Sleep Quality Checklist

Practical Tools for Better Rest and Safer Driving

WINTER DRIVING SAFETY SERIES

FIRST UNDERWRITERS
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Quality sleep is the single most effective countermeasure against driver fatigue. The **American Academy of Sleep Medicine** recommends 7-9 hours of sleep per night for adults, yet many commercial drivers consistently fall short. This checklist provides a structured, practical approach to evaluating and improving your sleep habits. Use it daily to build routines that lead to better rest, sharper alertness, and safer driving.

1 SLEEPER BERTH ENVIRONMENT SETUP

Your sleep environment directly affects sleep quality. Complete this checklist before each rest period to ensure optimal conditions. Even small improvements add up over time.

Darkness

- [ ] Blackout curtains installed and fully closed
- [ ] Windshield and side window covers in place
- [ ] All electronic indicator lights covered or turned off
- [ ] Phone and tablet screens face-down or in do-not-disturb mode

Temperature

- [ ] Cab temperature set to 65-68°F (18-20°C) for optimal sleep
- [ ] APU or idle-free climate system functioning properly
- [ ] Extra blanket available for temperature drops during the night
- [ ] Adequate ventilation to prevent stuffiness without excessive noise

Noise Control

- [ ] Earplugs available and in good condition
- [ ] White noise machine or fan app set up (consistent background sound)
- [ ] Truck parked away from high-traffic areas, loading docks, and reefer units
- [ ] Phone set to do-not-disturb with emergency contacts allowed through

Comfort

- [ ] Quality mattress or mattress topper in good condition (replace annually)
- [ ] Clean bedding changed at least weekly
- [ ] Supportive pillow appropriate for your sleep position
- [ ] Sleeper berth area clean and free of clutter

PRO TIP: Invest in your sleep setup the way you invest in your truck. A quality mattress topper ($50-150) and blackout curtain set ($30-60) pay for themselves many times over in improved alertness, safety, and overall health. These are some of the best ROI purchases a driver can make.

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2 PRE-SLEEP WIND-DOWN ROUTINE

A consistent wind-down routine signals your body that sleep is approaching. Perform these steps in the same order each time to build a reliable sleep trigger. Start your routine **30-60 minutes before your target sleep time**.

- [ ] **Set a target bedtime** — Same time each night whenever possible, even on days off
- [ ] **Stop all screen use** — No phone, tablet, or laptop; blue light suppresses melatonin production
- [ ] **Complete personal hygiene** — Brush teeth, wash face; consistent routine signals sleep time
- [ ] **Light stretching** — 5 minutes of gentle neck, shoulder, and back stretches to release tension
- [ ] **Relaxation activity** — Read a book, listen to calm music, or practice deep breathing exercises
- [ ] **Set your alarm** — Allow 7-9 hours of sleep time; place alarm within arm's reach
- [ ] **Review tomorrow's plan** — Write down next day's route/stops to clear your mind of planning
- [ ] **Dim lights progressively** — Reduce cabin lighting during the last 30 minutes before sleep

WARNING: Screens emit blue light that suppresses melatonin by up to 50%. If you must use a device, enable "night mode" or "warm display" settings and keep brightness to the lowest readable level. Better yet, switch to an audio-only option like a podcast or audiobook.

3 DAILY SLEEP HYGIENE HABITS

These daily habits significantly impact sleep quality. Check off each item you practiced today. Aim for at least 8 out of 10 items consistently to maintain optimal sleep health.

- [ ] Woke up at roughly the same time as yesterday (+/- 30 minutes)
- [ ] Got exposure to natural sunlight within 30 minutes of waking
- [ ] Completed at least 20 minutes of physical activity (walking, stretching, exercise)
- [ ] Ate regular, balanced meals throughout the day (no large meals before bed)
- [ ] Stayed hydrated — drank at least 8 glasses of water throughout the day
- [ ] Stopped caffeine intake at least 6 hours before planned bedtime
- [ ] Avoided alcohol within 4 hours of bedtime (alcohol fragments sleep cycles)
- [ ] Took breaks every 2-3 hours during driving to move and refresh
- [ ] Avoided napping after 3 PM (late naps interfere with nighttime sleep)
- [ ] Did not use the sleeper berth for non-sleep activities (eating, watching videos)

4 DIET & CAFFEINE MANAGEMENT

What you eat and drink has a direct impact on how well you sleep. Follow these guidelines to fuel alertness during the day and promote quality rest at night.

