

Trucking Life:
An Entertaining, Yet Informative Guide to
Becoming and Being a Truck Driver

By Todd McCann

Smashwords Edition

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## [Chapter 1](#)

### **What Is It With Truck Driving?**

If you're reading this right now, it's likely because of one of two reasons. Either you're considering becoming a professional truck driver, or you just have a healthy curiosity about what's involved in being a trucker... or perhaps your in-laws are over for a visit, you've faked food poisoning, and you've locked yourself in the bathroom with your spiffy new mobile device to avoid the drool-inspiring details of every ache and pain they've experienced since their last visit.

Somehow, in the midst of your fake moans and groans, you've accidentally ordered my book. Thank you for your order. All sales are final. Only kidding. Sheez, I guess if I was hiding out in the crapper, I'd be edgy too.

If you are hiding from the in-laws, at least find something more interesting than this book; like that super-informative website with a pictorial history of Cindy Crawford (or Brad Pitt, to be politically correct) that you stumbled across while, ahem, searching for that educational website on Gothic Architecture in Europe. Yeah... that's the ticket.

#### **On the note of political correctness...**

I'm not very good at it, so please bear with me. Ladies, you'll have to forgive me if my writing sometimes seems to be aimed at men. It's not intentional, but since the vast majority of truckers are men, I'm bound to goof every now and then. Now that my

disclaimer for all those annoying political correctness Nazis is out of the way, let's move on.

**If you purposely ordered this book, you're not alone in your curiosity about the trucking world.**

*"How many miles do you drive each day? Where do you take showers? Do you have to pay for fuel?"* These and many other questions pop up after people discover my wife and I are truck drivers. These people might be construction workers, homemakers, or telemarketers, so I have to wonder: why should *they* care about trucking?

Now I'm not complaining, and I certainly don't mind answering their questions. I just wonder how anyone could possibly want to know such mundane details about being a trucker. After all, I don't ask them how to frame a wall, or what's the best way to annoy someone while they're eating dinner. Why should I? I certainly don't care, but apparently they do. Maybe you do too?

**You must have some sort of interest in trucking because you forked over the dough for this book.**

Perhaps it's more than just a passing interest. Maybe you've always wondered what it would be like to drive a truck for a living. Maybe you've had this strange fascination with trucks ever since your youth, when you first got a trucker to blow his horn by vigorously pumping your arm up and down?

Whatever your reason for asking, the fact remains that many people do ask me about this boring stuff. So that got me thinking... which really hurt my brain.

**Why do some people have an interest in trucking? Here's my take.**

People are interested in the unfamiliar. That's why we watch The Discovery Channel. Heck, it's not every day that you get to see hyenas humping. Likewise, a trucker's lifestyle is something that you wouldn't be familiar with because you don't see or hear about it every day. Unlike most other professions, trucking isn't just a job; it's a lifestyle all its own.

No one wants to know the details of a toll booth attendant's day because, quite frankly, they're a freakin' toll booth attendant. They stand in a booth making the exact same change all day, then go home and don an oxygen mask to keep from passing out from all the exhaust fumes. They get paid a set salary every Friday. Yawn-o-rama.

A factory worker builds widgets all day and goes home to have a couple of beers and watch American Idol. He or she gets paid by the hour. Ho-hum. No wonder no one asks them about their jobs! Their job is just like everyone else's!

On the other hand, as a trucker, I may get up early one day and battle city traffic until evening. The next day I wake up in the afternoon and drive deserted roads all night to deliver a load in the middle of freakin' nowhere. Not you. You fight rush hour to and from work every day.

Every load I haul gets picked up in a different city, and I rarely know where I'm heading next. You pass the same 7-Eleven and park in the same parking lot at work every day; possibly even the exact same parking spot.

I'm away from home for long periods of time. You get to be with the family and/or friends every night.

When I'm not driving down the road, my "home away from home" is either the driver's lounge in a truck stop or a truck cab the size of a half-bathroom. You've got a deck with a grill and a familiar toilet seat... you lucky dog.

I've seen all 48 states in the continental US of A and parts of Canada. You crossed the state line to pick up discount beer and cigarettes once.

