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## Completed Commercial Driver Training, Got your Class 1: Now What?

New truck drivers with entry-level skills but not that much on-road experience driving a commercial vehicle for a trucking company may be told they need more time behind the wheel – someone else’s wheel – before an employer will hire them.

It can be a challenge to get a first job in the industry, especially for work driving tractor-trailers and combinations. Employers are reluctant to trust inexperienced drivers with their equipment and loads, and smaller companies don’t have the resources to provide mentors to new drivers. Having said that, hunting for work in this sector is like hunting for work in any industry; you need to do more than just answer job ads. Here are some strategies to try.

1. Some larger companies have additional in-house “finishing” programs for drivers, including additional training and mentoring from veteran drivers. Research companies in your area to find out what they offer and contact them for details.
2. Does your training school work with trucking companies to help place program graduates? Some companies have lists of “approved” schools they’ll work with when hiring entry-level drivers.
3. Review the [National Occupational Standard \(NOS\) for Commercial Vehicle Operator \(Truck Driver\)](#) . Do you have any of the “supportive competencies” listed in the NOS for truck drivers, such as working with calculators, computers, or GPS units? These are transferrable skills and should be on your resume. Make sure employers know you have them too.
4. Rather than applying for advertised jobs, contact companies you’d like to work for to see if they’ll grant you an information interview about driving jobs and what they look for in drivers. Short information interviews get you out there and talking to people and may provide some insights to act upon. They’re also good practice for job interviews. Try to talk to the driver or safety supervisor or the HR manager. Take a copy of your resume.
5. The problem with lack of experience can sometimes be helped by working your way up, so, if you’re aiming for long haul, consider driving a straight truck on a temporary basis, doing local pick-up & delivery.
6. Get creative to show what you can do. Can you get a job temporarily moving trailers as a yard/shunt driver? (The ability to back trailers safely and efficiently is extremely valuable.) Talk to experienced drivers at a truck stop to find out who’s hiring. Go door to door in industrial areas

where trucking companies and supply warehouses are located with your resume and ask about jobs. Companies can say “no,” but you are gaining networking skills at the same time.

7. Online forums for truck drivers may provide advice and insights from experienced drivers. They may not get you a job, but they provide support for the process, which is important for the next strategy in this list...
8. Keep a positive attitude. The big thing to remember is that everyone starting off is in a similar boat – it’s not personal. So the more you can do to make connections and show your desire to work, the better it is. Practice professionalism in all things, from cold calls to providing a detailed resume to dressing appropriately for an interview – whether for a job or information. One of the important skills a truck driver needs is the ability to work well with customers, representing the company. Employers will notice if you look and act the part.