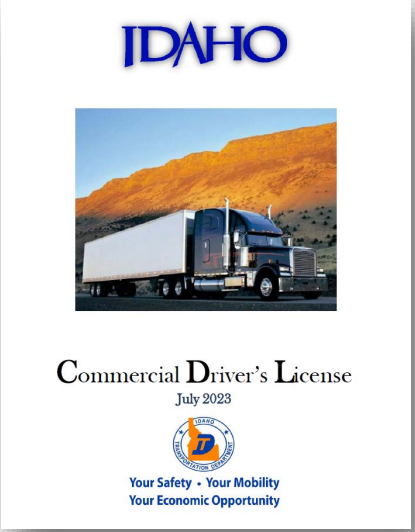
TEN EASY STEPS TO A C.D.L. (July 2023 revision)

(For Self-Study CDL applicants with some experience in truck/bus operation)

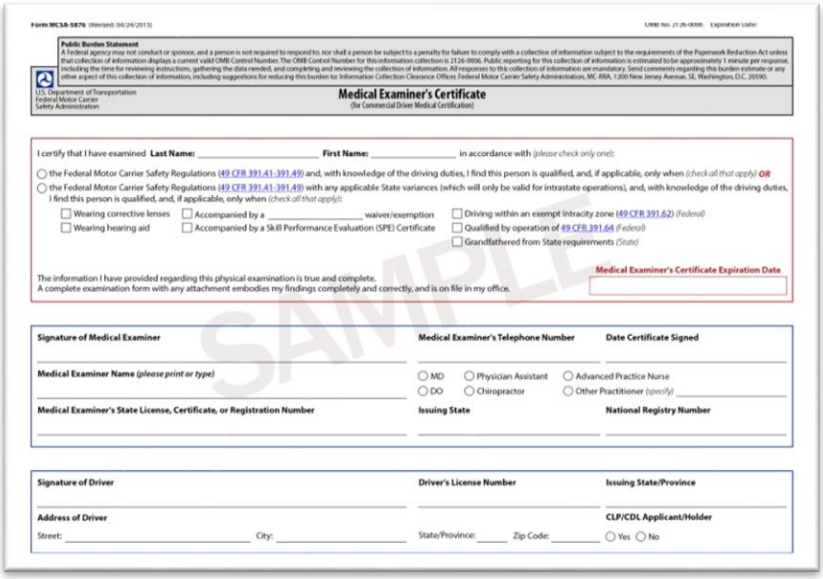
1. OBTAIN A CDL MANUAL Locate the latest version online of the Idaho CDL manual through the Idaho Transportation: https://itd.idaho.gov//wp-content/uploads/2016/06/cdl_manual.pdf

   You can download the PDF file to your phone, computer, or tablet, or obtain a paper manual. Earlier versions of the manual are fine for general study, but be sure to review the first chapter in the latest version of the manual to keep up with FMCSA required changes.



2. REVIEW MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS/ OBTAIN DOT MEDICAL: Read the applicable pages in Chapter One of the CDL manual to see if you are required to have a medical examiner's certificate for the driving you intend to do. MOST commercial driving activities require a medical certificate. The following link will take you to a list of commodities and whether they are exempt (no medical card needed for INTRASTATE hauling) or regulated (medical card required for all commercial hauling purposes): https://isp.idaho.gov/cvs/commodities/

   A Department of Transportation (DOT) physical examination is conducted by a licensed medical provider and may be valid for up to 24 months. The examiner may also issue a medical examiner's certificate for *less* than 24 months when it is desirable to monitor a medical condition. The provider must be listed on the "National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners". A list of National Registry certified providers in your area can be found here: https://nationalregistry.fmcsa.dot.gov/home


Form MCSA-5876 (Revised: 04/24/2013) OMB No. 2126-0006 Expiration Date:

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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Motor Carrier
Safety Administration

Medical Examiner's Certificate
(for Commercial Driver Medical Certification)

I certify that I have examined **Last Name:** _____ **First Name:** _____ in accordance with *(please check only one)*:

○ the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (49 CFR 391.41-391.49) and, with knowledge of the driving duties, I find this person is qualified, and, if applicable, only when *(check all that apply)* **OR**

○ the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (49 CFR 391.41-391.49) with any applicable State variances (which will only be valid for intrastate operations), and, with knowledge of the driving duties, I find this person is qualified, and, if applicable, only when *(check all that apply)*:

☐ Wearing corrective lenses ☐ Accompanied by a _____ waiver/exemption ☐ Driving within an exempt intracity zone (49 CFR 391.62) *(Federal)*
☐ Wearing hearing aid ☐ Accompanied by a Skill Performance Evaluation (SPE) Certificate ☐ Qualified by operation of 49 CFR 391.64 *(Federal)*
☐ Grandfathered from State requirements *(State)*

The information I have provided regarding this physical examination is true and complete.
A complete examination form with any attachement embodies my findings completely and correctly, and is on file in my office.

