



# Driver safety training program

A model program for companies like yours

## PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

At Sentry, we believe safety is in everyone's best interest—and essential to your company's ability to thrive and grow. You can use this best practices guide as a model for developing your own driver safety training program. It includes schedules and forms you can adapt to your needs. You can also use it in its entirety as a ready-to-go kit.

With the industry's continuing shortage of drivers, having a driver safety training program like this can help you train your novice drivers and enhance the skills of drivers with moderate experience, building the value of your on-the-road team.

This kit includes:

- Why we put safety first
- How we promote safe driving
- Building safety skills: A week-by-week training schedule
- Driver trainer agreement form
- Student driver contract
- Student driver weekly road evaluation form
- Student driver final evaluation form



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## WHY WE PUT SAFETY FIRST

### Our goals

To be effective, our driver safety training program should fulfill several purposes:

- To develop novice team members into safe, conscientious, and skillful driving professionals
- To reinforce the skills of moderately experienced drivers, while aiding their integration into the team
- To build a culture of safety based upon the foundation established by senior drivers

### Our philosophy

Safety is an integral part of a successful driving career. Our program is designed to help leverage the skills and experience of our veteran drivers to help truckers new to our team become better, safer drivers. We also want to improve cooperation, communication, and camaraderie across the entire company.

- We make safety one of the core values of our company.
- We value skills, experience, and a commitment to safety as essential characteristics for members of our driving team.
- We hire and retain better-than-average drivers.

## HOW WE PROMOTE SAFE DRIVING

### Safety is a shared responsibility

Every member of the driver safety training program team has important responsibilities to every other part of the team. We must all work together to enhance safety.

- The driver trainer teaches and prepares the student driver to hold an independent road driving position.
- The student driver improves skills and adopts the safety culture of our organization.
- The safety director assigns student trainer pairings and oversees our driver safety training program.
- The owner/manager pre-screens new driver candidates and maintains records.

### The driver trainer's role

Selecting the right trainer is an important first step in getting a new driver off to a good start. A good driver trainer fully understands the company safety program and sets an appropriate example for the student. To be eligible, a driver trainer should also have/maintain the following qualifications:

- Three or more years of on-the-road (OTR) experience
- Six months or more of a favorable work record with the company
- Zero preventable accidents in the last three years
- No more than two moving violations in the last three years
- No major traffic violations in the last three years (including DUI, illegal possession, reckless/careless/negligent driving, racing, hit and run, eluding an officer, traffic violation resulting in death, revocation for any reason, vehicle used in a felony, speeding over 15 mph)

The driver trainer uses the six-week guide included in this document to move the student driver along in the training process. The driver trainer also uses these weekly plans to evaluate the student driver's progress, providing feedback to both the student driver and the safety director.

### The student driver's role

The student driver's mission in this program is to absorb our company's safety culture and benefit from the experience of the veteran driver trainer. Because any driver can learn to do their job better and safer, a student driver for the purposes of this program is any driver 23 years of age or older with less than 36 months of OTR experience. Additionally, the student driver should meet the following qualifications to maintain eligibility for this program through Sentry Transportation's underwriting department:

- Must be a graduate of an accredited truck driving school and hold a valid CDL-A license
- Should be in the top 25% of their graduating class
- Should have a clean motor vehicle record (MVR) with no moving violations or at-fault accidents in the last three years, whether in a DOT-regulated motor commercial motor vehicle (CMV) or non-regulated vehicle
- Must pass a thorough background check
- Must pass a thorough pre-hire road test
- The student driver must ride in the second seat (not in the sleeper) for a minimum of 5,000 miles while the driver trainer drives
- The student driver must then accumulate an additional 10,000 miles or more as a driver while the driver trainer occupies the second seat (not in the sleeper)
- After accumulating 10,000 miles as a driver under supervision of the driver trainer, the student driver will undergo a final road test administered by the safety director, after which the student driver may drive alone

Information on any student driver being considered for the program should be submitted to Sentry Transportation for underwriting approval.

