

# Commercial Vehicle Pre-Trip Inspection Checklist

You are only required to inspect the items on the CDL Vehicle Inspection checklist. You may use the checklist provided in this section for your test and check off items as you have completed them, but NO additional markings or writing may be placed on this list prior to the test. You MUST name, point to and/or touch and fully explain to the examiner WHAT you are inspecting each safety critical item for. If you do not, you will not get credit for the item(s).

(Remember to latch the hood.)

## Class A Checklist Tractor Semi-Trailer or Truck & Trailer or Bus & Trailer

### In-Vehicle/Engine Start PG. 3

- \*air or \*hydraulic brake check
- parking & trailer brake check
- service brake check
- lighting indicators
- emergency equipment
- windshield & traffic monitoring devices
- wipers & washers
- heater & defroster
- horn(s)

### Lights Operations Check PG. 4

- all external lights

### Front of Vehicle/Engine Area PG. 4

- lenses
- fluid levels
- fluid & air leaks
- steering systems

### Steering Axle PG. 4 & 5

- tires
- rims
- lug nuts
- springs/mounts & air bags & shocks
- brake lines or hoses & leaks
- brake contaminates

### Side of Vehicle PG. 5

- lenses & reflectors
- traffic monitoring devices
- battery
- fuel tank(s)/DEF tank
- frame(s)

### Combination Vehicles Only PG. 6

- air & electric lines & connectors
- fifth wheel skid plate or pintle hook or tow hitch
- kingpin & apron & gap or drawbar ring & tongue or coupler & tongue
- locking & safety devices

### Trailer Only PG. 6

- landing gear & clearance
- reflective tape

### Rear of Trailer PG. 6

- lenses & reflectors

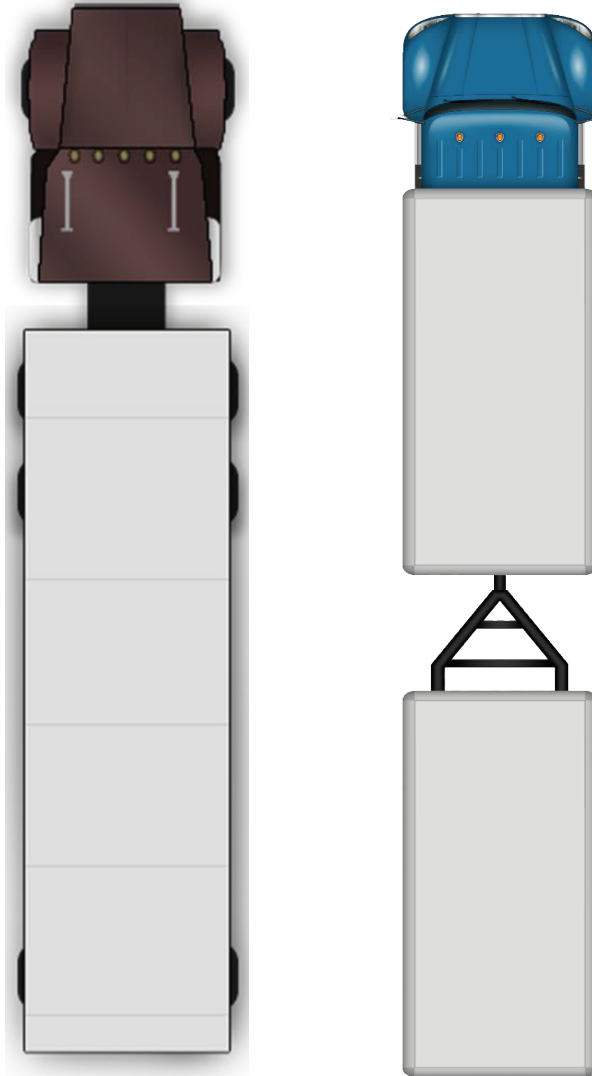
\* Automatic failure if not performed correctly

### Passenger and School Bus Only

- passenger entry & lift
- emergency exits
- passenger seating
- passenger monitoring devices

### School Bus Only

- student lights (front & back)
- stop arm(s) & safety arm
- first aid & body fluid kits



