

Free sample template: please read first

Thanks for downloading this free template from Let's Talk Business Plans. It is a sample to help you get started, not finished advice.

- **Check everything.** All numbers, rules, rates, fees and other information in this template are examples. Verify each one against current official sources and your own quotes before you rely on it or share it with a lender, investor or agency.
- **No guarantee.** The template is provided "as is", without any warranty of any kind, express or implied, including accuracy, completeness or fitness for a particular purpose. Let's Talk Business Plans is not liable for any loss or decision that results from using it. You use it at your own risk.
- **No support.** We can't provide help or support for this free template.
- **Not professional advice.** It is not legal, tax, accounting or financial advice. For that, talk to a qualified professional.

By using this template you accept these terms. Good luck with your plan!

Trucking Business Plan Template

For an owner-operator or a small trucking company (one truck to a few trucks)

Company name: []

Owner(s): []

Base state: []

USDOT number: []

Operating authority (MC) number, if any: []

Plan date: []

Contact: []

How to use this template: replace every [bracketed field] and delete the grey italic guidance before you send the plan. The numbers come from the free Excel model that goes with it (trucking-financial-model.xlsx); most sections name the tab to copy from. Keep it short and specific.

This template is not legal, tax or lending advice. Federal rules and fees change, and states have their own rules: check the official page linked in each section before you rely on it. The rules quoted here are the federal rules for interstate carriers, as published on the date the template was made (October 2026).

1. Executive summary

Write this section last, on one page. A reader should know what you haul, how you will get loads, what you need money for and why the numbers work, without reading further.

- What we haul: [freight type] in a [dry van / reefer / flatbed / gooseneck] trailer, mainly on [lanes or region].
- How we operate: [under our own operating authority / leased onto (carrier name)], based in [state].
- Equipment: [year, make, model of truck] and [trailer], [bought / financed / leased].
- Who we haul for: [direct shippers / brokers / load boards / a dedicated contract], see section 3.
- Funding request: [\$ amount] to [buy the truck / trailer / cover working capital], see section 11.
- Planned rate per loaded mile: [\$]. Break-even rate per loaded mile: [\$] on a cash basis and [\$] on a profit basis (Excel: Break-Even tab). Margin of safety: [%].
- Year 1: revenue [\$], net income [\$], debt service coverage ratio (DSCR) after owner draw [x] (Excel: Key Ratios tab).
- Lowest month-end cash in Year 1: [\$] in [month] (Excel: Key Ratios tab; the month is on the Cash Flow tab).

Questions this section should answer:

- *What is the business, in two sentences?*
- *How much do you need, for what, and how will it be repaid?*
- *What rate per mile do you need, and how far can rates fall before you stop covering your costs?*

2. Company and authority setup

Give the legal structure, the owners and their share, the base state (where you will register plates and fuel tax) and the start date. Then show where each federal registration stands. Fill in the status column with the number and date, or 'applied on [date]', or 'not needed because [reason]'.

Legal structure: [sole proprietor / LLC / corporation]. Owners: [name, % owned]. Base state: [state]. Start date: [month, year].

Item	What the federal rule says	Status, number and date	Official source
USDOT number	Interstate carriers file Form MCS-150 before they begin operations, and again every 24 months; FMCSA then issues a USDOT number. FMCSA's fee schedule lists no fee for the USDOT number.	[USDOT number, date issued]	49 CFR 390.19T ; 360.3T
Operating authority	For-hire carriers running under their own authority apply for operating authority. The application fee is \$300 for each type of authority and is not refunded. FMCSA said in April 2026 that its new Motus registration system would not yet eliminate MC numbers.	[MC number, date applied, date active]	49 CFR 360.3T ; 91 FR 23144
BOC-3 process	One BOC-3 form names a process agent for	[agent company,	49 CFR

