



CDL Class A

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1. During a pre-trip inspection, which component should you check for cracks, missing bolts, and proper mounting?

- A. Coupling device (fifth wheel)
- B. Fuel cap
- C. Steering wheel
- D. Windshield wipers

2. What is the correct order to begin the 7-step pre-trip inspection?

- A. Check the tires first, then inspect the cab
- B. Start the engine, then walk around the vehicle
- C. Approach the vehicle, look for leaks and damage from a distance, then check the engine compartment
- D. Check the mirrors and lights before checking the engine

3. During a pre-trip inspection of the engine compartment, which fluid level does the CDL manual specifically require you to check?

- A. Windshield washer fluid only
- B. Transmission fluid only
- C. Engine oil level
- D. Coolant additive concentration

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4. How many steps are in the standard CDL 7-step pre-trip inspection procedure?

- A. 5
- B. 7
- C. 6
- D. 9



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5. While driving, your low air pressure warning light and buzzer activate. According to the CDL manual, at approximately what air pressure does this warning typically trigger?

- A. 60 psi
- B. 45 psi
- C. 100 psi
- D. 90 psi

6. During an en-route inspection stop, you notice one of your drive axle tires has a tread depth measuring 2/32 of an inch. What action is required?

- A. Reduce speed and report it at the destination
- B. You may continue until the next scheduled maintenance stop
- C. You may continue; the minimum for drive axles is 2/32 inch
- D. You must remove the vehicle from service immediately; drive axles require at least 4/32 inch

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7. Which of the following brake defects found during inspection would place a vehicle out of service?

- A. Brake adjustment within 1/4 inch of the maximum stroke limit
- B. Lining thickness exactly at the manufacturer's minimum specification
- C. A cracked brake drum
- D. Slightly worn brake shoe hardware

8. During a pre-trip inspection of the coupling, you push forward on the trailer and the fifth wheel does not release. What does this indicate?

- A. The glad hands are not connected
- B. The landing gear needs to be lowered further
- C. The coupling is properly locked and secure
- D. The kingpin is worn and must be replaced before driving

9. During your pre-trip walk-around, you find that one running light on the trailer is not working. What must you do before driving?

- A. Cover the broken light with tape and proceed
- B. Note the defect and have it repaired before operating the vehicle
- C. You may proceed as long as at least half the lights are working
- D. Drive only during daylight hours until it is repaired



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10. During a pre-trip inspection of a vehicle with air brakes, you fan the brakes to reduce air pressure. At approximately what pressure should the spring (parking) brakes automatically activate?

- A. 60 psi
- B. 90 psi
- C. 40 psi
- D. 20 psi

11. When starting a loaded tractor-trailer on a level surface, which gear should you typically begin in?

- A. Neutral, then ease into first gear only after the engine reaches operating temperature
- B. A low gear that allows smooth movement without excessive clutch slipping
- C. Second gear to avoid jerking the trailer
- D. The highest gear available to conserve fuel

12. When coming to a stop in a vehicle equipped with a manual transmission, what is the correct procedure for the clutch?

- A. Pump the clutch repeatedly to help slow the vehicle
- B. Leave the clutch engaged until the vehicle is nearly stopped, then push it in
- C. Push the clutch in well before braking to reduce engine braking
- D. Shift into neutral immediately and coast to a stop

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13. When backing a straight truck, your first action after checking mirrors should be to:

- A. Turn on hazard lights and sound the horn three times
- B. Begin reversing slowly and steer as needed once underway
- C. Shift directly into the highest reverse gear for better control
- D. Get out and walk the path to identify hazards before moving



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14. Which of the following best describes the purpose of a retarder on a large commercial vehicle?