**READ MN CDL MANUAL SECTION 10M PAGES 189-200**

Department of Public Safety Driver and Vehicle Services - 445 Minnesota St., Saint Paul, MN 55101

Phone: (651) 201-7626 TTY: (651) 282-6555 Fax: (651) 296-5316

Rev. 7.5 01.21.2026

# Commercial Vehicle Pre-Trip Inspection Checklist

You are only required to inspect the items on the CDL Vehicle Inspection checklist. You may use the checklist provided in this section for your test and check off items as you have completed them, but NO additional markings or writing may be placed on this list prior to the test. You MUST name, point to and/or touch and fully explain to the examiner WHAT you are inspecting each safety critical item for. If you do not, you will not get credit for the item(s).

(Remember to latch the hood.)

## Class B or Class C Checklist Straight Truck or Other Straight Vehicle

### In-Vehicle/Engine Start

- \*air or \*hydraulic brake check
- parking & trailer brake check
- service brake check
- lighting indicators
- emergency equipment
- windshield & traffic monitoring devices
- wipers & washers
- heater & defroster
- horn(s)

### Lights Operations Check

- all external lights

### Front of Vehicle/Engine Area

- lenses
- fluid levels
- fluid & air leaks
- steering systems

### Steering Axle

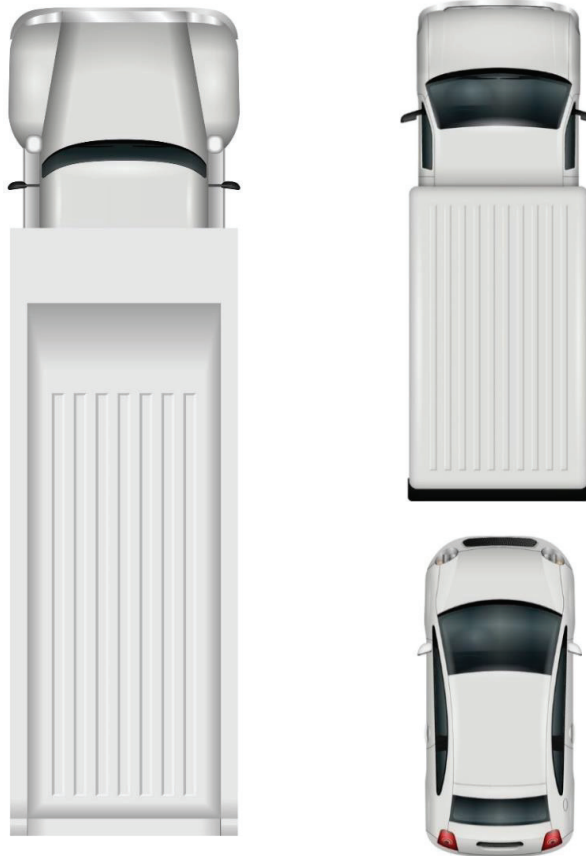
- tires
- rims
- lug nuts
- springs/mounts & air bags & shocks
- brake lines or hoses & leaks
- brake contaminates

### Side of Vehicle

- lenses & reflectors
- traffic monitoring devices
- battery
- fuel tank(s)/DEF tank
- frame(s)

### Rear of Vehicle

- lenses & reflectors



\* Automatic failure if not performed correctly

**READ MN CDL MANUAL SECTION 10M PAGES 189-200**

Department of Public Safety Driver and Vehicle Services - 445 Minnesota St., Saint Paul, MN 55101  
Phone: (651) 201-7626 TTY: (651) 282-6555 Fax: (651) 296-5316

Rev. 7.5 01.21.2026

## **INSIDE VEHICLE/Engine Start:**

**Safe Start:** **SHOW:** Before starting the truck, buckle-up. Pull on the parking + trailer brake valves and/or point to them. **EXPLAIN:** parking & trailer brakes are engaged. Turn the ignition key to the "on position," wait momentarily for the ABS, DEF and other warning lights to appear. **EXPLAIN:** All warning lights appear and are functioning. Next, **SHOW:** the transmission is in neutral and then start the truck.

