**Entry-level driver training**

**Requirements before February 7, 2020**

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) requires that entry-level drivers receive training on four specific topics before being allowed to operate commercial motor vehicles (CMVs). An entry-level driver is defined as a driver with less than one year of experience operating a CMV with a commercial driver’s license (CDL) in interstate commerce.

Entry-level drivers must have a certificate or diploma showing they have been trained in the following areas before operating a CMV requiring a CDL:

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| 1. | **Driver qualification requirements —** The federal rules on medical certification, medical examination procedures, general qualifications, responsibilities, and disqualifications based on various offenses, orders, and loss of driving privileges ( [Part 391Subparts B](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR391SubpartB');), and [E](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR391SubpartE');)). As stated by the FMCSA, this includes training on the following:   * “Loss of a limb; impairment of a limb; diabetes mellitus standard for drivers currently requiring insulin for control; cardiovascular disease standards for conditions known to be accompanied by syncope, dyspnea, collapse, or congestive cardiac failure; respiratory dysfunction standards; procedures for the clinical diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure; standards for rheumatic, orthopedic, muscular, neuromuscular, or vascular disease; epilepsy standards including conditions likely to cause loss of consciousness; psychiatric disorders including mental conditions which affect the driver’s operation of the CMV, vision standards, hearing standards, and diagnosis of alcoholism as a disease; alternative physical qualification standards for the loss or impairment of limbs; and vision and diabetes exemption program requirements.” * “The following drivers must be medically examined: new drivers, drivers with expired medical cards, and drivers whose ability to perform their normal duties has been impaired by a physical or mental injury or disease.” * “Additional types of subjects employers should cover in driver qualification should include the following: A discussion of driver qualification standards under Sec. 391.11, driver responsibilities under Sec. 391.13, and disqualifications based on various offenses, orders, and loss of driving privileges under Sec. 391.15.” |
| 2. | **Hours of service of drivers —** The limitations on driving hours, the requirement to be off-duty for certain periods of time, preparation of driver logs, and exceptions ( [Part 395](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR395');)). Training must also include fatigue countermeasures as a means to avoid crashes. |
| 3. | **Driver wellness —** Basic health maintenance including diet and exercise and the importance of avoiding excessive use of alcohol. According to the FMCSA, “Driver wellness topics could include stress, sleep apnea, how to maintain healthy blood cholesterol, blood pressure, and weight, as well as the importance of periodic health monitoring and testing, diet, and exercise. Many of these items could also be combined with the driver qualification training requirements that require a doctor to inquire about and test for numerous physical conditions. Driver wellness, however, should inform the driver what should be considered on a daily and monthly basis to maintain a healthy lifestyle. For example, in discussing topics about blood pressure, diet, and exercise, an employer may want to address the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, but also mention that the medical qualification requirements are written in terms of minimum standards for safe driving, including guidelines for blood pressure and diabetes mellitus.” |
| 4. | **Whistleblower protection —** The right of an employee to question the safety practices of an employer without the employee’s risk of losing a job or being subject to reprisals simply for stating a safety concern (29 CFR [Part 1978](javascript:DoLink('r29CFR1978');)). |

The training and/or the certificate or diploma can be provided by the employer or other training provider. The certificate or diploma must be placed in the driver’s personnel file or Driver Qualification file, and it must be kept until one year after the driver leaves the company.

The certificate must contain:

* The date,
* The name and address of the training provider,
* The driver’s name,
* A certification statement, and
* The signature and printed name of the person attesting that the driver has received the required training.

Employers and driver training schools are not required to spend any specific amount of time on the training, because the length of training is not specified in the regulations. However, the FMCSA estimates that trainers will spend an average of 10 hours to train on the four topics, including 5.5 hours on driver qualifications and hours of service, 4 hours on driver wellness, and 30 minutes on whistleblower protections.

The rules can be found in 49 CFR [Part 380](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR380');), Subpart E.

**Requirements on and after February 7, 2020**

The entry-level driver training rule establishes minimum training standards for drivers applying for their initial CDL, upgrading their current CDL, or obtaining a passenger, school bus, or hazardous materials endorsement for the first time.

Before to taking the skills test, an entry-level driver must successfully complete a prescribed program of theory and behind-the-wheel instruction provided by a school or other entity listed on FMCSA’s Training Provider Registry (TPR).

