



How to Select the Right CDL Training School

"Imagine choosing a job not on money or even on career advancement, but as part of a life worth living." -Dale Dauten

Now that you've decided to become a professional truck driver, let's get you rolling in the right direction by helping you select the right CDL training school for your particular needs.

There are three "primary" questions you will need to answer before making a wise selection. They are:

1. How quickly do I need to complete my CDL training?
2. How much am I willing to spend on my CDL training?
3. How much help will the school give me in finding my first driving job?

Now let's look deeper into each of these three questions to better determine what will be the most profitable path for you to take. Grab a notebook and pen, and start getting your thoughts together on paper.

First Question; you will have to decide how quickly you need to get your CDL training completed. Carefully look at your finances and discuss everything with your family to determine how fast you need to complete this phase of your new career.

1. How quickly do I need to complete my CDL training?

You are faced with two choices in regards to how much time it will take to complete your CDL training. They are: private and company-sponsored schooling. What's the difference?



A. Private: is an independent school that charges tuition. Training typically lasts from 14 to 30 days. Trade school programs can last about three months. Note: a trade school can be a cost effective solution when low tuition is important, you already have a job, and you need more time for the material to properly sink in. Private schools are faster and more expensive but give you the freedom to choose the best employment opportunity.

B. Company-Sponsored: is a trucking company/carrier that has their own training school. Some charge a tuition, and some require you to work for them for a minimum of one full year to pay the tuition back to them in full. Training time is typically 14-30 days.

Second Question; the issue of cost may be at the top of your list for obvious reasons. With cost you are faced with several more options to choose from. So, let's take a closer look at question 2.

2. How much am I willing to spend on my CDL training?

A. Private: schools typically charge between \$2K and \$10K. Most take cash, check, credit cards, and state government program grants, or any combination thereof. Most fall in the \$5K range as a common average. Note: check with your state employment office to see if there is a program to help offset the cost of tuition. My state; Tennessee does, but I didn't check until all the funds were gone – too late in the year – be the early bird!

B. Company-Sponsored: schools charge typically between \$0K and \$4K. Please note that for the \$0 cost you will have to work for that company



a minimum of one year. This scenario is similar to trying out for a sports team; if you don't work out they will cut you from the team. Also, if you leave before the year is up, you will have to pay a prorated amount based on how long you actually worked before you quit.

Third Question; you'll have to decide how quickly you need to get your first driving job. If it's urgent, I would still caution you to spend your research and interview time very wisely to avoid having to live with any long term mistakes.

3. How much help will the school give me in finding my first driving job?

Issue #1: (Private School) does the school offer job placement assistance?

If not, then it will be up to you to shake the bushes for your first driving job. Note: any school without at least a minimum of five industry contacts (more is better) that would be of interest to you should raise a serious red flag. Remember, you may need this placement service even after you have graduated from the school – it's a resource that should be part of the whole package.

Issue #2: (Private & Company-Sponsored Schools) trust but verify! You can initially trust what a school/company recruiter has to say, but in the same vain make sure you verify what they are promising. How do you do this?



One, ask other former students/current drivers their “opinion” without taking it as gospel. Also, the school should have testimonials regarding student/driver success stories.

Two, check with your local Better Business Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce for any feedback they can give you on the school. Finally, check the company website for any additional information that can help you.

Three, get any promises in writing. Any official “acceptance/employment” letter must have all the necessary information in the body of the letter that is important to your needs. Information included must be clear and exceedingly easy to read and understand.

TopTip 1: always read everything thoroughly before signing any document!

TopTip 2: you have just as much right to interview a school/company as they do to try and get you signed onboard. See the sample list of interview questions below.

Remember, trust but verify!

Now that you have successfully answered the three “primary” questions, spoken with your family, and have diligently done your interviews needed to help make an informed decision. You are now ready to get your CDL training under your belt and enter the next phase of your career; getting hired and getting out with your company trainer. Good luck to you!



Sample Interview Questions: Private School

1. Do you have literature that I can take with me? (Or send)

Answer: _____

2. Do you have a website?

Answer: _____

3. How long have you been in business?

Answer: _____

4. Are you state certified/accredited?

Answer: _____

5. Do you have a list of testimonials from former students?

Answer: _____

6. Do you do your own testing? (3rd party testing)

Answer: _____

7. What is your average ratio of instructors to students?

Answer: _____

8. Do you offer job placement assistance? Even after I graduate?

Answer: _____

9. What is your success record with helping students get hired?

Answer: _____



10. Can I get a list of the companies you train for? (More research)

Answer: _____

11. What type of financing do you accept?

Answer: _____

Additional Sample Interview Questions: Company-Sponsored School

1. How long does training last?

Answer: _____

2. How long will I be out with the company trainer?

Answer: _____

3. What is the rate of training pay?

Answer: _____

4. What is the starting rate of pay once training is over?

Answer: _____

5. What is the length of time until my training is paid in full?

Answer: _____

6. Question:

Answer: _____

7. Question:

Answer: _____

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8. Question:

Answer: _____

9. Question:

Answer: _____

10. Question:

Answer: _____

