



# **MISTAKES**

**Truck Drivers Make  
When Switching Jobs**

*(and how to avoid them)*

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Do you feel like you're making one mistake after the next at your trucking carrier? Do you feel like you're never happy no matter which carrier you go to? Do you feel like, try as you may, you just can't seem to find the right fit in a carrier?

You're not alone. There are hundreds — dare I say, *thousands* — of drivers out there just like you. They don't make the pay they desire. They can't get home when they want to. And that truck stop never has the dark roast coffee they love, not to mention a good parking spot.

Like Mick Jagger, they just can't get no satisfaction.

*And maybe I shouldn't say it, but...  
...sometimes it's their own fault.*

Was that harsh? Maybe. But was it honest? Certainly. And I, Joe Goering, am always going to give it to you straight. I've been working in the trucking industry helping drivers just like you for over thirty years.

So, I know a thing or two about the mistakes drivers are making when they fill out an application or hop from carrier to carrier.

No one wants to make a bad job decision and end up stuck in a career that they hate. Unfortunately, it happens more often than not in the trucking industry.



We talk to drivers all the time who regret their past decisions and the trucking companies it's brought them to. They've made a number of the mistakes on this list, like abandoning their truck, failing to research trucking companies and hopping from job to job.

*But what if you could prevent these mistakes?*

At Anderson Trucking Service (ATS), we don't have driving recruiters. We have consultants. We aim to help each driver we talk to make the right decision for themselves, even if that means they don't ever end up driving for ATS.



By downloading and reading this guide, you'll learn:

- 1 The top mistakes drivers make in their careers.**
- 2 The top mistakes drivers make when they are looking for new trucking carriers.**
- 3 A guide to preventing these mistakes.**

When you use this guide as a tool, you'll begin to make the best decisions when it comes to your well-being and career longevity.

**Keep on trucking!**  
(But keep on reading first!)



# *You hop from job to job*

**Why it's Bad:** You may come off as flighty and disloyal and carriers might not want to hire you because of it.

Quick question: How many jobs have you held in the last five years? The last three years? The last one? Ideally, you've not held more than three jobs in the last three years. Otherwise, that dream carrier you've had your eye on? They might not be hiring you after all.

Leaving a trucking position before you have been there one year is generally defined as job-hopping. Turnover rates are high in the trucking industry, sure, but if a driver hops from job to job too frequently by choice, it's a red flag for many carriers.

Drivers job hop for many reasons, including burnout, unclear expectations, a bad carrier/driver fit and mistreatment. While all of these are understandable reasons to quit, it's best to tough it out for a year and give yourself a chance to adapt to the carrier and vice versa.

When you quit within just a few months, you aren't giving the carrier a chance to prove themselves. You also aren't giving yourself adequate time to adjust.

Even though job-hopping is part of the industry, it doesn't mean all recruiters will be lenient on you. You can have some recent job positions on your work history, and recruiters will understand if you have to switch carriers because your previous carrier was mistreating you, but carriers typically set a standard.

For example, ATS does not hire drivers that have **more than three job changes in the last 12 months** or **six job changes in the last 36 months**. Some companies have stricter standards than this, while others are more lenient.

## WHY?

You might look flaky and unreliable. The carrier may worry that any slight inconvenience will set you off and encourage you to leave your truck abandoned. Carriers want a chance to prove themselves to you, and you won't have the chance to truly get in a good groove with a carrier until about six months in.

A driver that hops from carrier to carrier can be a liability. Not only is it costly to hire a driver, but job-hoppers can lower a carrier's reputation. It's in the best interest of the carrier to have a team of drivers in it for the long haul so they can offer their customers the best quality of service. Carriers don't want to rent a driver — they want a long-term driver.

