

# How to Become A Truck Driver

**Ready to start your new career?  
This guide outlines the beginning  
steps you need to take to become  
a truck driver.**





# Introduction

Truckers play an indispensable role in maintaining the smooth flow of modern commerce. Truck drivers transport goods across the country — and even the entire continent — efficiently and reliably, allowing goods to reach consumers in a timely manner.

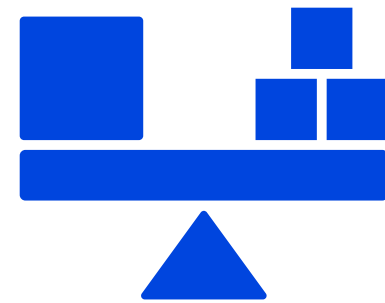
The trucking industry has always been full of opportunities for individuals seeking stable and rewarding careers, and that has only become increasingly true with the ever-expanding demand for goods and the growth of e-commerce in recent years. Whether you're interested in long-haul trucking or prefer to stick to local delivery routes, there's something out there to suit your preferences and skill sets. Plus, there are plenty of entry points even if you don't have prior trucking experience..



# **If you decide to earn your commercial driver's license (CDL) and start a truck driving career, you can expect:**



**Job variety, ranging from local to long-haul trucking routes**



**Flexible schedules**



**A competitive truck driver salary**



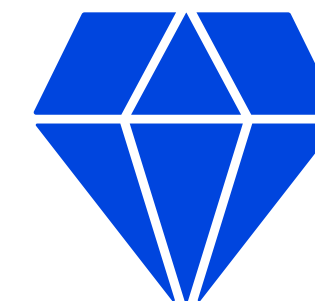
**Potential for bonuses and incentives based on performance**



**Opportunities for career advancement and growth within the industry**



**Job security due to the essential nature of trucking**



**Access to benefits like health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off**



**The ability to travel to different regions**



# Truck driver salary information

[How much money a truck driver can make](#) varies based on a multitude of factors, such as experience, type of cargo transported, and the distances covered. However, on average, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers earned an average of [\\$49,920 a year in 2022](#). While long-haul trucking drivers earned [\\$70,445](#) on average, according to Salary.com.

It's important to remember that these figures are only estimates, and are subject to variation based on individual circumstances and market dynamics. Do your

research so you can make informed decisions about your career path and potential earning potential. Additionally, consider factors beyond just salary, such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, and opportunities for advancement. Truck driving offers a rewarding and essential career path for those with the necessary skills and dedication. By staying informed and weighing all relevant factors, you can pave the way for a successful and fulfilling career in the trucking industry.

**Average  
yearly income of**  
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# Understanding CDL requirements

Interested in a truck driving career? One of the major steps to become a truck driver is earning your commercial driver's license (CDL) through your home state. This truck driver certification will prove that you have the necessary knowledge, experience, skills, and physical abilities to drive safely.

*More specifically, CDL requirements include:*



## Passing written knowledge tests

One of the first hurdles you'll need to overcome is passing written knowledge tests. These tests assess your understanding of traffic laws, safe driving practices, and specific commercial vehicle operation regulations. If you're not the best test taker, don't worry! There are plenty of resources and strategies available to help you succeed. Look up practice tests, online study guides, or consider enrolling in a CDL preparation course to boost your knowledge and confidence.



## Completing skills tests

Not only will you need to show that you know how to inspect your vehicle properly, but you'll also need to hit the road so your examiner can see what you're like behind the wheel. You must also demonstrate your backing skills, including straight backing, offset backing, parallel parking, and alley docking, depending on your state.







## Meeting the minimum age requirement

You must be at least 18 to obtain your CDL and drive within your state (intrastate). If you plan to cross state lines with a commercial vehicle, you must be 21 years or older [to drive interstate](#).



## Meeting health standards

As an applicant for a CDL, you must meet certain health standards to ensure you are physically capable of safely operating a commercial vehicle. This typically involves passing a medical examination conducted by a certified medical examiner listed on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) National Registry. Common health considerations include vision, hearing, blood pressure, and overall physical fitness. Certain medical conditions may disqualify an individual from obtaining a CDL or require additional documentation or exemptions.



## Meeting other driving requirements:

Other DOT regulations for truck drivers worth mentioning include having a valid non-commercial driver's license, having one to two years of driving experience, and having no active suspensions.



# Choosing a truck driving training program

Earning your CDL can be tricky, but the good news is that you don't have to go it alone. There are many truck driving schools and online resources for CDL preparation. However, some are better than others — and the right one can help you get your truck driving career off on the right foot.

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When evaluating truck driving schools, you'll want to consider:

## **Accreditation:**

Ensure the school is accredited by a recognized accrediting agency or affiliated with reputable industry organizations.

## **Curriculum:**

Review the curriculum to check that it covers all necessary topics for CDL preparation, including classroom instruction and hands-on truck driving training.

## **Facilities and equipment:**

Assess the quality of the school's facilities and the condition of their training vehicles to ensure they meet safety standards and provide a conducive learning environment.







### **Reputation:**

Research the school's reputation within the trucking industry and among former students to gauge their satisfaction and success rates. Read reviews and talk to current and former students to understand the school's strengths and weaknesses.

