



Company Driver

Trucking companies are blooming despite the poor economy. Ads to encourage people to become truck drivers are on national television. On the other hand, thousands of established truck drivers are complaining about their pay. You will hear them say that they do not get enough miles to make the monthly bills. To understand what is going on you have to take an in-depth look into the field. In general, trucking companies offer three different statuses for drivers: company drivers, lease drivers, and owner-operators.

The training for company drivers, lease drivers, and owner-operators is all the same. Some trucking companies offer the training on the spot in their truck driving schools. For those companies their schools are big money makers. Not all those who sign up for courses graduate, but they still have to pay the tuition they agreed to pay. Most of these companies allow just about anybody in their driving school. Once there you will be educated on driving over the road with a big rig. You will also learn the advantages of becoming a lease driver or an owner-operator. If you recently started schooling to become a driver you have to be aware that the drivers on the road do not always share the opinion of the driving schools and trucking companies.

No matter what your instructor says, it is wise to choose to become a [company driver](#) first and to investigate which option is better while you are already on the job. As a [company driver](#) you have all the rights and duties of a regular employee. You have to do your work to the satisfaction of your driver manager and the client, and in general you have to accept the loads that are given to you within the areas you agreed to go, no matter what the date or the season is. You have to follow the guidelines that are outlined by your driver manager. At the same time, as a company driver you will see your paycheck grow with every mile you drive. Not every lease driver or owner-operator has this guarantee.

When you are self-employed, and thus not considered a company driver, a large chunk of your higher pay check goes to the payment of your lease or owner-operator contract. You have to pay this amount every week. For many that is in the area of about \$600. If your driver manager is not able to provide you with a lot of miles, or if the weather is against you—say the truck needs repairs and is in the shop for two days—or simply because somebody else in the office messes up, you could end up with a negative pay check.

As a company driver you get paid for every mile you run. If you do not run enough miles, your pay check is low. If you run

a lot of miles your pay check is high. You will never end up with a negative pay check.

Trucking companies often refund your tuition if you stay with them for at least a year. If you leave the company before that time you are very likely to still be making payments to the school until it is all paid for. Besides that, company drivers can quit their job and apply for work with another trucking company whenever they feel like it. The self-employed drivers (these are the lease drivers and the owner-operators) do not have that luxury. They have signed a contract to lease or buy the truck and they are legally required to fulfill the stipulations of the contract. Many sign for three years, and when the driver manager does not provide them with enough miles, that aspect can get very frustrating. There is not much a self-employed driver can do to turn around such an unfortunate situation. Of course he can just park the truck and walk away, but doing so has enormous consequences and the driver's credit will be ruined. As a [company driver](#) you do not have to lose sleep over miles. You just take out your stuff and go.

A lease driver or an owner-operator has the advantage of choosing a truck. Trucks can be very different depending on what make and model you go for. The interior can be quite different and, after all, you are about to spend a lot of time in that thing. A company driver is usually not granted the same privilege. The company has figured out what make and model is the most economical solution, and that is what the company driver will drive around and practically live in from now on. That thought can make anyone lean towards the option of leasing or becoming an owner-operator. Trucking companies will rub this aspect in as much as they can because they prefer for you to become self-employed. It is a way for them to try to give you some of the liability when freight is low or when circumstances that cannot be controlled by anybody hit your route, your employer, or just the trucking business in general.

You have to be well aware of all these aspects when the job



Trucking Career Feature

is offered to you. Every truck driver is given the option of company driver, lease driver, or owner-operator at some time. It is you, the candidate, who has to investigate and come to the conclusion that [company driver](#) is the desirable option, at least until you are very familiar with all the aspects of the field you work in.

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