

CDL General Knowledge Practice Test

Original Full-Length Form 1

Directions. Work through 50 original multiple-choice questions in a 60-minute session. Select the one best answer. Answers and explanations begin after the question section. This independent practice form is informed by federal CDL knowledge requirements; states may use different question counts, timing, and endorsement combinations. Always study the current CDL manual issued by your state.

Question 1

Which statement best describes alcohol's effect on commercial driving?

- A. It improves night vision.
- B. It can impair judgment and increase reaction time.
- C. It is safe below any state limit.
- D. It only affects drivers who feel tired.

Question 2

If a critical warning light or gauge shows a serious malfunction while driving, what is the safest response?

- A. Cover the light so it does not distract you.
- B. Stop as soon as it is safe and investigate the problem.
- C. Increase speed to reach the destination sooner.
- D. Ignore it until the next scheduled service.

Question 3

Before a trip, mirrors should be adjusted so the driver can:

- A. See only the trailer tires.
- B. See the sleeper berth without turning.
- C. See the area behind and beside the vehicle with minimal blind spots.
- D. Avoid checking the right side.

Question 4

Before moving a commercial motor vehicle from a parked position, the driver should first:

- A. Check the surroundings, secure the cab, and select the correct gear.
- B. Turn off all warning devices.
- C. Release the parking brake and accelerate.
- D. Sound the horn continuously.

Question 5

When descending a long, steep grade, a driver should generally select a gear that:

- A. Changes repeatedly while the vehicle is moving downhill.
- B. Is low enough to control speed without relying on continuous service-brake use.
- C. Is the highest available gear.
- D. Allows the engine to idle with no braking.

Question 6

What is the safest general rule when backing a commercial vehicle?

- A. Keep the windows closed so outside noise is reduced.
- B. Back quickly to minimize time in the maneuver.
- C. Rely only on the mirrors.
- D. Use a spotter when available, check the path, and back slowly.

Question 7

A good visual search for a CMV driver should include:

- A. Only the vehicle's instruments.
- B. The rearview mirrors once per hour.
- C. Only the lane directly ahead.
- D. The roadway ahead, mirrors, sides, intersections, and escape areas.

Question 8

A turn signal should be used early enough to:

- A. Tell other road users what the driver intends to do.
- B. Replace mirror checks.
- C. Reserve the intersection for the CMV.
- D. Allow the driver to turn without slowing.

Question 9

If a vehicle's speed increases while all other conditions remain the same, stopping distance generally:

- A. Stays exactly the same.
- B. Decreases.
- C. Becomes independent of reaction time.
- D. Increases, often substantially.

Question 10

Why should a heavily loaded CMV usually leave more following distance than a passenger car?

- A. The CMV is allowed to ignore traffic.
- B. The CMV has fewer mirrors.
- C. The CMV needs more time and distance to stop.
- D. The CMV cannot use its brakes.

Question 11

When meeting an oncoming vehicle at night, a driver should:

- A. Use high beams continuously.
- B. Avoid looking directly at the glare and keep scanning the roadway.
- C. Look toward the oncoming headlights.
- D. Turn off all lights.

Question 12

During heavy rain, a driver should reduce speed because:

- A. The road becomes shorter.
- B. Rain makes all braking systems stronger.
- C. Water eliminates the need for following distance.
- D. Tire traction can decrease and stopping distance can increase.

Question 13

A ball rolling into the street near a parked vehicle should make a driver anticipate that:

- A. The ball has priority over the CMV.
- B. A child or another road user may follow it.
- C. The road is closed.
- D. No further scanning is needed.

Question 14

After a front tire blows out, which response sequence best protects control?

- A. Hold the wheel firmly and keep the vehicle straight; stay off the brakes until the vehicle has slowed, then brake gently while maintaining control.
- B. Turn sharply toward the shoulder before reducing speed.
- C. Accelerate until the tire stops moving, then release the wheel.
- D. Brake hard immediately, then steer toward the shoulder.