I get paid by the mile or by a percentage of the load. You get paid by the hour or by salary.

I use words like "chicken coop" and "plain white wrapper" at work. You know what "synergy" means and I don't care.

**I guess when you look at it like that, it's easy to see why people have an interest in the life of a trucker.**

It's just so foreign to them compared to their everyday life. To us, the trucking life may seem quite dull because we live it every day. Quite frankly, driving for 11 hours nearly every day can be extremely boring, especially if you don't find ways to keep it interesting. We'll be discussing ways to stay entertained in Chapter 10.

Whatever the reason for a person's curiosity about trucking, there is absolutely no denying that it exists. That led to more deep thoughts... and a migraine. Man, I've gotta quit thinking so much.

**So how could I help all you curious folks out there?**

Maybe what was needed was a practical guide that could answer all those little questions that non-truckers seem to want to know about a trucker's life on the road. Sure, it might satisfy the person with a passing interest, but even better, it would give much needed information to those who are looking to pursue a job as a professional truck driver.

I certainly wish I had known the facts before I made the leap. Under the circumstances, I don't think it would have changed my mind, but still, any uninformed decision is potentially unwise.

***Will I like truck driving? No one can answer that question for you. That's for you, and only you, to decide.***

It doesn't matter if you're a white-collar worker looking for an escape from backstabbing office politics or a blue-collar laborer looking for better pay than your local factory or fast-food joint. Truck driving may fit the bill. Then again, it may not.

I can't stress enough that this is a decision only *you* can make, and it should only be done by getting the hard facts about what you're about to get into. Just because your cousin may love being a trucker doesn't mean that you'll share his passion about it. I mean, you don't share his weird goat fetish, do you?

Any career change can be an expensive proposition (although there are ways to get into trucking without any upfront cash). **Don't you owe it to yourself to get the truth?** This book is your first step.

### **Exactly how can this book help you decide if trucking is right for you?**

This book is designed to help outsiders and new truckers understand the world of trucking. If you do decide to pursue a career as a truck driver, you might also be interested in other upcoming books that will help you with other aspects of trucking.

The next book is entitled [\*How to Find a Great Truck Driving Job\*](#). This book will tell you all the right questions to ask when you are job-hunting and why it's important to ask these questions in the first place. It also includes a printable questionnaire form in the back so you won't forget to ask anything when you call a potential employer.

I can hear you say it; *Why would I need such a guide?*

Many times, a disgruntled trucker feels like the trucking company has lied to them, when in reality, they just forgot to ask a particular question about the thing that they're now throwing a hissy fit about. I know because I've done it numerous times. Nearly every time I didn't like something about a particular company I had hired on with, it was due to something that I had forgotten to ask about.

That's why I decided to make this list of questions in the first place: so I wouldn't forget to ask that one vital question that would keep me from lobbing Molotov cocktails into the Recruiting Department's office. Trial-and-error is the worst way to find a job, so don't do it.

This current book is designed to give you the unbiased facts about what you'll face as a new trucker. Believe me when I say that the "unbiased" part of that is what's so hard to find. We'll have more on that subject in the next chapter.

**This book is interspersed with some specific male- and female-oriented insights, some inevitable trucker stories, and some unrelated blabber that I consider humor.**

The information in this book will help you make an informed decision as to whether your experience in a trucking career will be as yummy as chocolate and peanut butter or as puke-worthy as apple pie with a mustard glaze. There is absolutely no sense in wasting your time, effort, and money trying out a different career when you could possibly figure it out just by reading a short book.

**This book is an easy read that will feel more like a face-to-face conversation than a textbook.**

To make things even easier to comprehend, I'll also try to refrain from using a lot of trucker jargon that you may not understand. 10-4? Oh, come on now. Even your grandma knows what that means.

**One thing this book won't do is recommend any particular trucking companies.**

*Why not?* Because the things I love about a particular company could be the very things you end up hating after you blindly take my recommendation. Then you might get peeved at me, don a hockey mask, and hunt me down with a big freakin' machete. Frankly, I rather enjoy the use of all my limbs. Only you can know what kind of company will suit you best. Here's a real life example of that.

