



Backing techniques can be mastered with practice. But backing procedures are more difficult to develop. They're not recommended unless they're absolutely necessary.

One in four commercial vehicle accidents takes place because of a backing maneuver gone wrong. Lack of visibility, along with the unique characteristics of various kinds of equipment, makes backing tough.

The furthest an experienced double-rig driver can back his/her vehicle in a straight line may be no more than 10 feet. But the task is something every driver has to tackle. When you do, it's important to make sure your cargo doesn't shift.

General Tips

- The first advice you're likely to get from an experienced driver about backing up is "Don't!" But when you have to, here are some practical ideas, based on thinking ahead.
- Set yourself up to back out of traffic, not into it.
- Learn where other rigs stop and leave yourself a forward way out.
- Get out of the cab and check what's behind you for yourself.
- Estimate overhead and side clearance obstacles.
- Adjust all mirrors for maximum rear and side vision — both sides.
- If cargo doors must be opened before reaching the dock, secure them carefully.



Straight Truck Technique

Since a straight truck is a single component, it's backed like an automobile. That is, the steering wheel turns in the same direction you want to go.

Turn the wheel to the right if you want to position the rear of the van to the right. Your biggest problem is visibility.

Combination Technique

A tractor-trailer adds a component and creates a new problem for the backing driver. In fact, you perform two steering maneuvers.

First, you aim your trailer by running the steering wheel in the opposite direction. What happens is that the rear tractor axle becomes the trailer steering axle.

After initiating the steering action, you begin turning the tractor steering wheel in the same direction you want to go. In the second maneuver, the tractor will follow the semitrailer around. Your rig actually moves in an "S" to get you where you want to go.

Visibility is limited, but backing to the left will help.

Doubles and Triples

You can figure with multiple units, that you will multiply the backing difficulty with every component you add to your rig. However, your turning radius is shorter than with a semi-trailer. (Just watch out that you don't pull the air lines and electrical cables on the tightest turns.)

The trick is to straighten the whole rig first. That way, you give yourself a straight line to follow. If a component gets out of line, there is no correction technique. You just start over.

Don't Forget the Cargo

Before any maneuver it's good practice to check that the cargo is still secure. It's especially important when backing. Be prepared for sudden shifts caused by braking or impact.

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