

How to Get Started as a Truck Driver – Things to Know and Consider First

A Quick Start Guide By L.D. Sewell

If you need a job or want to start a new career right now the great news is that there is plenty of opportunity available for you as a truck driver!

But before you pick up that phone and call a recruiter or head off to truck driving school – there are some things you really need to know about the business and lifestyle of trucking and decide whether it is the right move for you right now or not.

Tons of people head off to truck driving schools to start their new truck driving careers every single year – and they have been doing this for a very long time too. Sadly, most of them will not survive even one year in trucking – and many won't even make it past the ninety-day mark.

I want you to be prepared for what the realities of trucking entail and to think it through carefully before you decide to become a professional truck driver.

Before we get into the challenges you will face let's talk a little bit about some of what trucking does offer you;

- **A Job!** – Trucking is always hiring, and the pay is not bad even starting out comparatively speaking. Many companies also offer excellent benefits
- **Independence** – While you do have tons of rules and schedules to keep, you still get to make a lot of decisions on a daily basis that directly impact your quality of life and your net pay
- **Variety** – While most people drive a desk in a cubicle or some other captive type of work seeing the exact same thing all day every day – as a truck driver you will continuously have a changing view, meet new people, go to new places and generally have more variety
- **Opportunity Time** – you can listen to audio courses, books, podcasts all day as you drive and educate yourself. You can also make calls and recruit other drivers, run an online business, write a book – do any number of things that can help you make more money while you are sitting at shippers and receiver waiting to be loaded or unloaded. That turns normally wasted time into opportunity time too!
- **Career Opportunities** – Trucking is a huge industry and part of an even larger Transportation Industry (Air/Sea/Rail) that offers you more opportunities to advance and even build your own company if you like, and if you are motivated and driven to do so. Starting out as a truck driver is an ideal way to not only begin receiving a pay check – but perhaps even more important for the serious and driven Entrepreneur – a path to learning the business. Gain the necessary knowledge, skills and experience that will help you choose a course that is best

for you and your family – maybe as an Independent Owner Operator, Freight Broker or even as a Fleet Owner. There are many other paths to choose from too as well as opportunities for people wanting staff positions and leadership positions within a company instead of owning a company themselves. There are plenty of choices!

- **Low Barrier to Entry** – Today so many other jobs and careers that are worth having have massive stumbling blocks in your way – and many people will find them insurmountable. Trucking doesn't have that problem. The requirements to get started are minimal and most people can easily meet them. If for some reason you can't meet the driver requirements – there are still other ways to get into trucking, such as becoming a freight agent, freight broker, dispatcher etc. Then learn the business and maybe move in another direction of your own choosing – so do you have opportunity if you are willing to work for it.

In summary trucking offers practically anyone and everyone opportunities if they are motivated and willing to work to get them. And that brings us to the next thing we need to discuss – some of the challenges you will face and the obstacles you will have to overcome to be successful in trucking.

Washout Rates

As I mentioned earlier – many people who try to become truck drivers don't last long. They quit and go back to what they were doing or on toward finding some other opportunity they hope will work out better for them than trucking did.

Why do so many people quit?

That is a multilevel answer. The main reason is that they should have never gotten into trucking to begin with in some cases and in other cases they should have been far better prepared for the realities they would be facing as new entry level truck drivers.

You see trucking has always had - and continues to have - a hunger for far more drivers than it ever has at any given time. Some people call this a "Driver Shortage". Others debate that there is any actual shortage at all – but rather an insatiable desire to add more drivers to given companies so they can move more freight and consequently make more money. By the way – there is nothing wrong with wanting to add capacity and make more money, that is just business – but the problem comes in part because the competition is fierce for drivers.

Some companies, though certainly NOT all... will be in such a rush and so desperate to attract drivers that they are not very good at taking the time and effort to accurately and completely tell their new and hopeful drivers what they're REALLY getting

themselves into. Many more do a terrible job of training and preparing them to face these challenges. So, they drop like flies...

The Biggest Challenges

Here are some of the biggest challenges you will have to face and overcome if you want to succeed in trucking;

1. **Time Away from Home** – Different people may rank these things in different orders of importance to them – but after about two decades in trucking I can tell you that based on my experiences one of the very top challenges is going to be time out on the road and away from home, away from loved ones, away from friends, family and old routines. Most people do not realize trucking is much more than just a job – it is going to be a new way of life for you – a whole new lifestyle. Most drivers have great difficulty adjusting to this and some simply can't handle it – others choose not to. In some cases, the driver may be able to deal with the constant separation but its his or her mate and/or other family members that either can't or won't adjust to this new reality of how life is for truckers and their families. Please do not underestimate this – think it over carefully. Then talk it over in detail and make sure THEY – whoever THEY are to you – understands and gets this. Be sure they are willing to accept these realities and that you are too – otherwise DO NOT PROCEED!
2. **Lower Pay Than Anticipated** – Most new drivers come into trucking expecting two to three times the actual amount they are paid during their first few months in trucking. This takes a serious toll and leads to anger and frustration as well as personal financial crisis for a lot of drivers. It also upsets family members left at home – who can't pay the bills on what the driver is earning – so they get upset and take out their frustration on the driver. Combine that stress will fatigue and the already significant stress of trying to learn and do the job of a truck driver and it is more than enough to push people beyond their limits and past their breaking point – so they quit. So, know this going in – whatever you are quoted by a recruiter or trucking company is likely a best case scenario at best and may be flat out wrong. This may be because you will be inefficient a new driver and it takes time to learn the ropes – and for your dispatcher and company to trust you enough to give you better runs and tighter schedules that pay better. It may be because the recruiter or company just seriously exaggerated or otherwise had inaccurate information provided to them – which they passed on to you. Keep in mind most recruiters do not actually control your loads or in any way work with operation directly if at all – and a great many are independent recruiters or recruiting firms, and website operators who do not work directly for the motor carrier at all. They just don't always have the right information. In those cases no

