

Tips for

HOW TO KEEP UP WITH YOUR SCHEDULE



ONSPOT



As a professional driver you know what it takes to get the job done. Yet, when the work becomes a habit, it's easy to overlook those little things that could make a difference and actually improve your workday – or avoid annoying incidents. If you just take the time to reflect and look upon the job from an overall perspective, there is a chance that you'll discover tips and details that could be relevant for your specific working situation. Of course there is a difference if you're on the road for days as a long haul driver or if you're rushing the city streets in a delivery truck. Yet, your mindset should be the same:

What can I do to make my workday smooth and keeping up with schedule?

1. Plan well to drive and feel good

Proper planning could be the key to a successful trip. Poor planning may lead to wasted driving time, wasted fuel cost and you could be late for delivery. Poor planning could put you in a situation when you're hungry, out of fuel, or with a broken wheel but no repair shop close by.

Obviously, besides knowing your point of destination, there's a lot of planning you can do on how to best get there in time. The more detailed your planning, the more confident you can be in making it to your destination in time.



Careful planning will help you keep up with the schedule.

2. Planning the route

You know the total distance of your trip and you have a good idea of your possible average driving speed, so it's easy to estimate the driving time. Don't be too optimistic here, though. There could be lots of reasons why you won't be able to keep that speed. Road conditions may be worse and traffic may be heavier than you thought. Bad weather may slow down the entire traffic pace, and maybe you'll need more and longer stops for eating and resting because driving turns out to be tougher than you thought. If you run out of time and rush to keep up with your schedule, there's a risk of making mistakes that will delay you even further.



Don't be too optimistic. Calculate for a slower driving speed and longer driving time accordingly. This will help you keep up with the schedule.

3. Finding your way

GPS navigation equipment contains loads of useful information on roads, service points, restaurants, fuel stations, and more. It's handy and useful – when it works...



GPS devices can fail. Always bring a good old road map and maybe written notes on service points, fuel stations and resting points etc., as a backup. Avoiding getting lost and unnecessary detours will help you keeping up with your schedule.

4. The weather is a challenge

Hopefully, you'll drive on a dry road on a sunny day, but don't count on it! When planning your trip you must take expected weather conditions into account, as bad weather may increase your driving time. Wintertime, when roads are icy and snowy, traffic pace could be considerably reduced and delays are commonplace. To keep up with your schedule, you should plan for this and make sure you have proper traction control equipment. Also take into account the time and effort needed to use that equipment. Just bringing snow chains will not help you making it on schedule. In all, it could take hours and hours of tiresome mounting and dismounting over and over if you are on a long trip, and that time must be counted for. Automatic tire chains on the other hand, are engaged and disengaged by the flip of a switch – while driving. Automatic tire chains will save you a lot of time and effort and help you keep up with your schedule.

In a worst-case scenario, not even tire chains will help and the snowstorm may leave you stranded – with no chance of keeping up with schedule. In that situation you'll be very happy that you brought some extra supplies, some warm clothes and a warm sleeping bag...

Use an online weather service, e.g. weather-forecast.com, to have a forecast for your planned driving areas. Also keep a shortcut to a weather forecast service in your smartphone—or download a good weather app. This way you can easily have regular updates during your trip. We all know that weather conditions can change quickly, timely information can be the difference between sitting in a traffic jam or arriving safely and on time.



Check the weather report regularly on your way. Taking expected weather conditions into account will help you to keep up with the schedule.



Automatic tire chains will help you to keep up with the schedule.



Bring extra clothes and supplies when you expect bad weather.

5. Prepare your vehicle – and keep an eye on it.

Don't just count on your vehicle to be in good condition. Make sure it is!

Preparing your vehicle for winter conditions is not just about the vehicle itself. A commonly overlooked issue is the diesel fuel. The paraffin ingredient (in the diesel fuel) gels at low temperatures, which can lead to roughness while operating the vehicle—or even engine failure. Accordingly, you should choose winter blend fuel. Check with your engine manufacturer to get approved recommendations on fuel treatments. Remember that diesel fuels have condensed water suspended in the solution. Keeping your gas tank at least half-way full minimizes the risk of water freezing in the fuel line.

Also, consider using thinner oil in cold climate. Check your engine manual for proper viscosity levels for different climates. Besides checking fuel and fluids, make sure your battery is in good condition, and consider using heavy-duty winter windshield wiper blades for tough ice build-up.

Especially when driving in harsh winter conditions, it's most important to regularly check that everything is in order. The brakes and the tires are quite obvious to check before leaving, but there's a good reason to keep an eye on them and other things when you're on your way.

In snowy conditions, check your tail-lights at every stop. They must be clean so you are clearly seen by other drivers on the road.

Check the trailer tires often. Are the wheels turning? If the brakes are frozen, there could be a frozen valve, or the brake pads could be frozen to the drums. A frozen valve could be melted by pouring some methyl hydrate through the system.



Winterizing your vehicle will help you keeping up with the schedule.



Continuously checking your vehicle will help you keeping up with the schedule.

6. A case – just in case

Hopefully, you won't need "emergency supplies", but if you do you'll be very happy you brought them. Depending on the trip length, the season and your location etc., an "emergency pack" could look quite different from time to time. However, the basic idea behind it will remain the same: the items that could improve your situation if misfortune strikes. The better you plan, the better you can cope with the unexpected.



Bring items that could be useful in unexpected situations. These items could be crucial for keeping up with the schedule.

Consider bringing:



Extra food – Dried or canned. You might be stranded in a snowstorm far from a restaurant or a store.



Water – Keep a good pack of spare water bottles.



Extra clothes – Your warm jacket and insulated boots may be your best friends if you need to leave the cab in a snowstorm. Don't forget to bring an extra sweater, warm gloves, a cap and extra socks. If there is a risk of heavy rain (e.g. in spring or fall), bring a raincoat and rubber boots.



Strong LED headlamp – Your invaluable tool in the dark. With a headlamp instead of a flashlight you're totally free to use both arms. LED lights will be far more energy efficient than old bulbs.



Spare batteries – Your headlamp will be quite useless without them...



Cell phone power bank – If you cannot charge your cell phone, the power bank may become your lifeline. Keep the power bank fully charged.



Propane heater and lighter – You might end up freezing cold, and need to cook...



Hammer and a putty knife – They're good for removing ice.



Warm sleeping bag – Even if you don't plan to use it, it could make cold waiting hours bearable.



Books – Something to read if you need to kill idle time.



Road map, paper notebook and pencils – Even if they're old-fashioned, they work in virtually all conditions.