**If there's one thing truckers are known for (other than body odor and foul language), it's telling trucker stories. Here's the first of many.**

The Evil Overlord (the wife and ex codriver) and I hired on with a trucking company based in Florida. The first day of orientation, we gave each other that "uh-oh" look out of the corner of our eye when the class instructor began explaining an unfamiliar company policy.

It seemed that on high-value loads, such as televisions or other electronics, we'd be required to travel 300 miles from the shipper before we were allowed to stop. They went on to explain that people familiar with the shipper commit many of the thefts. The thieves simply follow you when you leave. When you stop for fuel, food, or whatever, they wait until you go inside and then they nab your truck. Research had shown that thieves would give up after you drive 200-300 miles without stopping.

I guess that makes sense, but that one policy was unlike anything we had previously dealt with. We had a very bad feeling about it, but because we had come all the way from Missouri, we decided to give it a go.

In that orientation class, we sat alongside another couple that also expressed some concerns about that policy. We even discussed it with them during our breaks. To make a long story short, we only drove for that company for ten months. I'm actually surprised we lasted that long. We tried to stick it out, but we just couldn't get past that one awful policy.

Two years later, I was walking through a truck stop lounge when one of the magazines on the newsstand caught my eye. Guess who was on the cover? I'll be danged if it wasn't that same couple we sat beside at orientation. They still worked there.

Furthermore, they had been chosen by that very carrier to represent them in the feature article inside. They were singing the praises of the very company that we had both been uneasy about during orientation. I'm glad they were enjoying it. We sure hadn't.

This story is a perfect example of why one company isn't right for everyone. They overlooked that one little policy, but it bugged us enough to move on down the road, so to speak. Had it been something else, our roles may have been reversed.

By the way, this particular security policy has grown in popularity over the years and we've grown accustomed to it since then, so don't let this kind of policy scare you like it did us.

**Just as I won't be recommending any trucking companies, I also won't be glamorizing a trucking career to influence you. I have no reason to. You'll see why in a bit.**

What I will do is give you the truth about the trucking industry so you can make an informed decision for yourself.

Driving a truck isn't for everyone, and it'll certainly take some getting used to. It's also something you don't want to dive into without careful consideration, so don't quit your day job just yet.

As I said before, changing careers can be an expensive undertaking. There's the lost wages, lost health insurance (or highway robbery COBRA costs to continue it), the cost of education for your new career, and your lack of efficiency in a new job, just to name a few. And let's not forget the never-ending nagging from your spouse about not bringing home the bacon until your first paycheck from the new job kicks in.

We need to discuss in more detail what driving a truck is about before you possibly commit career suicide. You need to know some of the pitfalls before you eagerly jump off the high dive, only to realize that someone neglected to put water in the stinkin' pool.

**Here are just some of the questions we need to answer before you can make an informed decision.**

- How much money can you make?
- Who makes a good trucker?
- What's it like to drive a big rig?
- Can you be away from home?
- How will you handle downtime on the road?
- How does your home time work?
- Can you handle the long driving hours?
- What's it like to sleep in the truck?
- What about health issues?
- What about personal hygiene?
- How are women truckers treated?
- What are the job qualifications?

- Will I have job security?

These are just some of the questions that will be answered for you. We'll tackle these one at a time. If you read about all these things and decide truck driving may work for you, you'll need to know the process of becoming a truck driver, so the end of the book will cover:

- Choosing and attending a driving school
- Finding a great job
- Going to orientation class
- Hitting the road with a trainer
- A day in the life of a trucker

**Before we go any further, why don't we go ahead and get my credentials out of the way.**

That way you'll know I'm not some pencil-pushing desk-jockey blow-hard. Wow. That's a lot of hyphens.



## Chapter 2

### **Who The Heck Am I?**

Okay. First off, let me go against everything I've ever read about being an author by stating outright that I am **not** an "expert" in my field. I'm just a regular dude who happens to know more about trucking than you because I've done it longer than you. That's it. That's the extent of my expertise. Are we clear on that? Good. Because anyone who claims to know everything about any subject is not only full of horse nuggets, but they're also someone I don't want to hang out with... and neither do you.

