



Glossary of Trucking Terminology



Term	Description/Explanation
ABS	Anti-lock Braking System
ADR	Australian Design Rules. These relate to trucking in particular trailer braking
Aggregate Trailer Mass (ATM)	The total mass of the trailer when carrying the maximum load recommended by the manufacturer. This includes mass imposed onto the towing vehicle when the combination vehicle is resting on a horizontal supporting plane
Air Suspension	Compressed air bags used to raise the vehicle's chassis from the axles and support the weight of vehicle
Air Trip	A tailgate tipper release catch operated in the truck cabin
Angel Gear or Gods Gear	This is slang for rolling in neutral – presents a high risk of losing control of the vehicle and significant mechanical damage
Articulated Vehicle	Most commonly a reference to a prime mover and semi-trailer – articulated between the motored unit and the semi-trailer
Automatic Tow Coupling	Trailer coupling on the tow vehicle that automatically releases a spring loaded towing pin when the draw bar of the trailer comes into contact with it
Axle Group	An axle or more than one axle that supports and load shares a section of a vehicle
Ball Coupling or Bartlett Ball	Ball coupling similar to that used on a box trailer, which connects a dog or pig trailer to a truck
B-Double	A 2nd semi-trailer which is attached to the rear of the 1st semi-trailer using a turntable
Bobtail	Prime mover truck with no attached semi-trailer
Bonneted Truck	A truck that has the driving cabin located behind the engine, which is covered by a bonnet. Due to the extra length of a bonneted truck, cabover vehicles are popular in Australia. (see Cabover)
Bogie Drive	A two drive axle truck e.g. the two rear axles of a truck powered from the engine via the driveshaft
Bulkhead	A strong wall-like structure placed at the front of a flat trailer to prevent the load coming into the cabin during sudden stopping or collision
Cab Chassis	A truck not fitted with a body, in the case of a rigid truck, or turntable in the case of a prime mover. Just the driving cab mounted on the chassis
Cab Guard	A strong structure fitted to the rear of a prime mover cab to prevent freight hitting or coming into the truck cabin if an accident occurs
Cabover	A truck with the cabin mounted directly above the engine. Popular in Australia to keep the overall length of the truck & trailer combination compliant with road rules
Cap Tarpaulin	A tarpaulin cover that goes over a trailer load
Chassis	A truck vehicle frame consisting of two rails (chassis rails) upon which the cab and load carrying structure sits
Clutch Brake	A component of the transmission put into action by the last couple of centimetres of clutch pedal travel braking the spinning gears in the transmission which allows first or reverse gears to be selected



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Combination vehicle	A rigid truck that is towing at least one trailer
Constant Mesh Transmission	A constant mesh gearbox is a type of manual transmission in which all forward gear pairs remain engaged – in mesh or fixed to their positions all the time
Container	Commonly called a shipping container. This is a metal box for transporting bulk goods via ship that can be lifted off/out of the ship and placed onto a trailer to for land transportation. The container has twistlock corner castings enabling it to be locked onto a specialised 'Skel' (skeleton) trailer (or rigid truck) which has twistlocks on it, so it can be transported. Containers are usually either 20 feet (6.06 metres) or 40 feet (12.19 metres) in length
Converter Dolly	A dolly, as it is commonly known, usually has two axles, a turntable and draw bar. It is used to support and tow the front end of a semitrailer when it is used as the second or third trailer of a heavy combination vehicle
Cruise Control	Similar to cruise control in a motor vehicle, a truck cruise control can be set so a constant vehicle speed is maintained. More advanced systems adjust vehicle speed keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front to avoid a collision
Crash Gearbox	A form of manual transmission with gears that do not use synchronizing mechanisms. They require the driver to manually synchronize the transmission's input speed (engine RPM) and output speed (driveshaft speed) to be able to change gears
Curtain-sider	Often called a tautliner, a curtain-sider is basically a flattop trailer with a framing structure mounted on it, which is used as a tarping system. When the tarp is pulled forward or back, it exposes the trailer, enabling loading from the side or rear. See Side Curtains
Deck	The deck is the trailer platform that the load is placed on for transportation
Dog Box	This is a slang term for the driver sleeper box located behind the driving cabin
Dog Trailer	A trailer with 2 axle groups of which the front axle group is steered by connection to the drawing vehicle
Dolly	See Converter Dolly
Double De-Clutching	A method of shifting gears in vehicles with an unsynchronised manual transmission. Often called double shuffling
Double Trailer Combination	A vehicle configuration of a prime mover, a semi-trailer and a trailer
Drawbar Stand	A height adjustable device, or leg, which keeps the trailer drawbar at the right height to enable smooth trailer coupling to the tow vehicle
Drive Axle	The drive axle contains two split axles (one each side), the differential and universal joints, which enables the power generated by the engine (via the driveshaft) to be transferred to the road
Dual Wheels	A pair of wheels which are attached to either end of the axle
Dunnage	Wood, matting or similar material used to keep cargo in position. Can also provide a gap between the load and deck surface so a fork lift can get under to lift it
EBS	Electronic Braking System – similar to ABS – electronic sensors monitor the speed of the wheel as it rotates and detects if it is about to lock up under braking. When this happens, the brakes are automatically released and then rapidly reapplied to maximise braking efficiency
Electric Retarder	Uses electromagnetic induction to provide retardation (slowing) force on the rotor (behind the gearbox) or driveshaft to provide stopping power without using the brakes



