

You drive *that*?

Is that *your* truck?

Are you riding with your *husband*?

Aren't you *scared*?

These are some of the questions I get asked every day. My answers got very repetitive: Yes, I drive that. Yes, it's mine (it's assigned to me). No, I'm not riding with my husband. I have come across a vast amount of inconsiderate people, most of whom don't have a clue what it takes to drive a tractor-trailer.

Truck driving takes someone who is willing to be a continuous learner, and someone who is willing to respect the machine and know what it's capable of. As silly as it sounds, you must become one with the truck. In the beginning, when I took the leap of faith into my career as a truck driver, I knew I was taking a risk. But, I would not change the decision I made for anything.

My mother was a truck driver before I was even a twinkle in her eye, so I remember very little about her actual driving. I do, however, have very vivid memories of her stories. She always had a CB radio at home, and she went by the handle "The Stranger." I found it fascinating to listen to her and other drivers talk. My mother could be socially awkward in person, like me, but could open up when not subjected to face-to-face interaction. I admired her ability to talk and be so comfortable in her own skin. I learned a lot from her stories and talks with her friends.

Something that passed down to me from my mother is my love for traveling. It seems like I am always searching for the next place to call home. Every time I have tried to settle down, I've only ended up having the urge to get up and go again. After moving across different states, my most recent move has brought me to Ohio, where I began working as a mail carrier.

This job offered financial stability, but I worked long hours in brutal weather conditions. Because of this, I decided it was time to find a new career. After reaching out, a friend recommended Keller Trucking. I thought of my mother and decided to go on a ride along with a local driver by the name of Al Beamer. To say I was thrilled about this opportunity was an understatement. I could hardly sleep the night before!

My expectations were met. I had finally felt complete for a day. I knew this was the path I wanted to take. I quickly applied with Keller to be a truck driver!

I was so gung-ho on being a truck driver, I thought everything would be perfect! But after failing the functional capacity test, I started to reconsider my decision. I was very down on myself because of the failure. But I recognized that the test is there for a reason and I saw this as an opportunity to determine just how bad I wanted this job! I hired a trainer and worked towards my goal every day.

After all the hard work, I then passed my functional capacity test and soon after passed my CDL-A permit test! Now it was time for the real fun!

Training was overwhelming to say the least. A lot of information is given to you in a short amount of time. I recommend staying focused, putting your phone down and taking notes! Everything started to come together for me once I got behind the wheel after being in the classroom.

To this day I hear my trainers' voices in my head, asking me what I should do and guiding me through situations. The information I received from the trainers and the collaboration with my classmates is priceless. It is why I am the driver that I am today.

When it came time to take our CDL test, my classmates and I all failed our first test on the same day. Although this was common, we were still disappointed in ourselves. Like the functional capacity test, I accepted this as a challenge. I worked hard on the range the following week.

Over the course of that week, I had a mental breakthrough. I was overthinking! I have a tractor and a trailer that needs to go from point A to point B. It's that simple. This realization helped reduce some anxiety I had about the test and it provided reassurance.

On the second try all my classmates and I passed our CDL test. We were thrilled! We all celebrated that night.

Finally, I hit the road with my 10,000-mile Finishing Program trainer, Joe. He gave me some basic tips such as what to pack and eat and helped me get acclimated to this new career.

Now, I proudly drive truck solo for Keller Trucking. I started this journey with a dog. Now I have a dog, a truck, and a whole new family made up of the most diverse, loving, caring, and sweet people. This new family grows every day. I would not change the choice I made for anything, except maybe starting sooner.



Charlotte Short
Professional Truck Driver
Thomas E. Keller Trucking, Inc.