

***Under the Trooper's Hat***  
***June 2025-When do you need a CDL?***

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Determining whether you need a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to drive a certain vehicle can be tricky, but this simplified guide—based on the below flowchart—breaks it down step-by-step. But first, what is Gross Vehicle Weight Rating?

The Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) is the maximum weight a vehicle or trailer can safely carry, including passengers and cargo. This limit is set by the manufacturer and should never be exceeded. For most vehicles, the GVWR can be found on a label or sticker located on the driver's side door or on the door frame. It may also be listed in the owner's manual or available through the manufacturer's website. For trailers, the GVWR is typically displayed on a sticker or metal plate attached to the trailer frame, often near the tongue, the part of a trailer that extends forward and attaches to the towing vehicle via a hitch, typically a ball hitch.

**Do I need a CDL?**

Step 1: What kind of vehicle are you driving?

- Is it a combination vehicle (like a truck and trailer)?
  - ► Yes → Go to Step 2.
  - ► No → Go to Step 3.

Step 2: What's the weight?

- Is the Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) of the vehicle and trailer combined, 26,001 lbs. or more, AND is the trailer rated at over 10,000 lbs.?
  - ► Yes → You need a CDL (Class A)
  - ► No → Go to Step 3.

Step 3: Is it a single vehicle (not a combination)?

- Is the Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) 26,001 lbs. or more?
  - ► Yes → You need a CDL (Class B)
  - ► No → Go to Step 4.

Step 4: Are you transporting passengers?

- Is the vehicle designed to carry 16 or more passengers, including the driver?
  - ► Yes → You need a CDL (Class C) with a Passenger Endorsement
  - ► No → Go to Step 5.

Step 5: Are you transporting hazardous materials?

- Does the vehicle require placards for hazardous materials?
  - ► Yes → You need a CDL (Class C) with a Hazmat Endorsement

- ► No → You do NOT need a CDL

Sometimes, specific exemptions apply to vehicles that would otherwise require a CDL. A CDL is not needed for operating an emergency vehicle or if the driver is an active-duty military member driving a military vehicle. Farmers are also exempt when using a farm-registered vehicle within 150 air miles of their farm, if the farmer is not driving for hire. Likewise, a CDL is not required to operate a recreational vehicle (RV) or camper for personal use.

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