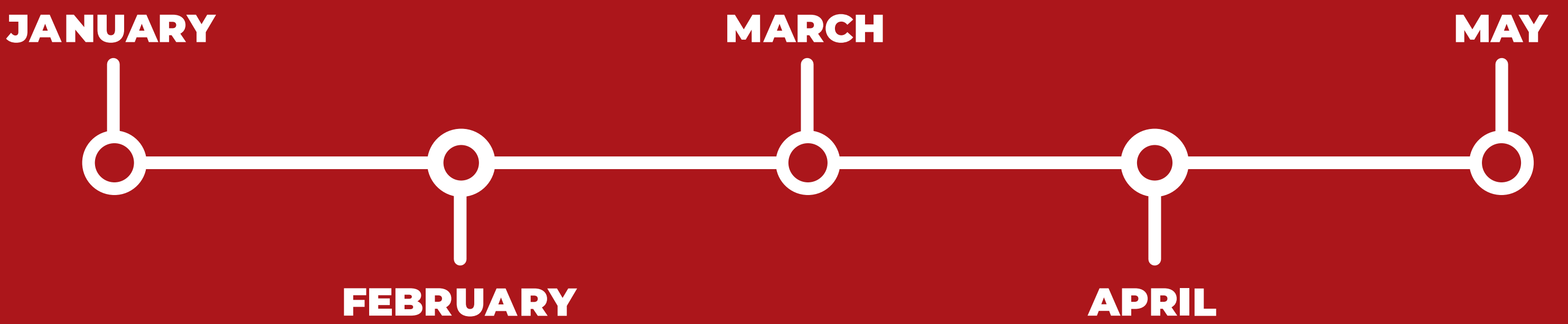
### Why You Shouldn't Job Hop

- 1 You'll lose money
- 2 It's inconvenient
- 3 You look disloyal
- 4 You may not get hired by your ideal carrier



## Tips to Avoid Job-Hopping

- Give yourself a timeline. If you're unhappy, try to work a specific number of months before quitting.



- Look at your income as a monthly average, not a weekly average.



- See if you can make a lateral move within the company if you're unhappy. You may be able to switch to local or regional driving or take a corporate position.



*Mistake #2*

## ***You don't have a career plan***

**Why it's Bad:** You might settle for a career and find out you can't advance like you want to.

What does your life look like in five years?  
How about ten years?

I want you to take a few minutes to think about your career plan. Can you envision it clearly or is it as foggy as the Golden Gate Bridge in the early morning hours?



It's important to make a plan for your career. Without a plan in place, you'll feel directionless, and so will your career.

Say you want to drive heavy haul and haul massive wind turbine blades or oil rig equipment down the road. If you only work in dry van shipping and you never make the intentional move to flatbed, your dream to haul oversized freight will be just that, a dream.

*Row, row, row, your boat...life is but a dream...*

## **WAKE UP.**

Stop dreaming and make it a reality. Making big career moves requires planning, and big career moves are the ones that'll make you the big money.

Talk to your driver recruiter about all your options with that particular carrier so you can align your expectations with theirs. Determine if you can make a lateral move and haul the freight you want to haul. Ask if they haul [military freight](#). Ask if you can lease a vehicle or if you can work with them as an owner-operator.



Maybe you want to be an ice road trucker. Maybe you want to be a hazmat hauler. Maybe you want to work for a top private truck fleet, like Walmart or Sysco.



If you want to get into these lucrative careers, you need to take steps to get there; it doesn't happen overnight. And if you don't make an intentional plan to get yourself there, you might end up at a carrier that doesn't offer what you want or can't get you on a career path to success.

For instance, some carriers may only offer loads for dry van drivers. If you eventually want to haul luxury cars, you're going to



need securement experience and you'll want to start out at a carrier that has flatbed opportunities.

Either way, you'll be unhappy. By settling, you won't find a carrier that will help you reach your goals.

Don't be that driver.

Instead...

### **...Ask yourself these questions:**

- **What is your dream truck driving job?**
- **What are the steps it takes to get there?**
- **What kind of driving experience do you need to get there?**
- **What endorsements do you need?**
- **Does your current carrier offer this type of driving?**
- **Can your current carrier give you the experience you need?**



## Mistake #3

# You don't research the company

**Why it's Bad:** You may end up at a carrier whose expectations do not align with yours.

Imagine this: Your refrigerator breaks.

You need a good replacement option and you need it fast. (Those popsicles aren't going to last much longer and your kids will be *so mad* if the banana ones are gone. Can you blame them?)



So what do you do? You do your research. You get on your phone or your computer and you



start to narrow down your options based on price and availability and features. You have a list of non-negotiables (it has to have an ice maker, it can't be white, it can't cost more than **x** amount ) and negotiables (it *could* be stainless steel or black, it *could* have a freezer on the bottom or the top).