*ii.* **THINK G A L E:** If air gauges read above 100 psi, (if need be) pump the brake to release air to 90-100 psi and "reset the governor."

## **AIR BRAKE CHECK:**

### **1. Governor Cutoff Check & Air Gauge**

**G.** Leave both the parking + trailer brakes pulled out, and inspect that the air gauge is working and builds the air pressure. Mention governor cutoff of approximately 120-140 psi, and **CALL OUT** the cutoff pressure of your vehicle. **EXPLAIN:** "Air gauges show air pressure and identify the gauge."

### **2. Air Loss check**

**A.** Apply pressure on the service brake pedal. Then release the parking and trailer brake. Let the needles stabilize at a minimum of 90 psi. Shut the truck off and turn the key to the ON position.

*i.* Note: Parking and trailer brake valves should be pushed in or "released."

**EXPLAIN:** "I should not lose more than 4 psi per minute." (Note: 3 psi for Class B).

*ii.* Wait the full minute while holding your foot on the service brake

**EXPLAIN:** "I did not lose more than 4 psi (Class A) or 3 psi (Class B)."

### **3. Low Air Alarm check:**

**L.** **EXPLAIN:** "The low air alarm should come on before 55 psi. I should be able to hear it and see it." Start to pump the service brake until the alarms come on. **CALL OUT** the psi of your vehicle and confirm again that you "see it and hear it."

### **4. Emergency Brake check:**

**E.** **EXPLAIN:** "Both brake valves should pop out and apply automatically between 45-20 psi." Start to pump the brakes until both valves apply, "pop out" and **CALL OUT** the psi of your vehicle.

Start the engine, put the truck in drive and try to pull against the brakes. **EXPLAIN:** "Emergency brakes hold." Put the truck in neutral and build air pressure to 100 psi which is within the safe operating range of 90-120 psi.

## **Parking & Trailer Brake Check**

### **Step 1.** Parking Brake:

Release (push in) the trailer brake (**red valve**) leaving the parking brake (**yellow valve**) is applied or pulled out. Put the truck in drive/gear. Gently pull against the parking brake, truck should not move; **EXPLAIN:** "Parking brake holds."

### **Step 2.** Trailer Brake & Trailer Connection

Release (push in) parking brake (**yellow valve**) and pull out the trailer brake (**red valve**). Gently apply the gas pedal or release the clutch to gently pull against the trailer. Then, **EXPLAIN:** "Trailer Brake holds the truck and the trailer. AND the trailer is securely coupled."

### **Service brake:**

**SHOW:** Release (push in) the parking and trailer brake valves, drive forward (roughly 5 MPH), and stop with the service brake/brake pedal. **EXPLAIN:** "The service brake stops the truck; also the brakes apply evenly without pulling to either side."

### **Lighting indicators:**

**EXPLAIN:** "ABS & DEF indicator lights are not (on), and there is no check engine warning light visible. **SHOW:** Turn on lights and check right / left turn signal indicators, and four-way flashers (hazards). Check the high beam indicator.

**EXPLAIN:** "dash lights work, I can read the gauges clearly."

### **Emergency Equip:**

**SHOW:** Spare fuses **EXPLAIN:** "none are missing," **SHOW & EXPLAIN:** "We have 3 red reflective DOT safety triangles that are not cracked or missing, ready to use in the box; **SHOW & EXPLAIN:** The fire extinguisher is fully charged, safety pin is in place and not missing. The Fire extinguisher is securely mounted."

**Windshield & Traffic Monitoring Devices (mirrors):** **EXPLAIN:** "Windshield is clean, clear, and not cracked. No illegal stickers and nothing blocking my view. The mirrors are clean, clear, and adjusted properly to me."

**Wipers & washers:** **SHOW:** Test the washer fluid first. **EXPLAIN:** "the washer fluid applies evenly, and the wiper blades work properly with no signs of streaks."

**Heater & defroster:** **SHOW:** Turn fan to high, turn selector to defroster/floor, and turn temperature to heat. **SHOW:** with your hand that the top and bottom fans both work. **EXPLAIN:** "Both fans and heat work properly."

