

Backing of Vehicles

1. Basic backing maneuvers.

The following are the basic backing maneuvers (techniques) a driver needs to master in order to properly perform his/her job:

- * straight line backing;
- * alley dock backing;
- * parallel parking;
- * sight side backing; and
- * blind side backing.

1. Straight line backing is the simplest maneuver to learn. It is fundamental in learning all other backing maneuvers.

2. Alley dock backing involves backing while turning into a space that is 90 degrees to the truck. It most often occurs at loading docks when the driver must back in from off the street or between two vehicles.

3. Parallel parking involves backing into a space along a curb or dock. While the principal is the same as parallel parking a car, it is one of the more difficult to learn with a tractor-trailer.

4. Sight side backing is backing toward the left side of the vehicle. The driver can see the intended trailer path. Sight side backing is preferred, as the driver has maximum visibility.

5. Blind side backing is backing toward the right side of the vehicle. The driver has limited visibility and can only see where he/she is going in the truck's rearview mirrors. Blindsight backing is more dangerous than sight side backing and should be avoided when possible.

2. General procedures all drivers should follow when performing a backing maneuver.

Drivers need to keep in mind that all backing maneuvers have the potential to become dangerous. In most backing situations, even a second or two is enough time for someone or something to get in the path of a vehicle.

A driver should perform the following safety checks before starting a backing maneuver:

- * get out of the vehicle and check to the rear;
- * check above, under, and to the sides of the vehicle;
- * check for adequate swing clearance;

- * check in front of the vehicle (if pulling forward is necessary); and
- * warn others that the truck is backing.

Once the safety checks have been made the driver shouldn't delay in moving the vehicle. Any delay could allow time for another potential hazard. If there is a delay, the safety checks should be conducted a second time.

Starting in the proper position (in as straight of a line as possible) is the key to successful backing. Other key backing tips include:

- * being patient;
- * backing as slowly as possible using the lowest reverse gear;
- * not accelerating or riding the clutch;
- * not oversteering;
- * backing to the left side (sight side) whenever possible;
- * using mirrors;
- * using the horn and flashers;
- * turning off the radio and keeping the windows open to listen for noises;
- * having someone watch and guide the rig from the outside (if possible);
- * checking behind the rig;
- * watching for obstacles that can tilt the trailer (curbs, ramps, etc.);
- * looking out for overhead objects (wires, tree limbs, etc.); and
- * restarting the backing maneuver instead of backing poorly.

3. Assistance of a spotter

Depending on company policy, the driver may have the option of using a helper to complete a backing maneuver.

When using a helper, the driver and helper must agree on signals, with the most important signal being stop. The helper must also be in position so that the driver can see the helper in the truck's rearview mirror at all times.

Even though the driver is using a helper he/she must continue to take full responsibility for his/her actions. The driver can't neglect his/her responsibility because a helper is available.