Then you methodically narrow down your options until you find the perfect refrigerator replacement.

Ta-da! You have a new fridge and your popsicles are icy cold!



Now tell me this: The last time you looked for a new trucking carrier when you were unhappy with your current carrier, did you have a list of [negotiables and non-negotiables?](#)

Depending upon your answer, I may be giving you the same look my granddaughter gives me when I make a corny dad joke. (Er, *grandpa* joke.)



*I know you can do better than that, guys.*

If you don't have a list of needs and wants, you'll find yourself settling for whatever job comes your way. And we know that that is by no means a recipe for success. (It's not a recipe for my wife's incredible homemade chicken noodle soup, either.)

Taking a job with whatever trucking carrier will hire you sets you up for unhappiness and, unless you're incredibly lucky, chances are that your expectations will not align and you'll always be butting heads.



Do you want to go home every weekend so you can attend your daughter's hockey games? You better tell your recruiter that.



Do you want to be making a certain amount every week? Let them know.

Do you only want to haul freight in a certain region? You know the drill! Tell 'em.

If you don't tell your recruiter and your fleet manager what you want out of a driving position with their company, they simply won't know. They can't do their jobs and help you if you don't articulate your needs.

That's why you need to have a list of negotiables and non-negotiables before you even begin talking to a driver recruiter.

Things you should consider adding to your list of questions:

- How often can I go home?
- How will I be paid?
- How much can I expect to make per week?
- Do you do forced dispatch?
- Where is your customer base?
- Do I have to haul to x area?

- What happens if I have a family emergency?
- Do you have driver-facing cameras?
- Can I bring my pet on the road?
- Can I bring my spouse with me?
- Where do I need to have maintenance done?
- What is your lease program like?
- What are the pros and cons of leasing versus being a company driver?
- What is your turnover rate?
- Can I talk to a current driver?
- Do your fleet managers go through extensive training?
- What is your safety policy?
- What does your orientation look like?
- Can I move up to **x** position?
- What kind of trucks do you have?
- Is your equipment new?
- Do your trucks have inverters or auxiliary power units?
- Do your trucks have a speed governor?

Make sure you have a list of negotiables and non-negotiables that align with each of these questions and don't settle for a carrier that doesn't align with your values and your expectations.

Do your research on the company and ask all your questions. Search their website. Watch live question and answer sessions. Scour the internet for reviews and talk to drivers that work for that company. If your driver recruiter isn't willing to give you the names of any current drivers, take that as a red flag.

Consider these two truck driver examples:

## ***Transient Terry***

Terry is always chasing the next paycheck. They go from one trucking carrier to the next looking to get the biggest payout.

They're thinking about leaving their current carrier. The carrier told them they'd make \$8,000 per month but last week they only made \$1,000, so Terry's done with that carrier.



They see an ad on Facebook for a new trucking carrier and they're promising that drivers will make at least \$2,500 per week. Terry clicks the link and submits an application. Their safety score is good and they don't have anything bad in their work history report, so they get hired right away. Next thing you know, Terry's putting in their two-week notice and they're off to new driver orientation.

Fast forward to three months down the road. Terry is only making on average \$1,000 per week — not anywhere near what was promised in the ad and even less than they were making at their last carrier.

How happy do you think Terry is?

## ***Methodical Morgan***

Morgan is considering switching trucking carriers. Their current carrier doesn't seem to give them the respect they deserve, and they don't seem to care about safety. They have urged them to haul freight when weather conditions made it unsafe to do so or when they were coming up on Hours of Service (HOS).



Morgan pulls out their computer one night in their sleeper and starts researching “safe trucking carriers” and “top-paying trucking carriers” and “respectful trucking carriers.”



They make two columns, writing down the pros and cons of each carrier as they align with their career goals and needs. Morgan reads the carrier’s articles and watches their videos, absorbing everything they can. Morgan sees that one carrier even has a live question and answer session coming up, so they attend and ask a few questions.

When Morgan runs into the truck stop for a cup of coffee the next morning, they see the logo of one carrier they were researching last night on a fellow driver’s shirt. Morgan asks him how he likes his carrier.

Morgan applies to multiple carriers and has their list of questions and non-negotiables with them as they talk to a number of recruiters.

They carefully consider their decision before going with the carrier whose logo they saw on the driver's shirt at the truck stop.

