

Choosing the right commercial vehicle

Six questions to help you make the right choice





Deciding which commercial vehicle is right for your business can seem overwhelming, so we've put together six simple questions that can help you make the right choice.

1. What do you need a commercial vehicle for?

The first question you need to ask is how you're planning to use your vehicle.

This is perhaps the most important question as it will help you understand your needs and let you make important decisions about size, body style, fuel type etc.

Consider some of the following:

- What's the size and weight of a typical load?
- Does it need to carry the load at all times?
- Do you require internal or external racking or to install specialist equipment or a workspace in the vehicle?
- What kind of security will you need?
- How will the load be accessed – side doors or a tail-lift?
- Will the van need to carry any passengers?



2. Will current or future legislation affect your business?

As more clean air zones appear in UK cities and road tax for certain commercial vehicles continues to rise, it's definitely worth considering where you'll operate and how the current (and possible future) legislation may affect you.

For example, if your van is likely to spend a lot of its time in a clean air zone, opting for a plug-in vehicle may be your best option due to savings on fuel and any congestion or emission charges.



3. What body style is best for your business?

Panel, flatbed, drop-side, tipper? It all depends on what your van will be used for. It can be tempting to opt for a general-purpose medium or car-derived van, but often a more specialised choice is more appropriate.

For example, a micro van with cargo access doors at the rear and at both sides is ideal for making deliveries in narrow streets.

Think about whether your vehicle is operating in public open spaces such as parks, where extra safety features such as rear underrun protection devices? Or if your work will involve crews working at height?

You can always talk to us about this, and our expert team can help you find the right commercial vehicle, whatever your needs.

4. What size van do you need?

Bigger isn't always better. If you know you'll only need a large capacity van occasionally, it can be more cost-effective to run a smaller vehicle on a day-to-day basis and hire something bigger as and when you need it.

Smaller vans may also be cheaper to tax in the future under a graduated VED scheme which is currently being looked at by the government.

However, if choosing a smaller vehicle means you need to make two trips instead of one on a regular basis, then something larger would definitely be better in terms of fuel costs and emissions.



5. Do you know what payload you'll need?

With the Euro 6 emissions standard (EU6) now in force, the extra engine technology for controlling diesel NOx emissions, plus a full tank of AdBlue, can eat up between 30kg and 60kg of your vehicle's payload.

This can be a real issue for commercial vehicle operators, but choosing racking systems that use ultra-light materials and modular designs can help offset this. Although more expensive than conventional racking, their strength and versatility means they can be used over a 10-year lifespan and in two or three successive vehicles, making them very cost-effective.

In fact, the extra payload they offer and reuse means each system usually more than pays for itself over time.

To help spread out the initial cost, it's worth choosing a leasing company that gives you the option of financing the racking alongside your vehicle.

6. What fuel is right for you?

Diesel engines have been a popular choice for commercial vehicles due to their power and superior fuel economy compared with petrol. However, diesel is now facing growing resistance, especially from city authorities, because of its effects on air quality – definitely something to consider if your operation involves a lot of city driving. Although all new vehicles sold in the EU since September 2015 have had to comply with EU6, therefore new vans bought since then should not currently be affected by any Low Emission Zones.

A range of national and local government incentives could make you think twice about diesel and instead choose a low emission vehicle. They'll pay less (sometimes nothing) to enter clean air or congestion charging zones, and often be able to take advantage of offered time-saving perks, such as Electric Vehicle only traffic lanes.

If your journeys involve a lot of time in city centres, it could be worth considering pure electric or plug-in hybrid vans – which are particularly efficient at carrying out last-mile, localised deliveries. Whereas petrol vans are becoming more popular among urban fleets, as they don't need additional heavy exhaust system features to meet EU6.

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The final steps

It can also be worth talking to your drivers about their needs – their experience and insight can be invaluable and they're the ones who'll be spending the most time in your vehicles. Getting it right for them is just as important as getting it right for the journeys and payload.

Choosing your supplier

Look for someone who takes the time to really understand your needs and if you also need financial services, make sure you pick someone who specialises in commercial vehicles. It's also worth checking they have strong relationships with converters and other suppliers (e.g. service and repairs, breakdowns, screens and tyres) which are critical to keeping your vehicles on the road at all times.

Once you've chosen your vehicles and agree on funding, we recommend arranging an onsite meeting with the converter and other key parties (such as the leasing company) as a final check. This shouldn't throw up any surprises but, if there are any, catching them now will save you a lot of time and money in the long run.

Alphabet's commercial vehicle service

While many leasing companies will claim to be able to meet your business needs, few can match our track record, or ability to understand your funding, operational and fleet management requirements.

We offer a truly flexible approach and can deliver even the most complex fleet mix on time and to the right specification – from coachwork and internal fit-out to complete bodybuilding projects.

And if you require funding, we know offer truly flexible finance solutions that match your business and commercial vehicle needs.

Alphabet – dedicated to meeting your expectations without compromise.

Call us on **0370 50 50 100**

Email us at **alphabet@alphabet.co.uk**

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