As far as my personal life goes, I don't really have much of one. For excitement, I like to hang out with my wife and our nephews. I also love to play golf when I get a chance, which isn't very often with my trucking lifestyle. As I'm fond of saying, I like golf so much that I always spend an extra hour or two each round looking for my ball.

I'm also a Christian who won't even flinch if you drop an F-bomb on me. I do cringe a bit when I hear someone take the Lord's name in vain with a "God damn!" or a "Jesus Christ!" but I honestly can't expect a nonbeliever to live by Biblical rules, now can I?

I'm also the type of Christian who won't call you names or scream at you simply because I don't agree with your lifestyle or beliefs. I try to live out the part of the Bible that talks about noticing the speck in someone else's eye without considering the plank in my own eye. I love that the Bible has a sense of humor.

Okay. Before you do like Iron Maiden and *Run To The Hills*, let me assure you that this book is not an avenue to preach at you. In fact, if I hadn't just told you I was a Christian, you'd probably get to the end of this book without even noticing.

I'm happy to share my faith with anyone who can carry on a conversation without resulting to petty insults, but now is not the time or place for that. If you'd like to chat about it, give me a shout at [AboutTruckDriving@gmail.com](mailto:AboutTruckDriving@gmail.com).

*So exactly how much truckin' experience do you have?*

My wife and I were married in 1993. It seems like forever ago... I mean... yesterday. We began our truck driving career in July of 1997. She was my co-driver in a team operation for nine of those years, so I've driven as a team and I've also driven as a solo driver. I've worked for six different carriers, all of them fairly large, which is what I recommend to the new driver (I'll explain why throughout the book). Together, we have over 3 million miles under our butts.

I have a male's perspective on the job and my wife, Lorinda, has her own unique views, as wives tend to do. On that subject, I once read that all the planets spin counterclockwise, except for Venus, which is associated with women. So what's that tell you?

**A match made in heaven. At least I think that's the right location.**

As you're about to discover, our relationship involves a healthy dose of sarcastic humor that borders on irreverence. If we both couldn't take a joke and some verbal abuse, we would've divorced years ago. You can't stay married as long as we have while living in a space the size of a walk-in closet without a rock solid sense of humor.

If you don't have one, you probably ought to order one from one of those late night infomercials before you pursue a career in trucking. *"But that's not all! Buy a sense of humor now and we'll include a set of earplugs specially designed to tune out your spouse!"* Man. I'm a sucker for those infomercials.

[How twisted is our marriage?](#) Well, we're not nearly as dysfunctional as Ozzy and Sharon Osborne, but we're certainly no Ozzie and Harriet either. You won't hear many pet names like "Honeybunch" or "Snookums" being thrown around our house. Although I have many names for Lorinda, her official moniker is "[The Evil Overlord](#)," which she knows and willingly accepts. She will henceforth be known as such.

Since her official pet name can be a mouthful, I usually just shout loving words at her. It might sound something like this. *"Hey you ol' hag! Where's my golf shoes!?"* Her pet name for me? "Dumb-ass;" as in, *"They're by your golf clubs, where you left them, Dumb-ass!"*

Now I don't know how fitting that name is, but I seem to answer to it every single time. And lo and behold, my golf shoes were right where she said they'd be. So maybe there's something to that name after all.

A tad bit of advice to you newlyweds out there: You probably shouldn't give your new spouse pet names like this immediately. Not if you value your special parts anyway.

## **How we got into trucking...**

I started considering a career in trucking because I wanted to go to college. *Uhhhh... say what?* Let me explain so you don't think I've been hitting the crack pipe.

In the early '90s, I was working at a dead-end factory job by day. By night, I was the lead singer of a decent local cover band, and my life's ambition was to be a rock star. That's practical, right? [Click this link for a sample](#) of me doing some Led Zeppelin if you're a glutton for punishment. Watch out. It's chock-full of explicit language. Since then, I've come back to my faith and dropped my potty-mouth, so that GD I drop at the beginning is especially hard for me to hear. I'm glad my God is a forgiving one. I did rock this song though!

