Backing Maneuvers

Straight Line Backing
Straight line backing is the easiest backing maneuver.

- Position the vehicle properly. Line it up so you have as straight a path as possible.
- Back slowly.
- Use both mirrors.
- Use the push-pull method of steering to stay on path. (When the trailer gets bigger in one mirror, you're off track.) Push the steering wheel towards that mirror to correct your drift.
- If you find yourself drifting too far, pull up, re-position the trailer, and start over.

Alley Dock Backing
This is perhaps the most common backing maneuver. Begin by positioning your vehicle with enough room to make your corner.

- Approach the alley at a right angle to set up a sight side back. This reduces the risk of traffic trying to get by you in mid-maneuver. Check your left mirror for clearance.
- You will have to turn left to get the rear of the trailer as close to the alley as possible. Check your right side for clearance.
- Turn right to pull the front of your trailer to the right, then cut to the left. Tractor and trailer should now be on target.
- Turn steering wheel to right when tractor passes center of alley.
- Stop with the rig in an arc so you can see the left rear corner of the trailer and your target.
- Check clearance behind, and between trailers or other obstacles. Open and secure trailer doors if there won’t be room to do so later.
- Visualize your path to the dock. Jack tractor to start trailer on path.
- Straighten wheels so tractor will chase trailer. Follow with straight line back.
- Stop three or four feet short of the dock.
- Secure the vehicle. Use parking brake and flashers. Get out and check remaining space.
- Ease trailer to dock.
Backing Maneuvers

Sight-Side Jackknife Backing
Sometimes you won’t have the luxury of ending your maneuver with a straight line back. You may need to use jackknife backing to position your tractor as close as possible to the side of the dock so it doesn’t stick out into traffic.

- Position rig by pulling past the dock while parallel to it; as with an alley dock back. Check clearance.
- Visualize path trailer is going to travel.
- Follow same procedure as for alley dock back until rear wheels reach the turning point (about midpoint of the alley).
- Turn steering wheel to the right. Trailer will be backing in a line that will allow the tractor to follow at about a 15-degree angle.
- When trailer is about to make contact with dock, turn steering wheel sharply to the right. This should result in a 90-degree jackknife position. (Make sure air and electrical lines are long enough and won’t be torn off.)

Blind-Side Jackknife Backing
Never blind-side back unless it is an absolute necessity. Always use a qualified spotter when a blind-side back is unavoidable. During blind-side backs, stop every few feet to check clearances and ensure a clear path.

- Position vehicle properly (as with sight-side jackknife or alley dock, except facing opposite direction).
- Check the area.
- Visualize trailer path of travel.
- Follow general backing rules.
- Watch for rear wheels to reach turning point.
- Turn steering wheel to the left; trailer will move right. Trailer should be backing in a line that will allow the tractor to follow.
- When trailer is about to make contact with dock, turn steering wheel sharply to the left. This will give the 90-degree jackknife angle.

Caution: An angle of greater than 90 degrees must be avoided to prevent damage to tractor, trailer, or connections. An angle of less than 90 degrees may be sufficient.
Backing Maneuvers

Parallel Parking
Parallel parking is the most difficult backing maneuver, and perhaps the least often used, but professional drivers should know how it’s done.

- If parking on your right, drive past the spot, leaving about three feet from the end of your trailer to the opening.
- Make thorough check of area for clearances and obstructions.
- As you start back, turn steering wheel slightly to the left. Trailer should be entering space at about a 15-degree angle.
- As you continue back, increase the turn. Make sure back right side of trailer is heading toward back right side of parking space.
- Continue until front of trailer is even with front of space, then turn steering wheel hard to the right to jackknife tractor into position.
- Turn steering wheel sharply to the left, and keep backing until your vehicle is in parking space.
- Pull forward to adjust position and clearance.