Classroom Activity for Grades 6–8

Included in this activity:

- Page 2  What’s the Problem?: Overview of Trucking Industry Concerns
- Page 3  Be a Part of the Solution: Introduction to Public Service Announcements and Television Commercials
- Pages 4–11  Four Sample Contracts for Producing Public Service Announcements
- Pages 12–15  Two Sample Contracts for Producing Television Commercials
Developing Public Safety Announcements and TV Commercials for the Trucking Industry

A Project SHIFT Classroom Activity for Grades 6–8

1. Divide students into no more than six teams.

2. Explain that each team will create a Public Safety Announcement (PSA) or television commercial promoting an issue or concern relevant to the trucking industry.

3. Distribute a booklet to each student and assign one of six contracts that appear in the booklet to each team.
   - Contract 1: PSA on Blind Spots, pp. 4–5
   - Contract 2: PSA on Following Distance, pp. 6–7
   - Contract 3: PSA on Passing a Truck, pp. 8–9
   - Contract 4: PSA on Distracted Drivers, pp. 10–11
   - Contract 5: Commercial on Truck Driver Shortage, pp. 12–13
   - Contract 6: Commercial on Truck-Driving Careers, pp. 14–15

4. Review pages 2–3 of the booklet with the entire class so that they understand the trucking industry’s concerns. Encourage them to discuss the ways in which PSAs and commercials get their messages out to various audiences (such as using popular music, humor, celebrity endorsement, etc.).

5. Have the teams follow the instructions in their contract for developing a PSA or commercial. Allow about 20 minutes for students to brainstorm about their presentations.

6. When the teams are ready, have each one make a two- to three-minute presentation of their ideas to the rest of the class.

This activity was adapted from Active Learning: 101 Strategies to Teach Any Subject, Mel Silberman, Temple University, Allyn and Bacon, 1996, p. 41.
What’s the Problem?

**Truck Drivers Needed**
Right now, there are nearly 20,000 professional truck driving jobs awaiting qualified drivers. By the year 2014, that number will increase to 111,000. That’s because the need for drivers is growing fast—far more quickly that the number of new drivers taking to the road.

**Qualified Truck Drivers Needed**
Project SHIFT, a partnership between Clackamas Community College, representatives of the Oregon trucking industry and other community organizations, is addressing this challenge by:

- Providing job training for transportation workers to become drivers and training for job seekers in truck driving safety, customer service, and delivery skills.
- Providing students and others with information about professional truck driving careers.

The goals of Project SHIFT are to train hundreds of professional drivers and to help thousands of local students explore and prepare for jobs in the transportation industry.

![Graph showing current driver shortage and projected shortage by 2014](image)

**The Numbers Aren’t Adding Up…**
...at least not fast enough. The demand for professional truck drivers far exceeds the supply of trained drivers ready to get behind the wheel. For the trucking industry, that’s a challenge. For job seekers who are considering a career as a professional truck driver, that’s an opportunity.
Be a Part of the Solution

Project SHIFT and You
Project SHIFT wants to help people—including you—understand the trucking industry’s concerns. By bringing you the latest information on career trends in the trucking industry and an in-depth look at some of the safety issues important to professional drivers, Project SHIFT hopes to help you see yourself in the driver’s seat of a truck someday. In this booklet, you’ll find out about some of the issues that concern truck drivers who are already sharing the road with other drivers. Four issues in particular—blind spots, following distance, passing a truck, and distracted drivers—shed light on how important it is for all drivers to be alert, aware, and informed behind the wheel. You will also find out about the industry’s critical shortage of professional truck drivers and what a future truck-driving job might look like for you.

Lights, Camera, Into Action!
One of the best ways to inform, educate, and entertain people all at once about an issue is with a television commercial. For many of us, commercials are merely opportunities to make a beeline for the kitchen to fix a snack. But the people who create those commercials hope you’ll stick around to hear what they have to say and take action—whether it’s buying a product, seeking more information, supporting a cause, or getting personally involved. One type of commercial, a Public Service Announcement, or PSA, informs community members about issues that are important to their health and safety. (PSA can also stand for Public Safety Announcement.) Producers of PSAs hope you will take certain steps to protect your safety and that of others.