The Evil Overlord listened to Nancy Reagan and "just said no" to my rock-n-roll dreams. That's understandable... I suppose. Although I really can't imagine why she wouldn't want me to turn into a druggie and be surrounded by fake blonde groupies with equally fake body parts. It's a mystery to me. Women can be so unreasonable sometimes, can't they?

Instead, I decided to go to school in Dallas. In 1995, I graduated from a two-year technical college from which I earned an Associates Degree in Music and Video Business. I was either going to become a band manager or get into the technical side of broadcasting. As a band manager, I would've likely still been around all those drugs and groupies on a regular basis; so broadcasting it was.

Instead of becoming the next Axl Rose (or his manager), I got an entry-level part-time job as a cameraman at a local TV station. Because I had an education, I quickly moved up to directing the weekend newscast. It was still only part-time, and although it sounds glamorous and I liked the work, the pay absolutely sucked.

Once I figured out that there wasn't much money in local broadcasting, I began taking classes at a community college with hopes of transferring to Kansas State University to study Architecture. If I couldn't become the next lead singer for Alice in Chains, I figured I'd become the next Frank Lloyd Wright.

Since part-time at the TV station wasn't paying the bills, I also had a full-time job at an egg-packing plant where I worked on the dock as a shipping/receiving clerk. On those docks I met... you guessed it... truckers.

We attended an open house at KSU and spoke with the professors, who quickly squashed my plan of working a full-time job while attending classes. The course workload was way too intense and most students who had tried it had eventually dropped out. It seems

that it takes a good bit of time to build a model skyscraper out of toothpicks. Who knew? The problem was that we knew we couldn't pay our bills unless The Evil Overlord and I both worked full-time jobs.

**Well, now we're in a pickle, aren't we? Time for "Plan B."**

Back on the docks, I had always heard the truckers talking about their pay and how many miles they were getting. It was a lot more money than I was making, so I began to ask them questions as I loaded their trucks. Getting a trucker to talk is not exactly hard to do, as you no doubt can tell by my rambling so far.

Every trucker that heard I was thinking about teaming with my wife as my co-driver gave me a stiff warning: "*If you don't get a divorce after six months in a truck with your wife, your marriage will last forever.*"

Despite their warnings, I was convinced that if I could persuade The Evil Overlord to drive a truck with me for a year or two, we could pay off all our debt and afterward attend KSU completely debt-free. Now how would I talk a fairy princess (cough) into learning to drive a truck?

What finally swung her was the evening a friendly trucker agreed to let me see the interior of his new truck. It was impressive. It was really clean, inside and out. He had a TV and a microwave oven inside a set of cabinets, and it even had bunk beds. It reminded me of an RV.

The Evil Overlord worked in the same plant, so I ran in and got her to come take a look. She, too, was impressed, and as we walked away, she said, "*That was nice. I could live like that for a year or two.*" It had worked.

On second thought, maybe it was the prospect of escape from me through divorce within six months that did it. Now that I think of it, it was probably the latter. Sorry, woman. You're stuck with me now. And that was the birth of two truckers.