**Horn:** **SHOW:** Toot the horn(s). **EXPLAIN:** "city horn works and air/freeway horn works" (if equipped). Note: One operating horn is required for testing.

**Lights Operation Check:** **TIP:** leave lights on and truck idling. **EXPLAIN:** "Now I will check all my lights." **SHOW:** Now exit the vehicle facing the truck, maintaining three points of contact, (close the door).

#### **All External Lights:**

**EXPLAIN/SHOW:** "Lights are on and working by pointing to each light."

1. **Low Beams and High Beams:** check front. **SHOW:** difference between (low vs high beams).
2. **Running Lights** (Clearance, marker & tail): check all sides of truck and trailer + top of cab.
3. **Right Turn Signal:** check front & back.
4. **Left Turn Signal:** check front & back.
5. **Hazard/Four Way Flashers:** check front & back.
6. **\*Brake Lights:** **Ask** the examiner to help you check the brake lights.

#### **Front of Vehicle/Engine Area**

**Lenses:** **EXPLAIN:** "The lenses are the proper color (amber or clear), clean, not cracked or missing and securely mounted."

#### **Fluid Levels**

1. **Oil Level:** **EXPLAIN:** "I would remove the yellow dipstick, while the engine is off. Level should be above the add mark, if below, point to where it should be added."
2. **Coolant Level:** **EXPLAIN:** "Coolant should be above the add line mark. If below the add line mark, point to where it should be added. Mention: I would check and add coolant while engine is off."
3. **Power Steering Fluid:** **EXPLAIN:** "I would check while the engine is running. Should be above the minimum/add mark. If below, point to where it should be added."
4. **Automatic Transmission Fluid:** Automatic transmissions only, **EXPLAIN:** "I would check the yellow dipstick (passenger side) - should be above add mark (while engine is running). If low, add fluid to the dip-tube where it was checked."

**Fluid & Air Leaks:** **EXPLAIN:** "Check under the vehicle for any puddles on the ground, also noticing any air leaking, and smells of burning fluid or rubber. Check all hoses to be properly clamped, and free of any abrasions, bulges, cracks or leaks. Check that all caps are not missing and securely mounted."

#### **Steering Axle:**

##### **Steering Systems:**

**Steering Box:** **EXPLAIN:** "Properly mounted and secure, no missing nuts/bolts, not cracked or leaking. Hoses are clamped securely, not leaking and showing no abrasions, bulges or cracks."

##### **Steering Linkage (3 parts):**

1. **EXPLAIN:** "Check for linkage cracked, bent or dented."
2. **EXPLAIN:** "All joints are connected securely, properly greased, and showing no loose or excessive play."
3. **EXPLAIN:** "Check for any loose or missing nuts/bolts, and no missing cotter pins in the castle nuts."

##### **Tires: (3 steps)**

###### **EXPLAIN:**

1. **TREAD:** "The tire is evenly worn. I would verify tread depth with a tread depth gauge; tread depth is at least 4/32 of an inch, and the tire is a virgin tread, not recapped."
2. **CONDITION:** "The tire is properly mounted, free of any abrasions, bulges, cracks or leaking air."
3. **INFLATION:** "The tire is properly inflated to the tire specification, and checked through the valve stem with an air pressure gauge. The cap is not missing and the tire and dust cap are securely mounted."

**Rims:** **EXPLAIN:** "No damaged, cracked or bent rims. No welding or repairs. The bolt holes behind the lug nuts are not elongated. The rim is securely mounted."

**Lug Nuts & Studs:** **EXPLAIN:** "The lug nuts and studs are all present, not cracked or bent. No gap or space between the lug nuts and the rim, and the studs have no shiny threads all are securely mounted."

### **Springs/Mounts/Airbag & Shocks:**

**Springs:** **EXPLAIN:** "The metal is not cracked, bent, rusted through, sagging or loose. Springs are not shifting or scissoring, and securely mounted."

**Mounts:** **EXPLAIN:** "Inspect the Spring mounts + U-Bolts metal not damaged, twisted or sagging with no gaps, spaces or missing nuts & bolts. Bushings are not torn or missing and are securely mounted."