Medical Examiner's Certificate Expiration Date

SAMPLE

Signature of Medical Examiner | **Medical Examiner's Telephone Number** | **Date Certificate Signed**

Medical Examiner Name *(please print or type)*
○ MD ○ Physician Assistant ○ Advanced Practice Nurse
○ DO ○ Chiropractor ○ Other Practitioner *(specify)* _____

Medical Examiner's State License, Certificate, or Registration Number | **Issuing State** | **National Registry Number**

Signature of Driver | **Driver's License Number** | **Issuing State/Province**

Address of Driver
Street: _____ City: _____ State/Province: _____ Zip Code: _____

CLP/CDL Applicant/Holder
○ Yes ○ No

3. STUDY THE REQUIRED PORTIONS OF THE CDL MANUAL: Near the front of the CDL manual is a chart that will tell you what chapters to study for the Commercial License and related endorsement(s) you desire. Your particular equipment combination will dictate what you need to study and test for. If you have a vehicle with air brakes, you'll need that test. For a class A CDL, you must take the Combination Vehicles test. The General Knowledge test is required of all new CDL applicants. Details on testing are below.

4. GO TO A COUNTY SHERIFF'S DRIVER'S LICENSING OFFICE:

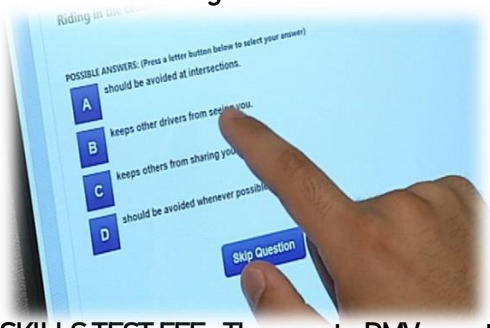
- START THE CDL PROCESS: Tell the Examiner you are there to begin the process of obtaining a CDL. They will have you complete an application for a CDL, and will help you declare a driving category—a federal rule to determine whether you plan to drive only in Idaho or interstate, and whether you are medical card required ("non-excepted") or not required ("excepted").

- BRING YOUR MEDICAL CERTIFICATE: If you are required to have a medical certificate, obtain it as soon as possible and take it with you to the DMV. They will scan a copy of your medical certificate card to be incorporated into your driving record. All commercial drivers who are "non-excepted" must submit a medical certificate to your county DMV or ITD when obtained and upon each renewal.
  - If you are for some reason ineligible to obtain a DOT Medical, you CANNOT drive a commercial vehicle in interstate commerce, unless you plan to work for a government agency or other excepted interstate category. This website contains more information about CDL medical requirements: http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/topics/medical/medical.htm

- BRING YOUR BIRTH CERTIFICATE, US PASSPORT, or OTHER PROOF OF PERMANENT LEGAL PRESENCE IN THE UNITED STATES. Federal rules require all applicants for a Commercial Learner's Permit or CDL to present proof of legal presence in the United States to the DMV to be entered on the driver's record. This will only need to be done one time.

- PROVIDE PROOF OF IDAHO RESIDENCY. Federal regulations require all applicants for a Commercial Learner's Permit or CDL to provide proof of Idaho residency. Proof of Idaho residency can be a utility bill, official government tax document, mortgage/lease/rental agreement, etc. Documentation must be dated within 1 calendar year and include the physical residence address and your full name.

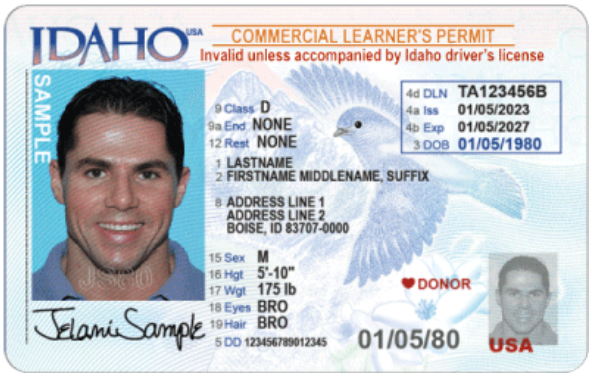
- TAKE THE REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE TESTS: When you are ready, take your written knowledge tests. The written tests are $5.00 each. Some county DMV offices have limitations on times they do testing, or require appointments to test. Call your DMV to see what their testing hours are.