***That's all fine and dandy, but how do I know I can trust what you're saying?***

Good question. I think I'll answer that right now.

~~~~~

Chapter 3

Why Should You Believe Me?

For starters, I'm not a guy with a hidden agenda. Many people that you'll be talking to when you first look into trucking will have a vested interest in making truck driving sound like a fabulous job. They may tell you all the wonderful things about driving a truck but "forget" to mention the less desirable aspects of the job. *Why would they do that?*

It's a good bet that many of them work for specific trucking companies as driver recruiters. Others will work for a service that gets paid by how many referrals they send to a number of different trucking companies. Either way, they're getting paid to get you into trucking, not to look out for your best interest.

Don't get me wrong: some of these referral companies are great at what they do. The service is usually free to the driver too. You simply mail, fax, or fill out one online application and get multiple job offers in return.

I've started many job hunts this way. They'll find the companies that suit your qualifications and requirements, and prospective employers will contact you. But asking them for advice as to whether or not you'll like trucking is like asking a car salesman if you should buy a new car. Their pay depends on you liking it.

Another common thing you'll hear is that you should talk to truckers to get the truth about being a truck driver.

I agree with that... but with one caveat: You should definitely talk to as many truckers as possible, but you should also be wary when you do. *Why's that?* Because many drivers earn bonus pay for recruiting new drivers to their company; that's why. So you can see that drivers may have a motive to tell you how great the trucking life is.

On the other hand, if a driver is having a bad day, he'll have nothing but bad things to say about a career or a company that he normally likes. I know, because I've done it—unintentionally, of course. Something I have never done intentionally is to receive a bonus for recruiting drivers.

Notice I said "intentionally" just now? Let me explain. One week, The Evil Overlord and I noticed that our bank account was larger than expected. As it turned out, we had received a referral bonus from a husband/wife team that had hired on recently. We were boggled at first, but eventually remembered a couple that we had talked to at a truck stop once.

Our conversation with them had naturally turned to the comparison of our employers. We hadn't tried to recruit them, but apparently they were interested enough to switch companies. They must have made a note of our truck number, because I'm quite certain we hadn't given out our last name. That qualifies as unintentional, doesn't it?

Don't misunderstand me. There's nothing inherently wrong with obtaining a bonus for recruiting other drivers, especially if those drivers are already in the industry and know what trucking is all about. Where it gets iffy is with people unfamiliar with trucking.

A driver may tell you what a perfect job they have, how much money they make, and how great trucking is, just to try to persuade you to drive for their employer. You're taking advice from someone who is trying to earn some extra cash, not look out for your best interests.

Not all drivers will stoop this low, but some definitely will, especially considering that they could earn anywhere from \$250 to \$1,500 extra for each driver they recruit. That's a lot of freakin' moolah!

Here's a great example of these influences in action.

I was looking through an online forum for truckers the other day and saw an extremely old message where a guy had asked what trucking was like. He only had two responses.

One was from a driver who told him, and I quote, "*Run away as fast as you can before you make the biggest mistake of your life.*" He went on to give his reasons as to why trucking sucked so badly. I could almost feel his anger seeping through my computer screen.

Now some of his complaints were legitimate, but most of the stuff he was griping about seemed to me to simply be a result of working for a horrible company. I certainly hadn't ever been treated like that before. At least not by anyone I wasn't married to.

The response from the other guy talked about how great trucking was and how it all depended on which company you went to work for. His email address stood out like a camel on a hockey rink. Who was the questioner to believe? Probably neither.

The angry guy had probably just had a really crappy day or worked for an equally crappy company. The second responder could have been a recruiter working for a particular trucking company or he could've been a driver surfing for some referral pay. It's possible that the "pro-trucking" dude could have just been a nice guy, but how do you know? That email address made me awfully suspicious. Maybe I'm just paranoid.

I imagine that questioner was as confused as Paris Hilton at a self-serve gas station. I still wonder which guy he listened to. Unfortunately, the question had been asked so long ago that I didn't get a chance to help the poor guy out. I hope he chose the right path and is currently happier than a circus freak at a tattoo parlor.

Now, I know what you're thinking. "*You're a driver! Why should I trust you?*" Good point. Aren't we the observant one?

Before I started this book, I asked myself the same question. Why *should* anyone take my word for it? Like anyone who has a job, I'm bound to have my share of bad days too. That's why I promised myself I'd never write any portion of this book in the midst of one of those terrible days. I knew I couldn't be unbiased when I was in a bad mood.