***Theory instruction***

The rule requires instruction in 30 specific topics under five areas of instruction:

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| 1. | Basic Operation |
| 2. | Safe Operating Procedures |
| 3. | Advanced Operating Practices |
| 4. | Vehicle Systems and Reporting Malfunctions |
| 5. | Non-Driving Activities |

The required topics include (but are not limited to) basic control, visual search, vehicle inspections, hours of service, and trip planning.

An assessment must be used to determine the driver-trainee’s proficiency for each unit of instruction. Driver-trainees must achieve an overall minimum score of 80 percent on the theory assessment. There is no minimum number of hours that driver-trainees must spend on theory instruction.

***Behind-the-wheel instruction***

Behind-the-wheel training includes both range and public road instruction covering just under two dozen topics. The required topics include (but are not limited to) vehicle controls, speed and space management, backing, and parking.

The training must be completed in a vehicle of the same group or type that the driver-trainee intends to use for the CDL skills test.

The proficient completion of the behind-the-wheel training is based on the instructor’s assessment of each driver-trainee’s performance of the required elements of behind-the-wheel training.

Training instructors must document the total number of clock hours each driver-trainee spends to complete the behind-the-wheel curriculum. There is no minimum number of hours that driver-trainees must spend on behind-the-wheel instruction.

***Endorsements (Passenger, School Bus, Hazardous Materials)***

An individual seeking to obtain a passenger, school bus, or hazardous materials endorsement for the first time must complete the training related to that endorsement from a provider listed on the TPR.

A specific curriculum that includes theory and behind-the-wheel instruction must be completed in order to obtain a passenger or school bus endorsement.

A specific curriculum that includes theory instruction must be completed in order to obtain a hazardous materials endorsement.

***Training provider registry (TPR)***

In order to be listed on the Training Provider Registry (TPR), the training provider must:

* Follow a curriculum that meets the criteria listed in [Part 380](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR380');), Appendices A through E;
* Use classroom and range facilities that comply with all federal, state, and/or local statutes and regulations;
* Use vehicles in behind-the-wheel training that comply with all federal, state, and/or local statutes and regulations, and are in the same group or type that driver-trainees intend to operate for their CDL skills test;
* Use theory instructors who meet the definition in [§380.605](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR380.605'););
* Use behind-the-wheel instructors who meet the definition in [§380.605](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR380.605');); and
* Be licensed, certified, registered, or authorized to provide training in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations of any state where in-person training is conducted.

Facilities and equipment must comply with all applicable federal, state, and/or local statutes and regulations.

***Instructor requirements***

Theory and behind-the-wheel instructors must hold an appropriate class of CDL (including appropriate endorsement(s)) and have either:

* A minimum of two years of experience driving a commercial motor vehicle requiring the CDL (including appropriate endorsement(s)); or
* A minimum of two years of experience as a behind-the-wheel commercial motor vehicle instructor.

These individuals must also meet all applicable state qualification requirements for commercial motor vehicle instructors.

***Certification and recordkeeping***

After an individual completes training administered by a provider listed on the TPR, that provider must, by midnight of the second business day after the driver-trainee completes the training, electronically transmit training certification information through the TPR website.

All training providers on the TPR must retain the following records:

* Self-certifications by all accepted applicants for behind-the-wheel training, attesting that they will comply with the regulations in Parts [40](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR40');), [382](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR382');), [383](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR383');), and [391](javascript:DoLink('r49CFR391');), as well as state and/or local laws, related to alcohol and controlled substances testing, age, medical certification, licensing, and driver records;
* A copy of the driver-trainee’s commercial learner’s permit (CLP) or CDL, as applicable;
* Instructor qualification documentation indicating driving and/or training experience, as applicable, for each instructor, and copies of CDLs and applicable endorsements held by behind-the-wheel instructors or theory instructors, as applicable;
* The Training Provider Registration Form submitted to the TPR;
* The lesson plans for theory and behind-the-wheel (range and public road) training curricula, as applicable; and
* Records of individual entry-level driver training assessments

Training providers listed on the TPR must keep training-related records for at least three years from the date each required record is generated or received. If a record, such as a behind-the-wheel instructor’s CDL, has expired or has been canceled, the most recent, valid CDL should be kept.