

Could You Answer a Roadside Inspector in English Without an App?

A simple practice guide for truck drivers

**You do not need perfect grammar.
You do need clear, job-related English.**

How to use this guide

Practice for 10 minutes at a time. Ask another driver, dispatcher or safety manager to read the questions. Answer without using a translation app or a prepared script.

Change the order of the questions. Use your real trip, load, logbook and truck information. The goal is to understand the question and give a true answer - not to memorize one sentence.

Important

These are practice examples. They are not a complete list of inspection questions. An inspector may use different words or ask follow-up questions.

Before you start

CHECK Know where the trip started and where it will end.

CHECK Know what you are hauling and the load weight.

CHECK Know your current duty status and recent driving time.

CHECK Know where to find your CDL, medical information, shipping papers and ELD records.

CHECK Know basic truck and trailer parts in English.

TA Trans reminder

If you do not understand a question, say: "Please repeat the question slowly." Do not guess. Do not give information that does not match your paperwork.

1. Questions about the trip and load

Replace the example information with your real information.

QUESTION OR INSTRUCTION	SIMPLE ANSWER OR ACTION
Where did your trip start?	My trip started in Gary, Indiana.
Where are you going?	I am going to Columbus, Ohio.
What are you hauling?	I am hauling steel coils on a flatbed.
How much does the load weigh?	The cargo weighs about 42,000 pounds.
Who is the shipper?	The shipper is listed here on the bill of lading.
Who is the receiver?	The receiver is [company name] in [city and state].
Is the load secured?	Yes. I checked the securement before I left and again after the first 50 miles.
Do you have a permit?	Yes. The permit is here. / No. This load does not require a permit.

Useful load words

shipper	the place that sends the freight
receiver	the place that receives the freight
bill of lading / BOL	the main shipping document
cargo	the freight on the truck
securement	chains, straps and other equipment that hold the cargo
permit	written permission for a load that is oversize or overweight

2. Questions about hours, records and equipment

QUESTION OR INSTRUCTION	SIMPLE ANSWER OR ACTION
May I see your driver's license?	Yes. Here is my CDL.
What is your current duty status?	I am on duty, not driving.
When did you last take 10 hours off?	My last 10-hour break ended at [time] on [date].
How many hours did you drive today?	I drove [number] hours today.
Show me your logs.	Yes. I will open the ELD and show the requested records.
Do you have shipping papers?	Yes. The shipping papers are here.
Turn on the headlights.	Turn on the headlights and wait for the next instruction.
Apply the service brake.	Press and hold the brake pedal.
Release the parking brake.	Release it only when the inspector tells you and it is safe.
Open the hood.	Open the hood safely and wait for the next instruction.

Truck and trailer words

steer tire front tire used for steering	drive tires tires on the tractor's powered axles
trailer tires tires on the trailer axles	fifth wheel connection between the tractor and trailer
landing gear trailer support legs	air lines lines that carry air between tractor and trailer
brake chamber part that uses air pressure to apply the brakes	lights and reflectors equipment that helps others see the truck

3. Road signs and safety phrases

QUESTION OR INSTRUCTION	SIMPLE ANSWER OR ACTION
STOP	Come to a complete stop.
YIELD	Slow down and give the right of way.
ROAD CLOSED	Do not continue on this road.
DETOUR	Follow the temporary route.
LOW CLEARANCE	Check the height. Do not continue if the truck will not fit.
STEEP GRADE	Choose a safe speed and gear before going down.
LANE CLOSED AHEAD	Move safely into an open lane.
WEIGH STATION OPEN	Enter the weigh station when required.

Helpful phrases

QUESTION OR INSTRUCTION	SIMPLE ANSWER OR ACTION
Please repeat the question slowly.	Use this when you did not hear or understand the full question.
Do you want me to show the log on the screen?	Use this to confirm what record the inspector wants.
The defect is on the driver's side of the trailer.	Use this to explain the location of a problem.
I need to contact my safety department.	Use this when you need company help after the English assessment.
I understand. I will wait here.	Use this to confirm an instruction.

Translation apps

FMCSA guidance says translation apps, interpreters, cue cards and telephone translation services should not be used to help a driver complete the English-language interview. After a driver passes the English assessment, the inspector may choose other communication methods to complete the rest of the inspection safely.

Source and disclaimer

Based on FMCSA English-language proficiency roadside enforcement guidance dated April 16, 2026, and the federal driver qualification rule in 49 CFR 391.11(b)(2). Read the current guidance at [fmcsa.dot.gov](https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov). This practice sheet is educational and does not replace current law, official guidance or company safety procedures.