Question 15

When the drive wheels lose traction and begin to spin, the driver should generally:

- A. Turn the steering wheel rapidly from side to side.
- B. Increase throttle sharply.
- C. Release the accelerator and avoid abrupt braking.
- D. Set the parking brake immediately.

Question 16

Who is responsible for checking that cargo is properly loaded and secured before and during the trip?

- A. The driver, while following applicable rules and company procedures.
- B. Only the customer receiving the cargo.
- C. Only the mechanic.
- D. Only the shipper.

Question 17

When inspecting tires during a pre-trip inspection, a driver should look for:

- A. Only damage on the left side.
- B. Only the tire brand.
- C. Whether the tires match the paint color.
- D. Cuts, bulges, improper inflation, and unsafe tread or damage.

Question 18

A driver who wants to transport certain hazardous materials requiring placards generally needs:

- A. Only a passenger endorsement.
- B. No additional authorization if the cargo is in a box.
- C. The appropriate hazardous materials qualification and endorsement.
- D. Only a school bus endorsement.

Question 19

Before beginning a long downgrade, the driver should:

- A. Shift to neutral.
- B. Wait until the brakes overheat.
- C. Select the proper gear and plan braking before speed builds.
- D. Use the parking brake as the primary brake.

Question 20

If a driver becomes too sleepy to drive safely, the driver should:

- A. Stop at a safe location and rest.
- B. Drive faster to finish sooner.
- C. Open a window and continue indefinitely.
- D. Drink water while continuing at highway speed.

Question 21

A driver discovers a safety defect during an en-route inspection. What should the driver do?

- A. Continue because the trip has started.
- B. Ask another driver to sign for it.
- C. Hide it until the next annual inspection.
- D. Report it and have it corrected before operating if it affects safe operation.

Question 22

Before releasing the fifth wheel to uncouple a tractor from a semitrailer, the driver must ensure that:

- A. The air lines are disconnected and the tractor is driven away immediately.
- B. The combination is secured, the parking brake is set, and the trailer is properly supported.
- C. The release handle is pulled while the tractor is moving.
- D. The landing gear is raised completely before the parking brake is set.

Question 23

A fire extinguisher carried on a CMV should be:

- A. Accessible, properly secured, and maintained as required.
- B. Used to cool hot brakes while driving.
- C. Stored where it cannot be reached.
- D. Checked only after a fire starts.

Question 24

Off-tracking means that:

- A. The vehicle stops tracking after a lane change.
- B. The rear wheels of a turning vehicle follow a path inside the front wheels.
- C. The front wheels always follow the rear wheels exactly.
- D. The trailer becomes lighter in a turn.

Question 25

Why is coasting downhill in neutral unsafe?

- A. It guarantees the brakes will stay cool.
- B. It reduces the driver's control of speed and may prevent use of engine braking.
- C. It always improves traction.
- D. It locks the steering wheel.

Question 26

When using a spotter while backing, the driver should:

- A. Continue if the spotter waves urgently.
- B. Use signals from anyone nearby without agreement.
- C. Agree on signals, keep the spotter visible, and stop if the spotter disappears.
- D. Back faster than the spotter can walk.

Question 27

Looking well ahead is especially important in a CMV because it:

- A. Guarantees that no one will enter the lane.
- B. Allows the driver to ignore mirrors.
- C. Makes following distance unnecessary.
- D. Gives more time to identify hazards and slow smoothly.

Question 28

The horn should be used primarily to:

- A. Make pedestrians move out of any legal crossing.
- B. Express frustration at traffic.
- C. Alert others when needed to prevent a collision.
- D. Replace the turn signal.

Question 29

A safe speed for a CMV should be based on:

- A. The vehicle's maximum speed.
- B. Road, weather, traffic, visibility, vehicle, cargo, and driver conditions.
- C. The posted limit only.
- D. The speed of the fastest vehicle nearby.

Question 30

An escape route is best described as:

- A. A shoulder that is always safe at any speed.
- B. A route shown only on a paper map.
- C. An open area the driver can use if the current path becomes unsafe.
- D. A lane that may be entered without checking.

