

Blueprint to Success™

This is your ultimate guide for getting your Class A CDL and getting hired by the carrier you want to work for. If you follow this chronological sequence from beginning to end, you will greatly increase your chances of being successful in getting the best training and the best employer.

1. Determine if you meet the qualifications for obtaining a CDL. This includes your physical health, mental health, prior work history, criminal record, and driving record. After researching these if you aren't sure, then contact a trucking company and speak to someone there to see what they say. Some may deny you, but others may accept you, so accept the first "no" and give up. If after contacting 6 or 8 of the mega trucking companies and they all say "no", then you should most likely not pursue a CDL at this time. Ask those companies how long before something on your records would be old enough that they will consider hiring you, it may only take a year or two before you would be a good candidate.
2. Call your state DMV and find out how many hours of CDL training your home state requires in all 3 parts of CDL training in order to meet their minimum requirements. Write all that down and keep it handy.
3. Once you have determined you are eligible for a CDL, it's time to decide what type of equipment you want to run, meaning what type trailer you want to pull. You will have 3 basic choices as a new driver. Dry Van, Reefer, or Flat Bed will be those choices and each has it's own set of characteristics which you may or may not enjoy. We cover all this and much more in our in-depth course on trucking for beginners called "The Absolute Truth About Being a Trucker and ALL the Secrets".
4. When you have decided which trailer type you would like to pull, it's time to start looking at all the carriers with that trailer type who hire brand new drivers. You will want to try to find the ones who have a terminal close to your home first, then if you need to, you can expand your search radius slowly until you find one who meets the needs you have based on the 86 questions you ask them.
5. Be sure to ask them if they recommend any private schools if you wish to pay for school on your own, and please exhaust ALL options for paying for it on your own before you consider letting a carrier pay for it, or train you at their own carrier based school.
6. Be sure to ask the carrier how many hours of training they require and what scores they want to see, then ask if you can fill out an application to see if all of your various types of records and history will meet their requirements. If they say they will hire you, ask them for a letter of intent. Once you have all these bases covered, you can then start looking for a school.
7. Now you look at who has the most required hours of training to meet their minimum requirements, it will either be your home state, or the carrier you want to work for.
8. Be sure, when you talk to schools, that they provide you with enough hours of training to meet the minimum requirements for your home state AND for the carrier you want to work for.

9. Find a school based on the carriers recommendations or if you don't have that, just start with the closest ones to your home and be sure you read all the reviews you can find online/google, etc. for those schools BEFORE you ever call them. Use your own judgement to weed out any that are obviously lacking, then begin calling them and use the 56 question pdf to interview each school and we suggest speaking to as many as it takes until you have at least 3 good options which you like.
10. From the short list of 3 good ones, then call the carrier recruiter back and explain to them that you have settled on 3 possible schools and see if they would mind researching them a bit for you as well. They may already be aware of those schools' reputations etc. Use that additional information from the carrier recruiter to help make your final decision.
11. Once you have made your final decision, call the school back and make arrangements to get your CDL.
12. Once you are in school and as soon as you have a general idea of your graduation date, call the carrier recruiter again and update them with our expected graduation date and work closely with them from that moment forward to ensure you have as little down time between graduation and beginning orientation at the trucking company as possible.
13. Be sure you have asked all the questions we have provided to you and don't skip anything. Even if it doesn't seem important to you right now, trust us when we say they are all very important!
14. Please be sure if you do go to a school that is paid for by a carrier, that you fully read and understand everything in the contract they want you to sign before signing it! If you are not comfortable with the terms then explain your concerns to them and see if they can alter anything to better suit you. If they can't, then find another carrier to work for.
15. ALWAYS be sure you are absolutely 100% honest with schools and carriers about ALL of the things in your records and history as defined in step #1 because you need to know if you are able to be trained and hired by these companies. If you lie or attempt to hide anything it will eventually be found out and then you will be stuck with no chance of being employed as a CDL truck driver.
16. Once you are about to leave for carrier orientation be sure to take everything you will need for at least a month away from home, this includes arranging for your mail to be taken care of if you live alone, all toiletries you will need, clothes (keep in mind you may end up in the north where it may be cold even if it's warm where you live). It's also a good idea to not take cash with you because it can easily be stolen, so if you have a credit card it is much safer to carry with you. You need to check with the carrier recruiter to be sure that you also have any and all documents you will need to be onboarded with them, and this will most likely include your bank checking account number and routing number for ACH wire transfers when you get paid. A voided check for the account where you want your pay checks deposited is usually best. Also be sure you have enough money to pay for any meals which aren't included while at school and at the carrier orientation, and then once you get on the road with a driver trainer you will be responsible for all your own meals. Keep in mind to ask how long before you receive a pay check so you know how to budget your finances. Our course "The Absolute Truth About Being a Trucker and ALL the Secrets" is great for learning more.

17. If you are someone with little patience, then you will learn to have patience quickly in this profession. The orientation will take anywhere from a few days to a couple weeks, depending on the carrier and their entire process.
18. Once you are assigned a driver trainer and you get on the road, don't expect to be allowed to drive in heavy city traffic right away. A good trainer will want you to get a bit of experience first before allowing you to drive in heavy city traffic. Again, be patient and listen to everything your trainer tells you. It's very easy to get frustrated with not only the one trying to teach you, but also with yourself because you think you should already know how to do more than you do. Do not take your frustrations with yourself out on your trainer. Remember your trainer is your new best friend and the more that person likes you, the more time and effort they will put invest in training you. You can also end up developing a good friendship that can last the rest of your life, and that new friend is also someone can later call and ask questions if you need help with something. Remember also, that truck is their home and they are letting you stay in their house while making the effort to teach you a new career, so respect them and their home. Not all trainers are good ones, and don't be afraid to ask the carrier for a different trainer if you are not getting the training you need from the current one. If they are inexperienced, then definitely ask for another one who is!
19. When training is complete you will return to your terminal for some follow-up things such as a road test etc. before being assigned a truck. This will most likely be the time when they let you go home for a few days before leaving on your first solo trip.
20. Be sure you have everything on your truck you will be needing from food, clothing, tools, toiletries, to any medications, eye glasses, contact lenses, laundry detergent, etc. Please understand that anything you need to buy on the road costs 3X as much at a truck stop, so avoid having to buy anything at truck stop if at all possible. If you can find a Wal Mart with truck parking that is your best bet for shopping when on the road.
21. Always study your truckers road atlas and write down directions on a sticky pad and stick it to your dash, and do not blindly trust your gps. Trip planning is always extremely important on every trip you do, so take the time to properly plan your trips and routing.
22. Above all else, always take your time, go as slow as you need to, never do anything you are not 100% sure you can do safely, and always keep your focus and attention on the road and traffic. NEVER talk on the phone while driving until you have gotten several months or more of experience because a phone conversation is very distracting, and it is extremely dangerous in your early stages of becoming a truck driver. When you do finally feel safe to talk on a cell phone, always use a headset of some sort. IT IS ILLEGAL TO HAVE A PHONE HELD UP TO YOUR EAR WHILE DRIVING A CMV!!!

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