

# Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) Driver – Is it the Job for YOU

Lorry drivers are the glue that holds supply chains together. No container or truck or trailer moves without, at some point, a lorry driver. Even so, transport companies, often have great difficulty finding, hiring and keeping drivers. Nearly every period of economic growth is accompanied by a driver "shortage," including the current recovery.

HGV Drivers not only work for Transport companies, they work in all aspects of Industry, from Logistics, to Manufacturing, Retail and Construction to mention but a few.

They drive a very diverse amount of vehicle types, from standard box vans in the removals sector, to specialist vehicles carrying explosives, food, hazardous chemicals, fuel tankers, temperature controlled, tippers, refuse trucks and very large load articulated vehicles.



HGV drivers, also known as Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) drivers, transport and deliver goods and raw materials across the UK and overseas.

If you enjoy working by yourself, want a job that makes use of your driving skills and one that can take you all over mainland Europe; this career could be for you.

To become a lorry driver, you will need to be over 18 and hold a full car licence. You will also need to pass HGV training and gain a Certificate of Professional Competence (Driver CPC) and hold a digital tachograph card.

You could be driving vehicles or combinations of vehicles and trailers that cost in excess of £150,000 and carrying loads of a similar value (or considerably higher), therefore there is a high level of responsibility on HGV drivers to drive safely. HGV vehicles use large amounts of fuel, so drivers need

to drive with due care and attention to braking and cornering and be aware of fuel-efficient driving techniques.

You can also train for this job through an apprenticeship scheme.

HGV Drivers work from depots, distribution centres and warehouses, and apart from driving, your duties would include:

- planning delivery schedules and routes with transport managers
- supervising or helping to load and unload goods
- making sure loads are safely secured
- following traffic reports and changing your route if necessary
- completing delivery and collection paperwork
- carry out pre and post journey vehicle checks
- use mechanical handling equipment, such as pallet trucks, lorry mounted cranes and forklifts

However, the Job is not for everyone.

You need to be physically fit, be flexible (this is a must due to unforeseen incidents on the road network), be able to maintain concentration for long periods when driving long journeys. Be literate and numerate and understand technology (the industry uses many IT devices such as handheld scanners and digital receipt devices). Plus:

**Be Responsible:** Driving a lorry is a highly responsible job. Your main place of work is the public road and everything you do is visible to others. A 44-tonne lorry is 40 times heavier and four times longer than a car. Driving such a vehicle is not something to be taken lightly, both on our public roads and when at sites for collections or deliveries.

**Be Dependable:** Road haulage is a service industry that works to high service standards, including punctual delivery schedules. Employers need to know that you will come to work on time, ready to drive, and will complete the work reasonably allocated to him. This is because customers depend on your delivery to keep their businesses running, and shops supplied.

**Be Flexible:** You have to be prepared to respond positively to the unexpected. If there is a road accident ahead, you may not get back to base at the time originally planned. Or an additional collection may be added when you are on the road.

**Be a Safe driver – with skill and patience:** You have to be better than most road users on the road and remain calm in the face of thoughtless or reckless behaviour, whether by a motorist, cyclist – or even other lorry driver. The road haulage industry has a strong road safety culture – let's make it even stronger.

**Be able to stay within the law:** Lorry drivers share a responsibility with their employer to behave responsibly and within industry regulations. Both your licence to drive and, potentially, your employer's licence to operate, are at risk if you fail to do so. That means driving only when you are fit to do so, not only in terms of drink and drugs but also any illness that could impair road safety. And use of hand-held mobile phones when driving is absolutely unacceptable.

You will also be expected to comply with drivers' hours rules, a walk-round safety check of the vehicle and ensure it is safely loaded.

**Be the Representative the company:** You will be an ambassador for your company, both on the road and when you are collecting and delivering for customers. Employers will expect you both to drive well and to be presentably dressed and to be courteous to customers. At the same time, employers will not make unreasonable demands on you and will want you to tell them if customers make unreasonable demands upon you.

### **Working hours and conditions**

You would normally work an average of 48 hours a week but can only drive for 45 hours a week. Overtime may be available; however, there are strict laws about the amount of hours you can spend driving between rest breaks.

You could spend a lot of time away from home, including overnight stays where necessary. Most of your time would be spent on the road, and you would drive day and night, in all weather conditions.

The industry works 24 hours a day 7 days a week 365 days a year and has many shift patterns to enable full coverage of this demanding industry.

### **Income**

Starting salaries can be between £18,000 and £22,000 a year for a newly qualified apprentice driver. With experience, this can rise to between £23,000 and up to £35,000.

Drivers of specialist vehicles and with overtime can increase these figures up to £45,000 per annum.

\*Figures are intended as a guide and vary depending on employers.

### **Entry requirements**

To become an HGV driver, you must have a valid HGV licence. To acquire this, you need to:

- be competent in English and math's (to take the LGV theory test)
- be 18 or over
- hold a full car licence and have a good driving record
- have good eyesight that meets the legal requirement
- pass a medical as part of the HGV test

There are several ways to obtain your HGV licence. If you are already working for a transport operator, for example as a clerk, your employer may be willing to train you. If you are not employed by an operator, you could find yourself through "driver training" before looking for work. Or there is the option of becoming an apprentice.

The HGV licence test is divided into three categories:

- Category C1 allows you to drive rigid vehicles over 3.5 tonnes up to 7.5 tonnes
- Category C allows you to drive rigid vehicles over 7.5 tonnes
- Category C+E allows you to driver articulated vehicles over 7.5 tonnes

A category C licence can be obtained without having to pass a C1 first but to drive articulated and drawbar vehicles you would need to pass a further test at C+E

Courses last from one to three weeks and cover driving skills, basic mechanics, and loading and securing loads. The test includes vehicle safety questions, manoeuvres such as reversing into a loading bay, 25 miles of road driving and a theory test based on the Highway Code and LGV regulations.

### **Continued Professional Development (CPD)**

HGV Drivers have to complete 35 hours of training over a five-year period and continue that every 5 years, so there will always be opportunities for CPD.

Some drivers go on to complete health and safety courses, customer service courses, advanced driver courses, fuel and efficient driving courses, Supervisor and Transport manager courses.

There are many routes for CPD even adult apprenticeships.

### **Career Advancement**

HGV Driving is a career and many LGV Drivers stay driving all of their working life, however the industry is very diverse and has a multitude of opportunities such as the following:

- Driver Trainers
- LGV Mechanic
- Administrators
- Traffic Planner (LGV Drivers make excellent planners as they know the road networks after being a driver)
- Customer service operators
- Transport Supervisors
- Transport Managers

The industry is known for promoting from within so progression within the industry is an easy step up.