agents	every state you are authorized to operate in and every state you cross.	date filed]	366.2T , 366.4T
Insurance and the insurance filing	No carrier may operate before it has the minimum coverage. For-hire carriers of nonhazardous property in interstate commerce need at least \$750,000 if a vehicle is 10,001 lb GVWR or more, and \$300,000 for a fleet of only lighter vehicles. Your insurer files proof of coverage with FMCSA, and authority is not issued until it is accepted.	[insurer, limits, annual premium, filing date]	49 CFR 387.7 , 387.9 , 387.301T , 387.303T
Unified Carrier Registration (UCR)	The fee for 0-2 vehicles is \$55 a year for registration year 2027 and later (\$46 for 2025 and 2026).	[registration year, date paid]	49 CFR part 367
IRP plates and IFTA fuel-tax license	Federal law makes the International Registration Plan and the International Fuel Tax Agreement definitions control, and states collect fuel-use tax through a single base state. Ask your base state whether your truck must be apportioned and what the plates and decals cost.	[plate number, IFTA license number, dates]	49 U.S.C. 31701 , 31705
Form 2290 heavy vehicle use tax	Due for a truck with a taxable gross weight of 55,000 lb or more: \$100 at 55,000 lb up to \$550 over 75,000 lb for a full tax period (July 1 to June 30). File by the last day of the month after the month of first use.	[weight category, amount, date filed]	IRS: About Form 2290 ; Form 2290 table ; instructions

Questions this section should answer:

- *Are you legally set up to haul, and if not, what is left and when will it be done?*
- *Who owns the business, and in which state is it based?*

3. Services, lanes and customers

Say what you will haul, where, and for whom. Name real sources of freight you have talked to. Do not quote market size or growth figures unless you can link a primary source for each one.

Freight and equipment type: [general freight / refrigerated / building materials / ...].

Main lanes or region: [for example, home base to the cities you will run most often, and how often].

Where the loads will come from:

Source of freight	Who (name, if known)	Share of loads you expect	What you have in writing
Direct shippers	[]	[%]	[letter of intent / contract / none yet]
Freight brokers	[]	[%]	[broker setup completed / rate confirmations]
Load boards	[which boards]	[%]	[subscription]
Dedicated contract or lease to a carrier	[]	[%]	[lease or contract, dates]

Seasonality: [which months are busy or slow for this freight, and how you plan for them].

Attach letters of intent, contracts or recent rate confirmations in the appendix if you have them.

4. Rates, miles and competition

Explain how you will price loads and how many miles you will run. Use the same numbers you entered on the Excel Assumptions tab, so the plan and the model agree.

- Planned rate per loaded mile: [\$], based on [rates you have been offered or quoted for your lanes].
- Fuel surcharge: [included in the rate / paid separately at \$ per loaded mile].
- Driving days per month: []. Average miles per driving day: [] (must fit the hours-of-service limits in section 6).
- Deadhead (empty miles) as % of all miles: [%], and how you will keep it down: [backhauls, regular lanes, ...].
- Who else hauls this freight on these lanes, and why customers will use you: [on-time record, equipment, availability, service area].

5. Equipment plan

Describe the truck and trailer you will use and how you will pay for them. The weight ratings matter: they decide which federal rules apply (Excel: Assumptions section 2 and the Compliance tab).

	Truck (power unit)	Trailer
Year, make, model	[]	[]
New or used; mileage	[]	[]
Price (attach the quote)	[\$]	[\$]
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)	[lb]	[lb]
Gross combination weight rating (GCWR)	[lb]	—
Taxable gross weight for Form 2290	[lb]	—
Warranty	[]	[]
How it is paid for	[loan / lease / cash], down payment [\$]	[]
ELD provider	[]	—

Maintenance plan: [where the truck will be serviced, inspection schedule, and the repairs-and-maintenance amount per mile you budgeted in the Excel model].

6. Operations and compliance

Show the day-to-day plan and that you know the safety rules that apply to you. Fill in the checklist; the cost column should match the Excel Compliance tab.

Operations: [days out per month, home time, who dispatches (you or a dispatch service), how you will be paid (customer terms or factoring), where you will buy fuel, how you will keep records].