Question 31

At night, a driver should reduce speed when visibility is limited because:

- A. Mirrors work only during daylight.
- B. The vehicle becomes shorter.
- C. Hazards can appear within the distance lit by the headlights.
- D. Night driving eliminates pedestrians.

Question 32

A high-profile vehicle in strong crosswinds may require the driver to:

- A. Reduce speed and be ready for sudden lateral movement.
- B. Release the steering wheel.
- C. Drive beside another truck for protection.
- D. Increase speed to outrun the wind.

Question 33

A line of stopped vehicles or another hazard hidden beyond a hill crest is a warning that:

- A. Traffic or a hazard may be out of sight, so speed should be reduced early.
- B. The hill makes braking unnecessary because the hazard is hidden.
- C. The road is certainly empty once the crest is reached.
- D. The driver should pass the visible vehicles without checking.

Question 34

If the service brakes fail while descending a long grade, which action should be part of the emergency response?

- A. Jump from the cab.
- B. Shift to neutral and coast.
- C. Turn off the engine immediately while moving.
- D. Stay calm, warn others, and use available methods such as a lower gear or escape ramp.

Question 35

A locked-wheel skid is most likely when the driver:

- A. Uses a lower gear before a downgrade.
- B. Scans mirrors.
- C. Brakes harder than available traction allows.
- D. Leaves extra space.

Question 36

Improper cargo weight distribution can:

- A. Only change the color of the trailer.
- B. Improve every emergency maneuver.
- C. Eliminate the need for tie-downs.
- D. Affect steering, braking, tire loading, and vehicle stability.

Question 37

Which fifth-wheel finding should cause the driver to refuse to move the combination until it is corrected?

- A. The fifth-wheel mounting bracket is cracked.
- B. The release handle is secured in its normal position.
- C. The air and electrical lines are connected and secured.
- D. The locking mechanism is fully engaged.

Question 38

Placards are used primarily to:

- A. Guarantee that a load is safe.
- B. Communicate the presence and hazard class of certain regulated materials.
- C. Replace shipping papers.
- D. Show the driver's personal license class.

Question 39

Brake fade on a long downgrade is caused by:

- A. A clean windshield.
- B. Using a low gear before the descent.
- C. Checking the mirrors too often.
- D. Excessive heat from overusing the service brakes.

Question 40

A driver is most likely to reduce fatigue risk by:

- A. Driving through the driver's normal sleep period without a plan.
- B. Planning adequate sleep and stopping before becoming dangerously sleepy.
- C. Relying on loud music alone.
- D. Skipping meals and breaks.

Question 41

Moisture and oil in an air-brake system can:

- A. Replace the need for a low-pressure warning device.
- B. Increase tire traction.
- C. Make the brakes maintenance-free.
- D. Damage components or reduce reliable brake operation.

Question 42

If the low-air-pressure warning activates, the driver should:

- A. Stop safely as soon as possible and determine the cause.
- B. Disconnect the warning device.
- C. Pump the brakes repeatedly while speeding up.
- D. Continue because the warning is only for parking.

Question 43

Spring brakes are designed to:

- A. Increase air pressure in the reservoir.
- B. Replace every service brake.
- C. Apply mechanically when air pressure is lost or the parking control is applied.
- D. Operate only the windshield wipers.

Question 44

A driver should monitor air-pressure gauges because they show:

- A. The engine oil level.
- B. The pressure available in the air-brake reservoirs or system.
- C. The cargo's center of gravity.
- D. The trailer's tire temperature only.

Question 45

If an air-brake leakage test shows pressure dropping faster than the current manual allows, the driver should:

- A. Pump the brakes repeatedly while driving to rebuild pressure.
- B. Increase speed so the compressor can catch up.
- C. Treat the test as failed, report the defect, and have the excessive leakage corrected before driving.
- D. Continue because the warning device is still working.

Question 46

A trailer skid is especially likely when the driver:

- A. Brakes hard while the trailer is lightly loaded or the road is slippery.
- B. Uses mirrors before a lane change.
- C. Leaves extra following distance.
- D. Checks the coupling before departure.

