



## Hit The Road With A Trucking Job

Truckers are the lifeblood of American Commerce. Ready to hit the open road with a trucking career?

Since the early 1970s, the romance of the long-haul trucker has inspired stories and lots of great music. But the life of a real truck driver is more than just CB radios and truck stops. Real truckers are one of the most important components of business today. They deliver goods and services all over the United States; from everyday loads of food and household goods to exotic chemicals and gases. Where ever you look you see a truck delivering goods and services wherever they're needed.

### Trucking: A Tough and Dangerous Job

While there are many kinds of trucking jobs, all trucking jobs have one thing in common. Truck drivers are responsible for getting a load from one place to another on time and in good shape. That's not always the easiest job. Truck drivers must deliver their loads in all kinds of conditions, from heavy snow to blazing heat. Some [regional trucking jobs](#) may require traveling on roads that are in poor condition or through the heart of dangerous terrain such as mountains and deserts. Of special note are truckers who deliver loads to distant oilrigs in the far north. These "ice road" truckers must travel hundreds of miles over frozen lakes and rivers that may collapse under the weight of the load, which would plunge both driver and truck to the icy bottom. In other extreme cases, truckers may have to deliver loads in high-crime areas or, in the case of military contractor truckers, through actual combat zones.

Truckers must not only get their loads delivered on time, but often must also take care of the trucks they use. Because they often encounter truck inspection stations on the road, drivers on [CDL trucking jobs](#) (commercial driver's license) are responsible for making sure that lights, brakes, tires, and signals are all in perfect working order. They must also make sure that their loads are not only properly secured, but that they also meet stringent weight limits for the highways they will be traveling on.

Getting the load to its destination is just part of the challenge.

Often, as in the case of industrial supplies (piping, steel, and cars) the load may weigh hundreds of tons, making the haul a dangerous proposition. If the load involves toxic materials (such as gasoline or chemicals) or gases (like chlorine or oxygen), special precautions must be taken to avoid spills or explosions.

#### Long haulers

Long haul truckers (who drive the large-cab trucks with extra-long trailers), spend up to 90 percent of their time on the job driving. Because trips can take so long, many long haulers have sleeper cabs—truck cabs with small beds built into the back. These can be used to catch up on lost sleep if the run will be a long one. Often two truckers work together, one doing the driving while the other catches a few Z's.

But these distance truckers have even more tasks to cover besides driving. U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) rules require truckers to be responsible for keeping written logs of their trips including all pickups, drop-offs, maintenance problems, and accidents.

#### Non-CDL trucking jobs

Not every trucking job requires a special license or a huge big rig. Many trucking jobs are carried out by delivery drivers using smaller pickups, package vans and other light trucks below 26,000 pounds. Delivery drivers typically work within a single area, allowing them to spend nights at home. Most drivers for package companies, auto-parts delivery, food-delivery services, and medical-delivery companies fit into this category. These drivers often don't have to load their own trucks or keep detail travel logs for USDOT inspectors. However, they often have to collect delivery fees or payments, write receipts, use electronic tracking systems to keep deliveries up to date, and work with dispatch offices.

#### Qualifications

While most delivery (non-CDL) drivers require little more than a valid driver's license and a clean record, long-haul



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and tractor-trailer drivers hauling loads over 26,000 pounds must have a commercial driver's license. Learning to handle a tractor-trailer requires special training, which is offered by a variety of courses through special training schools. To pass the CDL exam, drivers must not only be capable of handling their rigs under test conditions, but must also know the proper methods of loading, inspection, maintenance, and rules of the road. All drivers must also pass applicable state and federal regulations that determine if they can obtain a CDL. In addition, Transportation Security Administration rules also require that drivers who will handle hazardous materials must be fingerprinted and pass a background check.

### Earnings

Based on US Bureau of Labor surveys, median tractor-trailer driver salaries range from \$16 to \$17 hourly, with a top range of \$25 per hour. General-freight truckers normally have the highest salary range. Light-delivery drivers start at \$12.17 per hour, with an average of around \$16 per hour.

### Conclusion

If you're looking for a high-paying traveling job on the open road, a career as a truck driver may be what you're looking for.

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