### The safety director's role

The safety director is responsible for the implementation and management of the driver safety training program, including:

- Submitting information on student drivers to Sentry Transportation upon hire
- Promoting the identification and development of traits that make someone a safe driver
- Pairing up driver trainers with student drivers
- Monitoring progress
- Terminating training and employment, if necessary
- Administering final student driver road tests

### The owner/manager's role

The owner/manager provides the conditions needed for the driver safety training program to succeed:

- Hiring only qualified student driver candidates
- Conducting extensive pre-hire road tests prior to hiring
- Fostering a culture of safety reinforced by incentive programs and company-wide behavior

The owner/manager should retain records of all student driver activity during employment and for a minimum of three years after an employee leaves the company. Include miles driven and details on any traffic citations or accidents.



## **BUILDING SAFETY SKILLS: A WEEK-BY-WEEK TRAINING SCHEDULE**

This driver safety training program follows a six-week schedule. The driver trainer should use the goals and guidelines to plan each week of training. These standardized benchmarks will help the driver trainer evaluate the student driver's progress and skills.

This schedule is provided as a training guideline that will give the driver trainee an opportunity to gain experience and success in your program. We understand that your company's training schedule may vary depending on unique operational factors.

### **WEEK ONE**

#### **Driving restrictions**

- Begin with interstate driving during daylight hours only
- Switch seats when needed so the student driver does not drive through large cities or during rush-hour traffic
- Allow the student driver to drive within the driver trainer's comfort level

#### **Length of trips**

- First trip: 100-mile radius
- Second trip: 300 to 400-mile radius (overnight)
- Third trip: Driver trainer's discretion

#### **Main goals**

- On the first trip, have the student driver observe only on the outbound load. Get to know the student driver. Keep in mind that this is a new experience, and it's up to you to pass on your experience and professionalism to the student driver. The student driver may be seeing the trucking industry for their first time through you. Always have a positive, upbeat attitude about the company and your customers. Make training a good experience—remember, the industry's future depends on people like you.
- Have the student driver drive back to the terminal with the inbound load as the student driver's initial road test. Make sure they can properly do a pre-trip equipment inspection, coupling/uncoupling, shifting, backing, etc. Be patient and keep in mind the student driver will likely not be as good as you in any area, but will improve with experience.
- At the earliest safe opportunity, let the student driver drive. As they progress, start to work on progressive shifting and proper use of the clutch. Point out different road signs, possible low overpasses, etc.
- Make sure that logs are kept up-to-date daily and be certain that the student driver understands all four lines of the logs. Recap the importance of filling out logs clearly.
- Always stress safety and encourage the student driver in all aspects of driving.

### **WEEK TWO**

#### **Driving restrictions**

- Continue interstate or two-lane driving during daylight
- Begin driving after dark, but not after midnight
- Begin city driving, but not during rush hour

#### **Length of trips**

- As assigned by dispatch

#### **Main goals**

- Start to increase the student driver's driving time within their capabilities.
- Make sure the student driver is involved in all coupling/uncoupling, with emphasis on proper procedure.
- Have the student driver begin backing up in simple situations (daylight only), with emphasis on proper procedure.
- Stress safety on turns and the proper use of mirrors.
- Demonstrate and explain the proper method of determining following distance and the importance of maintaining a safe following distance under all conditions.
- Praise the student driver for doing things correctly.

### **WEEK THREE**

#### **Driving restrictions**

- None

#### **Length of trips**

- As assigned by dispatch

#### **Main goals**

- Continue to increase the student driver's driving time. The student driver should be doing at least 50% of the driving by the end of this week.
- Start to go over routing. Don't just tell the student driver how to get there—show them how to get there by using the map. Point out how to get to the destination by the shortest, safest route.
- Start to explain our fuel stop network and how it works. Explain emergency fuel stops. Demonstrate and explain the proper operation of the vehicle to maximize fuel economy.
- Continue to stress safety on turns and the proper use of mirrors.
- Let the student driver park the vehicle—show and explain where to park and why to park there.
- Start to teach the student driver proper use of the Jake brake in all stages, making certain that they understand that it's to be used to assist braking only.
- Stress time and space management, and the vehicle's ability to stop and maneuver in traffic.

