

IFDA National Championship

Overview & Study Guide

Transportation Competition

This overview is designed to be used alongside the comprehensive overview and study guide to help competitors prepare for all aspects of the IFDA National Championship. Success requires knowledge of regulations, practical driving skills, and an understanding of competition procedures.

Structure of the Competition Events

The competition consists of three main parts: a written exam, a pre-trip vehicle inspection, and a driving course. Each part assesses different skills and knowledge relevant to safe driving. A combined 500 points can be earned across all three portions of the event.

- **Written Examination:** 25 questions to assess knowledge of safety and regulations, completed in one hour.
- **Pre-Trip Inspection:** Drivers must identify 10 planted defects within a set time limit.
- **Driving Course:** Six driving challenges, each worth 50 points, designed to test practical driving skills.

Awards

Individual Awards

- First Place: \$2,500, Champions jacket, vehicle magnet
- Second Place: \$1,500
- Third Place: \$1,000
- Rookie of the Year: \$500 plus Louisville Slugger (highest scoring first-time participant)
- Perfect Score Awards: \$100 each for perfect pre-trip, written test, or field course

Team Awards

- Presented to company with minimum of three competitors
- Based on combined scores from written test and field course
- Scoring criteria:
 - Average of three best competitors
 - Average of all company competitors

- **Award:** Team trophy

Competition Protocol

- Competitors must wear name badges at all times
- Remain in the sequester lounge until called for competition
- After completing both pre-trip and course competition, return to the sequester lounge to turn in the number
- Protests must be filed within 30 minutes of competition completion
- No electronic devices permitted during any part of the competition:
 - Written-test, Pre-trip inspection, Field course, and Sequester lounge
 - Prohibited items include phones, tablets, Wi-Fi watches, fitness trackers
 - Penalty: Immediate disqualification

Preparation Recommendations

1. **Study thoroughly:** Review ATA Facts for Drivers, JJ Keller pocket guide, FMCSA regulations
2. **Practice inspection techniques:** Familiarize yourself with common defect locations
3. **Develop precision skills:** Practice close-quarter maneuvering and distance judgment
4. **Time management:** Plan strategies for completing each section within time limits
5. **Rest adequately:** Ensure proper rest before competition day (early start time)
6. **Know the rules:** Understand all competition protocols and penalties

Written Examination

The written exam evaluates drivers' knowledge of their job responsibilities and safety practices based on three authoritative sources: the most recent version of ATA Facts for Drivers, the current JJ Keller pocket guide, and up-to-date FMCSA regulations. The accompanying study guide focuses on ten essential knowledge areas that will be covered in the exam.

Pre-Trip Inspection

The pre-trip inspection tests a driver's ability to conduct an efficient and thorough safety check of their vehicle. During this assessment, drivers must identify "planted" safety-related defects within a specified time frame: five minutes for Straight Truck and seven minutes for 3-Axle and 5-Axle vehicles.

There are 10 planted defects, with each correct identification worth 10 points for a perfect score of 100 points. There are no extra points awarded for non-planted defects.

The inspection vehicles should be the same types as those used on the driving course, though not necessarily identical. Planted defects typically include easily identifiable issues such as missing or inoperative windshield wipers, missing wheel lugs, and similar problems that don't require extensive mechanical adjustment.

When identifying defects, drivers should inform the judge of the defect clearly for the judge to hear. Judges will acknowledge but not confirm correct identifications, and no points are awarded for identifying unplanted defects. Competitors are prohibited from raising the hood, opening trailer doors, turning on lights, blowing the horn, pumping brakes, or fixing any defects.

Driving Course

The driving course evaluates a driver's practical skills and ability to operate commercial vehicles safely and efficiently. Participants navigate through a series of standardized obstacles that simulate real-world driving challenges encountered in professional driving situations. The course tests precision maneuvers, spatial awareness, proper mirror usage, and adherence to safety protocols. Drivers are scored based on accuracy, technique, and skill, with penalties assessed for failure to follow directions, excessive speed, incomplete obstacles, not using three points of contact when entering and exiting the cab, and so forth.

Safety Requirements

- Seat belt must be worn at all times (300-point deduction if not worn)
- Must maintain proper driving position (50-point deduction if standing)
- No heads out of windows (50-point deduction)
- No opening doors during course (50-point deduction)
- No excessive speed (50-point warning, disqualification on second warning)
- Must use 3 points of contact when entering vehicle (50-point deduction)

Judges Communication Signals

- **Stop:** One long whistle blast
- **Proceed:** Two short whistle blasts
- **Stop and proceed to next obstacle:** One long followed by two short whistles

Driver's Communication Signals

- **Emergency time out:** One long horn blast

Closing Information

The IFDA National Championship represents the pinnacle of professional driving excellence in the food distribution industry. Success in this competition requires not only technical skill and regulatory knowledge but also careful preparation and attention to detail.

Remember that all competitors must adhere strictly to competition protocols, including the prohibition of electronic devices at any stage of the competition. Violations will result in immediate disqualification. Proper rest before the event is essential, as competition days typically begin early.

We encourage all participants to thoroughly review the study materials, practice their inspection and driving techniques, and develop effective time management strategies for each section of the competition. The combined skills demonstrated across the written exam, pre-trip inspection, and driving course reflect the comprehensive expertise required of today's professional drivers.

For any questions regarding competition rules or procedures, please contact the IFDA Championship Committee prior to the event. We wish all competitors the best of luck and look forward to recognizing excellence in professional driving at this year's National Championship.