

Driving a Moving Truck

1. Complete an initial moving truck inspection

-Check for any visible damage to the interior or exterior of the truck and report it if you notice something. Then, check its tires, signals, lights, and side-view mirrors. Make sure you know how to operate the turn signals, windshield wipers, and parking brake.

2. Make sure the truck is loaded properly

Are you confident you can load the rental truck properly before driving away?

Before you drive off toward your final destination, one thing that will make your trip safer is to know that your belongings have been packed well in the back of the van and will be secure throughout the journey.

Sudden braking and sharp turns may cause some of your loaded household items to shift and get damaged as a result. It is hard to drive a rental truck as it is, so the last thing you'll ever need is to worry about whether your stuff in the back is safe or not.

3. Get to your desired speed gradually

As you'll soon find out, driving a moving truck is very different to driving a standard car in almost all aspects. Due to the huge size and the enormous weight, your rental truck will need some time to get up to speed.

Compared to the speed and acceleration of your own vehicle, the rental van will most likely feel too slow and sluggish.

If it's your first time driving a moving truck, remember to build to the desired speed gradually. Avoid accelerating too quickly because that will increase drastically the truck's fuel consumption and may cause your cargo items in the back to shift.

4. Apply the brakes early

One thing is clear – a super heavy moving vehicle loaded up with a house's worth of items will not behave like a normal car. And while it's a bad idea to accelerate the moving van too rapidly (if that's even possible), you're strongly advised against braking too suddenly and too hard.

Slamming on the brakes of a moving truck may not only damage your possessions in the back, but it may also throw the entire vehicle off-balance and thus cause you to lose control of it. In bad weather conditions (rain, snow, ice, strong winds), sudden braking can easily lead to a road accident.

So, make sure you slow the moving van gradually when you need to stop. Always go easy onto the brakes and apply them early to give yourself enough time to brake smoothly before turns or when approaching intersections, crossings or traffic lights.

5. Keep a safe distance from other vehicles

Driving a rental truck across the country can be a real adventure. It's up to you to make sure its ending is good.

Having in mind that moving trucks take longer to stop than regular cars, it's important to keep at least double the distance from the cars in front of you than you would keep if you were driving your own car.

If you have trouble figuring out that safe distance, then use the 4-seconds rule. That rule is simple enough – stay at least 4 seconds behind the vehicle that is in front of you.

To gauge that recommended safety distance, count the seconds from the moment the car ahead of you passes a specific landmark until the instant you pass that same spot on the road.

When driving the moving truck in bad weather, increase that distance even more.

6. Exercise extra caution when changing lanes and merging

Driving a moving truck cross country is anything but easy. It won't be long before you realize that the moving truck doesn't have a center rearview mirror inside the cabin. As a result, you'll have to rely entirely on the side rearview mirrors, and that can be rather tricky at times.

The lack of a center rearview mirror will make changing lanes and merging much more challenging, at least at the beginning of your trip. Use the little blindspot mirrors attached to the side rearview mirrors to keep track of what's happening behind you.

It's exceedingly important that you keep in the right lane when driving the rental truck on the highway and let faster vehicles go by.

7. Don't pass other vehicles unless you absolutely must

As a general rule, you should refrain from overtaking other vehicles, especially when you're driving uphill or on narrow roads. Due to the large size of your truck and the lack of proper acceleration and speed, your rental truck will require much more time and distance to complete the overtaking maneuver successfully.

However, even when you stick to the right lane on the highway, at times you'll get stuck behind vehicles that go even slower than you. And when that happens, you may not have another choice but to overtake that slower car or truck in front of you.

If you absolutely must overtake a vehicle, do it very carefully: check the mirrors for any cars in the other lane, signal the start of the maneuver and then step on the gas.

8. Make your turns wider than usual

Moving trucks are not just larger cars.

Our tips on how to drive a large moving truck when moving across the country continue with a very important aspect of your road trip – making safe turns.

Another thing to remember before you sit behind the steering wheel of your truck rental is that moving trucks require a lot more space to turn than standard passenger cars, especially when executing right turns.

Whenever you need to make turns when driving a rental truck, slow down as much as necessary and even consider coming to a complete stop if a turn seems somewhat trickier. Switch on your turn signals and then check the side mirrors to determine whether or not you have enough room for the turn.

