

Selecting a School (Continued)

- **Financing:** Reputable truck driving schools offer a variety of alternatives to assist in funding tuition for you, finding loans that have reasonable terms and seeking companies that have employer-paid tuition reimbursement programs.
- **Program Length:** Look for a program that is the right length for you. Some programs may be too short (1-3 weeks), providing minimal driving experience.
- **Cost:** Tuition at trucking schools varies significantly. Focus on the value for your money: actual driving hours are the key. Make sure you understand expenses such as the costs of a driving permit, license, motor vehicle record report, DOT physical and drug screen, insurance, loan fees, application and registration fees, books, lodging, etc. Also carefully read and understand the school's refund policy and the terms of any enrollment contract or loan papers you sign.

Tips For Selecting a Program

1. Beware of the "CDL Mill". Many tractor trailer driving schools only want to produce as many licensed drivers as possible in the shortest time and the least cost. Training is secondary. They're usually 1-3 week programs that include minimal driving time and several students crowded in one truck. **Avoid at all costs!**

2. There is no such thing as "free" training. Some trucking companies advertise "free" tractor trailer driver programs. It's not. Training is often hasty and informal; it's usually just advice from a co-driver, not a formal training program. Also, read the fine print. They normally require you to work for one or two years. The tuition will be taken out of your pay. If you leave the company they can demand repayment, report you to credit bureaus and seek collection. **It's misleading and unfair to you!**

3. Lifetime training guarantees. This is a marketing gimmick. If you are trained properly the first time, why would you need a guarantee of training for the rest of your life? These guarantees typically are made by schools that provide minimal driving time. Students frequently have to receive future training because they can't get hired without better driving skills.

4. Call your state licensing agency if you need assistance in researching or contacting a quality school.

5. Visit the school. To assess whether a school is right for you, visit the facility, inspect the equipment, talk to the students and instructors, review placement information and get employer references.

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A Guide to Selecting a Professional Truck Driving School



Planning Your Future:

It Pays to Compare

1998 The SAGE Corporation

Your Future In Trucking

The Industry Demand

America has an enormous amount of freight to move around the country. As the saying goes, “if you got it, you got it by truck.” This demand has resulted in a critical shortage of qualified truck drivers. It has been estimated that 539,000 driving positions will need to be filled by 2014, that’s 54,000 drivers each year. To attract new drivers companies are offering starting annual pay that can be more than \$ 35,000, plus excellent benefits like health insurance, paid vacation, 401K plans and comfortable, high-powered trucks.

Qualified Drivers Needed

You can probably guess that the drivers that work for the top companies and earn the most money are those that are the most qualified. A primary concern of trucking companies regarding a driver’s qualifications is the extent and quality of the training a driver has received. The fact is, the best trained drivers are in the highest demand. Drivers with solid fundamental skills and experience are well paid for their abilities and knowledge.

As a result, THE QUALITY OF YOUR TRAINING IS CRITICAL. But there are a lot of schools across the country. Choosing a reputable program that is right for you requires some investigation and comparison shopping. This *Guide* will help you evaluate truck driving schools so you make the right decision for your career.

Selecting a School

Your future could depend upon the truck driving school you attend. There can be a big difference among schools in the objectives and quality of the training offered. Here are the basic characteristics you should look for:

- **Facilities:** Classrooms should be adequate for instruction, clean, have audio-visual capabilities, training aids and a library. A private practice driving range should be near the school.
- **Equipment:** The school should provide well-maintained recent model tractors and trailers such as those used by employers.
- **Certification:** Look for programs that follow a curriculum that meets or exceeds the Professional Truck Driver’s Institute (PTDI) standard. PTDI requires a minimum of 44 hours of actual behind the wheel driving time (driving time does not include “observation”). PTDI is an independent industry organization seeking to advance tractor trailer driver training, proficiency, safety and professionalism by establishing minimum standards and certifying schools meet them. These schools have met the most demanding industry standards.
- **Accreditation:** Schools may voluntarily seek accreditation by agencies listed by the U.S. Dept. of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency. Accredited schools have demonstrated to the agency that they meet high educational standards and business practices.

- **Driving Time:** This is the most important part of your training! The PTDI industry standard program must have 44 hours of actual driving time by each student. Many schools mislead students by including “observation time” as part of the time spent driving. Observation is NOT driving and provides minimal training value. Demand the full amount of actual driving time.
- **Student –to- Truck Ratio:** Many schools cut costs and quality by training 3 to 5 students in a truck at once. The best schools provide private, one-on-one instruction (one student per truck). This way, the focus is on you. It may be unsafe to be distracted by other students when you are just learning to drive a truck.
- **Instructors:** Teaching staff should have a minimum of two years driving experience. Instructors should have a background in education or have participated in a formal “train the trainer” program. Accredited and certified school instructors have met these standards. Ask current students what they think of the instructional staff.
- **Placement Assistance:** The school should have personnel dedicated to assisting you in finding a good job in the trucking industry. This should include private advising with you regarding your future and companies that meet your preferences. No school should ever guarantee you a job, but they can verify the school’s placement record. Talk to recent graduates, current students, and employers about the quality of the school’s training.