



TRANSPORTATION & WAREHOUSING

Top 10 Questions to Ask a Potential Trucking Employer

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Great news: You've got what seems like a solid offer to drive for a reputable trucking company. But before you hop in the cab, you'll want to know certain details about the firm's policies to determine whether the job measures up to your expectations. To get the answers you're looking for, ask a potential employer these 10 key questions:

What Is Your Home-Time Policy?

Long-haul drivers put in long hours on the road, says Kelly Anderson, president of Impact Transportation Solutions. But if a company promises you one day off a week, clarify how it defines a day.

Anderson offers this possible scenario: "Here I am this morning arriving back to the terminal, unloading truck, going home. If I have three days off coming, then today is one of them -- I've wasted half a day (out of my three days off). A time-off policy means three complete days off."

What Are Your Major Lanes?

Find out what typical routes, distances and regions your prospective employer wants you to travel. Trucking career consultant Craig Robins says a driver who lives in a remote area may be better off choosing an employer with a nearby terminal location for truck fueling and maintenance rather than going with a higher-paying company that doesn't have any terminals near home.

What Type of Equipment Will I Have?

Particularly for long-haul work, "you want to be comfortable," Anderson says. Ask if the company will assign you equipment and what that will include. Will you get an air-ride suspension? A sleeper on the truck? What size? Since you will be spending most of your time with this equipment, make sure you can live with it.

Do You Provide Layover Pay?

Layover is the wait or delay a trucker experiences between scheduled loads. In general, a driver should expect to receive layover pay for wait times beyond his control.

Do You Slip-Seat?

When a driver takes time off, he may have to cede, or "slip-seat," his assigned truckload (and truck) to another driver, Robins says. If you don't want to share your truck, look for an employer with a no slip-seat policy.

How Much Do You Pay?

Check out [Monster's Salary Center](#) for current driver pay scales. Demand is strong, so don't let a firm shortchange you. Anderson recommends evaluating the pay offered in terms of cents per mile.

But do so with caution, says Mitch Bookbinder, recruiter for national firm L.J. Kennedy Trucking. For instance, getting paid 50 cents a mile might sound great -- unless you'll be driving and living in an expensive, congested region like New York City.

What Are the Benefits?

[Benefits](#) are closely linked to pay, so don't consider one without the other.

"If you are looking at employers, find out how many miles per month, cents per mile and what are (your) costs for benefits and road expenses," Anderson advises. Some companies offer full medical, dental, vision and short-term disability coverage. The less the coverage, the more cents per mile you'll want.

Do You Pay for Lumpers?

Lumpers are for-hire loaders at a warehouse. A carrier may pay you to load or unload the freight for your truck or let you pay a lumper to do it. Find out if your potential employer will pay or compensate for the lumper.

Do You Offer Bonuses?

Some companies offer bonuses for a good driving record and performance, so it pays to ask. Robins also recommends asking if the company offers sign-on bonuses.

Will I Get a Dedicated Driver Manager?

A driver manager is particularly important if you're [just starting out as a driver](#). Having a direct manager to work with can foster a good company relationship, enhance your promotion chances and help you resolve concerns and issues quickly.

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