

INTERVIEW GUIDE

3-Step Interview Guide for Commercial Trucking

A practical framework for interviewing CDL drivers and fleet-support candidates — technical fit, motivational fit, and culture fit, with real questions for each.

One framework, ten roles, and a scorecard you can actually compare across candidates.

This guide gives you a consistent 3-step interview framework — technical fit, motivational fit, culture fit — plus role-specific questions for the ten positions commercial fleets recruit for most. Use the general framework for every candidate, then pull the questions for their specific role from the reference section.

Score each step 1-5 as you go. A candidate who's strong on technical fit but weak on culture fit is a different hiring decision than one who's the reverse — the scorecard makes that visible instead of relying on a gut "good interview" feeling.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Verify four things before the candidate ever sits down.

For any driver candidate, confirm before the interview: an active CDL in the correct class for the equipment being run, a clean or acceptable Motor Vehicle Record, current DOT physical/medical certification, and clearance through the FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse. Any gap in those four disqualifies a driver from most commercial insurance policies — no amount of interview performance changes that.

This step alone eliminates the single most common source of a bad hire in this trade: a strong interview from a candidate who turns out to be uninsurable once the paperwork comes back.

Technical fit. Motivational fit. Culture fit. In that order.

Most trucking interviews go straight to "tell me about your experience" and never verify anything concrete. This guide gives you three structured steps, each with real questions, so you leave the interview with actual signal — not just a good feeling.

Step 1 — Technical fit: confirm license class, MVR, and route/freight experience with specific questions.

Step 2 — Motivational fit: understand why they're moving and how they handle a schedule under pressure.

Step 3 — Culture fit: safety mindset and how they communicate with dispatch and the rest of the team.

STEP 1

Technical fit — ask about production experience, not just credentials.

Ask in the room:

- "What freight types and routes have you run — local, regional, or over-the-road?"
- "Walk me through a pre-trip inspection from memory."
- "Tell me about a time a hard hours-of-service deadline conflicted with a load running late. What did you do?"
- "What's the largest or most complex route or freight assignment you've handled start to finish?"
- For dispatch and fleet-management candidates: "Tell me about a time you had to re-route a load or reassign a driver on short notice."

STEP 2

Motivational fit — why now, and how do they handle friction.

- "What made you start looking?" (Vague answers here are a bigger flag than an honest "the home time wasn't matching what I was told.")
- "Do you prefer local, regional, or over-the-road work — and why?"
- "Tell me about a time a route or schedule didn't go the way you planned. What did you do?"
- "What does a bad day on this job look like to you, and what do you do about it?"

Candidates who can talk specifically about how they handle a late load, a schedule change, or a difficult dispatcher tend to be far more reliable hires than candidates who only talk in generalities about "hard work."

STEP 3

Culture fit — safety and communication.

- "Tell me about a near-miss or safety concern you raised on a job. What happened?" (You want someone who speaks up, not someone who says "I've never had one.")
- "How do you communicate with dispatch when a delay is unavoidable?"
- "What's your take on hours-of-service compliance when it slows a delivery down?"
- "How do you like to receive feedback from a dispatcher or fleet manager?"

Red flags checklist

- Can't name specific routes, freight types, or hours-of-service handling when pressed — only generic terms
- License class, MVR, DOT physical, or Clearinghouse status can't be verified or comes back with an unresolved issue
- Blames every past employer or dispatcher for every problem, with no self-reflection
- Dismisses hours-of-service or pre-trip inspection questions as "not a big deal"

Score every candidate on the same four dimensions.

DIMENSION	1-2	3	4-5
Verification	License, MVR, physical, or Clearinghouse status unresolved	All four confirmed, no red flags	All four confirmed, clean record with specific detail
Stability	Frequent short stints, vague reasons	Reasonable tenure, plausible reasons	Strong tenure or clear, specific reason for each move
Culture fit	Dismisses safety, blames others	Says the right things generically	Specific safety story, owns mistakes
Communication	Vague or evasive about dispatch/schedule friction	Reasonable, general answers	Specific, concrete examples of handling friction well

A candidate scoring 4-5 across the board is a fast yes. A candidate scoring 1-2 on verification is a no regardless of the other three — an unresolved license, MVR, or Clearinghouse issue is non-negotiable in this trade.