DO	DON'T
✓ Eat smaller, frequent meals throughout the day	✗ Eat large, heavy meals within 3 hours of sleep
✓ Choose lean proteins: chicken, fish, eggs, nuts	✗ Consume high-fat, fried foods at dinner
✓ Include complex carbs: whole grains, oats, brown rice	✗ Drink energy drinks after mid-afternoon
✓ Eat fruits and vegetables with every meal	✗ Use alcohol as a sleep aid (it fragments sleep)
✓ Drink water as your primary beverage	✗ Rely on sugary snacks for energy boosts
✓ Have a light snack if hungry before bed (banana, yogurt)	✗ Skip meals (causes blood sugar crashes and fatigue)
✓ Use caffeine strategically — morning and early afternoon only	✗ Drink excessive fluids right before bed (disrupts sleep)
✓ Limit caffeine to 400mg/day (about 4 cups of coffee)	✗ Consume spicy foods near bedtime (causes discomfort)

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CAFFEINE CUTOFF GUIDE: If your bedtime is **10 PM**, stop caffeine by **4 PM**. If your bedtime is **8 PM**, stop by **2 PM**. If your bedtime is **6 AM** (night drivers), stop by **midnight**. Caffeine has a half-life of 5-6 hours — half the caffeine from your 2 PM coffee is still active at 8 PM.

5 SLEEP DISORDER SCREENING

Sleep disorders affect an estimated **28% of commercial truck drivers**, often undiagnosed. If you check 3 or more items below, consult a sleep medicine specialist. Early detection and treatment can dramatically improve your sleep quality, alertness, and overall health.

Sleep Apnea Warning Signs

- [ ] Loud, persistent snoring (ask a co-driver, partner, or use a recording app)
- [ ] Gasping, choking, or snorting during sleep
- [ ] Waking up with a dry mouth or sore throat
- [ ] Morning headaches that improve as the day goes on
- [ ] Excessive daytime sleepiness despite 7+ hours in bed
- [ ] Difficulty staying awake during monotonous driving conditions

Other Sleep Issues

- [ ] Difficulty falling asleep within 30 minutes consistently
- [ ] Waking up multiple times during the night and unable to return to sleep
- [ ] Restless legs — uncomfortable sensations or urge to move legs at bedtime
- [ ] Waking too early and unable to fall back asleep
- [ ] Feeling unrested despite spending adequate time in bed
- [ ] Relying on sleep aids (medication or alcohol) more than twice per week

INSURANCE TIP: Many trucking insurance programs offer premium discounts for fleets that implement sleep apnea screening and CPAP compliance monitoring. Treated sleep apnea reduces crash risk by up to 70%. Contact First Underwriters to learn how your wellness program may qualify for better rates.

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6 7-DAY SLEEP LOG

Track your sleep for one week to identify patterns and areas for improvement. Complete each column honestly — this log is for your personal use. Rate sleep quality from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Bring this log to your next physical or sleep consultation.

Day	Date	Bedtime	Wake Time	Total Hours	Naps (min)	Caffeine Cutoff	Quality (1-5)	Notes
Mon								
Tue								
Wed								
Thu								
Fri								
Sat								
Sun								

Weekly Summary

Average hours of sleep per night:	_____
Average sleep quality score (1-5):	_____
Number of nights with 7+ hours:	_____ / 7
Number of days caffeine cutoff met:	_____ / 7

7 SLEEP QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT

Rate each statement honestly based on your typical sleep over the past 2 weeks. Use a scale of **1** (Never/Rarely) to **5** (Always/Almost Always). Add your scores for a total out of 50.

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I fall asleep within 30 minutes of going to bed	○	○	○	○	○
2	I sleep through the night without waking up	○	○	○	○	○
3	I wake up feeling rested and refreshed	○	○	○	○	○
4	I stay alert during monotonous driving conditions	○	○	○	○	○
5	I maintain a consistent sleep schedule (+/- 30 min)	○	○	○	○	○
6	My sleeper berth environment is dark, quiet, and cool	○	○	○	○	○
7	I avoid screens for 30+ minutes before bed	○	○	○	○	○
8	I limit caffeine to before my personal cutoff time	○	○	○	○	○
9	I get at least 7 hours of sleep per 24-hour period	○	○	○	○	○
10	I do not rely on sleep aids or alcohol to fall asleep	○	○	○	○	○

Your Total Score: _____ / 50

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Score Range	Rating	Recommended Action
40 - 50	Excellent	Maintain your current habits. You're a model for sleep health.
30 - 39	Good	Identify 1-2 areas scoring below 3 and focus on improving those.
20 - 29	Fair	Multiple areas need attention. Review Sections 1-4 and make changes.
10 - 19	Poor	Significant sleep issues. Consider a sleep specialist consultation.

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Carriers with strong driver wellness and fatigue management programs demonstrate their commitment to safety, which insurers reward with better coverage options and rates. Contact us to learn how your safety practices can work in your favor.

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