

CDL & Fleet Logistics: Training to Certification

A practical guide to earning your Commercial Driver's License and building a career in fleet operations, built for aspiring drivers and logistics professionals.

Commercial Driving Instructor: David Stone • 5 sections • 55 lessons • 18.50h total

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About this course

Getting a Commercial Driver's License involves more than just passing a road test. Between federal regulations, endorsement exams, pre-trip inspections, and navigating state-specific requirements, the process can feel overwhelming if you don't have a clear roadmap. And once you're certified, the logistics side of the industry introduces its own set of challenges: fleet management, compliance, route optimization, and operational efficiency.

This course walks you through every step, from understanding CDL classes and obtaining your commercial learner's permit all the way through certification testing and real-world fleet logistics. You'll work through pre-trip inspection checklists, air brake system breakdowns, hours of service regulations, and fleet technology tools like ELDs and telematics. Includes case studies from actual trucking and logistics operations, plus practical prep materials for both written and skills tests.

Course curriculum

Foundations and Preparation

- **How the CDL System Works: Classes, Categories, and What They Mean (22m)**
Breaks down Class A, B, and C licenses, what vehicles each covers, and how to determine which class fits your career goals.
- **Federal and State Requirements You Need to Know Before You Start (18m)**
Covers FMCSA regulations, age requirements, residency rules, and how state-specific requirements affect your path to certification.
- **The Medical Exam and Physical Qualifications (15m)**
Walks through the DOT physical exam process, disqualifying conditions, vision and hearing standards, and how to prepare for your appointment.
- **Getting Your Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) (20m)**
Step-by-step guide to studying for and passing the written knowledge test, required documents, and common mistakes that delay approval.
- **Choosing a CDL Training Program: What to Look For (25m)**
Compares school-based programs, company-sponsored training, and self-study paths. Includes a checklist for evaluating program quality and cost.
- **Understanding CDL Endorsements and Restrictions (18m)**
Covers each endorsement type (Hazmat, Tanker, Doubles/Triples, Passenger, School Bus, Tanker/Hazmat combo) and what each opens up for your career.
- **Budgeting for CDL Training: Costs, Aid, and ROI (14m)**
Realistic breakdown of training costs, tuition assistance options, employer reimbursement programs, and expected pay timelines after certification.
- **Career Paths in Trucking and Fleet Operations (20m)**
Maps out options from local delivery to over-the-road, fleet management, dispatching, and owner-operator routes with salary ranges for each.

Core CDL Knowledge and Skills

- **The Pre-Trip Inspection: A Systematic Walkthrough (28m)**
Detailed guide to inspecting engine compartment, cab, coupling devices, brakes, lights, and tires. Includes the exact verbal script for the skills test.
- **Air Brake Systems: How They Work and How to Test Them (25m)**
Covers air brake components, the governor cut-in/cut-out test, low-air pressure warning, spring brake test, and common failure points.
- **Basic Vehicle Control: Straight-Line Backing and Offset Backing (22m)**
Step-by-step techniques for the first two backing maneuvers on the skills test, with reference point strategies and correction methods.
- **Advanced Backing: Parallel Parking and Alley Dock (24m)**
Breaks down the parallel park and alley dock maneuvers with timing cues, mirror usage, and how to recover from overcorrection.

- **Coupling and Uncoupling Procedures (16m)**
Safe, methodical approach to connecting and disconnecting trailers, including fifth-wheel inspection, glad hand connections, and safety checks.
- **On-Road Driving: Shifting, Turning, and Lane Management (30m)**
Covers progressive shifting technique, right and left turns with wide vehicles, lane positioning, and managing intersections in a commercial vehicle.
- **Highway Driving: Merging, Lane Changes, and Following Distance (22m)**
Practical techniques for entering highways, managing speed in traffic, proper mirror scanning, and calculating safe following distances at various speeds.
- **Night Driving and Adverse Weather Conditions (20m)**
Adjustments for reduced visibility, wet and icy roads, fog, and high-wind situations. Includes when to pull over and how to use auxiliary lights.
- **Hazardous Materials Transportation Basics (28m)**
Covers Hazmat classification, placarding rules, shipping papers, loading restrictions, and emergency response procedures for Hazmat endorsement preparation.
- **Tanker Operations: Handling Liquid Cargo (22m)**
Explains surge effects, loading procedures, baffled vs. unbaffled tanks, and the specific driving adjustments required for tanker endorsement candidates.
- **Doubles and Triples: Configuration and Handling (20m)**
How to assemble, inspect, and drive multiple-trailer combinations. Covers the added complexity of tracking, off-tracking, and turning with longer setups.
- **Passenger and School Bus Operations Overview (18m)**
Covers the unique responsibilities of passenger transport, loading/unloading procedures, emergency exits, and the specific skills test requirements.

CDL Testing and Certification

- **Written Test Strategy: General Knowledge, Air Brakes, and Endorsements (20m)**
Proven study approaches for each written exam section, how to use practice tests effectively, and key topic areas that appear most frequently.
- **Skills Test Breakdown: What Examiners Are Looking For (24m)**
Detailed scoring criteria for each maneuver, automatic failures to avoid, and how the point system works across different state testing formats.
- **Road Test Day: Managing Nerves and Performing Under Pressure (16m)**
Practical tips for the morning of your test, what to expect from the examiner, how to handle mistakes mid-test, and a pre-test checklist.
- **The 10 Most Common CDL Test Failures (And How to Avoid Them) (22m)**
Real data on why candidates fail, from incomplete pre-trip inspections to rolling stops, with specific corrections for each failure point.
- **State-Specific Testing Variations: What Changes by Location (15m)**
How testing routes, scoring, and documentation requirements differ across states. Includes a reference table for the most common state differences.