**Shocks:** **EXPLAIN:** "Shocks are not cracked, bent, rusted through, straight or loose and not leaking. Bushings are not torn or missing with no missing nuts and bolts, securely mounted." **EXPLAIN:** I'd also step back to ensure truck is level with the ground.

**Brake hoses/Lines/Leaks:** **EXPLAIN:** "The air hoses are not leaking. They are not cracked worn or frayed. All couplings and fittings are secure. The ABS line shows no corroded, exposed or loose wires. Plugged in/fittings are secure."

**Brake contaminates:** **EXPLAIN:** "No grease or oil on the brake drum lining (or pad) that can affect braking capabilities.

**Automatic Transmission ONLY -** **EXPLAIN:** "must look through inspection holes."  
**(Remember to latch the hood.)**

### **SIDE OF VEHICLE/TRAILER:**

**Lenses & Reflectors** **EXPLAIN:** "Inspect that light lenses or covers are the proper color, clean, not cracked or missing, securely mounted."

**Traffic Monitoring Devices: (Mirrors)** **EXPLAIN:** "The mirrors are clean and not cracked. The mirror brackets are not bent (from damage). They are securely mounted. No missing parts."

**Battery:** **EXPLAIN:** "Batteries are secure. All connections are tight. No (excessive) corrosion. The electric cables and lines are secure and not cracked. or worn. The battery box and cover are secure.

The **1. batteries, 2. battery box, and 3. battery box cover** are securely mounted within the box and on the truck."

**Fuel tank(s)/DEF tanks:** **EXPLAIN:** "Fuel tank is secured with at least two metal straps and show no signs of the straps being twisted, loose or rusted through. The rubber bushings are not missing, and metal is not rubbing on metal. The fuel cap seal is in place, not worn through, missing or leaking. Search for leaks at the top and below the fuel tank, as well as at the cap. Inspect the tank is securely mounted."

**Frame(s):** **POINT & EXPLAIN:** "No cracks, breaks or broken welds, holes or other damage to the frame and cross members. No cracks, breaks or holes in the cargo area floor or loose or missing cross-support members on the trailer."

### **Combination Vehicles (ONLY)**

**(TRACTOR) Air and Electric Connectors/Lines:** **EXPLAIN:** "Electrical cord is plugged in and secured w/spring loaded safety latch. Air and electrical connections are properly seated, fully sealed, and locked in place. Hoses and lines are free of cuts, cracks, frays, or excessive wear. No air leaks present. Electrical & Air Lines are properly routed—not pinched, not rubbing, and not dragging on any vehicle components and are securely mounted."

**(SEMI TRAILER) Air and Electric Connectors/Lines:** **EXPLAIN:** "Electric cord is firmly plugged in and secured. The wires are not cut, corroded, exposed or loose and not dragging below the trailer frame. Securely mounted."

### **Fifth Wheel Skid Plate**

**1. Fifth Wheel:** **EXPLAIN:** "The fifth wheel is securely mounted to the vehicle by the platform. No cracks, breaks or excessive wear. It is properly greased with a poly plate"

**2. Platform:** **EXPLAIN:** "Platform is securely mounted to the frame, not cracked, bent, or rusted through. Inspect nuts and bolts are not missing and securely mounted to the frame of the truck."

### **King Pin & Apron & Gap**

**1. Kingpin:** **EXPLAIN:** "Locked in locking jaws, not cracked or bent. Head is visible under the locking jaws."

**2. Apron:** **EXPLAIN:** "Not cracked or bent, and secured to the trailer frame. No missing or broken welds."

**3. Gap:** **EXPLAIN:** "No sizable gap between the apron and 5th wheel and there should not be any gaps or sizable daylight between the bottom of the apron and the 5th Wheel Skid Plate, except for the gaps/space created by the poly plate. Explain if there was a gap, it would indicate the kingpin is not properly coupled."

## Combination Vehicle Only: (Continued)

### LOCKING & SAFETY DEVICES:

1. **Locking Jaws:** **EXPLAIN:** "Locking jaw is around the "shank" and not the "head" of the kingpin, latched securely and visible. Inspect that it is properly greased, not bent or cracked, and securely mounted."
2. **Release Arm:** **EXPLAIN:** "Properly seated in the drive position and is not bent. Inspect for cracks and that it has the proper spring tension."