CDL-A Truck Driver & CDL-B Truck Driver.

CDL-A Truck Driver: "What's the largest combination vehicle you've run, and what kind of freight?" · "How do you plan a route around hours-of-service limits before you leave the yard?"

CDL-B Truck Driver: "What kind of straight-truck or box-truck work have you done — local delivery, route work, something else?" · "How do you handle a delivery window that's tight because of traffic or a late pickup?"

Dispatcher / Fleet Coordinator & Fleet Manager.

Dispatcher / Fleet Coordinator: "Walk me through how you'd re-route three loads if a driver went out of service mid-shift." · "How do you keep a driver informed without overloading them with updates?"

Fleet Manager: "How do you decide when a vehicle goes down for maintenance versus staying in rotation?" · "Tell me about a time fleet capacity didn't match freight demand. What did you do?"

Safety & Compliance Manager (DOT) & Diesel Mechanic / Fleet Technician.

Safety & Compliance Manager: "Tell me about a DOT audit or an out-of-service violation you've handled." (Listen for the specific corrective steps taken — not just "we fixed it.") · "How do you track Clearinghouse and MVR status across a full driver roster?"

Diesel Mechanic / Fleet Technician: "Walk me through diagnosing a truck that's out of service with an unclear fault." · "How do you prioritize repairs when three trucks need attention at once?"

Logistics Coordinator & Driver Recruiter.

Logistics Coordinator: "Walk me through coordinating a load that has to change hands between two drivers mid-route." · "How do you handle a scheduling conflict between two customers who both want priority?"

Driver Recruiter: "How do you verify a candidate's license class, MVR, and Clearinghouse status before submitting them?" · "Tell me about a candidate who looked strong on paper but didn't pass verification. What did you do?"

Terminal Manager & Route / Delivery Supervisor.

Terminal Manager: "How do you run a terminal when driver availability and freight volume don't line up on a given day?" · "Tell me about a time you had to resolve a conflict between drivers at your terminal."

Route / Delivery Supervisor: "How do you handle a driver who's consistently running behind on their route?" · "Walk me through how you'd retrain a driver after a minor safety violation."

Move fast once verification is done — this market doesn't wait.

Once you've confirmed license class, MVR, DOT physical, and Clearinghouse status, and the candidate scores well across all four scorecard dimensions, don't let the offer sit. In a licensing-bottlenecked market with real competition for the same insurable candidates, a strong candidate who scored well in your process is very likely in someone else's process too.

If you're building this pipeline continuously rather than per-opening, this is exactly the stage where a standing, credential-verified bench pays for itself — you're not starting the search from zero every time a seat opens.

Four ways this interview goes wrong before it starts.

- **Taking a CDL at face value.** Verify license class, MVR, DOT physical, and Clearinghouse status before the interview, not after the offer — this is the single most common source of a bad hire in this trade.
- **Treating CDL-A and CDL-B as interchangeable.** They're different licenses with different equipment qualifications — a mismatch here is an insurability problem, not a training opportunity.
- **Skipping the hours-of-service and safety conversation because the resume looks strong.** A candidate who dismisses HOS compliance is a liability risk regardless of driving skill.
- **Making the offer slowly.** In a scarce-license market, a strong, verified candidate rarely stays uncontacted for long. Compress the time between a passing scorecard and an offer.

The eight questions to ask every candidate, regardless of role.

What freight types and routes have you run in production — not just what's on the resume?

Walk me through a pre-trip inspection (or equivalent process check for non-driving roles) from memory.

Tell me about a time a hard deadline or hours-of-service limit conflicted with a running-late load.

What's the largest or most complex assignment you've handled start to finish?

What made you start looking for something new?

Tell me about a time a route or schedule didn't go as planned.

Tell me about a near-miss or safety concern you raised.

How do you like to receive feedback from a dispatcher, fleet manager, or supervisor?



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