### **WEEK FOUR**

#### **Driving restrictions**

- None

#### **Length of trips**

- As assigned by dispatch

#### **Main goals**

- Continue to increase the student driver's driving time.
- Teach the student driver proper trip logging. So far, you and the student driver have had to log your trips as a two-person operation. Explain how you're logging it, and also show the student driver how to log it solo so they can do it when they get their own truck.
- Show the student driver how to fill out trip envelopes and what to do with them when they're completed.
- Explain the bills-of-lading and how they should be signed. Also, explain the use of a seal on the trailer. Have them watch piece counts and explain multi-stop seals.



- Let the student driver go with you when you work with shippers and receivers.
- Explain how dispatch works and why it's important to work closely together.

## WEEK FIVE

### Driving restrictions

- None

### Length of trips

- As assigned by dispatch

### Main goals

- Start role reversal by letting the student driver make the decisions, take orders, and do their own routing.
- Make sure the student driver knows the importance of properly getting all dispatch information—names, addresses, and phone numbers—so they know where to pick up and deliver.
- Teach the student driver how to read bills-of-lading for phone numbers and addresses.
- Work on helping your student driver find their final destinations. Share and explain what resources your student driver can use for directions.
- Show your student driver how to safely and properly load and secure the load in the trailer. Address proper use of the seals, proper weight distribution, how to slide the tandems, and what to do if the load is overweight.
- Teach your student driver about permits, cab cards, and bingo cards, and their importance.
- Explain what to do with a hazardous materials load, and how it should be handled.

## WEEK SIX

### Driving restrictions

- None

### Length of trips

- As assigned by dispatch

### Main goals

- The student driver should be doing all of the driving by the end of this week. If the driver trainer is not comfortable with this, the company must decide whether or not to extend the training schedule.
- Instruct your student driver where to buy fuel, and how to use the fuel stop network and fuel card.
- Your student driver should handle and complete all paperwork regarding the shipment. They should complete the trip envelopes for each trip.
- Let your student driver do their own logs, both team and solo. The student driver should log all trips as though they were running them solo, for practice.
- Your student driver should deal with shippers and receivers, handling bills-of-lading, piece counts, etc.
- Your student driver should work with dispatch to make check calls and take orders.
- Continue to work with the student driver on routing and using the map.

# Student driver contract

Completing our driver safety training program is an essential part of becoming a professional driver for our organization. By joining the company as a professional student driver, you are expected to:

- Successfully complete the probationary training program
- Be prompt and willing to work
- Keep communication open with your driver trainer
- Conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times
- Respect the driver trainer's truck and property
- Follow all procedures and policies
- Turn in your evaluations weekly
- Be safe at all times

With your help, we can make this a safe and exciting learning environment. Our goal is to enhance your skills as a successful solo driver. In the event student driver expectations are not met, the company reserves the right to terminate the student driver's employment.

Student driver: \_\_\_\_\_

Safety director: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Driver trainer agreement form

The undersigned agrees and understands that assignment of a student driver shall be for the duration of the established six-week training program and, barring unforeseen accident or illness, is charged with the fulfillment of all items listed for skill training and the evaluation of same as directed. Vacation time is to be scheduled with consideration given to not coinciding with training assignments.

All training and indoctrination will be conducted and communicated to the student driver within the safety and operational policies as declared by the company, and by those state and federal government entities which dictate the laws and standards under which the company must conduct all daily business.

The undersigned further agrees and understands that appearance and moral conduct are of utmost importance to the company. The driver trainer will stress to the student driver the importance of appearance and hygiene and the relation each bears to customer relations and the responsibility inherent in the role of company representative.