### TRAILER ONLY:

**Landing Gear & Clearance:** **EXPLAIN:** "The landing gear is positioned properly so it will clear the road and the rear of the truck (fifth wheel) during turns. No missing welds, and brackets are not cracked, bent or rusted through. No loose or missing bolts, landing foot and handle is stowed in drive position. Securely mounted and strong enough to support cargo."

**Reflective Tape:** **EXPLAIN:** "Reflective tape is DOT approved, and reflective tape on the sides and rear of the trailer are present and securely mounted to the vehicle."

### Rear of Trailer:

**Lenses & Reflectors:** **EXPLAIN:** "Lense covers on the rear of the trailer are the proper color (rear=red), they are clean, clear, not cracked or missing and securely mounted. Reflective tape on the trailer is DOT approved, clean, clear, visible, not missing and securely mounted."

### HELPFUL ACRONYMS:

CBD = (Metal) No Cracks, Bends, Dented

ABC = (Hoses & Tires) No Abrasions, Bulges, Cracks/Cuts

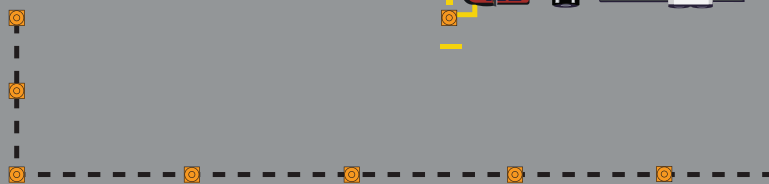
CDL = (Fuel & Def Tank, Fuel lines, Containers, Reservoirs, etc.) No Cracks/Cuts, Dents, Leaks/Loose

CEL = (Wires & Electrical Connectors) No Corroded, Exposed or Loose wires

CCC = (Glass, Mirrors, Lenses) Clean, Clear, not Cracked

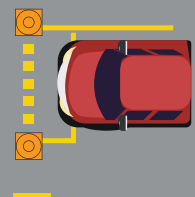
## BASIC CONTROL SKILLS (Test 2)

### 1. FORWARD STOP

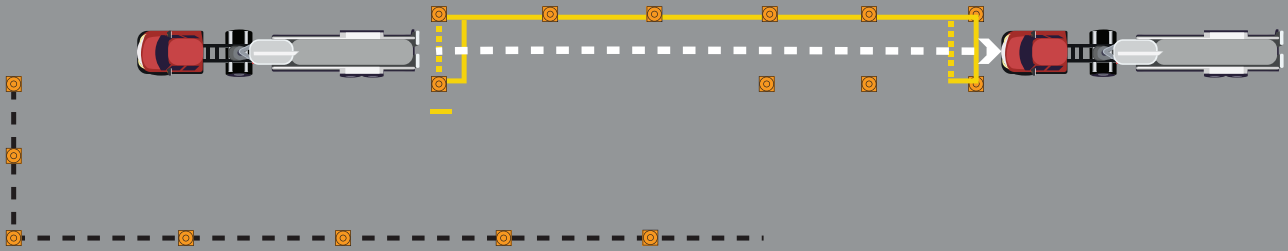


You will demonstrate your ability to judge the front of your vehicle during a controlled stop. Drive forward through the alley and stop with the front most part of the vehicle (other than unique vehicle parts higher than the door mirrors, such as a bucket truck) within the box at the end of the alley without going past it. You may stop only once.

No get out and looks, park the truck and sound the horn when you've completed the exercise.