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Exhaust Brake	An exhaust brake is a means of slowing a diesel engine by closing off the exhaust path from the engine, causing the exhaust gases to be compressed in the exhaust manifold, and in the cylinder. Since the exhaust is being compressed, and there is no fuel being applied, the engine slows down the vehicle.
Gross Trailer Mass (GTM)	The mass transmitted to the ground by the tyres of the trailer when coupled to a towing vehicle and carrying the maximum load recommended by the manufacturer or importer, approximately uniformly distributed over the load bearing area
Gross Combination Mass (GCM)	The loaded weight (including the weight of the truck & trailers themselves) of an articulated or combination vehicle
Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM)	The loaded weight (including the weight of the truck itself) of a rigid vehicle
Isolation switch	Also called a Battery Isolation Switch, which is a switch that cuts off battery electrical power completely to the electrical system of the vehicle for safety purposes and to prevent short circuit and possible fire
Jinker	A specialist trailer used to carry timber logs
Kingpin	A pin on a semi-trailer that locks into a prime mover's turntable jaws so the trailer can be towed
Landing Gear/ Landing Legs	Legs that move up and down which are attached at the front of a semi-trailer enabling it to be supported when not hooked up to a prime mover. They can be electrically or manually operated
Lift-Up Lazy Axle	An axle that can be lifted up off the road when not needed to save on wear & tear
Linehaul	Truck driving long distances between particular locations on a regular basis. e.g. Melbourne to Brisbane
Live Load	e.g. bulk liquids like fuel or milk or livestock that naturally move around while being transported
Load Sensing or Load Proportioning Valve	A load sensing proportioning valve system for hydraulic and/or air brakes which varies the amount of pressure in the system to prevent locking up. EBS (Electronic Braking Systems) have largely superseded this type of set up
Maxi-Brake	Maxi Brakes is another name for spring brakes. This type of brake has two chambers; one that acts the same as a standard brake chamber, and a second chamber that contains a powerful mechanical spring that acts as a fail-safe should the air brake system lose air pressure
Overdrive	Overdrive is the highest gear in the transmission. Overdrive allows the engine to operate at a lower RPM for a given road speed. This allows the vehicle to achieve better fuel efficiency, and often quieter operation on the road
Over Height Vehicle	A vehicle exceeding the maximum permitted height on a particular roadway
Over Revving	When RPM – Revs Per Minute – exceed the manufacturers recommendations. Engine damage can be caused when this occurs
Pantechicon or Pantech	A Pantechicon van is enclosed van attached to a rigid truck chassis, semi-trailer or trailer. An example would be a rigid furniture moving truck
Pig Trailer	A trailer having one axle group near the middle of the length of its goods carrying surface
Pin	The Pin (not to be confused with Kingpin) locks into the trailer drawbar eye tow coupler. This couples to the ringfeeder attached to the rear of a rigid truck. Mostly used for dog and pig trailers
Plant Trailer	A trailer which, instead of a load space, has fixed to it machinery such as an air compressor, concrete mixer or drilling rig