Needless to say, I didn't get a whole lot of writing done when my truck's air conditioning went out one July. But I did stick to my promise. I didn't write any part of this book while I had steam coming out of my ears.

Do I have a hidden financial agenda?

Well, you paid for this book; but that's not exactly hidden, now is it? While it's true that my current company pays me for driver referrals, you can still expect unbiased information from me. Let me explain why so you can continue reading this book without thinking I'm, as Gollum would say, as "trixie as the Hobbittses." And here's to hoping you're a wee bit taller and a bit more attractive than Gollum.

Again, my company does pay me for driver referrals (many of them do), but I can't benefit from you. *Why not?* Well, I only get paid for referrals **if** you happen to choose the company where I work **and** only then **if** you give them my name **and** they hire you. **But** that's not all! Hey, that's a lot of **ifs**, **ands**, and **buts**, isn't it? Aren't I clever?

Anyway, it's impossible for me to profit from you through referrals since I'm not going to tell you what company I work for. Without the name of my company, it doesn't matter if you know my name or vice versa. Hopefully that puts that baby to bed.

And can I ask a favor from you here? If by some strange chance you happen to figure out what trucking company I drive for, please don't announce it to the world. Remember, I'm basing the fact that I can't get driver referral pay on them by staying anonymous. Thanks in advance.

I also have never tried to persuade anyone to become a truck driver. Nor will I ever do so.

I'm glad to answer any questions someone might have, but I'd never try to influence anyone one way or the other. *Again I say, why not?* Because I really don't care whether you become a plumber, a priest, a pimp, or a professional truck driver. That's not for me to decide. That's your job. But now that I think about it, I would prefer that you don't pursue a career as a Pimpologist.

The important thing here is that I'm not trying to influence you in any way. I have no doubt that this will be made abundantly clear to you as you read along. I'm not here to sugarcoat things to your liking, nor am I trying to make you "*run away*," as one ticked off truck driver put it. I'm simply going to tell you what to expect as a truck driver so you can decide for yourself.

What that means is, you'll likely hear as many bad things as good. This is exactly what you need to hear: the pros and cons of truck driving. It's as simple as that. Heck, that's why I wrote the book in the first place, to either keep you from making a huge mistake or to help you make a career choice you'll be happy with.

It's not a foolproof process, but at least you can make an informed decision based on your own likes and dislikes. So in that sense, the pros and cons will vary from person to person.

The more you find out about trucking now, the wiser you'll be when it comes time to decide if trucking is right for you.

As I said before, you should definitely talk to as many people in trucking as you can. If you know any drivers, drill them with as many questions as you can think of. Even better, if you can spare a weekend, ask them if you can ride along with them for a few days. Many companies allow passengers through what is known as a "rider policy." We'll have more on that in Chapter 8.

I do have one concern with you riding along with a trucker for a weekend though. My fear is that it could give you the wrong impression of trucking.

Hitting the road for a weekend, seeing some countryside, and the novelty of being in a big rig for the first time could really skew your opinion to the positive side. Just remember, it may be new and exciting for one weekend, but don't overlook the fact that you're looking at doing this as a full-time career. Just a warning there.

If you know anyone who works in the office of a trucking company, talk to them. They no doubt know more about trucking than you do. Maybe they could even put you in touch with a company driver or someone within the company that knows something about driving. *What if I don't know anyone in trucking?* Here's an idea that helped us.

Find a local truck stop and spend a day or two talking to any drivers that you can get your hands on (figuratively speaking, of course).

Truckers are generally a talkative bunch, especially when it comes to their profession. Tell them what you're after and ask to buy them a cup of coffee or an iced tea. Once you've got 'em cornered, let loose with your questions.

Keep in mind that many drivers won't have time to sit and talk if they need to keep moving in order to deliver their load on time. Don't let that discourage you. If it's a large truck stop, you'll see hundreds, possibly thousands of drivers each day, so another will come along soon enough.

Here are some tips when approaching truck drivers:

1. **Prepare some questions on a notepad before you go, so you can stay on the subject.** You don't want this to turn into a play-by-play of every place he's been since Tuesday. Take it from a trucker, this can easily happen. I really don't know why truckers like to tell you where they've been, but they do. And they'll bring it up out of nowhere. Be sure to take lots of notes once he starts blabbing.
2. **Don't walk away if you see a driver roll his eyes or give you a dirty look as you approach.** He probably thinks you're a beggar or a hitchhiker with a sob story. We hear them all the time. Just smile and *immediately* tell them you don't want any money or a ride. Then quickly tell him what you want and ask if he's got the time for a cup of coffee.