As a driver trainer, I agree to the following:

- To teach the student driver how to be a successful solo driver
- To conduct myself in a professional manner at all times
- To readily share my knowledge, skills, and experience
- To follow the six-week training schedule
- To turn in completed evaluations weekly
- To take the student driver into as many different situations as the training period allows
- To advise management and/or the safety director of any problems with a student driver within 24 hours of identifying the problem
- To take the time to explain to the student driver what they do wrong or what can be improved
- To be a coach who actively works to build the student driver's confidence

I have read completely and understand fully the above, and by notice of my dated signature below, accept and agree to the company's driver safety training program as stated.

Driver trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Safety director: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Student driver weekly road evaluation form

Student driver: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Tractor #: \_\_\_\_\_

Destination: \_\_\_\_\_

Miles evaluated: \_\_\_\_\_

## Rating system

1 = Unsatisfactory 2 = Needs improvement 3 = Satisfactory

✓ = Properly done X = Improperly done/needs improvement

## PRE-TRIP

### Trip planning: 1 2 3

\_\_\_ Plans fuel stops

\_\_\_ Plans breaks

\_\_\_ Logs

\_\_\_ Trip envelopes

\_\_\_ Tolls

\_\_\_ Money management (personal)

### Pre-trip inspection: 1 2 3

\_\_\_ Engine compartment and leaks

\_\_\_ Steering

\_\_\_ Suspension

\_\_\_ Brakes

\_\_\_ Wheels

\_\_\_ Slide under vehicle

\_\_\_ Coupling area

\_\_\_ Front of trailer

\_\_\_ Side of trailer

\_\_\_ Rear of trailer

\_\_\_ Lights and reflectors

\_\_\_ Cab check/engine start

## ERGONOMICS

### Injury prevention: 1 2 3

\_\_\_ Lifts properly

\_\_\_ Entry/exit tractor

\_\_\_ Entry/exit trailer

\_\_\_ Driving posture

\_\_\_ Trailer doors opened safely

## COMMUNICATION AND SERVICE

### Customer relations: 1 2 3

\_\_\_ Calls shippers and receivers

\_\_\_ Attitude

\_\_\_ Follows directions

### Communications: 1 2 3

\_\_\_ Hours of service daily

\_\_\_ Communicates with dispatch

## DRIVING

### Coupling: 1 2 3

\_\_\_ Aligns unit until rear drive wheels are underneath nose of trailer

\_\_\_ Visually inspects trailer height

\_\_\_ Hooks air lines and electrical cord

\_\_\_ Pressurizes air systems

\_\_\_ Backs under trailer slowly

\_\_\_ Tests hookup-pull against pin

\_\_\_ Cranks up dollies/secures properly

\_\_\_ Visually checks jaws and locking pins

### Uncoupling: 1 2 3

\_\_\_ Checks ground surface/provides protection

\_\_\_ Uncouples air lines and electrical cord, secures properly

\_\_\_ Lowers dollies

\_\_\_ Pulls pin

\_\_\_ Pulls from under trailer, stops after

\_\_\_ Fifth wheel clears and secures tractor (checks for sinking)

### Intersections and turns: 1 2 3

\_\_\_ Determines decision point

\_\_\_ Looks left, right, left before entering

\_\_\_ Signals in advance

\_\_\_ Turns from right lane to right lane

\_\_\_ Demonstrates proper technique when positioning wheels from curb

\_\_\_ Button hooks

\_\_\_ Proper gear before turning

\_\_\_ Safe speed during turn

\_\_\_ Yields right-of-way

\_\_\_ Shifts gear while turning

\_\_\_ Cancels signal after turn is completed

\_\_\_ Watches mirrors



**Pullout: 1 2 3**

- Turns headlights on
- Checks all gauge readings
- Adjusts seat
- Fastens seat belt
- Releases brakes properly (red first)
- Checks for air leaks
- Pumps down air/checks low air devices
- Warms up engine to proper temperature
- Tests hook-up (hand valve)
- Rolls ahead/tests all brakes (foot brake)
- Starts without rollback