- A. It slows the vehicle by applying resistance to the drivetrain, supplementing the service brakes
- B. It increases the engine's power output during acceleration
- C. It locks the rear axle to prevent skidding on wet pavement
- D. It automatically downshifts the transmission when descending a grade

15. During the double-clutching technique, what happens between the first and second clutch disengagement?

- A. The driver releases the accelerator, lets the clutch out, and matches engine RPM to road speed in neutral before engaging the next gear
- B. The driver holds the clutch pedal halfway down while moving the gearshift to the new gear
- C. The driver pumps the clutch twice to clear air from the clutch lines before selecting a gear
- D. The driver blips the throttle while keeping the clutch fully depressed throughout the shift

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16. When should a driver turn OFF a vehicle's retarder?

- A. Any time the vehicle speed exceeds 55 mph
- B. When the road surface is wet, icy, or otherwise slippery
- C. Whenever carrying a load heavier than 26,000 pounds
- D. Only during backing maneuvers in a tight space

17. If you miss a gear while shifting upward through a multi-speed transmission, what is the correct response?

- A. Come to a complete stop, then restart from a low gear
- B. Skip two gears ahead to compensate for the missed gear
- C. Return to neutral, bring engine RPM to the proper range, and attempt the shift again
- D. Force the lever into the desired gear using firm pressure

18. What does road speed (vehicle speed in mph) have to do with when you shift gears?

- A. Each gear has an appropriate road speed range, and you shift when that range is reached, especially when a tachometer is unavailable
- B. Federal rules require all CDL drivers to shift at exactly 10 mph intervals regardless of load
- C. You shift based on road speed only when the tachometer is broken
- D. Road speed is irrelevant; only engine RPM determines the correct shift point



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19. A driver is backing a 53-foot trailer into a dock using a 90-degree blind-side backing maneuver. After the initial setup, the driver realizes the trailer is drifting wide. What is the correct steering correction?

- A. Accelerate slightly to straighten the trailer through increased kingpin tension
- B. Turn the steering wheel away from the drift (toward the trailer) to bring the trailer back on line
- C. Stop immediately and pull forward to reset; do not attempt a correction while reversing
- D. Turn the steering wheel toward the drift to push the trailer back on line

20. A driver is descending a 6% grade in a fully loaded combination vehicle. After several miles, the driver notices the service brakes feel 'spongy' and require more pedal travel than normal. The MOST likely cause is:

- A. Brake fade caused by heat buildup from excessive or continuous brake application on the grade
- B. The transmission has automatically downshifted, reducing driveline resistance
- C. Air pressure has dropped below 90 psi, causing partial loss of hydraulic assist
- D. The retarder has engaged automatically and is interfering with normal pedal feel

21. When double-clutching an upshift in a 10-speed transmission under a heavy load at highway speed, the driver releases the accelerator and moves to neutral. Before completing the shift into the next higher gear, engine RPM should be:

- A. Higher than it was in the previous gear, because a higher gear always requires a higher RPM
- B. Brought to idle speed before engaging any gear to prevent wear on synchronizers
- C. Lower than it was in the previous gear, because a higher gear turns more slowly at the same road speed
- D. The same as it was at the top of the previous gear to avoid any change in driveline torque

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22. How far ahead should a commercial driver look when driving at highway speeds?

- A. 3 to 4 seconds ahead
- B. 5 to 8 seconds ahead
- C. 20 to 25 seconds ahead
- D. 12 to 15 seconds ahead



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23. When driving in city traffic at lower speeds, how far ahead should a commercial driver scan?

- A. About 1 to 2 seconds ahead
- B. One full city block ahead
- C. Just past the front bumper of the vehicle
- D. 30 to 40 seconds ahead

24. When is it appropriate to use your horn while operating a commercial motor vehicle?

- A. Routinely before every intersection to alert pedestrians
- B. Only to express frustration at slow traffic
- C. To warn others of your presence when necessary to help avoid a collision
- D. Whenever you are merging onto a highway

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25. Which side of a tractor-trailer has the largest blind spot?