### **Job placement assistance:**

Inquire about the school's job placement services and partnerships with trucking companies to help graduates secure employment after completing their truck driving training.

### **Cost and financial aid:**

Consider the cost of tuition and fees, as well as the availability of financial aid options such as scholarships, grants, or student loans to help cover expenses. Some truck driving schools have many opportunities for financial assistance, while others offer students little to no support.

### **Location and schedule:**


Find a conveniently located school that offers a class schedule compatible with your life and personal commitments.



# On-the-road truck driving training

One of the most important things you can do to prepare yourself for becoming a truck driver is to get adequate on-the-road training. After all, reading about the rules and how to be a great truck driver is very different from actually being behind the wheel for hours at a time. You'll need to make important decisions in a split-second — and that ability will only come with practice. Accepting an entry-level driving position can help you get lots of on-the-road training quickly so you can put your classroom instruction and theoretical knowledge to the test in real-world driving scenarios.

It may be worth finding a mentor or an experienced driver willing to offer guidance and support as you tackle a variety of road conditions, explore new routes, and develop your vehicle operation and customer service skills. The right mentor can help you gain confidence behind the wheel and refine your driving techniques, setting you up for a long, successful truck driving career. Truck driver apprenticeships can be a great way to connect with valuable mentors.



**“The right mentor can help you gain confidence behind the wheel and refine your driving techniques, setting you up for a long, successful truck driving career.”**



# Navigating the job search

Finding a job isn't a walk in the park, but there are some things you can do to make the search easier. To launch your truck driving career, you'll need to find entry-level truck driving jobs. Start by searching the major online job boards, such as Indeed, Monster, or LinkedIn, and delve into trucking-specific job sources, including [Trucking Job Now](#) and [CDL Job Now](#). You can usually filter by location, experience level, and job type to find opportunities that match your truck driver qualifications.

Additionally, consider reaching out to trucking companies directly to inquire about job openings or apprenticeship programs. Networking with other truck drivers or attending industry events and job fairs can also help you uncover potential job leads.

However, finding entry-level truck driving jobs is just the beginning. Next, you'll need to craft and submit a resume that demonstrates your truck driver qualifications and will help you stand out from the crowd. Not sure how to do that? We've got a few resume writing tips:



**Searching for jobs is tough, especially if you're new to the business, but don't let that discourage you. With determination and persistence, you'll soon find the right truck driving job to kickstart your career.**



## Resume writing tips:

### Research every opportunity:

Before you start writing your resume and completing your application, thoroughly research the job and company. This will allow you to highlight your relevant skills and qualifications and tailor your resume to better match what the company is looking for.

### Highlight relevant skills needed for truck driving:

Got maintenance knowledge, a mastery of defensive driving, excellent communication skills, or a perfect driving record? Make sure to mention it in your resume.

### Include industry-specific keywords:

Incorporate industry-specific keywords and phrases related to truck driving and transportation to optimize your resume for Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) and increase your chances of getting noticed by hiring managers. These keywords can include terms such as 'CDL certification,' 'long-haul driving,' and 'route planning'.

### Proofread carefully:

Before submitting your resume, proofread it carefully to ensure it's free of typos, grammatical errors, and formatting issues. Consider asking a trusted friend or mentor to review it for a second pair of eyes and additional feedback.



# Breaking off to start your own trucking company

[Starting a trucking business](#) can be an exciting and empowering step for many truck drivers. Most drivers begin their careers working for other carriers, gaining valuable experience and insights into the industry. This foundational period often serves as a stepping stone, enabling drivers to learn the ropes and understand the intricacies of the trucking world. As they progress, many drivers feel the urge to establish their own operations, dreaming of greater freedom and the potential for higher earnings.

Transitioning from an employee to an owner-operator involves several critical steps, one of which is obtaining the necessary trucking authority. Partnering with [DAT Authority](#) can significantly streamline this process. DAT Authority assists in managing the paperwork for crucial registrations, including your USDOT and MC numbers, your intrastate application, and appointing your BOC-3 Process agent. Our experts will guide you through both federal and state applications, helping you navigate the often complex regulatory landscape and avoid any unnecessary delays.

Once you've got your operating authority and are ready to start your business, leveraging resources such as the [DAT load board](#) can be invaluable in your new venture. The DAT load board offers access to a vast network of job opportunities, with over 400 million loads posted annually. This tool allows you to find profitable loads quickly and effectively, maximizing your earnings on the road. You also gain the advantage of viewing current market conditions, truckload rates, company reviews, and credit scores, ensuring you work with reputable partners and are compensated fairly for your services.

Starting your own trucking company is not just about managing a vehicle; it's about managing a business. With DAT's support, you can kickstart your entrepreneurial journey in trucking, making informed decisions that enhance your career and grow your business in this competitive industry.







## Thriving in your truck driving career with DAT

Once you've got some experience under your belt and are a little more established, DAT can help you take your career to the next level. Not only do we offer [DAT Authority](#), a solution designed to support you through the entire trucking authority application process, but we also have a powerful [load board](#), featuring millions of loads and providing you with unparalleled opportunities to maximize your earning potential and optimize your routes.

Learn how [DAT Authority](#) can help you today and take the first step towards independent success on the open road.