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Pogo Stick	Is a pole designed to contain dangling hoses and cables behind the truck cab to prevent them falling and dragging on the ground
Power Takeoff or PTO	A method of taking power from a truck's transmission and transmitting it to an application such as a concrete mixer, tipping hoist or garbage compactor
Prime Mover	A truck used to tow a semi-trailer
Reefer	Slang for a refrigerated trailer or rigid truck with refrigerated box mounted on the chassis, used to transport frozen, chilled or perishable goods
Rigid Truck	A truck that is not articulated and has a single rigid chassis
Roadtrain	A prime mover and semi-trailer towing one or more trailers connected via a dolly. (Not to be confused with a B-double which is a prime mover towing two semi-trailers with both trailers attached by turntables attached to the trailers themselves) See B Double
RPM	Engine Revolutions Per Minute. Also known as Revs Per Minute or revs
Semi or Semi-Trailer	A trailer having one axle group towards the rear end of the length of its goods carrying surface, while significant load is imposed on the drawing vehicle. Some of the goods carrying surface is usually over the tow vehicle
Service Brake	Vehicles with air brakes must have separate braking systems for normal slowing/stopping, for parking and for emergency braking. These systems are controlled independently. The brakes that are used for normal stopping are called Service Brakes.
Side Curtains	Side curtains are usually attached to the gates on the side of a flattop trailer and enclose the load. A Tautliner type truck or trailer may also have side curtains. Also see Curtain Sider and Tautliner
Skeletal or Skel Trailer	A trailer or semi-trailer which doesn't have a tray and has attachments such as twist locks for carrying containers
Skid Plate	The Skid Plate is attached underneath the front of a semi-trailer and the Kingpin is part of this assembly. The Skid Plate slides on the prime mover turntable as the truck reverses to hook up the semi-trailer and this enables the Kingpin to be put into the correct position to be locked into the turntable
Sleeper Box/Cab	A sleeping compartment fitted behind the truck cabin which is open to and accessible from the truck cabin
Speed Limiter	An electronic component that limits the top speed of a truck
Speed Retarder	See Electric Retarder
Spider	The hub of a wheel that the wheel rim is attached to
Spring Brake	See Maxi-Brake
Stock Crate	A truck or trailer body designed for loading, unloading and transporting livestock
Super Single	A wide profile wheel and tyre used on a steer (front) axle or as an alternative to a dual wheel assembly on trailers. It can provide weight advantages being lighter than a dual wheel set up
Table Top	A general purpose trailer with flat load deck, which is not bound by vertical sides – also known as a Tray Body
Tachograph	A recording device which measures the hours of operation and speed of a truck on the road



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Tailgate	Gate at the rear of tipper trucks that can be opened enabling tipping of loads
Tandem Axle Group or Bogie Axle Group	A two axle group which load share
Tare Mass	The weight (or mass) of a vehicle without its load
Tarp or Tarpaulin	Usually a canvass covering to cover loads with to protect it from the elements
Tautliner	A popular type of Curtain Sider. See Curtain Sider and Side Curtains
Telescopic Hoist	A hydraulic hoist attached to a tipping body to raise it up
Tipper	A truck or trailer which can use gravity to dispense the load by tipping up the cargo body
Tri-Axle Group	A three axle group which load share
Triple Trailer or Triples	A combination consisting of a prime mover, a semi-trailer and two trailers. i.e. a three-trailer roadtrain. See Roadtrain
Tug	A prime mover used to move/shunt trailers around a truck yard or depot
Turbocharger or Turbo	A turbine driven by exhaust gases which spins at high speed, compressing outside air and forcing it into the cylinders, providing greater combustion and therefore power, as compared with a naturally aspirated engine
Turntable	A turntable is attached to the rear of a prime mover and couples a semi-trailer to it using the Kingpin
Turntable Jaws	The component of the turntable that locks around the Kingpin, securing the semi-trailer to the prime mover
Twin Steer Axle Group	Four steerable wheels at the front of a rigid truck or prime mover
Twist Lock	A Twist Lock is attached to a rigid truck frame, a Skel or other trailer and secures a container to it. There is usually one in each corner
Vacuum Servo Brake	A Vacuum Servo Brake is placed between the brake pedal and the hydraulic master cylinder and uses stored vacuum to amplify the driver's pedal efforts, providing greater braking force
Wet Tank	Relates to air braking systems. The first tank that compressed air enters is call the Supply Tank or Wet Tank. It collects most of the moisture and oil that drops out of the air. Moisture in the brake system can freeze in cold temperatures and may cause brake failure. The Wet Tank requires regular draining