You should take and pass the General Knowledge test before attempting to take other tests. While it is permissible to do so, most applicants should not attempt to take multiple tests on the same day. Test results remain valid for one year from the date they were passed- if you don't obtain your CDL in that year you must re-take all the written tests. *If you fail a test, you can re-test in three days (and pay another five dollars).*

- SKILLS TEST FEE: The county DMV agent will collect a skills test fee of $10 from you. All knowledge tests required for the license you are seeking must be passed before the skills test can be administered. The skills test fee is the county portion of your road test. The CDL Examiner will charge a separate fee for the test payable directly to the Examiner at the time of testing.

- OBTAIN A COMMERCIAL LEARNER'S PERMIT: You must obtain a Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) to obtain or upgrade a commercial license. The permit costs $29 and is valid for one year. It allows you to drive a truck or bus on public streets to practice driving a commercial vehicle. You must have a licensed CDL driver rated to drive the equipment you are practicing in riding with you at all times when on public streets. The licensed driver must be sitting in the right seat (trucks) or in the row behind the driver (busses) with you when you are practicing on public streets. Federal Rules require you hold a CLP for at least 14 days before you can take a skills test.



5. COMPLETE ENTRY LEVEL DRIVER TRAINING: As of February 7, 2022, CDL Applicants must comply with Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) regulations. These rules require that all entry-level drivers of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) receive training from a provider listed on FMCSA's Training Provider Registry. To be eligible to take required skills tests, commercial driver's license (CDL) applicants must have completed applicable entry-level driver training from a registered training provider. LEARN MORE at: http://tpr.fmcsa.dot.gov or scan the code using the camera on your smartphone.

6. PRACTICE THE VEHICLE INSPECTION: During the 14 day waiting period, practice and prepare for your test. The pre-trip vehicle inspection must be done on any commercial vehicle you test in, regardless of size or type. Most applicants who fail the skills test do so by not preparing well enough for the pre-trip inspection. Do the following before attempting to take your skills test:

- STUDY CHAPTER 11 THOROUGHLY: If a component is on your vehicle and in Chapter 11, you need to memorize it for the test. There are plenty of components you are required to memorize, so concentrate on those items. It is imperative that you know how to do the brake test on the vehicle you will be testing in. Doing the brake check improperly will result in failing the test. You will have 45 minutes to complete your pre-trip inspection on test day.

- WATCH THE VIDEO(s): The videos listed below are extremely helpful to prepare you to take the test. These short productions will help show you HOW TO DO THE VEHICLE INSPECTION; that is, what the examiner expects you to describe to him or her as you are inspecting your vehicle. This will give you a much better idea of how to conduct your inspection on test day. *Note: Watching videos alone will not thoroughly prepare you to take the skills test. Use the videos as a helpful guide to show you how to tell the inspector what you are looking for, in addition to studying all required inspection components listed in Chapter 11.*

- TRUCK INSPECTION VIDEO: Produced by Steven Lloyd, an Idaho CDL Examiner in Meridian. Steve's video can be found at: https://www.cdlidaho.com/ -- Click on the "video" link at the top of the page. It also shows the backing exercises; it's a very useful video.

- TRUCK INSPECTION VIDEO: Produced by Harry Packwood, an Idaho CDL Examiner in Boise. Also a very good study resource. It can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PScgfTEchOE

- SCHOOL BUS VIDEO: There are several helpful videos on how to inspect school busses on YouTube. Here is one that covers the vehicle inspection in a concise, efficient manner. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOkJqDoCzak8

Note: *These are public-source YouTube videos that have been reviewed by staff at the Idaho Transportation Department and are recommended. There is no cost to watch these videos. ITD does not guarantee that this content will remain available.*

7. PRACTICE THE BACKING MANEUVERS DESCRIBED IN CHAPTER 12: Refer to the diagrams and measurements shown in Chapter 12, and set up a practice course in a suitable area if possible.

- The "Straight line back" and "Offset Back" maneuvers are required of all applicants.
- The Examiner will select either the alley dock or parallel park maneuver on test day, so you should practice both of those maneuvers.
- Time Limits on the tests are designed to allow sufficient time for beginning drivers (who have practiced) to complete the maneuvers without penalty. Unprepared applicants who go over the time limit will have points added to their score, and may not pass the exercise.
- Use "looks", pull ups, and reference markers as described in the manual if you need them during the test. Just like in the "real world", pulling up your vehicle or getting out to check your position during backing is less costly than running into something!
- Excessive pull-ups are deducted from your score, but the deduction for pulling up is less than that of crossing a boundary line or cone and causing an encroachment.

8. PREPARE FOR THE ROAD TEST: For the road test, review Chapter 13 in the CDL manual.

- Make sure you know how to conduct a proper "Stop/Start" exercise, as described in the manual;
- Know where to stop at intersections.
- If taking a school bus test, you will need to study the student discharge requirements in Chapter 10.

