads may also give you leads. Internet job sites, too, are another place to look.

Opportunities for advancement, compensation, and job outlook

As you stay with a particular bus company for a period of time (or alternatively, as you gain experience and perhaps move between companies), you can qualify for better, less stressful routes and greater pay. As you continue, you may also become a manager or a supervisor for a bus company.

Job opportunities for bus drivers may turn out to be better than usual at present, because people are taking public

transport more often. With the rising gas prices it is becoming much more difficult and expensive to drive one's private car. Therefore, this may be one of the fastest growing sectors for [transportation and jobs](#). However, that remains to be seen. Competition may remain stiff, too, because many qualified drivers apply for this type of work. Many bus drivers work part-time for one or more companies and therefore "cobble together" a full-time workweek, but a full-time 40-hour workweek at one company is usually reserved for only the most experienced drivers.

As of 2004, bus drivers averaged a wage of about \$14 an hour, with the most experienced drivers earning about \$25 an hour.

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