- **Endorsement Exams: Preparing for Hazmat, Tanker, and Others (20m)**
Targeted preparation for each endorsement written test, with focus areas, study resources, and tips for the TSA Hazmat background check process.
- **What Happens After You Pass: Temporary License, CDL Issuance, and Next Steps (12m)**
Covers temporary driving privileges, waiting periods, document handling, and the practical steps to take immediately after certification.
- **CDL Renewal, Upgrades, and Adding Endorsements Later (14m)**
How to maintain your CDL, renewal timelines, medical card updates, and the process for upgrading from Class B to Class A or adding new endorsements.

Fleet Logistics and Operations Management

- **Introduction to Fleet Logistics: How Goods Actually Move (18m)**
Big-picture view of supply chain logistics, the role of trucking in freight movement, and how fleets coordinate pickups, deliveries, and returns.
- **DOT Compliance: Regulations Every Driver and Manager Must Know (26m)**
Covers FMCSA compliance basics, driver qualification files, vehicle maintenance records, and the audit process that keeps fleets legal.
- **Hours of Service (HOS) Rules: A Practical Guide (24m)**
Breaks down the 11-hour driving limit, 14-hour window, 30-minute break rule, 70-hour weekly limit, and short-haul exceptions with real scenarios.
- **Electronic Logging Devices (ELDs): How They Work and What They Record (20m)**
Explains ELD hardware, data transfer methods, edit rules, malfunctions, and how to handle roadside inspections with electronic logs.
- **Route Planning and Optimization Techniques (22m)**
Covers load planning, stop sequencing, fuel stop strategy, and how dispatchers and drivers coordinate routes using logistics software.
- **Fleet Technology: Telematics, GPS, and Dash Cams (18m)**
Overview of the technology tools modern fleets use, what data they collect, how drivers interact with them, and how they affect daily operations.
- **Cargo Securement: Methods, Materials, and FMCSA Standards (25m)**
Detailed look at tiedown requirements, working load limits, blocking and bracing, and securement rules for different cargo types.
- **Fuel Management: Reducing Costs Across a Fleet (16m)**
Strategies for fuel purchasing, idling reduction, route-based fueling, and how fleet managers track and benchmark fuel performance.
- **Fleet Maintenance Programs: Preventive Schedules and Inspections (22m)**
How to build and manage preventive maintenance schedules, track repairs, handle out-of-service criteria, and manage parts inventory.
- **Safety Management: Building a Culture That Reduces Incidents (20m)**
Covers CSA scores, safety incentive programs, incident investigation, driver coaching methods, and how safety data influences fleet insurance rates.

- **Insurance, Liability, and Risk Management for Fleets (18m)**
Explains commercial auto insurance types, cargo insurance, liability limits, claims processes, and how accident history affects premiums.
- **Warehouse and Distribution Center Operations (20m)**
What happens between pickup and delivery: receiving, staging, cross-docking, inventory management, and how drivers interact with dock operations.
- **Load Planning and Freight Brokerage Basics (22m)**
Covers weight distribution, load boards, broker relationships, rate negotiation, and how freight pricing works in the spot market vs. contracts.

Career Growth, Specialization, and Long-Term Planning

- **Your First 90 Days as a Professional Driver (20m)**
What to expect during training, probationary periods, mentor programs, and how to build a good reputation with your fleet from day one.
- **Over-the-Road vs. Regional vs. Local: Picking the Right Fit (18m)**
Compares lifestyle, pay structures, home time, and career progression across the three main trucking segments with honest pros and cons.
- **Specialized Freight: Flatbed, Refrigerated, Oversized, and Tanker (24m)**
Deep dive into specialty hauling, including required skills, equipment differences, pay premiums, and the endorsements each requires.
- **Intermodal Operations: Rail-Truck Freight Coordination (16m)**
How container freight moves between rail yards and trucks, the role of intermodal drivers, and the operational differences from standard trucking.
- **Becoming an Owner-Operator: Financial and Legal Considerations (28m)**
Covers business formation, authority filing, equipment financing, insurance requirements, tax obligations, and the real economics of owning a truck.
- **Fleet Management as a Career: Skills and Pathways (20m)**
What fleet managers do daily, the certifications that help (CTP, NPTC), and how drivers can transition into management roles.
- **Dispatching Fundamentals: Coordinating Drivers and Loads (22m)**
Covers the dispatcher's role, communication protocols, load assignment logic, driver support, and how dispatching software streamlines operations.
- **Customer Service in Logistics: Working with Shippers and Receivers (14m)**
Professional communication at pickup and delivery points, handling accessorial charges, managing expectations, and resolving delivery issues.
- **DOT Recordkeeping and Documentation Best Practices (18m)**
Organizing driver qualification files, maintaining inspection records, managing permits and registrations, and preparing for compliance reviews.
- **Environmental Compliance and Sustainability in Trucking (16m)**
Covers emissions regulations, EPA standards, idle reduction mandates, and practical steps fleets take to reduce their environmental footprint.

- **Advanced Defensive Driving and Accident Avoidance (22m)**
Techniques beyond basic CDL training: hazard perception drills, emergency maneuvers, distracted driving prevention, and collision analysis.
- **Building Professional Networks in the Trucking Industry (12m)**
Industry associations, online communities, trade shows, and how professional relationships lead to better routes, pay, and career opportunities.
- **Industry Trends: Automation, Electric Trucks, and What's Ahead (20m)**
Honest look at autonomous vehicle developments, electric commercial vehicle adoption, platooning technology, and how these trends affect driver demand.
- **Building a Long-Term Career Plan in Transportation and Logistics (18m)**
Setting income goals, planning endorsements and certifications, evaluating job offers, and creating a five-year roadmap for career advancement.

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