**Slowing and stopping: 1 2 3**

- Tests brakes
- Checks mirrors
- Uses engine deceleration to slow the vehicle
- Applies steady brake pressure
- Stops suddenly
- Stops clear of crosswalk

- Uses tractor protection valve properly
- Stops \_\_\_ feet behind a vehicle in front

**Shifting: 1 2 3**

- Correct gear selection
- Upshifts smoothly
- Downshifts smoothly
- Downshifts to decelerate unit
- Over-revs engine
- Skip shifts
- Does not shift on railroad tracks
- Progressive shifts
- Gear recoveries
- Watches tachometer while shifting

**Clutch: 1 2 3**

- Proper use of clutch brake
- Double clutches
- Fails to use clutch
- Does not rest foot on clutch
- Dumps clutch

- Uses clutch to hold unit on hill

**Accelerator: 1 2 3**

- Idles off
- Advances steadily
- Maintains steady road speed

**Defensive driving: 1 2 3**

- Proper input for vehicle control
- "3 and 9" hand position on steering wheel
- Watches mirrors six to eight seconds
- Exhibits high eye lead time
- Establishes eye contact
- Watches gauges for \_\_\_ seconds

**Backing and parking: 1 2 3**

- Lines up unit properly
- Uses four-way flashers
- Gets out and checks clearances
- Sounds horn before backing
- Backs slowly with no acceleration

- Backing observed (circle one): straight / sight side / blind side

- Sets parking brakes properly (both buttons)

- Parks clear of traffic lane

**Speed: 1 2 3**

- Off-ramps
- Cornering
- Over-the-road
- Congested areas

**Following distance: 1 2 3**

- City
- Highway
- Congested areas

Recommendations: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Student driver: \_\_\_\_\_

Pass

Fail





# Student driver final evaluation form

Driver trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Co./app. miles: \_\_\_\_\_

Period of time with driver trainer: from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: The student driver (S) and driver trainer (T) will evaluate the student driver, making note of strengths and weaknesses. Driver trainer will discuss the evaluation with the student driver.

1.	Driving—shifting, instrument check, mirror check, turn signals, recommended RPMs, distance economy, etc.	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
<b>Strengths:</b>						
<b>Weaknesses:</b>						
2.	Night driving—speed, alertness, lane usage, high-beam usage, merging with traffic, etc.	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
<b>Strengths:</b>						
<b>Weaknesses:</b>						
3.	Defensive driving—aim-high steering, sees big picture, keeps eyes moving, leaves an out, proper use of mirrors, adjusting speed, four-second following, etc.	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
<b>Strengths:</b>						
<b>Weaknesses:</b>						
4.	Backing-up—proper lineup, gets out if unsure, four-way flashers, backs slowly, mirror usage, etc.	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
<b>Strengths:</b>						
<b>Weaknesses:</b>						
5.	Mountain driving—proper gear, Jake brake, adverse weather adjustments, etc.	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
<b>Strengths:</b>						
<b>Weaknesses:</b>						



6.	City driving—lane selection, pedestrians, traffic lights, crosswalks, intersection safety, turn signals, mirror usage, rush hour, etc.	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

7.	Customer relations	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

8.	Confidence	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

9.	Paperwork—logs, trip pack, expense envelope, delivery receipts, etc.	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

10.	Personal hygiene	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

11.	Physical stamina	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

12.	Ability to couple/uncouple	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

13.	Trip-planning—city, country, two or four lanes, following distance, mountains, weather, etc.	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

14.	Loading procedures—count, placement, back safety, etc.	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

15.	Truck housekeeping	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

16.	Attitude	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

17.	Willingness to learn	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

18.	Professionalism	S	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		T	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

19. In what areas did the student demonstrate above-average aptitude?

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

20. In what areas did the student demonstrate weakness?

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR OFFICE AND TRAINER USE ONLY**

Driver trainer comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Safety director comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Approved for hire: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Driver trainer signature and date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

Safety director signature and date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

Date of solo dispatch: \_\_\_\_\_