

What it Takes to be a School Bus Driver

Reference Guide and Test

Produced by Video Communications

INTRODUCTION

School bus drivers have one of the most underrated jobs there is. To be a school bus driver in today's world presents many challenges. Yet, it can also be one of the most rewarding career paths to take. This is not a job for the faint hearted. This is a job that requires physical skill, emotional control, focus, awareness and above all, a willingness to provide safety to all students who ride your bus.

In the video, we paint an overall picture of what it takes to be a school bus driver. Whether you are watching the video to get an idea if this is the career path you want to take, or using it as a reminder of why you chose this occupation, by the completion of the video, you will have a clear picture of what is either already expected of you.... OR what a school bus driver's job entails.

JOB DESCRIPTION

1) As a school bus driver, your job consists of multiple roles and responsibilities, as well as an understanding of state laws, district policies and the procedures you must follow to keep the students who ride your bus safe. The payoff to this is knowing that when you have completed your job for the day, you have transported anywhere from 30-90 students to school and back home safely. You have been an example, teacher and role model for the students who ride your bus. Each individual connected with the school contributes something to the organization that keeps it going. And a school bus driver's job is NO exception.

2) Looking at a typical day in the life of a bus driver in a nutshell...You would wake up early. Arrive to work early. Pre Trip the bus. Start your route. Pick up students. Deal with student behavior. Drop students off at school. Take a Lunch. Pick up students. Deal with student behavior. Drop off students. Post trip the bus. Rinse and repeat.

3) **EVERYDAY will bring a new challenge.** You must keep in mind that you not only have to drive the bus safely, but also that you are carrying a bus full of students, each with their own personality.

4) As we have previously mentioned, this job is not for everyone. An example of this is that school bus drivers must wake up early to get students to school on time. For you to wake up early, drive the bus safely and engage with students, you will more than likely need to go to bed early. Being up at all hours of the night and hanging out with your

friends just will not cut it. Being a school bus driver is a lifestyle. **What you do outside of your occupation will ultimately affect your career.**

5) **If you were to get a DUI - outside of work, you will have your school bus license revoked.** That is what we mean when we say that driving a school bus is a lifestyle. You must keep in mind that parents trust you to get their child to school and back home safely. And what you do outside of work could have a substantial impact on your career.

REQUIREMENTS

6) School bus drivers have a bunch of responsibilities. You stay busy, and if you TRULY care about school bus safety, you stay even busier. Although you may be sitting when you drive the bus, your job does require a certain level of physical demand. If you think this is a job where you can just be lazy and don't have to move around much.....think again.

Physical Demands

7) One thing that drivers MUST do everyday, is a pre trip inspection of the school bus. It WILL be NECESSARY and one of the most crucial parts of your daily routine. The pre trip inspection consists of, but is not limited to:

- a) Checking all tires
- b) Checking all lights
- c) Checking all Mirrors
- d) Checking all turn indicators
- e) Checking the windshield wipers
- f) Checking the undercarriage of the bus
- g) Checking the emergency doors
- h) Checking for damage to the bus, emergency reflectors and more.

8) To do all of the above requires several walk arounds of the bus, a lot of bending and reaching, and even a little bit of arm strength.

9) You will need to do even more moving around in the interior of the bus. Inside the bus, you will need to check:

- a) Interior lights, gauges and switches
- b) Mirrors
- c) Seats and seatbelts
- d) Safety equipment (*such as the fire extinguisher and first aid kit.*)
- e) All indicators and lights from the interior
- f) In-depth brake test EVERY morning before you leave the bus yard

10) As mentioned, the pre trip inspection is a critical part of your job. Don't be lazy. Don't shortcut any part of it. If the bus is not thoroughly inspected beforehand, it is NOT safe to drive.

11) At the end of every work day, you will also need to do a post trip inspection of the bus. A post trip inspection does not have as many tasks as a pre trip requires. However, **ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT** parts of the post trip inspection is to check for students. Students can easily get sidetracked and miss their bus stop. They may fall asleep on the bus. It WILL BE YOUR JOB to check for students through the entirety of the bus. This includes looking at AND under EVERY SINGLE SEAT. Leaving a student on the bus is something that you wouldn't want to weigh on your conscience.

