

Choosing a Driver Training School in Ontario

Part of becoming a professional transport driver involves learning and developing the necessary skills to operate the vehicle itself. However, there is more to being a driver than driving the truck. There are many other skills and knowledge elements that you have to have to have a successful career as a professional driver. It is the combination of all these skills that is the determining factor in finding a job. And while some schools offer the requisite training to obtain the appropriate classified license, the license itself is not a job guarantee.

Driver Training: A Critical First Step in Becoming a Professional Driver

There are many schools in Ontario that offer driver training. The school that you choose is probably the most important decision that you will make as you embark on your driving career. Schools in Ontario can be registered under the Private Career Colleges Act, which means that they are able to provide training that will prepare a student for a particular "vocation", one of which is a professional commercial driver. For a list of registered schools, see the [Private Career Colleges](#) on the Internet.

By contrast, there are many schools that are not registered, and as such, cannot offer vocationally based training. These types of schools typically prepare their students to get their commercial drivers' licenses, but do not necessarily prepare them for a driving job. If you want to drive as a career, you are advised to invest in a vocationally-based training program. For these reasons, it is best not to compare schools on cost alone, since the content, structure, and long-term prospects may vary significantly between training institutions. As the adage goes, *you only get what you pay for*.

Students enrolled in professional driver training programs may be eligible for funding through various funding programs or agencies such as the [Skills Development Program](#) administered by [Human Resources Development Canada](#). Individuals who qualify for funding under this program should contact their local [Ontario Human Resources Centre](#). A reputable and credible driver training school will be able to assist you with the appropriate sources of funding.

There are three organizations which accredit schools who are obligated to meet a minimum standard of training. These organizations are the [Professional Truck Driver Institute Inc. \(PTDI\)](#), a widely recognized North American standard, the [Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council \(CTHRC\)](#) who has developed the *Earning Your Wheels* curriculum, and the [Truck Training Schools Association of Ontario \(TTSAO\)](#) who has a list of members that meet minimum standards set by the TTSAO. All three organizations have equally valid standards.

Ask the Right Questions

Regardless of whether you choose an accredited school or not, it is important that you ask a lot of questions when investigating a driving school. For example (you may think of more):

- Is the school registered and bonded in accordance with the Private Career Colleges Act?
- Does the school provide a written curriculum, complete with the topics that will be covered, how much time is spent on each, as well as time spent in practical training?
- How much time is spent in a classroom?
- What is the student to instructor ratio?
- How much time is spent in a vehicle? How much of that is with YOU behind the wheel (as opposed to observing others learn)?
- How many students in a vehicle at one time?

- Is all the practical training done using tandem-axle tractors and full-size trailers?
- Does the practical training incorporate more than one transmission gear pattern? (it is recommended that training be provided on at least two shift patterns – 9 or 10 speed and 13 speed)
- Does the school have a written and oral interview acceptance program?
- Does the school have any agreements or arrangements with local carriers for employment opportunities for graduates?
- What is the school's placement success rate? Is it able to provide verifiable placement statistics?
- Can the school help you secure government training funds?
- Is the school willing to be inspected by funding agencies?
- Will the school make the arrangements for your road test to get your license?
- What kind of remedial assistance will you be offered if you are unable to obtain your license on your first attempt? Is the cost included in the up-front price?
- How long has the school been in business? Ask for references -- both previous students and employers that have used the school.
- What are the qualifications of the instructors? What credentials do they hold? Do they have formal training in adult education/training?

The cost of training can vary significantly between schools and training programs. If the price is too good to be true, it probably is. A well-researched comparison between schools and programs is your best bet to ensure that you get quality training and access to job opportunities that a commercial driver's license on its own will not necessarily guarantee.

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