



Trucking Career Feature

Becoming a Commercial Driver

A commercial driver is someone who is licensed to and can operate any type of vehicle with a gross weight of above 26,001 pounds, or 11,793 kg, including tow trucks, tractor trailers, and buses. Driving commercial motor vehicles requires advanced skills and knowledge beyond that of driving any light-weight vehicle such as a car. A commercial driver is required to have undergone appropriate training, since lack of training can cause accidents and even deaths on the road. There are licensing authorities that make the driver go through various courses before providing him or her with a Commercial Driver's License (CDL). The license program collects and stores all the convictions, if any, which the driver has on record.

Who Needs a CDL?

A driver must have a CDL to drive the following vehicles:

- All single vehicles with a manufacturer's weight rating of 26,001 pounds or more.
- All trailers with the manufacturing weight of 10,001 pounds or more and the combined vehicle's gross weight rating of 26,001 pounds or more.
- All vehicles designed to transport sixteen or more people including the driver; this also includes private buses.
- All school buses, regardless of size.
- All vehicles that are used in transportation of any material that requires hazardous material labeling or any quantity of a material list as a select agent or toxin.

All these above vehicles are divided into three classes: A, B, and C.

Endorsements Needed

A higher class CDL allows the holder to drive any of the following lower-class vehicles if a driver has followed the correct endorsements:

- Driver/passenger carrying vehicles such as buses including all school buses.
- Pull double or triple trailers.
- Drive tank vehicles.

There are many other endorsements needed for a light-vehicle commercial driver to get a heavy vehicle CDL, depending upon his or her work type.

Medical Waivers

All [commercial drivers](#) must meet the medical standards

established by the state or federal authorities to get a CDL.

Driver Disqualifications

A commercial driver cannot drive any commercial vehicle if he or she has been disqualified for any reason. Some serious disqualification reasons are given below:

- **Alcohol consumption; leaving the scene of an accident;** and commission of a felony: Any of these offences can make commercial drivers lose their license for three years or more, depending upon the severity of the offence.
- **Serious Traffic Violations:** Some serious traffic violations including excessive speeding, reckless driving, negligent driving, improper lane changes, driving a commercial vehicle without earning a license, and driving a commercial without having CDL at that particular time could all disqualify a driver from obtaining a CDL.
- **Violation of Out-of-Order Services:** These violations occur when a commercial driver has committed an offence during the past 90 days or has committed two violations in the time span of one year. There are many violations that differ from state to state.
- **Railroad-highway grade crossing violations:** These violations include failing to slow down on the railway tracks to let an approaching train go, failing to stop before a crossing when the driver is required to stop, and failing to clear the crossing because of too little under-carriage clearance.

Vehicle Inspections That a Commercial Driver Should Perform

Safety is the most important reason why a commercial driver



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must inspect a vehicle to ensure personal safety as well as that of others on the road. If a commercial driver carries out regular inspections of the vehicle then defects can be detected before causing any major accident.

Types of Vehicle Inspection

There are three types of inspections that need to be carried out to ensure a safe journey: pre-trip inspection, during-trip inspection, and after-trip inspection.

Pre-Trip Inspection: A pre-trip inspection helps find problems that can cause a crash or a break down.

During-Trip Inspection: During-trip inspection includes watching of gauges for signs of trouble, checking various items such as tires, wheels, rims, brakes, lights, reflectors, trailer-coupling devices, and cargo-securing devices.

After-Trip Inspection: An after-trip inspection occurs after completion of a trip. It includes filling out a vehicle-condition report and listing the problems that have occurred during the journey.

Emergency Equipments That Must Be Carried

A commercial driver should make sure that a vehicle is equipped with various emergency equipments such as a fire extinguisher, spare vehicle fuses, and warning devices for parked vehicles, a list of emergency phone numbers, an accident-reporting kit, and wheel-changing equipment.

Going Through the Basic Controls of the Vehicle

An efficient commercial driver is one who is completely aware of the basic controls of larger vehicles including accelerating, steering, stopping, and backing safety. Fastening of seatbelts

and applying parking brakes are also a part of basic control mechanism.

Things Needed for Safe Driving

A commercial driver has to drive for long hours; this requires the driver to always remain alert. There are some things that a good driver must do to stay alert and safe.

Be ready to drive: A commercial driver must have a sound sleep before undertaking any journey in order to stay alert.

Exercise Regularly: Resistance to fatigue can be achieved by doing some exercises. If a commercial driver tries to incorporate some exercises in a daily routine, he or she is more likely to stay healthy.

Eat Well: It is often hard for commercial drivers to eat healthy food when they are on long and taxing tours, but eating fruit and consuming a lot of water can give them energy and good health.

When Driving Do What?

While a [commercial driver](#) is driving he or she must try to add some useful habits to his or her lifestyle. Commercial drivers must keeping their cool while driving, take possible breaks, recognize the danger signals of drowsy driving, take naps in between shifts, and do not rely on any substance to stay awake.

There is a huge list of commercial vehicles, such as buses, tank vehicles, double and triple vehicles, combination vehicles, cargo vehicles, and many more. The primary asset of efficient commercial drivers is to ensure the safety of their own cargo and of all the other drivers on the road so that the entire journey is safe and successful.

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