BEFORE THE BUSINESS GETS MOVING

Before the first load.

The truck is one decision.
Put the business behind it on paper.

YOUR FIRST

operating brief.

01 OPERATION	Define the work
02 EQUIPMENT	Check the combination
03 COSTS	Replace assumptions with quotes
04 PREPARATION	Give every open item a next step

PICKUP + GOOSENECK

8 pages / 24 fillable notes / Your own evidence

Your road. Your people.

Planning, not operating approval.

01 / DEFINE YOUR OPERATION

Describe the work first.

Use this page as a brief for an agency, insurer or carrier. Hotshot describes the work and equipment; it does not decide which rules apply.

BUILD AN OPERATING BRIEF

The work

Cargo and customer

The model

Authority and responsibility

The boundary

Area and service limits

01 Own authority or leased-on? Who contracts for the freight?

02 Cargo, customers, home state and intended operating states

03 Interstate or intrastate? Evidence and unanswered questions

04 Who owns dispatch, insurance, filings and records?

KEEP IN VIEW

Describe the entire freight movement. A trip within one state may still be part of interstate commerce. Confirm the classification with the relevant authority.

REFERENCES 01, 02, 11 / PAGE 08

01 / DEFINE YOUR OPERATION

Record the whole combination.

Bring the actual pickup and gooseneck details to the conversation. Keep manufacturer documents and scale evidence with your notes.

VERIFY THE COMBINATION, NOT JUST THE TRUCK

Pickup
Ratings + condition

+ gooseneck
Ratings + condition

One combination
Weights + cargo fit

01 Pickup: model, GVWR, axle/tire ratings and work-ready weight

02 Gooseneck: GVWR, empty weight, deck and component limits

03 Combination rating, expected loaded weight and evidence

04 Inspection findings, securement needs and unresolved limits

KEEP IN VIEW

Do not infer legal payload or CDL status from an advertised towing capacity. Ratings, actual weights, axle and tire limits, cargo and state rules need separate review.

REFERENCES 03, 07 / PAGE 08

02 / PUT COSTS ON PAPER

Price the operation, not the hope.

Use your own quotes. Record the period and the source of each estimate. These fields do not calculate a market rate or predict profit.

EXAMPLE ONLY / 3,000 LOADED + 1,000 EMPTY MILES

$6,000 / 4,000
Modeled costs / all miles

= $1.50 / mile
Illustration, not a target rate

Your numbers
Same period. Own quotes.

01 One-time spending: item, quote, amount and due date

02 Recurring costs: insurance, equipment, subscriptions and other costs

03 Operating costs and all miles, including deadhead (same period)

04 Cash available, expected collections, owner needs and slow-week gap

KEEP IN VIEW

Operating cost per total mile = modeled operating costs / all miles. Include deadhead. Keep owner cash needs, reserves and financing cash flows visible without double-counting accounting expenses.

REFERENCES 08, 09 / PAGE 08

03 / PREPARE FOR THE WORK

Make every open item visible.

Research obligations for your exact operation. For each answer, record the source, responsible person, evidence, effective date and next review.

AN OPEN ITEM NEEDS A NEXT STEP

Question	Evidence	Next review
What applies to my work?	Who or what confirms it?	Owner + date

01 Registration / authority / filings: applies? evidence? effective date?

02 Driver credentials / medical / safety programs: who confirms?

03 HOS / duty-status records / ELD: rule or exception and evidence

04 State registration / permits / taxes: agencies, answers and open items

KEEP IN VIEW

Check USDOT/authority, process-agent and insurance filings, driver licensing and medical qualification, HOS/ELD, state registration, permits and tax obligations. This list is a research prompt, not a complete compliance checklist.

REFERENCES 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 10 / PAGE 08

03 / PREPARE FOR THE WORK

Walk through one real load.

Before committing, resolve the gaps between the freight, your equipment and the available operating time. Keep written terms and a retrievable record.

FOLLOW THE LOAD, THEN KEEP THE RECORD

Before booking

Freight + available time

Before pickup

Written terms + access

After delivery

Proof + invoice records

01 Freight dimensions, weight, loading method and equipment fit

02 Pickup / delivery windows, available hours and parking backup

03 Verified counterparty, written rate, payment and accessorial terms

04 Inspection, load photos, delivery proof and invoice record locations

KEEP IN VIEW

A route estimate is not a truck clearance or a duty-hours decision. Confirm restrictions, loading access, securement, appointments and a parking backup for the actual trip.

REFERENCES 05, 07 / PAGE 08

04 / PLAN YOUR FIRST 90 DAYS

Review what actually happened.

Use 30, 60 and 90 days as review points, not a promise of profitability. Compare invoiced revenue with cash collected and costs on all miles.

THREE REVIEW POINTS / NO PROMISE OF PROFITABILITY

30 / Compare

Which assumptions changed?

60 / Adjust

What needs work?

90 / Decide

Keep, change or stop?

01 Day 30: which assumptions changed? What evidence is missing?

02 Day 60: which lanes, terms and costs need adjustment?

03 Day 90: what will you keep, renegotiate or stop?

04 Three next actions: owner, evidence needed and review date

KEEP IN VIEW

Each week record loaded and empty miles, expenses, unpaid invoices, downtime and delays. Keep supporting records and discuss tax treatment with a qualified professional.

REFERENCES 08, 09 / PAGE 08

OFFICIAL SOURCES

Learn here. Confirm there.

Use the source that matches the decision. State requirements need a separate check for your operation.

01	**FMCSA registration** Before applying	OPEN
02	**FMCSA operating authority** Before accepting freight	OPEN
03	**FMCSA driver licensing** Before choosing equipment	OPEN
04	**FMCSA insurance filings** Before binding coverage	OPEN
05	**FMCSA hours of service** Before promising an appointment	OPEN
06	**FMCSA ELD guidance** When selecting a record system	OPEN
07	**FMCSA cargo securement** Before loading	OPEN
08	**IRS Publication 583** When setting up business records	OPEN
09	**SBA startup costs** Before committing money	OPEN
10	**Texas motor carrier registration** If Texas intrastate work is planned	OPEN
11	**FMCSA interstate vs. intrastate** When defining the operating area	OPEN

Sources consulted November 8, 2026. Independent educational planning aid; not affiliated with these agencies. Requirements depend on your actual operation. Original HU text and layout.