Item	What the federal rule says	Applies to me?	Status / date	Annual cost	Source
Hours of service	No driving without 10 consecutive hours off; up to 11 hours' driving; no driving after the 14th hour on duty; a 30-minute break after 8 hours' driving; 60 hours in 7 days or 70 hours in 8 days; a 34-hour restart.	[Y/N]	[]	—	49 CFR 395.3
Electronic logging device (ELD)	Carriers must install an ELD and require drivers to use it, with exceptions (for example, logs needed on no more than 8 days in any 30, or a vehicle manufactured before model year 2000).	[Y/N]	[provider]	[\$]	49 CFR 395.8
Drug and alcohol testing	Applies to drivers who need a CDL. An owner-operator who is the only driver must be in a random testing pool of two or more covered employees. Employers query the Clearinghouse at least once a year for each driver.	[Y/N]	[consortium, date enrolled]	[\$]	49 CFR 382.103, 382.701
Commercial driver's license (CDL)	Needed for a combination of 26,001 lb or more GCWR with a trailer over 10,000 lb GVWR (Group A), or a single vehicle of 26,001 lb or more (Group B).	[Y/N]	[class, endorsement s, expiry]	—	49 CFR 383.91, 383.5
Medical certificate	A driver must be medically certified and carry a current medical examiner's certificate.	[Y/N]	[expiry date]	[\$]	49 CFR 391.41
New entrant safety audit	New carriers are monitored for 18 months; the safety audit generally comes after at least 3 months of operation.	[Y/N]	[audit date]	—	49 CFR 385.307
Maintenance and inspections	[Your maintenance schedule and where records are kept.]	[Y/N]	[]	[\$]	—
State permits and taxes	Some states charge their own weight-distance or highway-use taxes, and intrastate rules differ. Check each state you will run in.	[Y/N]	[]	[\$]	Each state's agency

7. Marketing: how you will keep the truck loaded

Describe the steps you will take to win and keep loads. Be concrete: names, numbers of calls, which brokers. Avoid claims you cannot back up.

- Broker and shipper setup: [which brokers you will set up with, what their setup packets ask for, and when yours will be ready].
- Direct shippers: [which businesses on your lanes you will contact, and how].
- Load boards: [which ones, and how you will use them to cut deadhead].
- Reputation: [on-time delivery, communication, safety record] and how you will show it.
- Budget: [\$ per month for load boards, website, phone] (Excel: Assumptions section 6).

8. Management and drivers

Show who runs the business and drives the truck, and who helps you (accountant, insurance agent, maintenance shop).

- Owner: [name], CDL class [], endorsements [], [years] of driving experience, [types of freight hauled].
- Safety record: [driving record and inspection history; attach reports in the appendix if the lender asks].
- Business experience: [bookkeeping, dispatching, managing costs].
- Hired drivers (if any): [when, how many, how they will be paid]. For employees, the employer pays 6.2% Social Security and 1.45% Medicare (FICA) on wages ([IRS Topic no. 751](#); Excel: Driver Pay tab).
- Advisors: [accountant], [insurance agent], [maintenance shop], [factoring company, if used].

9. Financial plan

Copy the numbers from the Excel model so the plan and the model agree. Explain your main assumptions in plain words: miles, rate, deadhead, fuel, insurance and the truck payment. The SBA's guidance asks for projections that are explained and matched to the funding request.

Put in the plan	Copy it from (Excel tab)
Startup costs and how they are paid for (sources and uses)	Startup & Funding
Cost per mile, per total mile and per loaded mile	Cost per Mile
Break-even rate per loaded mile (profit and cash basis); break-even loaded miles per month; margin of safety	Break-Even
36-month profit and loss, by year	P&L
Monthly cash flow and the lowest month-end cash	Cash Flow
Truck and trailer loan payments and debt service	Loan
Debt service coverage ratio (DSCR), before and after owner draw; operating ratio	Key Ratios
Which compliance costs apply to your rig	Compliance
The list of assumptions you used	Assumptions (print it or paste the main lines)

Main assumptions: [miles per month, deadhead %, rate per loaded mile, fuel economy and price, insurance premium, loan rate and term, owner draw].

SBA's business-plan guidance describes a five-year financial outlook, with monthly or quarterly projections for the first year ([SBA: Write your business plan](#)). The Excel model covers 36 months. If your lender asks for five years, ask what format it wants for years 4 and 5.

Owner pay: if you take an owner draw rather than a salary, your income tax and self-employment tax are paid out of it. The IRS self-employment tax rate is 15.3% ([IRS: Self-employment tax](#)). Ask your tax adviser how it applies to you.

10. Risks and what you will do about them

For each risk, change the matching input in the Excel model, note what happens to the break-even rate and the lowest cash month, and write down what you would do.

Risk	What-if to run in the model	Effect on break-even and cash	Your plan
------	-----------------------------	-------------------------------	-----------

Rates fall	Rate per loaded mile –10%	[]	[]
Fuel price rises	Diesel +\$0.50 a gallon	[]	[]
More empty miles	Deadhead +5 points	[]	[]
Major repair or downtime	Fewer driving days in one month; higher repairs per mile	[]	[reserve, warranty]
Insurance renewal goes up	Higher premiums	[]	[]
Losing a main customer or lane	Lower rate or fewer miles	[]	[other sources of freight]
Slow-paying customers	Months until paid = 1, or factoring on	[]	[]

11. Funding request

Say how much you need, what each dollar buys, and how the loan will be repaid from the business's cash flow. Ask your lender what it requires (for example down payment, reserves and documents).