- A. The passenger's right side, extending diagonally toward the rear of the trailer
- B. Directly behind the trailer
- C. Directly in front of the cab
- D. On the driver's left side

26. When preparing to change lanes on a multi-lane highway, after signaling a driver should do what before moving?

- A. Move immediately as long as a mirror was checked
- B. Wait exactly 3 seconds then move
- C. Flash the signal twice more then proceed
- D. Confirm it is safe and allow surrounding drivers enough time to react to the signal

27. You are stopped at a red light that turns green. What should you do before moving the vehicle?

- A. Sound the horn once and proceed immediately
- B. Shift directly into the highest gear to clear the intersection quickly
- C. Check all mirrors and scan the intersection for any crossing traffic or pedestrians
- D. Flash your headlights to alert cross traffic

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28. What is the CDL manual's baseline following-distance rule for a vehicle over 40 feet long traveling at speeds above 40 mph?

- A. One second of following distance for every 10 feet of vehicle length, plus one additional second
- B. One second for every 5 feet of vehicle length
- C. Four seconds regardless of vehicle length or speed
- D. Two car lengths at all speeds

29. When backing a tractor-trailer, which mirrors are most useful for monitoring the path directly behind the trailer on both sides?

- A. The convex wide-angle mirrors mounted on the front bumper
- B. The in-cab backup camera display alone
- C. The flat primary (plane) mirrors on both sides of the cab
- D. An overhead interior rearview mirror

30. A driver is operating a 70-foot combination vehicle at 55 mph. Using the CDL manual's following-distance formula, what is the correct minimum following distance?

- A. 6 seconds
- B. 7 seconds
- C. 9 seconds
- D. 8 seconds



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Answer Key & Explanations

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1. A — Coupling device (fifth wheel)

The CDL manual requires you to inspect the fifth wheel for cracks, broken or missing parts, and to verify it is properly mounted and locked before every trip.

2. C — Approach the vehicle, look for leaks and damage from a distance, then check the engine compartment

Step 1 of the 7-step inspection is to approach and do an overview of the vehicle from a distance, looking for obvious damage, leaks, or tilting before moving closer.

3. C — Engine oil level

The CDL manual requires checking engine oil level as part of the engine compartment inspection; it must be at the proper level with no signs of leaks.

4. B — 7

The standard FMCSA/AAMVA CDL manual defines exactly 7 steps for the pre-trip vehicle inspection, covering everything from vehicle overview to signal and brake checks.

5. A — 60 psi

The CDL manual states the low air pressure warning device must activate before pressure drops below 60 psi, signaling the driver to stop safely and not continue driving.

6. C — You may continue; the minimum for drive axles is 2/32 inch

Federal regulations require a minimum tread depth of 4/32 inch on front axle tires and all drive axle tires; 2/32 inch is only the minimum for other positions, so a drive axle at 2/32 is an out-of-service condition.

7. C — A cracked brake drum

A cracked brake drum is a critical out-of-service defect per FMCSA regulations because it compromises braking performance and could lead to complete brake failure.

8. C — The coupling is properly locked and secure

Pushing forward on the trailer while the tractor is in low gear and not releasing confirms the fifth wheel is properly locked onto the kingpin, which is a required part of the coupling inspection.

9. B — Note the defect and have it repaired before operating the vehicle

Any lighting defect that affects required safety equipment must be repaired before the vehicle is operated; noting defects does not satisfy the requirement if the equipment is needed for legal operation.

10. C — 40 psi

The CDL manual states that spring brakes should automatically activate (pop out) when air pressure falls into the range of approximately 20 to 45 psi, with the generally tested threshold around 40 psi, ensuring the vehicle is held if air is lost.



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11. B — A low gear that allows smooth movement without excessive clutch slipping

The CDL manual instructs drivers to start in a low gear appropriate for the load and road conditions so the vehicle moves smoothly without excessive clutch wear or slippage.

12. B — Leave the clutch engaged until the vehicle is nearly stopped, then push it in

The CDL manual states you should keep the clutch engaged while braking to use engine braking, and only disengage the clutch when the engine speed drops too low, just before the vehicle stops.

13. D — Get out and walk the path to identify hazards before moving

The CDL manual's 'GOAL' principle (Get Out And Look) requires the driver to physically inspect the path behind the vehicle before any backing maneuver to identify obstacles and hazards.