Question 47

Before moving a tractor-semitrailer, the driver should verify that:

- A. The trailer brakes are disconnected.
- B. The fifth-wheel locking mechanism is engaged and the air and electrical lines are connected and secured.
- C. The kingpin is visible outside the locking jaws.
- D. The landing gear is fully down.

Question 48

A combination vehicle's rollover risk increases when the driver:

- A. Enters a curve too fast or makes an abrupt steering movement.
- B. Uses a safe following distance.
- C. Keeps the load low and centered.
- D. Reduces speed before a curve.

Question 49

Under federal CDL rules, a driver should expect the state to:

- A. Use exactly the same fees in every state.
- B. Waive all testing requirements.
- C. Issue every endorsement automatically.
- D. Administer the actual licensing program while meeting federal minimum standards.

Question 50

A driver should treat a damaged or leaking exhaust system as:

- A. A safety defect requiring prompt attention.
- B. A reason to remove the mirrors.
- C. A condition that improves ventilation.
- D. A cosmetic issue only.

Answer key and explanations

Review each explanation after completing the timed question section. The answer key is for independent study and does not reproduce secure state examination content.

Question 1

Answer: B

It can impair judgment and increase reaction time

Alcohol can impair judgment, attention, coordination, and reaction time even when the driver does not feel impaired. A safe commercial driver never operates under the influence.

Question 2

Answer: B

Stop as soon as it is safe and investigate the problem

A warning device is an early signal that a safety system may not be working. Continue only far enough to reach a safe stopping place and follow the vehicle and employer procedures.

Question 3

Answer: C

See the area behind and beside the vehicle with minimal blind spots

Properly adjusted mirrors expand the driver's view to the rear and sides. They do not eliminate blind spots, so the driver must continue a deliberate visual search.

Question 4

Answer: A

Check the surroundings, secure the cab, and select the correct gear

A safe start includes a 360-degree check, seat belt and door security, awareness of pedestrians and traffic, and the correct gear or range before the vehicle moves.

Question 5

Answer: B

Is low enough to control speed without relying on continuous service-brake use

Selecting a low gear before the descent helps the engine provide retardation. Service brakes are then used in controlled applications so they do not overheat and fade.

Question 6

Answer: D

Use a spotter when available, check the path, and back slowly

Backing is one of the highest-risk low-speed maneuvers. Avoid backing when possible, inspect the path, use a spotter when available, and stop whenever unsure.

Question 7

Answer: D

The roadway ahead, mirrors, sides, intersections, and escape areas

Commercial vehicles need more time and space to respond. A systematic scan looks ahead, to the sides, and behind, while checking for changes and escape options.

Question 8

Answer: A

Tell other road users what the driver intends to do

Signals communicate intent; they do not give the vehicle priority or replace checking mirrors and blind spots. Signal before the maneuver and cancel it after completing the maneuver.

Question 9

Answer: D

Increases, often substantially

Higher speed increases the distance traveled during perception and reaction and increases braking distance. Weight, road conditions, brake condition, and grade also affect stopping distance.

Question 10

Answer: C

The CMV needs more time and distance to stop

A loaded CMV has greater momentum and may require more distance to stop. A larger space cushion gives the driver time to respond without hard braking.

Question 11

Answer: B

Avoid looking directly at the glare and keep scanning the roadway

Directly staring at bright headlights can reduce night vision. Look toward the right side of the lane while maintaining awareness of lane position and hazards.

Question 12

Answer: D

Tire traction can decrease and stopping distance can increase

Water can reduce tire contact with the pavement and obscure hazards. Lower speed, smoother inputs, functioning wipers, and increased space improve control.

Question 13

Answer: B

A child or another road user may follow it

The visible object is a clue to a hidden hazard. Slow down, cover the brake, and scan around and beyond the parked vehicle before proceeding.

Question 14

Answer: A

Hold the wheel firmly and keep the vehicle straight; stay off the brakes until the vehicle has slowed, then brake gently while maintaining control

A sudden hard brake or sharp turn can worsen the loss of control. Maintain a firm grip, stay in the lane, ease off the accelerator, allow the vehicle to slow, and brake gently only after control is stable.