How happy do you think Morgan is?

**If you said that Methodical Morgan was happier after three months at her new carrier, you would be correct.**

**The moral of the story? Be a Morgan, not a Terry.**



## *You abandon your truck*

**Why it's Bad:** It's costly for the carrier and you may not get hired at a top carrier.

Honestly, this section shouldn't have much more than one line.

***DON'T ABANDON YOUR TRUCK.***

Just don't do it.

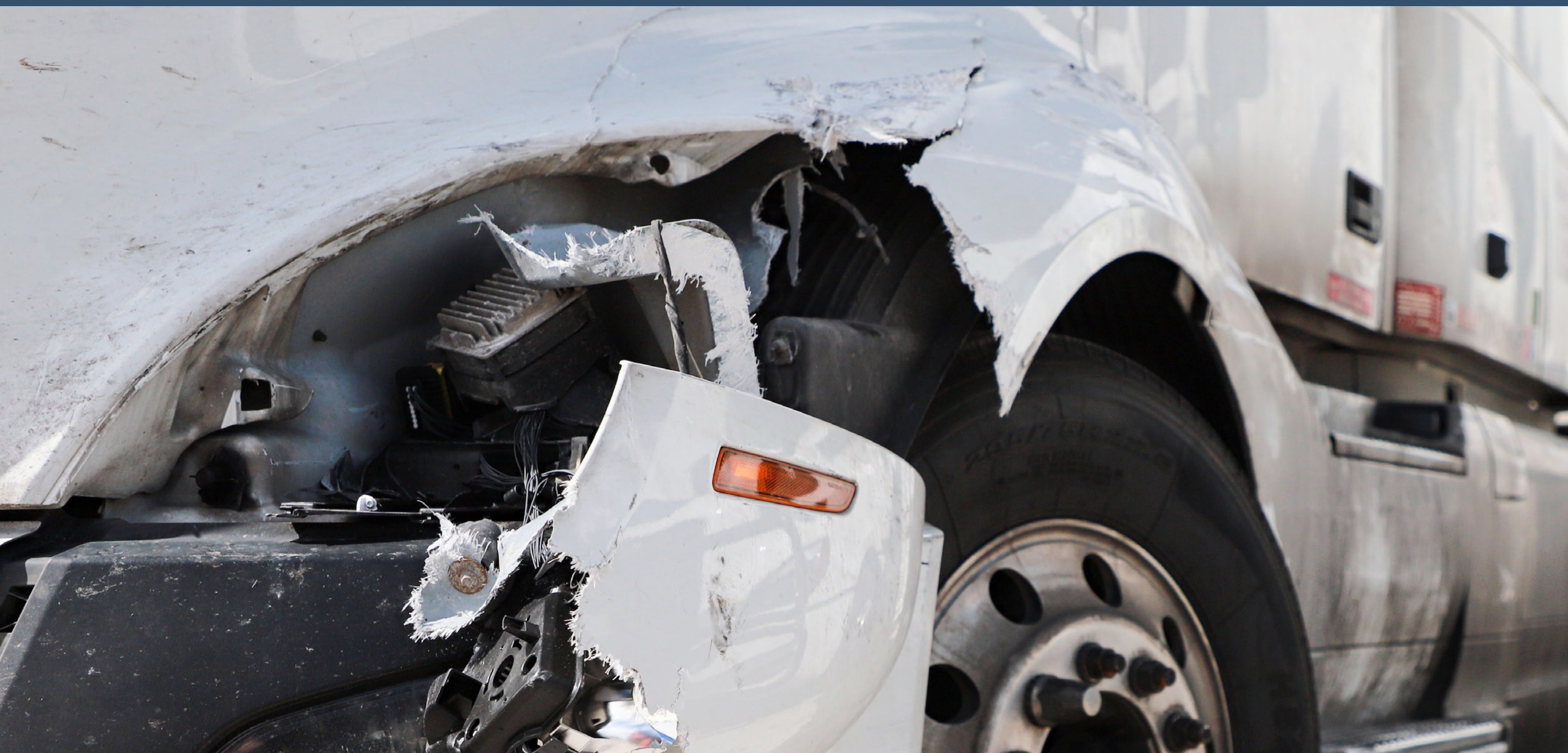
Truck abandonment is defined as leaving your truck in an unauthorized location — whether that's at home or in a Walmart parking lot — after quitting your carrier. An unauthorized location is any turn-in location that was not authorized by the carrier.