This activity consists of six sample agreements, or contracts, between members of your class and public agencies, such as the Oregon Trucking Association, to create a PSA or commercial about trucking industry issues. You and your classmates will have an opportunity to learn about a particular industry concern and consider how to inform the public and encourage appropriate action by developing your own PSA or commercial.

Project SHIFT wishes to thank the American Trucking Associations for contributing the text and illustrations in this activity booklet. The information presented on pages 4–15 can be found at the following websites: www.truckline.com, www.GetTrucking.com and www.atastr.com. See page 16 for other illustrations credits.
Contract #1: Public Safety Announcement on Blind Spots

Your Contract Assignment
The Oregon Trucking Association and the Oregon Highway Patrol have asked your group to produce a public safety announcement (PSA) for television to increase awareness among motorists about professional truck-driving safety concerns — specifically blind spots.

What to Do
- Read silently or take turns reading aloud the background information about blind spots on page 5. Take about 20 minutes to read, discuss your ideas, and plan a PSA that educates drivers about blind spots and encourages them to drive safely. Aim for a two- to three-minute presentation to the rest of the class.
- Your PSA should identify the trucking industry’s concerns about blind spots, and why it is important for drivers to be aware and cautious on the road.
- The commercial should contain a slogan (e.g., “Just Do It”) and an idea for a visual element (e.g., athletic shoes).
- A general concept and an outline of key points of the commercial are sufficient. But if your team wants to act out the PSA, that is fine, too.
- If necessary, ask your teacher or trucking industry representative for more information about the issue you are addressing in your PSA.

Sharing the Road
According to the American Trucking Associations, there are 3 million trucks on the road in the United States and 3.5 million truck drivers. More than 80 percent of U.S. communities depend solely on trucking for delivery of their goods. So it’s in our best interest to share the road with big rigs and be aware of the safety issues that affect them—and us—the most.
Background Information: Blind Spots
Most drivers have never been taught how to share the road safely with tractor trailers. Seventy to 75 percent of all truck-related auto fatalities are unintentionally caused by the car driver, according to figures from the Department of Transportation and the American Automobile Association—and 35 percent of these occur in a truck’s blind spots. For this reason, educating people about blind spots, safe merging and stopping distances is essential to highway safety.

All vehicles traveling on the road have blind spots where other vehicles disappear from view. In tractor trailers and other large vehicles these blind spots can be surprisingly big. There are blind spots on all sides of a large truck where other vehicles can disappear from the view of the driver. If a professional truck driver has to make a sudden maneuver on the road, such as a quick lane change to avoid debris, a crash can occur if the driver does not know you are there.

In this diagram, the truck driver can’t see any car that is traveling in the areas shown in yellow. Those are the truck driver’s blind spots.

Here’s what to do to avoid a truck’s blind spots:

- Do not linger alongside a truck. If you find yourself next to a truck, either move on past or back off so that the driver can see you. Look for the driver’s face in the truck’s side-view mirror. That will tell you if you are visible to that driver or not.
- If possible, pass on the left where the blind spot is smaller. On the right, the blind spot runs the length of the truck and extends out three lanes.
- When traveling behind a truck stay back 20–25 car lengths so the driver knows you’re there.
Your Contract Assignment
The Oregon Trucking Association and the Oregon Highway Patrol have asked your group to produce a public safety announcement (PSA) for television to increase awareness among motorists about professional truck-driving safety concerns — specifically following distance.

What to Do
- Read silently or take turns reading aloud the background information about following distance on page 7. Take about 20 minutes to read, discuss your ideas, and plan a PSA that educates drivers about following distance and encourages them to drive safely. Aim for a two- to three-minute presentation to the rest of the class.
- Your PSA should identify the trucking industry’s concerns about following distance, and why it is important for drivers to be aware and cautious on the road.
- The commercial should contain a slogan (e.g., “Just Do It”) and an idea for a visual element (e.g., athletic shoes).
- A general concept and an outline of key points of the commercial are sufficient. But if your team wants to act out the PSA, that is fine, too.
- If necessary, ask your teacher or trucking industry representative for more information about the issue you are addressing in your PSA.