Remember to always make your turns wider than what you're used to in order to avoid hitting a curb or bumping into another vehicle.

9. Use caution when parking the truck

Managing one of those large vehicles will be 10x tougher than driving your own car and will require your utmost concentration and extra caution.

Remember to set the emergency brake every time you park the rental truck and turn the wheels away from the curb facing uphill and toward the curb when facing downhill. Always park the truck in well-lit areas where you can see it easily.

Also, avoid backing up to minimize stressful situations – either look for drive-through parking lots or ask somebody to guide you at the truck rear as you’re going slowly in reverse. Whenever you need to back up, do rely on the rearview mirrors for guidance and your spotter when available.

10. Pay special attention to truck-specific road signs

When you drive your own car, you never worry too much about any road signs that are meant for truck drivers, do you? This time, however, things are a bit different and since you’re a truck driver now, you’re going to need to pay special attention to those truck-specific road signs.

The three types of signs you should be especially aware of are the ones about overhead clearance, weigh station stops, and lane restrictions. Also, observe closely the speed limit signs.

As a rule of thumb, when driving a moving van cross country, you should keep your truck speed at about 10 mph below the specified speed limit.

11. Keep an eye out for those overhead clearance signs

A single mistake when driving a moving truck across the country can prove to be costly. Too costly.

To understand how difficult it is to drive a moving truck when you’ve decided not to use the services of a good cross-country moving company, just add the extra pressure of keeping your eyes peeled for signs that specify the permissible overhead clearance.

Moving trucks are tall and some of them come very close to reaching the permitted height clearance on the road, while others may exceed it.

There should be a sticker somewhere inside the truck cabin that specifies the overhead clearance of the vehicle. If you can’t find it, request that information from the van rental company.

So, whenever you’re about to drive under a low-clearance passage like a bridge or a tunnel, compare your rental truck’s clearance with that marked on the road signs.

Important: Never go under an underpass until you’ve made sure the truck can pass through it problem-free.

12. Don’t skip weigh station stops

Driving a moving truck across multiple states may turn out to be tougher than you think. Besides watching out for overhead clearance signs, you'll also have to keep your eyes open for any weigh stations signs.

Weigh stations are highway checkpoints where large vehicles must stop for weight and safety inspections. In general, commercial vehicles are required by law to stop at those weigh stations, but rental trucks loaded with household goods may also need to go through those highway checkpoints.

The tricky part is that each state has its own regulations concerning weigh stations. So, before you set off on your cross-country relocation trip with a rental truck, follow this link to learn whether or not you'll have to stop at weigh stations when crossing different states.

13. Drive the rental truck with fuel in mind

Keep in mind that when renting and driving a moving truck across the states, one of the biggest expenses will be the cost of fuel.

When renting the moving van, request more information from the truck rental company about the vehicle's gas mileage. Use that information to calculate roughly how much fuel you will need for the journey.

For instance, if your truck consumes an average of 10 miles per gallon and the move distance is 500 miles, then you're going to need approximately 50 gallons of fuel.

Here are the top 3 fuel-saving tips that will help you save money when driving a moving truck through the country:

Do not accelerate abruptly – instead, reach your desired speed gradually.

Refrain from driving at the truck's maximum speed.

Ease off of the gas pedal early when you're approaching a stop.

Avoid paying an extra refueling fee by returning the moving van with the same amount of gas that it had when you rented it.

14. Plan your move route in advance

Plan your moving truck trip in advance to avoid a number of possible problems on the road. One great advice on how to drive a moving truck cross country is to study your route in advance so that you get a good idea of what to expect during the journey.

First of all, install the best GPS app on your smartphone or use a dedicated GPS device to map out your route. Also, it's a good idea to have a detailed paper map, just in case.

If possible, avoid driving through any mountainous regions or through large cities during rush hours. In case you'll have to stop overnight, find affordable hotels along the route that provide enough parking spaces for rental trucks.

Speaking of good tips when driving a moving van across the country, your trip will be much safer, and much more pleasant as well, if you can take turns driving the moving vehicle with a friend. After all, you're not allowed to drive more than 10 hours per shift when moving long distance with a rental truck.