one is intentionally trying to lie to you – yet the information is inaccurate, so the result is the same – you have the wrong information on pay. And finally – yes there are some recruiters and carriers who will tell you anything they think you want to hear and promise you the sun and moons and everything in-between if it will get you to fill an empty seat and deliver a few loads before you wise up and get mad and quit. Keep in mind this is not the majority – but there are some like this. Even if you do have decent information on pay remember the amounts quoted are gross – not net – and that means its before all withholding and deductions. In other words, its not the spendable amount of money you will get a check for or directly deposited in your bank account. That amount will be far less. You also have to factor in training time, trainee pay and delays from the time you start to the time you start getting paid. Pay issues cause many to quit quickly – so be aware, research carefully – make sure your family is aware and have some savings for you and them to carry you through the first few weeks.

3. **Stress and Fatigue** – All these things add up to stress. You will also be learning and developing the skills necessary to maneuver very large equipment in tight, confined and often congested small spaces. You will do this day after day all over the country or where ever your company operates, in all kinds of weather and circumstances. Day after day week after week. You may be gone from home anywhere from a few days to a few weeks – then when you do go home its only a brief visit for a day or two and then back on the road you go. When you get home, you will often be tired and exhausted and want sleep and rest. By the time you are refreshed it will be time to go back out on the road – this is the life of the truck driver. Can you handle it? Do you want to? How about your family?

Get the Big Picture First

I have multiple courses on Udemy now and I am adding more and updating the rest. I also have my own training center platform that is accessible from my site www.ldsewell.com from the Courses page and will be adding more in-depth courses there too.

Take some courses and get informed. Learn more about trucking before you jump in. My courses are relatively short and quick – and very affordable. You can take them online from anywhere you have a decent internet connection.

Also do some online searches yourself. Look up information on trucking. Watch some videos. Go to the FMCSA site and get some regulatory clarity. Go to your state's DMV or MVA site and get information there too.

Look at several trucking companies recruiting sites and maybe even call and talk to a recruiter – but keep in mind recruiters are skilled at their jobs (some are anyway) and

you may find yourself on the way to truck driving school before you even realize what happened if you are not very careful – so be careful!

The Basic Requirements

- 21 Years Old or Older
- DOT Physical – take and pass a DOT physical
- Drug Test – take and pass a DOT Pre-employment drug test
- CDL Learners permit (get a study guide at DMV/MVA of your state take an online test pay the fees and get the permit)
- Truck Driving School – Many companies will either sponsor you in some way (programs vary) or have their own internal training schools –research your options. You can also pay out of pocket - \$2500 to \$12000 or so depending on where the school is, the quality of the school and whether they receive any kind of government money or not. You may also go to your employment commission and ask about workforce or job training programs they might have available. Sometimes they will pay or partially pay for your training.
- CDL A – Graduate from your school take your state skills test and get a CDL (Commercial Driver's License Class A)
- Get Hired – If you go the sponsored route you will already have a job before truck driving school if not after you graduate and get your CDL you will then need to find a job.
- Complete Orientation and Begin Road Training – this takes several weeks total usually
- Complete Training and Start Running – Once you graduate/complete your trucking company's road training program you will be assigned your own truck and start doing the job on your own. Keep in mind you will NOT be an expert driver – not even close – you will barely know what you are doing, but hopefully you will know enough (depending on your training and on YOU) to do the job safely while you continue to refine your skills and learn more on the job as you do it over time
- Where You Go from Here Is Up to YOU! There are multiple options and multiple opportunities available to you. You can build an amazing career and if you choose to do so, learn everything you need to know to start your own trucking business successfully within a year or two. Take my courses and find out more.

About the Author



Hello and thanks for reading this free guide!

My name is L.D. Sewell but you can call me Derrick. I currently have about twenty years in the trucking industry and quite a few years in real estate, and business in general too.

I own and operate Transport Resource Solutions which is a training and consulting services company specializing in providing information, training and resources to businesses that operate vehicles commercially on public roadways. Visit www.transportresourcesolutions.com for more information on what services and products we offer there.

Additionally, we offer information, products and resources to entrepreneurs and individuals through www.ldsewell.com and you can find access to and information about everything else we currently have available there.

We develop and teach courses on multiple platforms covering topics that we specialize in which includes all things related to trucking, entrepreneurship and other things that can help you build a better life for yourself and those you care most about. You can find many of our courses on [Udemy](#).

I wish you all the best in everything you do in business and in life and I look forward to the opportunity to help you reach your goal.

Until we meet again...

Best regards,

L.D. Sewell