Question 15

Answer: C

Release the accelerator and avoid abrupt braking

A drive-wheel skid can be worsened by acceleration or abrupt braking. Ease off the accelerator, keep the wheels aligned with the intended path, and make smooth corrections.

Question 16

Answer: A

The driver, while following applicable rules and company procedures

The driver must ensure the vehicle is safe before operating it and must monitor cargo and tie-downs during the trip. Other parties may have duties, but the driver cannot ignore an unsafe load.

Question 17

Answer: D

Cuts, bulges, improper inflation, and unsafe tread or damage

Tires are safety-critical. Inspect all visible tires, rims, and valve stems and follow the applicable manual and company limits for tread and inflation.

Question 18

Answer: C

The appropriate hazardous materials qualification and endorsement

Hazardous materials rules depend on the material, quantity, packaging, and vehicle. The H endorsement process includes a knowledge test and, for many applicants, ELDT requirements.

Question 19

Answer: C

Select the proper gear and plan braking before speed builds

A low gear and controlled braking strategy help maintain a safe speed. Waiting until speed builds makes the vehicle harder to control and can overheat the brakes.

Question 20

Answer: A

Stop at a safe location and rest

Fatigue is a safety impairment, not a minor inconvenience. The safe response is to stop in a safe place and rest; stimulants and fresh air do not replace sleep.

Question 21

Answer: D

Report it and have it corrected before operating if it affects safe operation

Drivers must not knowingly operate an unsafe CMV. Report defects according to procedure and do not continue until the vehicle is safe or the proper repair decision is made.

Question 22

Answer: B

The combination is secured, the parking brake is set, and the trailer is properly supported

A safe uncoupling sequence prevents trailer movement and landing-gear collapse. Follow the current state manual and vehicle procedure for setting brakes, supporting the trailer, disconnecting lines, and releasing the fifth wheel.

Question 23

Answer: A

Accessible, properly secured, and maintained as required

Emergency equipment is useful only if it is present, charged, secured, and accessible. The driver should know the vehicle's emergency procedures and when evacuation is safer.

Question 24

Answer: B

The rear wheels of a turning vehicle follow a path inside the front wheels

A long vehicle's rear wheels cut inside the path of the front wheels during a turn. The driver must plan wide enough and watch for curbs, posts, vehicles, and pedestrians.

Question 25

Answer: B

It reduces the driver's control of speed and may prevent use of engine braking

The driver needs the drivetrain and selected gear to help control speed. Coasting can reduce control and is prohibited or restricted in many situations and jurisdictions.

Question 26

Answer: C

Agree on signals, keep the spotter visible, and stop if the spotter disappears

The driver and spotter should agree on signals before the maneuver. If the spotter cannot be seen, the driver must stop and reestablish communication.

Question 27

Answer: D

Gives more time to identify hazards and slow smoothly

Heavy vehicles need more time to respond. Looking ahead helps the driver plan speed, lane position, and escape options before a hazard becomes urgent.

Question 28

Answer: C

Alert others when needed to prevent a collision

A horn is a communication and warning tool. It should be used appropriately to make others aware of the vehicle, not as a substitute for safe speed and space.

Question 29

Answer: B

Road, weather, traffic, visibility, vehicle, cargo, and driver conditions

A posted limit is a ceiling, not a promise that the speed is safe in every condition. The driver must select a speed that preserves control and stopping space.

Question 30

Answer: C

An open area the driver can use if the current path becomes unsafe

Good space management includes planning where the vehicle can go if traffic stops, a tire fails, or another road user makes an unexpected move. An escape route is not automatically legal or safe without checking.

Question 31

Answer: C

Hazards can appear within the distance lit by the headlights

The driver must be able to stop within the visible distance. Reduced speed and careful scanning provide more time to detect people, animals, debris, and roadway changes.

Question 32

Answer: A

Reduce speed and be ready for sudden lateral movement

Wind can push a trailer or bus sideways, especially in open areas and when exiting shelter. Reduce speed, keep both hands available, and make smooth corrections.

