



Getting a Semi Driving Job

In our country, the ability to move freight from one place to the other drives our economy. In 2000, it was estimated that the transportation related goods and services made up 11% of our gross domestic product. Only housing and food made up a larger percentage. Needless to say, moving product is important and the majority of that movement takes place every day on our highways on semi trucks. Here we will look at some of the important aspects of becoming a truck driver and getting an OTR [truck driver job](#).

Education

There are several ways that you can obtain your class A CDL license. This is the base license required to drive a tractor-trailer on American highways.

Do it Yourself

Many states will allow you the option of studying the commercial driver's license manual on your own time. Once you feel confident you can then go for an approved testing center, here it is the highway patrol office, and take your written test. Once you have passed it, you will be issued a permit on which you can practice driving a semi truck with another licensed driver in the truck.

When you are ready, you can then take the driven part of your commercial driver's license. The test will begin with the 108-118 point pre-trip inspection that you must pass. If you flunk this area, you may not be allowed to continue, that will again depend on the state you are testing in.

Now for the bad news there are several reasons why this approach is not the best one. First of all to take your driven test you will either need a very good friend who will loan you the use of their truck or you will have to rent one, in some places that can cost up to \$150 per hour. This can also be a real problem for practicing your driving skills before the test. If you should make it through all those hurdles and walk away with your shiny new license you still have a major problem. Due to increased insurance requirements, your chances of getting an OTR truck driver job are nil. It is not that the companies do not want to hire you; it is the fact that their insurance will not cover you, the truck or the freight. You are looking at hundreds of thousands of dollars in loss if you were to wreck the truck not to mention the amount of liability if you were to injure another person.

Company Sponsored Training

Many trucking companies have begun to build their own training centers. In exchange for signing a contract with the company, you could get into their training program for very little upfront cost. It is usually a week or two of classroom training leading into paid on the job training once you have your permit. This is a great option for someone just starting out who does not have the means to pay for training through a technical college and who may need to produce income very quickly.

[Class A CDL truck driving jobs](#) is a growing field with a high turnover rate. This is one of the reasons companies are offering low to no cost class A CDL truck driver training. When you finish all of your training, it will be time for you to spread your wheels and fly across the country hauling all manner of freight.

The downside to this method is you are usually contractually bound to the company that trained you for your OTR truck-driving job. This contract could be for a minimum of six months or as long as two years, it all depends on the company. While that is job security, you will want to be sure, check out their compensation plan, home time policy, and vacation accrual. Compare them to similar companies in the class A CDL truck driver job field and make sure they are competitive.

School

If you can swing it this is by far the best option for obtaining your class A CDL license. Many technical colleges offer a revolving schedule for their CDL training program. In other words, they will start a new class every one to two weeks. This makes it very easy to get into a class. The class will likely be all day every day for about five weeks. This too will vary according to state requirements and each school's individual schedule. The cost will likely range from \$1500 - \$4000 and some states offer programs to help offset the cost. Depending



Trucking Career Feature

on the school, the cost of truck usage may be included, some cheaper programs may require you rent one, and then there is the cost of the license itself.

The best part of paying for your schooling outright is that you will not have a company contract hanging over your head when you graduate. You will be able to pick and choose between companies and find the CDL truck driver job that suits your needs. Be forewarned however that even with this method your start out wages will be at the lowest rung of the truck-driving ladder.

Local Jobs

It has been my experience that [local CDL truck driving jobs](#) are few and there is a stiff competition for them. Your small companies looking for someone to drive locally will go with the retiring [OTR truck driver](#) every time over a school graduate. If you are lucky enough to get a position like this think long and hard before changing jobs.

OTR

Over the road truck, driving is indeed a great field to get into if you are cut out for it. There is a lot more to the job than guiding a truck down the freeway. You will have logbooks to keep up with, delivery times to meet and traffic snarls that will blow your mind. It is a field that pays well because of these aggravations and many more. If you have, the opportunity to go out on a truck with another driver before you commit to a CDL training program you should. You will get a feel for the road and learn whether you love it or hate it. That is really the only two camps there are when it comes to a class a cdl [truck-driving job](#).

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