Too Close for Comfort?
How do you know if you are traveling at an appropriate distance behind a big rig?
Think football. That is, think of a football field. A football field is 100 yards in length. That’s how much space you should leave between the front of your car and the back of a truck in front of you, according to one trucking expert. The American Trucking Associations recommends a distance of 20–25 car lengths.
**Background Information: Following Distance**

Most drivers have never been taught how to share the road safely with tractor trailers. Seventy to 75 percent of all truck-related auto fatalities are unintentionally caused by the car driver, according to figures from the Department of Transportation and the American Automobile Association. For this reason, educating people about maintaining a safe following distance is essential to highway safety.

When following a truck, you should allow 20–25 car lengths behind it. Why all that distance? Large trucks block the view of the road ahead far more than smaller vehicles. Keeping your distance behind a truck gives you time to react if road conditions suddenly change. A good rule of thumb to ensure that you have left yourself enough room is to look for the truck’s side mirrors. If you can see them, then you are traveling at an appropriate distance.

Why is leaving that much distance between trucks and other vehicles so important? Here are just a few roadway hazards that drivers may encounter:

- Debris in the road, such as lumber or a ladder, may not have a serious impact on a large truck. But if that debris was suddenly in front of a car following too closely behind the truck, the impact on the car could be very serious.
- On congested roadways, traffic often slows down suddenly. If a car is traveling too closely behind a truck, the car’s driver will not be able to see the change in traffic and slow down.
- At highway speeds, everything happens fast. Accidents farther ahead or immediately in front of a truck require quick thinking and action. Leaving enough space in front gives drivers time to take the necessary action.
Contract #3: Public Safety Announcement on Passing a Truck

Your Contract Assignment
The Oregon Trucking Association and the Oregon Highway Patrol have asked your group to produce a public safety announcement (PSA) for television to inform motorists about professional truck-driving safety concerns—specifically, passing a truck.

What to Do
- Read silently or take turns reading aloud the background information about passing a truck on page 9. Take about 20 minutes to read, discuss your ideas, and plan a PSA that educates drivers about passing a truck and encourages them to drive safely. Aim for a two- to three-minute presentation to the rest of the class.
- Your PSA should identify the trucking industry’s concerns about passing a truck, and why it is important for drivers to be aware and cautious on the road.
- The commercial should contain a slogan (e.g., “Just Do It”) and an idea for a visual element (e.g., athletic shoes).
- A general concept and an outline of key points of the commercial are sufficient. But if your team wants to act out the PSA, that is fine, too.
- If necessary, ask your teacher or trucking industry representative for more information about the issue you are addressing in your PSA.

Look for the Lights
When is it safe to pull in front of a truck you’ve just passed? If you can see the truck’s headlights, then it is safe to make your move. Once you are in front of a truck, be sure to remain a safe distance behind other trucks as well. Reports the American Trucking Associations, “In 2006, rear-end collisions where passenger cars strike large trucks were 2.7 times more likely than large trucks rear-ending passenger cars.”
Background Information: Passing a Truck

Most drivers have never been taught how to share the road safely with tractor trailers. Seventy to 75 percent of all truck-related auto fatalities are unintentionally caused by the car driver, according to figures from the Department of Transportation and the American Automobile Association. For this reason, educating people about passing a truck safely is essential to highway safety.

When passing a truck and moving back into its lane, make sure you can see the truck’s headlights in your rearview mirror before you cut back in. That allows the truck enough space to slow down or stop if something happens up ahead.

A fully loaded tractor trailer can weigh up to 80,000 pounds and take the length of a football field to stop. Most passenger cars weigh around 3,000 pounds and have a much shorter stopping distance. Just because you can stop in time doesn’t mean that the truck behind you can if you’ve cut too close in front of it. Even if the driver makes a monumental effort, he or she may not be able to stop if you haven’t left enough room.

You may wonder why trucks leave space in front of them in heavy traffic. It is so they have enough stopping distance. Do not fill in that space and take up the safety buffer that the driver is trying to maintain.
Contract #4: Public Safety Announcement on Distracted Drivers

Your Contract Assignment
The Oregon Trucking Association and the Oregon Highway Patrol have asked your group to produce a public safety announcement (PSA) for television to increase awareness among motorists about professional truck driving safety concerns—specifically, distracted drivers.

