

Truck Driver

Move freight across the country in a tractor-trailer. Good money fast, and a lot of nights away from home.

TYPICAL PAY

\$58,640

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$40k to \$79k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 1 year

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Interstate highways, freight terminals, distribution centers, po...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or an equivalency certificate** Grade 12
Helpful, not always required. A clean driving record matters far more.
- 2 Get a learner's permit for the commercial license** Days to weeks
A written knowledge test at your state motor vehicle agency, plus a federal medical examiner's certificate showing you are fit to drive.
- 3 Complete entry-level driver training** 3 to 8 weeks
Federal rules require theory and behind-the-wheel training from a provider listed on the federal Training Provider Registry before you can take the skills test. The registry lists more than 18,000 active providers.
- 4 Pass the skills test and get your license** 1 day
A pre-trip inspection, backing maneuvers and a road test. Add endorsements for tankers, doubles or hazardous materials.
- 5 First year with a carrier** 1 year
Several weeks with a trainer in the passenger seat, then your own truck. Insurers make almost everyone do a year before better jobs open up.

Pros and cons

- + Middle income within a few months of starting
- + Training is cheap, and several routes pay you while you learn
- + Work is available in every state, all year
- Weeks away from home on over-the-road work. It ends relationships
- Sitting all day is genuinely bad for your health
- Unpaid waiting time at docks is a permanent industry complaint

Optional boosts

Hazardous materials. Tanker and doubles or triples. Oversize and heavy haul. Local and regional runs.

Good to know

Parking is the daily crisis

There are far fewer legal truck parking spaces than there are drivers who need to stop. Drivers routinely quit driving an hour early to secure a spot, because the alternative is an off-ramp shoulder. Surveys of dr...

The training rule is newer than you think

Until the entry-level driver training rule took effect, a person could in principle walk in and take the commercial license test with no formal training at all. Now a first-time applicant has to train with one of the 1...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
Training Provider Registry, the federal entry-level driver training system
Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association
American Trucking Associations

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/truck-driver>



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