Abandoning your truck can be costly — both for your carrier and on your record. It costs the carrier an arm and a leg to recover the truck and it may result in a permanent disqualification for you. You can kiss your CDL goodbye because there is a chance that no



carrier will hire you with a truck abandonment on your record.

Leaving your truck in the middle of an abandoned parking lot — or even a high-traffic area — with the key in site subjects that vehicle to theft or vandalism. That's tens of thousands of dollars that's out in the open for the taking. Can you understand why truck abandonment can result in the end of your professional driving career?



No matter how upset you are with your carrier, you should never abandon your truck. It is not worth losing your job over. Take some deep breaths and do what you need to do to get that truck where it needs to go.



While you're at it, you should keep the truck clean when you turn it in, too. Drop your possessions off at home and return your truck to the proper terminal in good condition.

Of course, there are a few very specific instances where truck abandonment may be absolutely necessary and unpreventable. If you happen to suffer from a medical event and need emergency medical attention, abandoning your truck won't be held against you.

How to avoid being falsely accused of abandoning your truck:

- Document everything.
- Make sure everything is in writing, from your quit date to the day you are turning in your truck.
- Take a photo of your truck when you return it.
- Make sure you can see the background in the photo and you can see the carrier's logo.
- Have someone from the carrier sign off on the truck's return and keep a copy of the form.



*Mistake #5*

## ***You don't prioritize safety***

**Why it's Bad:** You can get into costly accidents and lose your CDL.

Safety should be top-of-mind every time you get in your vehicle. And I don't just mean your semi-truck. I mean your personal vehicle as well.

Carriers utilize the pre-employment screening program (PSP), which shows crash and inspection history for each driver. This is reviewed before a driver is hired and a carrier may refuse to hire you based on their findings. Even a bad accident in your personal vehicle can be cause to take a second look and reconsider hiring a driver.





Moving violations can have an impact on the carrier's Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) score.

A high CSA score is not only a liability to a trucking carrier, but a high CSA score can prevent the carrier from getting high-paying loads. Safety and compliance scores are publicly accessible to potential customers *and* competitors. A history of hiring unsafe drivers can be problematic, and some customers may choose not to work with a carrier because of it — especially if the customer follows fleet rankings.

A good safety score can therefore significantly impact a carrier's profitability. It can help lower insurance premiums and may lessen the number of Department of Transportation (DOT) roadside inspections or audits.

Therefore, it's not in a carrier's best interest to invest in drivers who have not invested in safety.

Instead of thinking of the CSA score as a score, think of it as a percentile that's broken down into seven categories. This is called Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories (BASIC), which includes:

- 1 Unsafe driving
- 2 Crash indicator
- 3 Hours of Service (HOS) compliance
- 4 Vehicle maintenance
- 5 Controlled substances
- 6 Hazardous materials compliance
- 7 Driver fitness

Not only are drivers scored based upon if they've gotten into crashes or been caught speeding, but they will also be penalized for tailgating, changing lanes without signaling, failing to wear a seatbelt, violating Hours of Service, failing to maintain the vehicle, being caught driving under the influence, failing to secure a load and being caught without a medical certificate.





Ultimately, it comes down to keeping you and fellow motorists safe. When you step into your semi, you are not only liable to the load, you are liable to the other motorists on the road and to yourself. It's your job to do your best so you and the drivers on the road can both stay safe.

How you can avoid this mistake:

- Go slow. I always advise drivers to go two or three “under the flow” (under the speed limit).
- Maintain a safe following distance.
- Pull over in a safe location if driving conditions are poor.
- Always wear your seatbelt.
- Don't drive under the influence.
- Stay off your phone.
- Closely follow your Hours of Service and trip plan to ensure you aren't rushing.
- Get adequate rest before you start driving for the day.
- Take care of preventative maintenance.
- Always do your pre-trip inspections.
- When in doubt about securing a load, ask for help.



## Keep on Trucking!

If you've made any of the mistakes on this list, know that you aren't alone. Tons of drivers are making the same mistakes in their careers and when they're switching carriers. The difference is that you've read this guide and now you know how to avoid these mistakes in the future.

