



Checklist for Quality Courses in Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) Driver Training

This Checklist is a yardstick for motor carriers, commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver employers, truck safety advocates, prospective students and others in measuring the quality of a CMV driver training program.

Formal training is the most reliable way to learn the many special skills required for safe CMV driving. The more skills that are learned in supervised training, the fewer that need to be learned on the job. Such training is available from private CMV driver training schools, public education institutions and in-house motor carrier training programs. Because of the important role in CMV safety, the trucking industry has implemented minimum standards by which to measure training programs. The standards are administered through the Professional Truck Driver Institute (PTDI). Training institutions voluntarily certify their courses to verify that they are meeting PTDI industry standards.

*You can use the following Checklist to evaluate a course against PTDI standards. **PTDI-certified courses meet all of these standards plus a number of others.** The Checklist is only brief treatment of the standards by which CMV driver training quality is measured. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive treatment of evaluation standards. For the full standards and guidelines, see www.ptdi.org/standards.*

To find the answer to these points, you might consider asking school personnel, current students or graduates, and motor carriers who hire graduates from the school.

COURSE ADMINISTRATION

- Is the course accurately and clearly defined and explained in informational materials on topics such as costs, tuition reimbursement (if any), training provided, equipment used, outcomes, classroom hours and actual individual driving time? i.e., is advertising truthful?
- Are there clearly stated goals that match the needs of students and the transportation industry?
- Are there clear, written eligibility requirements and admissions procedures that the school follows and provides to prospective students?
- Must an applicant meet minimum DOT, state/provincial, federal and/or local law and regulations related to drug screens, age, physical condition, licensing, driving ability, and driving record as stated in the school's admissions policy?
- Are there written policies regarding safety, liability and rules?

INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL

- Do instructors possess a combination of education and experience that clearly qualify them for their assignments?
- Do driving instructors have at least three years of experience as a licensed CMV driver with a driving record which meets state/provincial requirements, school policy and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations?
- Do instructors have teacher/instructional skills?
- Do instructors have a state/provincial license or permit, if required?
- Are instructors thoroughly trained in the curriculum?
- Are instructors carefully supervised and evaluated?
- Do instructors participate in regular staff development programs?

TRAINING VEHICLES

- Are vehicles in good mechanical condition and comply with applicable federal/state/provincial safety requirements?
- Are training vehicles comparable in size and power to those used by motor carriers in the area?

INSTRUCTION & CURRICULUM

Curriculum Content

- Does the course outline clearly identify units of instruction including their sequence, broad purpose and general content?
- Does instruction cover knowledge, skill and behavior required to operate a CMV safely and properly? (See "Primary Functions/Duties of a CMV Driver" in the *PTDI Skill Standards for Entry-Level Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers* and the "Minimum Hours of Training & Five Curriculum Units" in the *PTDI Curriculum Standards and Guidelines for Entry-Level Commercial Motor Vehicle Driver Courses* at www.ptdi.org/standards.)
- Does classroom instruction include the use of aids such as video, electronic multi-media, displays, textbooks, models, charts, computer-based instruction, simulation, etc?
- Are instructional materials appropriate for the ability of the trainee and are they up-to-date?
- Are materials provided to each trainee?

Instructional Time

- Does each student receive at least 104 (60-minute) hours (or 125 50-minute hours) in a combination of classroom and lab time? (Lab is instruction that occurs outside the classroom that does not involve actual operation of the vehicle and its components; this includes time on the range under the supervision of an instructor. Observation time does not count as instructional time.)
- Does each student receive at least 44 (60-minute) hours (or 53 50-minute hours) of actual behind-the-wheel (BTW) time with at least 12 hours on the highway? (BTW is time with hands actually on the wheel.) (Highway includes roads, streets, etc.)
- Is the trailer loaded with a minimum of 15,000 pounds during at least six hours of highway time?
- Are night-driving principles taught and practiced, with a minimum of one hour of behind-the-wheel time?
- Is the total length of the instructional day, including independent study, not longer than 10 hours on average, and preferably not more than six consecutive days of training?

Student/Instructor/Vehicle Ratio

- Does classroom and lab instruction average one instructor for not more than each group of 30 students?
- Is there never more than one instructor to three vehicles on the range, and not more than 12 trainees per instructor?
- During driving, is there one instructor per vehicle and never more than four trainees in the vehicle?

Lesson Plans

- Do instructors use lesson plans to guide each session?
- Are students provided with behind-the-wheel lesson driving procedures along with a list of safety rules for street driving?

Classroom Conditions

- Is the learning environment safe, sanitary and comfortable?

Range Conditions

- Is the range safe and protected from the hazards from other road users?
- Is the range free of obstructions and does the surface enable the driver to maneuver safely and free from interference from other vehicles?
- Are there adequate sight lines available to the instructor and trainees?

Highway Instruction Conditions (Highway includes streets, roads, etc.)

- Is driving practiced under various roadway and traffic conditions?

Tests

- Do written classroom/lab tests assess mastery of a sample of knowledge objectives for each unit of instruction?
- Do range tests assess student proficiency in (a) fundamental vehicle control skills and (b) routine driving procedures?
- Do road tests use preplanned routes that permit a broad range of observations and are they conducted in traffic?
- Are road tests administered in a vehicle which is comparable in size and power to the industry sector for which the student is being trained?

Distance Learning & Independent Study Options

- If a portion of the classroom/lab instruction is delivered electronically, is there active two-way communication between instructor and student? Is the student provided with information about technological competence needed, completion requirements, and any additional costs? Must each student take a proctored exam? Does the course begin and end within a specified time frame? May the students review completed lessons as part of the course offered prior to any proctored exam?
- Does independent study substitute for not more than 34 (60-minute) hours of the 104 hours of classroom/lab instruction? (Note: Independent study is not the same as homework.)

Graduation

- Does a student have to successfully complete a course of instruction that meets the PTDI curriculum standards and hours, including appropriate subject matter tests and road skill tests before graduation?
- Does a student secure a CDL as a condition of graduation?

OUTCOMES & RECORDS

- Does the school use a follow-up system to determine program effectiveness and to track graduates?
- Does each student keep a "driver duty status record" to document time behind the wheel?
- Do both the student and instructor "sign-off" on the record?
- Are permanent records kept for at least five years?