What to Do
- Read silently or take turns reading aloud the background information about distracted drivers on page 11. Take about 20 minutes to read, discuss your ideas, and plan a PSA that educates drivers about distracted driving and encourages them to drive safely. Aim for a two- to three-minute presentation to the rest of the class.
- Your PSA should identify the trucking industry’s concerns about distracted drivers and why it is important for drivers to be aware and cautious on the road.
- The commercial should contain a slogan (e.g., “Just Do It”) and an idea for a visual element (e.g., athletic shoes).
- A general concept and an outline of key points of the commercial are sufficient. But if your team wants to act out the PSA, that is fine, too.
- If necessary, ask your teacher or trucking industry representative for more information about the issue you are addressing in your PSA.

It’s a Full-Time Job
When a driver gets behind the wheel, her number one priority is to safely reach her destination. And that safety extends to all others on the road—even bicyclists and pedestrians. Holding off until the driving is done for such activities as eating, using a cell phone, or consulting a map or GPS device can increase a driver’s chances of getting there safely. Some states now fine and penalize drivers for certain distracting activities.
Background Information: Distracted Drivers

Most drivers have never been taught how to share the road safely with tractor trailers. Seventy to 75 percent of all truck-related auto fatalities are unintentionally caused by the car driver, according to figures from the Department of Transportation and the American Automobile Association. For this reason, educating people about avoiding driving distractions and the appropriate use of communications technology is essential to highway safety.

Many large trucks are now equipped with very sophisticated communications equipment that allows for the driver to receive instructions and report back to the terminal. This equipment makes driving safer and delivering goods more efficient.

Many passenger vehicles now come equipped with the latest technical devices to help people navigate, communicate, and be entertained while they drive. It’s important that all communications devices add to safety rather than distract from it.

Professional truck drivers recognize the enormous responsibility that they have driving such large vehicles on the roadway. There are some hard and fast rules in the trucking industry for using communications technology in the truck’s cab—stay focused on the main job of driving and communicate at stops. That’s sound advice for all drivers. Use technology wisely and do not be used by it.

What about hands-free technology? Clarence Ditlow, the executive director of the Center for Auto Safety in Washington, D.C., has this to say: “There is a false perception that hands-free phones are better. Your mind is still off the road and focused on the conversation.” What do you and your classmates think?
Contract #5: TV Commercial on Truck Driver Shortage

**Your Contract Assignment**
The Oregon Trucking Association has asked your group to produce a television commercial advertising the importance of the trucking industry and explaining the shortage of professional truck drivers.

**What to Do**
- Read silently or take turns reading aloud the background information on page 13 about the truck driver shortage. Take about 20 minutes to read, discuss your ideas, and plan a TV commercial that educates people about the truck driver shortage. Aim for a two- to three-minute presentation to the rest of the class.
- Your commercial should identify the trucking industry’s concerns about the shortage and how it affects people.
- The commercial should contain a slogan (e.g., “Just Do It”) and an idea for a visual element (e.g., athletic shoes).
- A general concept and an outline of key points of the commercial are sufficient. But if your team wants to act out the commercial, that is fine, too.
- If necessary, ask your teacher or trucking industry representative for more information about the issue you are addressing in your commercial.

**Hit the Books, Hit the Road**
Current and future truck drivers alike need a solid foundation of technical and safety information, rules and regulations, and much more before they can qualify for and maintain a commercial driver’s license, or CDL. Project SHIFT helps potential truck drivers prepare for the road with training in transportation and logistics, practical applications, customer service, and on-the-road experience.
Background Information: Truck Driver Shortage

At this very moment and around the clock, coast to coast, trucks are on the road hauling the essentials—everything our nation needs such as food, books, clothing, electronics, automobiles and medical supplies. In 2006, the U.S. trucking industry hauled 69 percent of the total volume of freight transported in the United States. More than 26 million trucks of all classes, including 2.9 million typical Class 8 trucks operated by more than 750,000 interstate motor carriers, kept America moving.

Trucking also plays an important role in trade exchanged between the United States and two of our largest trading partners, Canada and Mexico. Trucks transported 80.7 percent of the value of trade between the United States and Mexico in 2006 and 64.4 percent of the value of trade between the United States and Canada.

But a serious shortage exists in some segments of the trucking industry. It’s not a shortage of freight or equipment; it’s a shortage of men and women qualified to drive trucks.