## 2. STRAIGHT-LINE BACKING

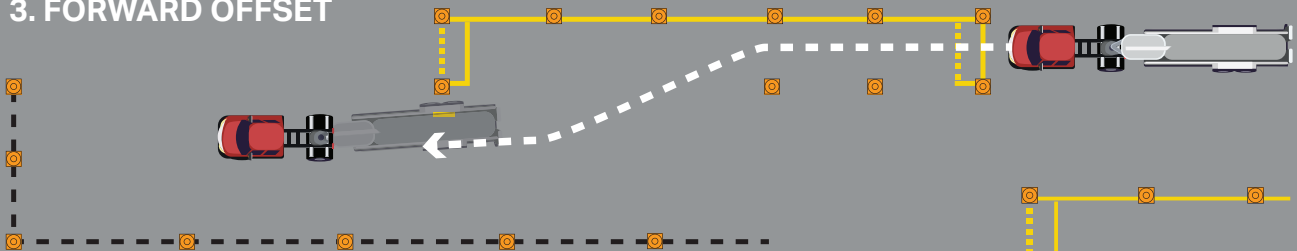


You will demonstrate your ability to back a vehicle in a straight line. From your stopped position from the previous exercise, the examiner will ask you to pull forward and stop when they raise their hand.

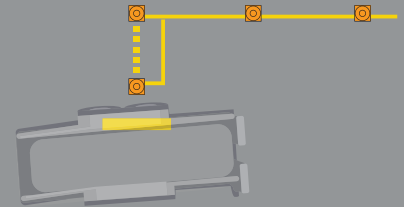
Then back straight through the alley until the front of your vehicle has cleared the last set of cones at the far end of the alley.

1 free pull-up and 1 get out and look are allowed

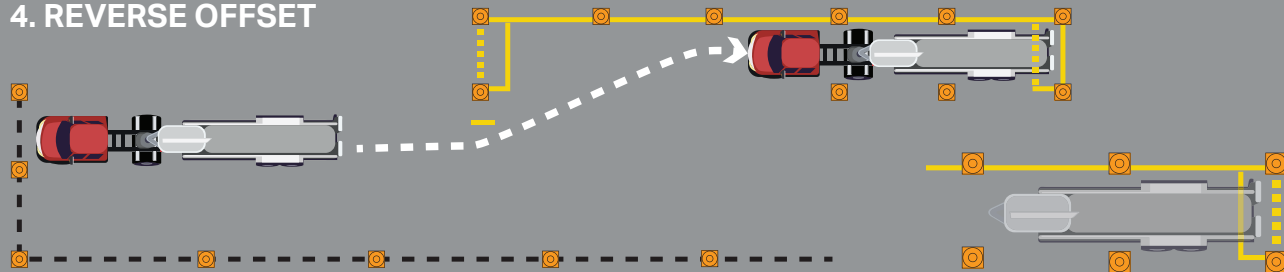
## 3. FORWARD OFFSET



You will demonstrate your ability to maneuver a vehicle around other objects while moving forward. You will drive forward and steer to the left through the opening into the opposite lane, keeping the right most rear tire between the cone and the line.



## 4. REVERSE OFFSET



You will demonstrate your ability to offset back and park a vehicle at the end of an alley. Starting parallel with the outer boundary, offset back into the alley, bringing the rear most part of your vehicle within three (3) feet of the rear of the alley. Stop with the rear most part of the vehicle in the three (3) foot box at the end of the alley. Your examiner will point out the rear most part of your vehicle when giving instructions for this exercise. Your vehicle must be straight within the alley when completed. Your vehicle must be completely within the defined exercise boundaries when completed. You may not go beyond the outer boundary line.

2 Free pull-ups and 2 get out and looks are allowed during this exercise

## **MENTALLY PREPARE FOR YOUR ROAD TEST**

**Proper Turns:** During turns, remember to stay straight and turn late. **Remember these steps:** 1. The closer you are to the right-hand curb the further straight you have to travel forward to avoid hitting the curb. 2. be aware of the left and right-hand sides of your vehicle/s while making turns. 3. Allowing too much space between you and the curb will also create space for drivers to attempt to pass. 4. Close this gap while completing turns.

**Right turns:** The truck and trailer tires should be 4-5 feet from the curb, when you start the turn. Always return to the curb about 4-5 feet to complete the turn. It's okay to enter into the opposing lane of traffic as long as it's safe to do so. It's also okay to cross over the center of road. Watch your rear wheel / rear trailer wheels in the passenger side mirror, wait for the rear wheel of the trailer or axle wheel (class B) to enter into the "round portion," of the curb and then come back to the curb on your right. DO NOT hit a curb with the drive tires (if Class B) and trailer tires (if Class A) on any right turn.

