A Seven-Step Inspection Method
Method of Inspection.

You should do a pre-trip inspection the same way each time so you will learn all the steps and be less likely to forget something. The following seven-step method should be useful.

Approaching the Vehicle.

Notice general condition. Look for damage or vehicle leaning to one side. Look under the vehicle for fresh oil, coolant, grease, or fuel leaks. Check the area around the vehicle for hazards to vehicle movement (people, other vehicles, objects, low hanging wires, limbs,

1: Vehicle Overview
Review Last Vehicle Inspection Report.

Drivers may have to make a vehicle inspection report in writing each day. The
motor carrier must repair any items in the report that affects safety and certify on the report that repairs were made or were unnecessary. You must sign the report only if defects were noted and certified to be repaired or not needed to be repaired.

2. Check Engine Compartment
Check that the parking brakes are on and/or wheels chocked.

You may have to raise the hood, tilt the cab (secure loose things so they don’t fall and break something), or open the engine compartment door. Check the following;

Engine oil level.

Coolant level in radiator; condition of hoses.

Power steering fluid level; hose condition (if so equipped).
Windshield washer fluid level.

Battery fluid level, connections, and tie downs (battery may be located elsewhere).

Automatic transmission fluid level (may require engine to be running).

Check belts for tightness and excessive wear (alternator, water pump, air compressor)--learn how much “give” the belts should have when adjusted right, and check each one.

Leaks in the engine compartment (fuel, coolant, oil, power steering fluid, hydraulic fluid, battery fluid).

Cracked, worn electrical wiring insulation.

Lower and secure hood, cab, or engine compartment door.

3. Start Engine and Inspect Inside the Cab
Get In and Start Engine

Make sure parking brake is on. Put gearshift in neutral (or “park,” if automatic). Start engine; listen for unusual noises.

Look at the Gauges
Oil pressure.

Should come up to normal within seconds after engine is started.

Ammeter and/or voltmeter.

Should be in normal range(s).

Coolant temperature.

Should begin gradual rise to normal operating range.

Engine oil temperature.
Should begin gradual rise to normal operating range.

**Warning lights and buzzers.**

Oil, coolant, charging circuit warning lights should go out right away.

**Check Condition of Controls.**

Check all of the following for looseness, sticking, damage, or improper setting:

- Steering wheel.
- Clutch.
- Accelerator ("gas pedal").
- Brake controls.
- Foot brake.
- Trailer brake (if vehicle has one).
- Parking brake.
- Retarder controls (if vehicle has them).

Transmission controls.

Interaxle differential lock (if vehicle has one).

Horn(s).

Windshield wiper/washer.

Lights.

- Headlights.

- Dimmer switch.

- Turn signal.

- Four-way flashers.
- Clearance, identification, marker light switch(es).

Check Mirrors and Windshield.

Inspect mirrors and windshield for cracks, dirt, illegal stickers, or other obstructions to seeing. Clean and adjust as necessary.

Check Emergency Equipment

Check for safety equipment:

- Spare electrical fuses (unless vehicle has circuit breakers).

- Three red reflective triangles.

- Properly charged and rated fire extinguisher.

Check for optional items such as:
- Tire chains (where winter conditions require them).

- Tire changing equipment.

- List of emergency phone numbers.

- Accident reporting kit (packet).

4. Turn Off Engine and Check Lights

Make sure the parking brake is set, turn off the engine, and take the key with you. Turn on headlights (low beams) and four-way flashers, and get out.

5. Do Walk-around Inspection

Go to front of vehicle and check that low beams are on and both of the four-way flashers are working.
Push dimmer switch and check that high beams work.

Turn off headlights and four-way, hazard warning flashers.

Turn on parking, clearance, side-marker, and identification lights.

Turn on right turn signal, and start walk-around inspection.