Currently, there is a truck driver shortage of approximately 20,000 drivers per year. This number is expected to increase to 111,000 drivers per year by 2014. The shortage is not due to a lack of interest, just basic economics—the demand for professional truck drivers is growing faster than the number of new drivers entering the field. The industry is desperate for new drivers.

Most individual long haul drivers average from 100,000 miles to 110,000 miles a year, with an average daily run of 500 miles. Regional and city drivers average about 48,000 miles behind the wheel annually. You do not need to buy or lease your own truck for most driver jobs. The vehicle is provided for you and usually maintained by the trucking company.

U.S. professional truck drivers are both men and women, vary in age, race and educational background, and live all over the United States.
Contract #6: TV Commercial on Professional Truck-Driving Careers

Your Contract Assignment
The Oregon Trucking Association has asked your group to produce a television commercial advertising the trucking industry and the truck-driving profession.

What to Do
- Read silently or take turns reading aloud the background information on page 15 about opportunities in the trucking industry. Take about 20 minutes to read, discuss your ideas, and plan a TV commercial that highlights the employment opportunities for professional truck drivers. Aim for a two-to-three-minute presentation to the rest of the class.
- Your commercial should identify the opportunities and types of driving jobs that are available in the trucking industry.
- The commercial should contain a slogan (e.g., “Just Do It”) and an idea for a visual element (e.g., athletic shoes).
- A general concept and an outline of key points for the commercial are sufficient. But if your team wants to act out the commercial, that is fine, too.
- If necessary, ask your teacher or trucking industry representative for more information about the issue you are addressing in your commercial.

Photo provided by Daimler Trucks North America, with permission. Daimler Trucks North America LLC is a Daimler company.
Opportunities in the Trucking Industry

U.S. professional truck drivers are both men and women, vary in age, race and educational background, and live all over the United States.

Over the Road / Long-Haul Drivers operate heavy trucks and drive for long periods of time, either interstate (between states) or intrastate (within one state). Some long-haul drivers travel a few hundred miles and return the same day; others are away from home overnight, or for several days or weeks at a time. Some drivers work in teams, including husband and wife teams.

Pick-up and Delivery (P&D) / Local Drivers operate light, medium or heavy trucks and work in route-sales or pick-up-and-delivery operations. P&D drivers usually make multiple stops each day and have frequent contact with customers. These drivers often need sales skills in addition to driving skills.

Specialized Trucking involves trucks that handle unusual, oversized or sensitive loads. Drivers cover local and long-distance routes, and need extra training to operate their equipment. Examples of specialized trucking include auto carriers, dry bulk carriers, (permitted) oversized and overweight loads, or double and triple trailers.

Hazardous Materials Drivers need additional training. Drivers need to know about the content of the loads they are hauling, how to handle the loads safely and what to do in an emergency. Drivers who transport hazardous materials must also take a special test when applying for the license that certifies them as a hazardous materials driver.

An Owner-Operator or Independent Driver owns his or her equipment, anything from a straight truck to a flat-bed tractor-trailer, and hauls freight on a contractual basis. Husband-and-wife owner-operator teams are very common, especially in the household goods moving industry. It is possible to make a good living as an owner-operator, but like many businesses, the competition is tight and there are many overhead expenses involved—equipment purchases, maintenance, fuel and insurance, to name just a few. Most owner-operators begin their careers as salaried drivers with a motor carrier before starting their own business.

Rates of pay and potential earnings vary considerably within the industry and depend on the driver’s experience, safety record and type of route. Most city P&D drivers are paid by the hour. In long-haul operations, drivers are usually paid a specified rate per mile, or, in some cases, a percentage of the revenue the motor carrier receives for the load hauled. In general, starting salaries range at about $40,000 per year, and with experience can range between $60,000 and $65,000 per year. However, for more specialized driving, such as being part of a sleeper team, a driver can make $100,000 per year. Similarly, drivers who spend days out at a time on over-the-road deliveries tend to make more than city drivers.
A special thank you to: American Trucking Associations, 950 North Glebe Road | Suite 210 | Arlington, VA | 22203-4181 | 703.838.1896 | www.truckline.com for industry information contained in these classroom activities.


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