

Five Basic Steps in Trip Planning

FIVE BASIC STEPS IN PLANNING A TRIP

Not all drivers are responsible for planning their trips. Some do no planning, some do part of the planning, and some do all of the planning. Drivers should know the basic steps in trip planning even if they will not be responsible for planning their trips. Sooner or later the information will be useful.

Make Sure All Paperwork is Up to Date

Paperwork includes driver logs, vehicle inspection reports, driver license, vehicle permits and licenses, and freight documents. Everything must be current, valid, and in compliance with the regulations and requirements of areas you will be traveling in (States, counties, cities, etc.).

Select the Route

This may be a dispatcher responsibility or a driver responsibility. There are many factors that must be considered. The size and weight of the vehicle might mean that certain roads cannot be used. If you will be carrying hazardous cargo, this will also determine which roads you can use. Unstable cargo

(liquids, cattle, etc.) will mean that you want to avoid narrow, sharply curving roads if possible. You also need to consider time of travel, the kind of traffic you will be driving in, and what the weather will be. Heavy rush-hour traffic on certain roads will slow you down. Rain and snow on hilly or curving roads will be dangerous.

Estimate Travel Time and Plan for Rest Stops

Even if the company does it for you, this is a very important step. Your own safety depends on good planning. Examine your route and figure out where you will need to stop. This will help you to avoid dangerous fatigue, especially if you are driving at night. The basic formula for travel time is total distance of your trip divided by average mph. This will tell you about how many hours you will be driving.

You will also have to consider things that will increase your travel time, such as heavy traffic, bad weather, number of stops, and so forth.

Estimate Fuel Usage and Plan for Fuel Stops

The company may do this for you or it may be your responsibility. It's an important step because if you run out of fuel, you might be stuck for some time. You may be able to plan rest and fuel stops together sometimes. You need to know how much fuel your rig carries and what the mpg is. After considering the type of traffic and road conditions and anything else that could increase the amount of fuel you'll need, check your map for fuel stops.

Plan for Expense Money and Personal Needs

This is your responsibility. The company will have policies on issuing money in advance, providing credit cards, and approved methods for paying bills and getting reimbursed for money you spend. You need to consider how often you will have to stop, the amount of fuel you will be purchasing, tolls, the number of meals you will pay for, whether you will be staying in a motel, etc. You also need to make sure you have money for person expenditures (things that the company will not pay for) finally, you need to make sure you have all clothing you will need, required tools, etc.