

CDL Cost Checklist

What you'll actually pay for a CDL in 2026 — and every legitimate way to pay \$0. Print it, check things off, don't overpay.

1 Pick your tuition path (check one)

- ☐ **Private CDL school:** \$3,000–\$8,000 (3–5 weeks, full time)
- ☐ **Community / technical college:** \$1,000–\$6,000 nationally; Ohio runs higher — Clark State (Springfield) \$5,100 all-in, Stark State \$7,165 (2025–2026)
- ☐ **Company-sponsored:** \$0 upfront — carriers cover tuition for a driving commitment (~12 months; Roehl: 120,000 solo miles)
- ☐ **Amazon Career Choice:** \$0 — pre-paid tuition at approved providers after 90 days; CDL is eligible
- ☐ **Amazon TOM Team:** \$0 — hired as Transportation Associate (~\$24–\$25/hr), Amazon pays for your CDL

2 Budget the fees nobody puts in the headline

- ☐ DOT physical: **\$75–\$150** (required before your learner's permit; valid 2 years)
- ☐ Drug test: **\$30–\$60**
- ☐ Commercial learner's permit (CLP): **\$10–\$50**
- ☐ CDL license fee: **\$50–\$200**
- ☐ Skills / road test fee: **\$50–\$200** (some schools include it)
- ☐ Endorsements (HazMat, tanker, doubles): **\$10–\$100 each**

Rule of thumb: add **\$200–\$500** on top of tuition unless the school bundles everything (Clark State's \$5,100 and Tri-C's \$5,000 do).

3 Count the hidden cost: lost wages

- ☐ Unpaid training weeks × my hourly wage = \$_____ (5 weeks at \$20/hr ≈ \$4,000)
- Paid academies and \$0 paths erase this cost too — not just tuition.

4 Before you enroll, verify

- ☐ School is on the FMCSA Training Provider Registry (required since 2022)
- ☐ Total all-in price in writing — tuition + every fee above
- ☐ Career Choice: my school is an **approved provider** (check first)
- ☐ Company-sponsored: commitment length and early-exit payback in writing
- ☐ OhioMeansJobs / workforce board checked for grant funding

5 The ROI math

Ohio truck drivers average **\$55,610/yr** (\$26.73/hr; BLS, May 2023); Columbus ~\$57,000. Even a \$7,000 out-of-pocket license unlocks \$15,000–\$25,000 more per year than warehouse work — it typically pays for itself within months. On a \$0 path, the return is immediate.

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Prices change — always verify on the school's or employer's official page before enrolling.