**Left turns:** The truck and trailer must remain in the left most lane, tires must go around the center line and/or painted yellow center lines. Always finish the turn in the same lane you started from. DO NOT let the trailer or class B vehicle rears tires cut or cross the yellow the center line/s on a left turn.

**Double turns:** As a CDL driver you need to turn from the outside lane whenever 2 turn lanes are available. Thus, leaving the inside lane for other traffic. Remember to always return to the same lane you started from i.e. the outside lane.

**Proper Stops:** Come to a complete stop, behind the stop sign 2-3 feet, cross-walks and stop bars. You should be able to see the bottom edge of the road marking. Remember to stop, look in both directions and then move when it is safe to do so. You do not want to stop or slow other drivers down while you proceed through the intersection and/or to complete any turns.

**Proper Observation:** Be alert and aware of all sides of your commercial vehicle and trailer. Keep your head moving during the road test, you can never look too-much. Every 12 seconds, show the examiner that you're looking near, far and side to side.

**Proper Hill Park:** Always signal to the curb. The truck and trailer, "if equipped with a trailer," must be parallel to the curb and also 1 foot or less from the curb. Try not to rub the curb with either the truck or trailer tires. When parking uphill, move the tires to the Left or away from the curb. Whenever parking down hill, move the tires right or into the curb.

**Proper Highway Driving:** Remember to signal early, often and continuously when entering the highway/freeway. Proper lane changes require you signal early, look, and then move into the lane when it is safe to do so. CDL drivers should allow a cushion of space around their vehicle/s. Always have an out or escape plan. Do not follow too close and provide a minimum of 150 feet in the front of the truck. Observe all speed limits, do not speed.

## **REMINDERS & HELPFUL TIPS**

1. You're not actually checking fluid levels, landing gear pins, glad-hands, gas cap & seals, removing oil and automatic transmission fluid dip sticks, coupling and uncoupling of trailer, crawling under the trailer, pulling release arm so as to unlock the locking jaw of the trailer. But rather mention this is what **"I WOULD DO."**

2. **Make sure you point at the part** and give a detailed description/explanation about every item listed! **Mention 3-4 things** about it, Check it off and move on. **BE detailed**, try to give a **3 - 4 point description** about nearly every item listed.

**Examples"**

- "not cracked, bent, dented or loose"
- "no missing bolts; mounted securely"
- "not bent, twisted, or warped; not rusted through"
- "not leaking" etc.

**Follow the list**, and **Be mindful** of what you are saying.

**REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT TIMED!**

3. **Study your Pre-Trip.** You need to practice, rehearse and study the Pre-Trip on your own to establish knowledge, confidence and passable results.
4. **Arrive** at the Driver's Exam Station at least **30 minutes**, before your scheduled road test. Please dress and be prepared for the inclement weather, cold, rain, snow and ice.

**Check in** at the Outside Dispatch Window. **DO NOT check in at the front door.**  
Instead walk around the DMV building to the dispatch window. **Wait in or by your CDL Test Truck.**

**IF YOU DO NOT SEE YOUR TRUCK, CALL 612-723-4398 ASAP!**

**CLASS A LEASING**

**MINNESOTA TRUCK & TRAILER SCHOOL**

**612-723-4398**

**ELDT & CDL TRAINING  
TRUCK RENTALS**

**Class A Leasing  
Office**

8899 Hastings St. NE  
Blaine, MN 55

**Arden Hills  
Exam Station**

5400 Old Highway 8  
Arden Hills, MN 55112

**Plymouth  
Exam Station**

2455 Fernbrook Lane N  
Plymouth, MN 55442

**Eagan  
Exam Station**

2070 Cliff Rd,  
Eagan, MN 55122

**Buffalo  
Exam Station**

1006 Commercial Dr, Buffalo,  
MN 55313

**Contacts: Main Line (612)723-4398**

**Eric / Owner (612)618-1812 | Sabrina (763)344-3113 | Alex (651) 802-4452**

**CDL Appointments for  
Arden Hills, Plymouth, Eagan & Buffalo DMV: 651-297-5029**