- Amount requested: [\$], as a [loan / lease / line of credit], over [years], at [rate, if quoted].
- Use of funds: [truck \$, trailer \$, startup costs \$, working capital \$] (Excel: Startup & Funding).
- Owner cash invested: [\$], [%] of the total.
- Repayment: monthly payment [\$]; DSCR [x] before and [x] after owner draw in Year 1 (Excel: Loan and Key Ratios).
- Collateral and guarantees offered, if the lender asks: [].

If you apply for an SBA-backed loan: SBA says 7(a) loan proceeds can be used to buy machinery and equipment, that borrowers must be creditworthy and “demonstrate a reasonable ability to repay the loan,” that most 7(a) term loans are repaid monthly from the cash flow of the business, and that you apply through a local lender ([SBA: 7\(a\) loans](#)). Maturities are ten years or less unless the loan finances equipment with a useful life over ten years, and rates are negotiated with the lender, subject to SBA maximums ([SBA: 7\(a\) terms](#)). SBA's planning guide says to explain how much funding you need, what you will use it for, and whether it buys equipment ([SBA: Write your business plan](#)).

12. Hot shot trucking: what changes

Use this section if you will run a pickup or medium-duty truck pulling a gooseneck or flatbed trailer. Which rules apply depends on the weight ratings of your truck and trailer, not on the name 'hot shot'. Enter your ratings on the Excel Assumptions tab (section 2); the Compliance tab recalculates.

Rule	When it applies (federal, interstate)	Source
USDOT number and medical certificate	A vehicle or combination of 10,001 lb or more (GVWR, GCWR or actual weight, whichever is greater) in interstate commerce.	49 CFR 390.5T
Minimum liability insurance (for-hire, nonhazardous)	\$750,000 if any vehicle is 10,001 lb GVWR or more; \$300,000 for a fleet of only vehicles under 10,001 lb GVWR.	49 CFR 387.303T

CDL	Combination of 26,001 lb or more GCWR with a trailer over 10,000 lb GVWR (Group A), or a single vehicle of 26,001 lb or more (Group B). Check your own ratings.	49 CFR 383.91
Drug and alcohol testing (part 382)	Only drivers who need a CDL.	49 CFR 382.103
Form 2290 heavy vehicle use tax	Taxable gross weight of 55,000 lb or more. The IRS says pickup trucks generally are not subject because their taxable gross weight is under 55,000 lb; add up your truck, trailer and maximum load to check.	IRS Form 2290 instructions
IRP plates and IFTA	Ask your base state whether your truck and trailer must be apportioned.	49 U.S.C. 31701

Hot shot notes for your plan

- Equipment (section 5): list the truck's GVWR, the trailer's GVWR and the GCWR from the labels or spec sheets.
- Compliance (sections 2 and 6): mark each rule Y or N from the table above, and say why.
- Insurance: get premium quotes for the limits you choose; the federal minimums are in the table above.
- Costs: enter your own fuel economy, rate and miles; a pickup's numbers differ from a tractor's.

13. Appendix checklist

Attach what your lender asks for. Items you may want to include; tick what you attach.

- ☐ Truck and trailer quotes or purchase agreements
- ☐ Insurance quote (limits and premium)
- ☐ Letters of intent, contracts or rate confirmations from shippers or brokers
- ☐ USDOT, operating authority, BOC-3, UCR, IRP and IFTA documents (or application receipts)
- ☐ Form 2290 Schedule 1, if it applies
- ☐ CDL and medical examiner's certificate
- ☐ Drug and alcohol consortium enrollment, if it applies
- ☐ Driving record and inspection history
- ☐ The Excel model: Assumptions, P&L, Cash Flow, Break-Even and Key Ratios pages
- ☐ Personal financial statement, bank statements and tax returns, if the lender asks
- ☐ Lease agreement with the carrier, if you are leased on

Sources for the rules in this template: eCFR, Title 49 (up to date as of October 9, 2026); Federal Register; IRS Form 2290 and instructions (Rev. July 2026); IRS Topic no. 751; SBA. Links are in each section.