

Is Trucking For You?

If it seems as if more and more big and small rigs fill the highways every year, it's not just your imagination - over 9 million Americans drive tractor trailers (2004 statistic) for a living both long and short haul. If you'd like to be one of them, here's how.

INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1: Complete high school or obtain your GED. Although not a formal requirement, most trucking companies (with about one-third of all jobs in this field) strongly prefer to hire high school graduates.

STEP 2: Maintain a clean driving record. Excessive moving violations and/or any Driving Under the Influence (DUI) convictions can disqualify you from trucking.

STEP 3: Obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to drive trucks over 26,000 lbs. or any size truck that transports hazardous materials. Getting a CDL requires applicants to pass both a written and driving exam to prove their ability to operate a commercial truck.

STEP 4: Prepare for and pass the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) exam of the U.S. Department of Transportation. In addition to a written test, truck drivers must pass a physical exam, including vision and hearing screenings.

STEP 5: Pass the FMCSR physical exam every two years to maintain your qualification as a commercial trucker.

Tips & Warnings

Many private schools offer training to prepare potential truckers for the CDL exam, which includes a period of driving under the direction of a licensed truck driver.

Contact your state's Department of Motor Vehicles for specific instructions on how to apply for a commercial driver's license where you live.

Keep in mind that the life of a truck driver can be lonely, with countless hours spent on the highway for long stretches of time.

All employers must now conduct pre-employment and periodic drug testing of truck drivers. Failing a drug test can result in immediate termination.