3. **You'll see a lot of drivers fueling at the fuel bays. It's okay to approach a driver while he's fueling, just remember that he'll assume you're a beggar or a hitchhiker.** If he agrees to talk to you, tell him you'll meet him in the restaurant. That way, he can finish fueling and find a parking space. That can take 15-20

minutes; so don't give up on him right away. If, however, he keeps talking to you while he's fueling, go ahead and chat until he's ready to go park.

4. **It's okay for women to approach men or women truckers.** It would certainly be ideal if a woman could get an experienced woman's perspective on things. **However, men shouldn't approach female truck drivers unless their husband/co-driver is standing nearby.** The Evil Overlord could never fuel or walk into a truck stop without at least one guy (mostly truckers) trying to talk to her. It drove her bananas. Women truckers get "hit on" enough, so just leave them alone.
5. **Don't approach a trucker who's eating alone in the truck stop restaurant.** If he wanted company, he'd be sitting near the other drivers. Respect his space. You can usually find the talkative truckers in a huddle somewhere. Feel free to sit down nearby. One curious question about their profession will likely yield information from many drivers. If you're lucky, a heated debate and a fistfight may break out. Kidding! Aww, who am I kidding? That would be cool.
6. **If you're considering team driving with your spouse, try to have them with you when you talk to drivers.** Two heads are better than one. Then again, if you've got two heads, a freak show might pay better than trucking. Anyway, a man is concerned with how many miles he'll get. A woman wants to know how much cabinet space is in the truck and how nasty the truck stop showers are. Try to find a husband/wife team to really get the dirt on what it's like to drive with your spouse. Take any and all advice. You'll need it.
7. **Some drivers may want to exchange names with you so if you end up hiring on with the company he works for, he can get a referral bonus.** If you're comfortable giving out your name, then there's nothing wrong with this, especially if he gives you a lot of good information. If you don't like the idea of a stranger having your name, politely decline and tell him that you're just getting started and you're not even sure if you want to get into trucking or not. If he persists, he's a jerk, so as The All-American Rejects say, "*Move along, move along, like I know ya do.*" **A tip from experience: DO NOT give out your phone number!!** We had to change our number once because an annoying driver kept calling us just to "see how we were."
8. **As far as referral bonuses go, don't be surprised if a driver offers to pay you half of the referral bonus for hiring on with his/her company.** This is a fairly standard practice for drivers who might try to recruit you. For example, if they're going to receive \$500 for recruiting you, they might offer to pay you \$250 to write their name down as your recruiter when you fill out an application later on. Whether you ever see that money or not is another story. If they want to swap phone numbers so they can pay you after you hire on, they may honestly be willing to give you your half. Just remember my warning about giving out your phone number. If they don't offer a way to contact you later, don't expect to ever see that money. It's kind of a two-edged sword, eh? Risk giving out your number, or risk not getting paid. I'll keep my privacy and my sanity, thanks.

9. **Last, but not least, remember that some of these drivers may have an agenda.** If they have absolutely nothing bad to say about trucking, watch out! Likewise, if talk turns to how great their company is and the conversation stays there, make your exit as politely as possible and find another driver. Notice I said "stays there." It's okay for a guy to like his company and talk about it a bit, but you'll be able to tell if it turns into a sales pitch. However, if you're the one who's asking questions because it sounds like a good company, that's a different story. You may as well find out as much as you can about a company that sounds good enough to be a prospective employer.

Before you leave the truck stop, make sure you grab some of the free trucker magazines that are available.

They're mostly full of advertisements trying to recruit drivers, but they'll help you become more familiar with how the trucking industry works and what the current pay rates are. Just remember, they're trucking magazines, so expect them to only show pro-trucking viewpoints.

After you're done, go home and mull over your notes. Include your spouse, whether they're going to be your co-driver or not. Even if they're staying home, your decision to potentially be gone for days on end will affect them too and they need to know what to expect.

Next, we need to talk about something we all love: chocolate chip cookies... especially fresh out of the oven, when they're super-gooey. Mmmmmm.

Seriously though, what I'm really talking about is money, as in cold, hard cash. Well, actually direct deposit or a payroll check mailed to your house. But you get my point. So, how much money can you make as a trucker? Let's find out, shall we?



[Chapter 4](#)

How Much Money Can You Make?

Why is it that money always seems to be the central topic in all of our lives? Maybe it's because the number one cause of divorce in America is due to money-related arguments. Maybe because without it, you'd be living in a cardboard box and using Mad Dog 20/20 as aftershave.