Question 33

Answer: A

Traffic or a hazard may be out of sight, so speed should be reduced early

The hillcrest blocks the view of traffic and other hazards. The safest response is to reduce speed before the crest and prepare for a queue or hazard that cannot yet be seen.

Question 34

Answer: D

Stay calm, warn others, and use available methods such as a lower gear or escape ramp
Brake failure requires controlled emergency action. Use engine braking and other available systems, warn traffic, look for a safe escape area or ramp, and avoid actions that remove control.

Question 35

Answer: C

Brakes harder than available traction allows

A wheel locks when braking demand exceeds available tire-road traction. Release or reduce braking as appropriate, regain rolling traction, and steer smoothly in the intended direction.

Question 36

Answer: D

Affect steering, braking, tire loading, and vehicle stability

Cargo placement changes axle loads and the vehicle's handling. The load must be within limits, balanced, and secured so it cannot shift or fall.

Question 37

Answer: A

The fifth-wheel mounting bracket is cracked

A cracked mounting bracket is a safety defect that can compromise the coupling. A proper lock, secured release handle, and connected lines are required conditions for safe operation, but a cracked bracket requires correction before moving.

Question 38

Answer: B

Communicate the presence and hazard class of certain regulated materials

Placards give emergency responders and other road users a visible hazard warning. They do not replace shipping papers, labels, securement, or required training.

Question 39

Answer: D

Excessive heat from overusing the service brakes

Repeated or continuous service-brake use can create heat and reduce braking effectiveness. Use the proper gear and controlled braking to keep the brakes within a safe temperature range.

Question 40

Answer: B

Planning adequate sleep and stopping before becoming dangerously sleepy

Fatigue management begins before the trip. Adequate sleep, realistic scheduling, breaks, and stopping when sleepy are safer than trying to force alertness.

Question 41

Answer: D

Damage components or reduce reliable brake operation

Contamination can corrode or damage air-brake components and interfere with operation. The system must be drained, maintained, and inspected according to the vehicle and state manual.

Question 42

Answer: A

Stop safely as soon as possible and determine the cause

Low air pressure can mean the braking system is losing its ability to operate safely. Stop in a safe place and follow the required inspection and repair procedure.

Question 43

Answer: C

Apply mechanically when air pressure is lost or the parking control is applied

Spring brakes provide parking and emergency braking force. They must be used and released properly; attempting to release them without understanding the system can be dangerous.

Question 44

Answer: B

The pressure available in the air-brake reservoirs or system

Air-pressure gauges help the driver recognize whether the system is building and maintaining adequate pressure. A gauge reading must be considered with warning devices and the vehicle manual.

Question 45

Answer: C

Treat the test as failed, report the defect, and have the excessive leakage corrected before driving. Excessive leakage can reduce braking capacity. Follow the current vehicle and state procedure, report the defect, and have the defect corrected before driving.

Question 46

Answer: A

Brakes hard while the trailer is lightly loaded or the road is slippery

A lightly loaded trailer can lose traction quickly under hard braking. Smooth braking, correct speed, and proper cargo distribution reduce the risk of a trailer skid.

Question 47

Answer: B

The fifth-wheel locking mechanism is engaged and the air and electrical lines are connected and secured

The connection must be mechanically locked and the service, emergency, and electrical connections secured. Landing gear must be raised and the trailer must be supported correctly before departure.

Question 48

Answer: A

Enters a curve too fast or makes an abrupt steering movement

A high center of gravity and trailer dynamics make abrupt steering and excessive curve speed dangerous. Slow before the curve and steer smoothly.

Question 49

Answer: D

Administer the actual licensing program while meeting federal minimum standards

FMCSA sets federal minimum standards, but states issue CDLs and administer their programs. State procedures, fees, manuals, and additional requirements can differ.

Question 50

Answer: A

A safety defect requiring prompt attention

Exhaust defects can allow dangerous gases into the cab and can damage components. Inspect the system and report or correct unsafe conditions before operating.