Road Test preparation, continued....

- Make sure you move your head as you check your mirrors, pass through intersections, etc. so the examiner can see that you are checking for traffic and hazards.
- Maintain frequent checks in your mirrors.
- Keep both hands on the wheel unless you are shifting.
- Know how your vehicle off-tracks. Running over curbs or other objects will result in failing the test.
- Know how to shift the vehicle you are driving. Practice until you can shift smoothly.
- Obey all traffic laws and travel at the speed limit unless weather or traffic requires an adjustment.
- Pay attention to highway signs that a commercial driver should observe. You will be tested on them!

9. SCHEDULE & TAKE THE SKILLS TEST: Contact one of the CDL Skills Test Examiners in your area to make an appointment for your test. The test normally takes about two hours. Most Idaho CDL examiners have full time jobs and do tests as a part time service to the state, so you may have to work around their schedule. The Skills Test fee is set by each examiner; the fee is not to exceed $190 per test per Idaho Code. Most examiners take cash only, but some accept other payment methods. Refer to the CDL Examiner list for examiners, availability of rental vehicles, etc. Here is the link: https://itd.idaho.gov/itddmv/?target=drivers-license-id-cards#cdl

IMPORTANT NOTES:

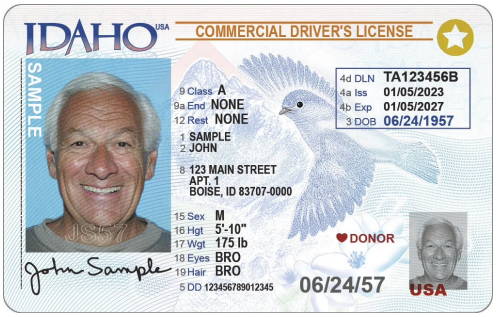
- FMCSA rules require that you hold your Commercial Learner's Permit for 14 days minimum before testing, even if you have a CDL and are just upgrading your license
- You MUST contact the examiner well in advance- Examiners are required to notify ITD a minimum of 48 hours before any CDL test
- BRING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT TO THE TEST! MANY VEHICLES WILL RESULT IN A RESTRICTED LICENSE:

  - "E" RESTRICTION: Testing in a truck or bus with an automatic transmission will result in a restriction being placed on your CDL that you can ONLY drive commercial vehicles with automatic transmissions.
  - "O" RESTRICTION: Testing in a Class A combination that is NOT a TRACTOR-TRAILER with a fifth wheel hitch will result in a restriction being placed on your CDL that you can only drive Class A vehicles that are not Tractor Trailers. This restriction includes most log trucks and other big trucks with pintle hitches!
  - "L" RESTRICTION: Testing in a vehicle that does not have air brakes will result in this restriction.

- Have a CDL licensed driver go with you to the test site unless you can legally drive your commercial vehicle there under a farm or other exemption.
- Don't forget your: Driver's license, commercial learner's permit, registration, and proof of insurance.
- Make sure your vehicle's lights and equipment are working properly, or you cannot take the test in that vehicle. Our examiners appreciate it if the interior of your truck or bus is reasonably clean on test day.

10. OBTAIN & ADD TO YOUR CDL: Once you pass the skills test, the examiner will transmit your test results to ITD for processing.

- You MUST return to the county DMV to have your new Commercial License issued.
- The cost is $40 and it's good for 4 years.
- Once you have your "base" CDL, you can later add endorsements as needed.
- Some endorsements (or removal of restrictions) will require additional skills tests.



TYPICAL C.D.L. ACQUISITION COSTS			
ITEM	**COST**	**NOTES**	**AVERAGE TOTAL**
WRITTEN TESTS	**$ 5 EACH**	***$15-20 depending on endorsements desired***	**$15**
SKILLS TEST	**$ Varies**	***Typically $ 120-150 to examiner, $10 to county, up to $200 or more for rental truck if needed***	**$140 if using your own vehicle**
COMMERCIAL LEARNER'S PERMIT	**$ 29**	***Required for all CDL tests and upgrades, and to practice on roadway prior to testing***	**$29**
LICENSING	**VARIES**	***$15 to add an endorsement after original issue; $25 to upgrade a license; $40 for 4 year CDL***	**$40 TYPICALLY**
MEDICAL EXAM	**IF REQUIRED**	***$60-150- costs vary widely; every two years or more frequently if needed***	**$125**
HAZMAT ENDORSEMENT	**IF REQUIRED**	***$86.50 for the Hazmat Threat Assessment every four years + $5 written test every 4 years***	**$92**
We hope you have found this information useful. For any questions email to CDLHelpdesk@itd.idaho.gov			