14. A — It slows the vehicle by applying resistance to the drivetrain, supplementing the service brakes

The CDL manual explains that retarders (engine, exhaust, hydraulic, or electric) help slow the vehicle without using the service brakes, reducing brake wear and heat on long downgrades.

15. A — The driver releases the accelerator, lets the clutch out, and matches engine RPM to road speed in neutral before engaging the next gear

Double-clutching requires pushing the clutch in and moving to neutral, then releasing the clutch and adjusting RPM to match road speed, then pushing the clutch in again and selecting the target gear so gear speeds are synchronized.

16. B — When the road surface is wet, icy, or otherwise slippery

The CDL manual warns that retarders can cause the rear wheels to skid on slippery surfaces because they apply braking force only to the drive axles; drivers should turn them off in slippery conditions.

17. C — Return to neutral, bring engine RPM to the proper range, and attempt the shift again

The CDL manual advises that if a gear cannot be engaged cleanly, the driver should return to neutral, re-match RPM to road speed, and reattempt the shift rather than forcing the lever.

18. A — Each gear has an appropriate road speed range, and you shift when that range is reached, especially when a tachometer is unavailable

The CDL manual notes that drivers can use road speed as a guide for shifting because each gear corresponds to a road speed range, which is particularly useful when a tachometer is absent or difficult to read.

19. B — Turn the steering wheel away from the drift (toward the trailer) to bring the trailer back on line

When backing, steering away from the drift (toward the side the trailer is drifting toward) causes the rear of the trailer to swing back toward the intended path; this is the standard CDL manual correction technique for off-track backing.

20. A — Brake fade caused by heat buildup from excessive or continuous brake application on the grade

The CDL manual identifies brake fade as a condition caused by overheating of the brakes from prolonged or excessive application on downgrades; proper technique is to use a low gear and apply brakes in short firm applications rather than riding them continuously.

21. C — Lower than it was in the previous gear, because a higher gear turns more slowly at the same road speed



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During an upshift, the driver must allow RPM to drop in neutral so that the engine speed matches the slower input-shaft speed required by the higher gear at the current road speed; engaging with too-high RPM causes a harsh clunk and driveline shock.

22. D — 12 to 15 seconds ahead

The CDL manual instructs drivers to look 12 to 15 seconds ahead at highway speeds to identify hazards early enough to respond safely.

23. B — One full city block ahead

At city speeds the CDL manual recommends scanning at least one city block ahead, which equates to roughly 12 seconds of travel time and provides adequate hazard recognition distance.

24. C — To warn others of your presence when necessary to help avoid a collision

The CDL manual identifies the horn as a safety device to be used when needed to warn others and help prevent a collision, not as a routine courtesy signal.

25. A — The passenger's right side, extending diagonally toward the rear of the trailer

The CDL manual identifies the right-side blind spot as the largest danger zone because it extends diagonally from the cab past the entire length of the trailer, making vehicles alongside the right side invisible to the driver.

26. D — Confirm it is safe and allow surrounding drivers enough time to react to the signal

The CDL manual emphasizes that a turn signal communicates intent; the driver must verify the move is safe and give other drivers adequate time to respond before executing the lane change.

27. C — Check all mirrors and scan the intersection for any crossing traffic or pedestrians

The CDL manual instructs drivers to re-check mirrors and scan the intersection before proceeding on a green light because other vehicles may have run the red or pedestrians may be in the crosswalk.

28. A — One second of following distance for every 10 feet of vehicle length, plus one additional second

The CDL manual requires one second per 10 feet of vehicle length as the base following distance, with one additional second added whenever speed exceeds 40 mph.

29. C — The flat primary (plane) mirrors on both sides of the cab

The CDL manual directs drivers to use both flat primary mirrors while backing so they can track the trailer's movement and verify clearance along each side.

30. D — 8 seconds

The CDL manual requires one second per 10 feet of vehicle length (70 feet = 7 seconds) plus one additional second for speeds above 40 mph, giving a minimum of 8 seconds total.



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