12) In addition to checking for students, you will need to clean the bus of any trash and have it prepared for the next day. You will need to check the following:

- a) All windows to make sure they are closed and locked
- b) You will need to check the seats for damage
- c) Check that all doors on the bus are closed and secured

Emotional Demands

13) Every school bus driver is going to encounter student behavior issues on their bus at some point. Part of a school bus drivers job is to be able to intervene when behavioral issues arise. This takes practice, patience and the understanding that there may be several approaches to take when you do encounter behavioral issues on the bus. We can say one thing, positive intervention is always the way to go.

14) We know it can be easy to get frustrated with misbehaving students. But part of your job is to keep your emotions in check. **Understand that you are dealing with children and YOU are the adult.** We all get frustrated and it's understandable.

However, you can't let that frustration get you so upset that it detracts from your overall goal, and that is to be an example of HOW to behave on the bus. You may have a student yelling in your face.....a fight taking place on the school bus or a student simply acting out for attention. And through each one of these instances it will be up to you to keep YOUR cool.

15) Here is something else to consider. We understand that life happens. Sometimes it may be something outside of work that is affecting you. In any event, you can talk with your supervisor and in many cases, your supervisor will allow you to take a little time off. They would rather you be at work with a clear head, then to come to work moody, upset or frustrated.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

16) School bus drivers undergo some of the most in depth training of any occupation. The reason for this is simple. They are carrying the most precious cargo on the planet....our children. Proper training will give you the tools to drive a school bus safely.

Willing to train the right individual

17) Aside from the tasks we have mentioned, bus drivers must have ongoing training throughout the year. They must be trained on how to pre and post trip the school bus, how to deal with student behavior and how to evacuate the bus and much more. One of the most in depth types of training a school bus driver receives, is the necessary driving skills to operate the bus safely.

Driving Skills

18) Driving a school bus isn't like driving a typical automobile. School buses are long, tall and heavy. They don't turn like a typical automobile, or brake in the same way. You will need plenty of practice to drive a school bus safely. **Here are some of the important skills to be obtained and should be practiced frequently NO MATTER HOW LONG you have been driving a school bus for:**

- a) You are going to have to master several turning maneuvers and most likely, in different styles of school buses.
- b) You are going to practice safe braking techniques.

- c) You will need to learn the procedures for approaching a school bus stop and school bus loading zones.
- d) You will practice driving the bus in tight quarters. You will learn to drive the bus in different types of weather conditions.
- e) You will need to follow and obey all traffic laws in your state, and/or special procedures recommended by your organization.

19) One of the most important tools that the school bus provides, are its mirrors. **You will need to learn to not only use them, but also RELY on the mirrors to safely monitor traffic around the bus at all times.** You should also know how to make the proper adjustments to the mirrors to get the best possible view around your bus.

20) These are many of the driving skills that drivers should not only understand and KNOW, but should be practicing on a consistent basis. No matter how long you have been driving a school bus, you can always take a little time to better your technique.

ROLES

Must be a team player

21) Throughout your career as a bus driver, you will run into several issues that will require the intervention of your supervisor. Whether it's dealing with parents, or an out of control student on the bus, the school team is there to assist you when such situations arise. The school team consists of transportation supervisors and/or administrative staff at the school. They have the authority to revoke bus riding privileges and if the principal were involved, can suspend a student for repeated offenses of misbehavior.