When you do your research, find a carrier that aligns with your goals, focus on safety and avoid job hopping or abandoning your truck, you'll find yourself settling into a carrier that you can feel at home with.

And that'll make you a lot happier as a driver. Believe me, I have decades of experience working with drivers just like you at ATS. I know what a successful, happy driver looks like.

For more best practices, information about the best trucking carriers and tips for success, you can [visit the ATS Learning Center.](#)



# Don't forget:

Don't treat trucking carriers like a revolving door;  
job hopping hurts you.

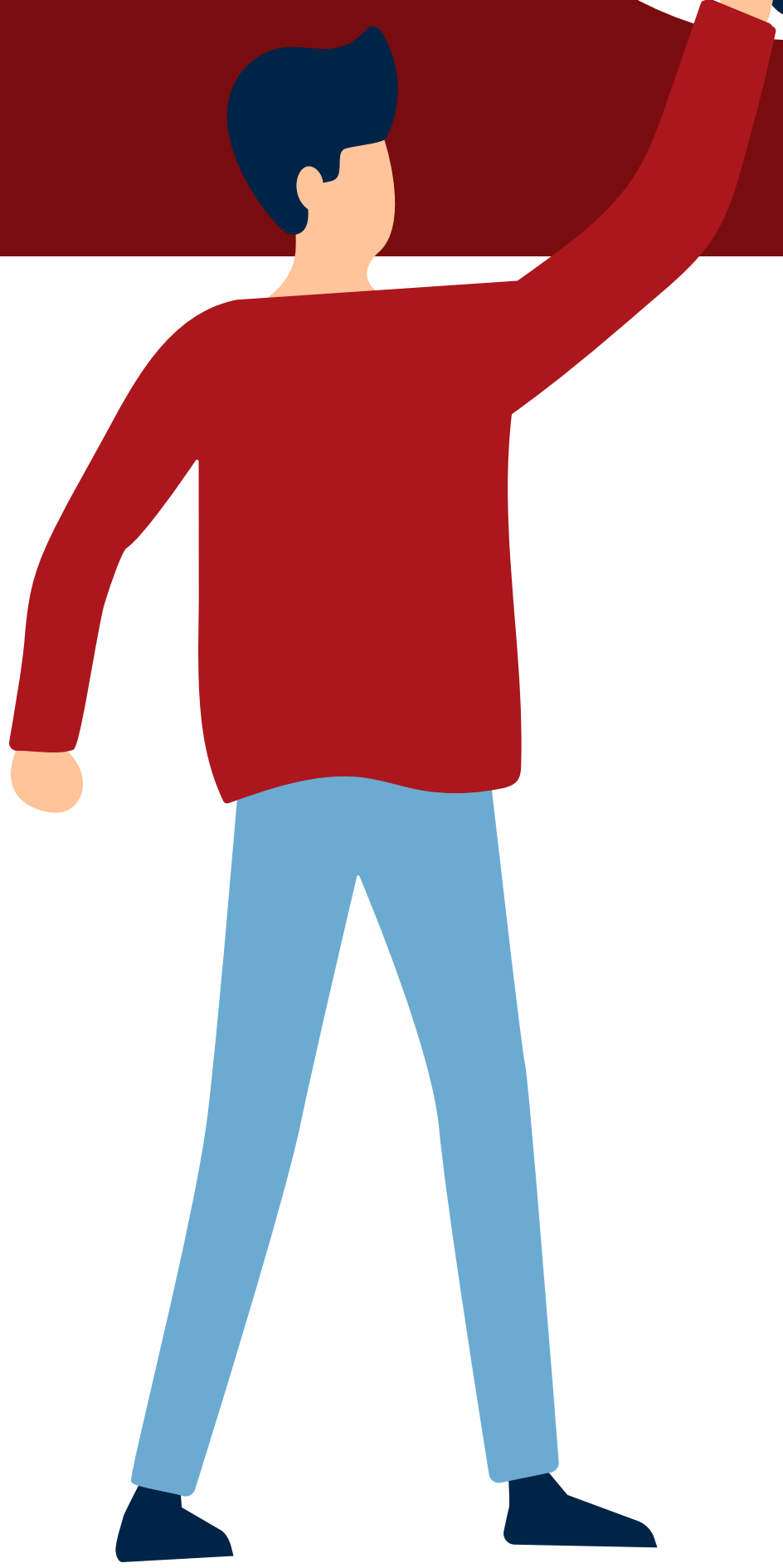


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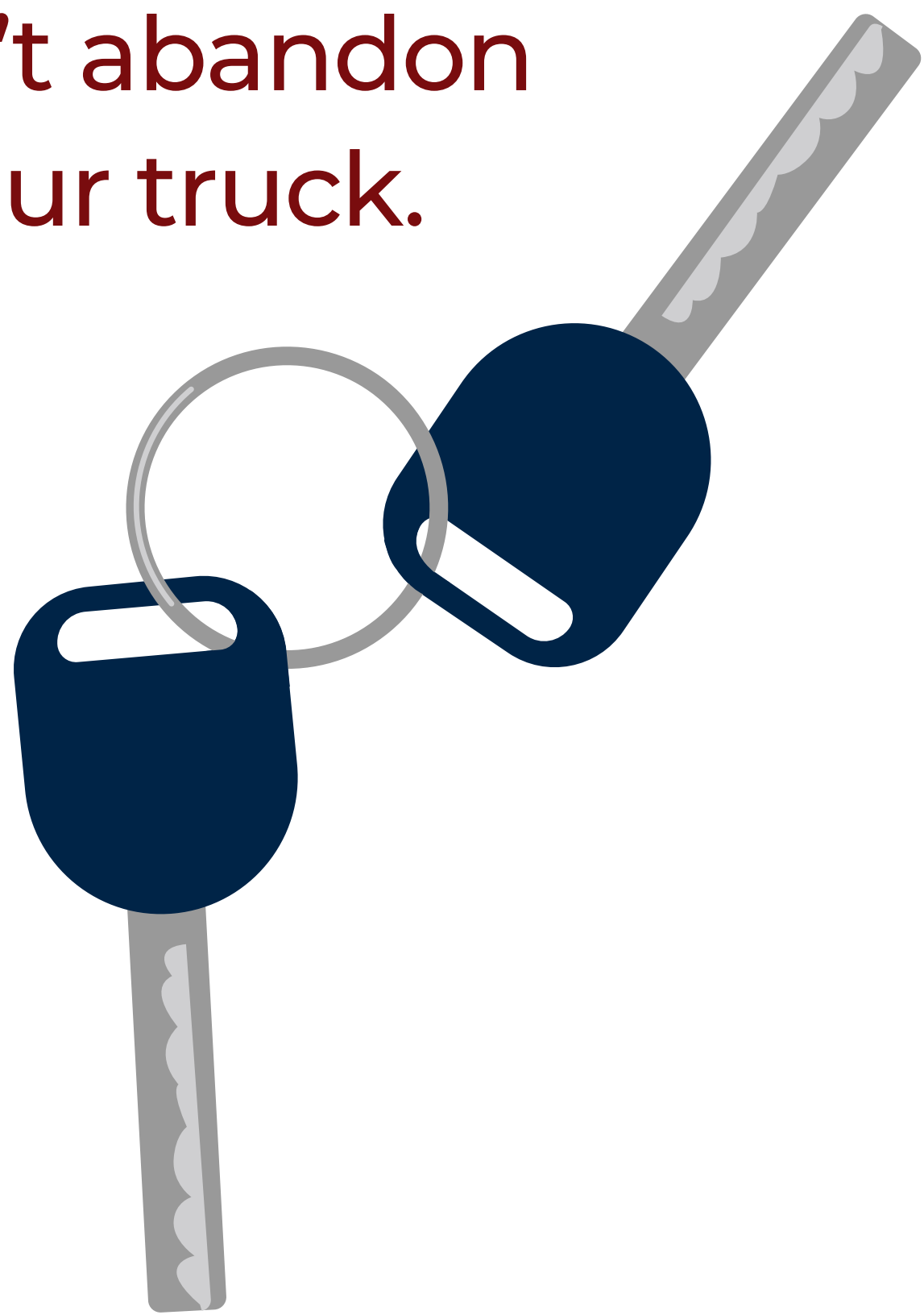




Do your research on trucking carriers.



Don't abandon  
your truck.



Focus on safety.



*Want to know if ATS is the right career home for you?*

**Learn What It's Like to Work for ATS**