22) Even though sometimes you may get the feeling like 'this is just my boss'....keep in mind that supervisors are there to assist you with many of the tough issues that school bus drivers face today. You get an out of control student on your bus. Rely on your supervisor. The bus is involved in an accident. Rely on your supervisor. **If you have ANY questions about ANYTHING safety related. RELY ON YOUR SUPERVISOR.**

23) As we mentioned in the video, one of the roles that school bus drivers will play on a daily basis, is a teacher. It will ultimately be up to you to teach the students that ride

your bus to do SEVERAL things. They must know:

- a) How to keep safe at bus stop locations
- b) How to load and Unload the bus safely
- c) Crossing procedures for students who need to cross the roadway
- d) General bus safety rules while riding the bus
- e) Where the emergency equipment is located
- f) Bus evacuation drills

24) And unfortunately in todays day and age, we even have active shooter drills. Not only SHOULD YOU know and understand your district's protocol for such events, but also be able to teach active shooter drills to students if required by your district.

25) As a school bus driver, there will be times when you may need to intervene with students, talk with parents and seek advice from your supervisors. In other instances, you may even need to talk to law enforcement or other emergency personnel. When talking to members of the public, make sure to remain courteous, respectful and professional. Remember that you are an extension of the school. **What you do and how you carry yourself when dealing with the public is a direct representation of the organization you work for.**

26) In addition to that, you must understand the importance of student confidentiality. **You should never talk about a student outside of work.** We understand that you may need to vent about an out of control student that rides your bus. But if so, do it with your supervisor. Not with your friends, not out in public, not with other bus drivers and definitely NOT on facebook.

27) As a school bus driver, your route during the day may stay the same. The students that rides your bus for the year may stay the same. Even the bus you drive may be the same. But it is important to remember that NO 2 days will be alike as a school bus driver. **Your ability to adapt to procedures, laws and policies are important. Your ability to adapt to behavioral issues on the bus is essential.**

28) You must be a quick learner and be able to absorb a lot of information. You must be able to adapt to a variety of situations such as: A change of bus stop locations, student behavior, new routes, new students, different buses and much more.

CLOSING

As you can see, school bus drivers have an important job, many responsibilities to adhere to and many roles to fill. We hope that after receiving this information that you will accept the challenges that being a school bus driver offers. We hope the level of work and responsibility is exciting to you. Because school bus drivers truly are the unsung heroes. There have been instances where drivers have saved children from injury due to their training and diligent efforts to maintain the highest level of safety. There have even been real life stories of school bus drivers going into fires to save children's lives. What kind of driver will you be? Although there may be days where you don't feel appreciated, just know that you are. Know that all this training....all the practice and all the information you gain is going to make your bus a safe one for students.

Also, here is something to think about. The school bus industry isn't going anywhere. When you work for the transportation industry, there will be chances for you to excel in your career. New and ingenious ways to train are thought up everyday. So, how do you think you can do your part on a daily basis? Will you be the next game changer?

When a parent sees your passion for keeping their child safe. When you leave the bus yard for the day and know that you had a positive impact in a student's life. When a student trusts you with confidential information. When you have picked up, interacted and dropped off a bus load of students safely. When a smiling child boards your bus and tells you good morning.....now THAT is the payoff. Thanks for watching. Stay safe.

TEST QUESTIONS

1) Choosing to become a school bus driver means you are choosing a lifestyle.

TRUE or FALSE

2) The best thing to do when dealing with student behavior is to vent on social media.

TRUE or FALSE

3) What you do outside of work can ultimately affect your career.

TRUE or FALSE

4) Supervisors are too busy to be bugged about personal problems at home.

TRUE or FALSE

5) Being a school bus driver requires a certain level of physical demand.

TRUE or FALSE

6) Once you have mastered all driving skills, there's no reason to keep practicing them.

TRUE or FALSE

7) One of the most important parts of the post trip inspection is to check for students.

TRUE or FALSE

8) The only thing you need to teach students is how to evacuate and cross roadways.

TRUE or FALSE

9) One of the most important tools that the school bus provides, are its mirrors.

TRUE or FALSE

10) The pre trip inspection is more important than the post trip inspection.

TRUE or FALSE

ANSWER KEY

- 1) TRUE**
- 2) FALSE**
- 3) TRUE**
- 4) FALSE**
- 5) TRUE**
- 6) FALSE**
- 7) TRUE**
- 8) FALSE**
- 9) TRUE**
- 10) FALSE**