



There's no way around it: Shipping freight is a complicated business. There are a wealth of service options to choose from, a host of details to keep in mind, and dozens of terms to understand. Of all those, finding the right service might be the most critical decision you'll make. Picking the right one will help ensure your freight will arrive when it's supposed to — and that you won't get hit with unexpected charges.

We've put together this guide to help you find the service that meets your needs. It walks you through 10 freight service types and provides tips and special requirements and restrictions to keep in mind.

Your Guide to Freight Services

Standard/Weekend Guarantee


As its name suggests, a standard guarantee shipment is one guaranteed to be delivered at a specific time. Depending on what service level you choose, it could be by 9 a.m., 10 a.m., noon, 5 p.m. or within a one-hour window — and you'll get your money back if it doesn't arrive on time.

Some carriers also offer weekend guarantee service. If they pick up a freight shipment by Thursday or Friday, they'll guarantee it'll be delivered by Monday.

! Special requirements and restrictions

For many carriers, the guarantee doesn't apply for:

- » Holidays and weekends
- » Force majeure (unexpected circumstances — i.e., earthquakes, hurricanes, lightning strikes, and the like)
- » Volume shipments
- » Missing information on bill of lading (BOL)
- » COD shipments
- » Delivery by appointment
- » Blackout periods
- » Extreme length shipments
- » Certain commodities
- » Delivery that requires liftgate services
- » Residential delivery
- » Delivery to certain locations

 *Tip: Contact your carrier to determine what exclusions may apply.*

Day- or Time-Specific Critical Guarantee and Expedited

This is where your carrier will ensure delivery on a specific day/time or on a nonstandard service day. Some carriers also offer expedited service for delivery on holidays and weekends.

Delivery by appointment is a related option. Sign up for that, and your carrier will deliver your freight within a specific window of time.

Either option is a smart one if your freight shipment needs to arrive on a specific date, within a tight time window or outside of the standard transit day timeframe.

! Special requirements and restrictions

- » Be sure to include the quote number on all BOLs
- » Shipments must be picked up by a specific time
- » The service doesn't apply under certain circumstances such as holidays, appointment-only delivery, etc.




Cross-Border Freight

Cross-border freight shipping from the U.S. into Canada or Mexico can be cheaper than conventional ground or air freight. It's usually faster than traditional LTL shipping. And its rates are generally lower than what you'd pay for air freight shipping.

Cross-border freight also typically includes tracking tools that help accelerate delivery time and customs clearance while maintaining compliance with trade regulations.

! Special requirements and restrictions

- » Canada: BOL and invoice (commercial or Canada Customs) required
- » Mexico: BOL, commercial invoice and NAFTA certificate of origin required

 *Tip: Check if a carrier C-TPAT/FAST certified and/or ACE approved with PARS expertise. Yes, those are a lot of acronyms to keep in mind. The key point to know: Carriers that have them can provide expedited processing for your commercial freight shipments.*

Air Freight

As you might expect, air freight service allows you to quickly and reliably ship goods to practically any domestic or international location. And that can be a huge advantage for small and mid-sized companies that need to get freight shipments across global borders without delay.


Air freight offers other advantages. Since airports tightly manage cargo, you can expect a high level of security. On top of that, many freight-forward carriers offer door-to-door service to major cities worldwide or standard door-to-airport or door-to-port service to almost any international destination.

Special requirements and restrictions

- » You'll need a commercial invoice for shipments to Puerto Rico.

Ocean Freight


Ocean freight is a cost-efficient option for your less time-sensitive shipments. You also can use Less Than Container Load (LCL) for partial shipments, Full Container Load (FCL) for heavy or oversized shipments or Break-Bulk for oversized cargo that requires individual loading. The itinerary can be strictly port-to-port, or it can include truck pick-up and/or delivery for door-to-port, port-to-door and door-to-door service.

 *Tip: The ocean freight shipping world has seen a lot of change in recent years, including large-scale consolidation and occasionally unpredictable price fluctuations. It pays to find a resource with deep industry knowledge, particularly one that can help you negotiate the best rates for your business.*




Sealed Divider Service

Sealed divider service means that your shipment will be the first one that gets loaded onto the truck and sealed with a wall. Doing so ensures your freight remains intact and secure in the same trailer all the way from pick-up to delivery. Sealed trailers are also specially designed to protect cargo in transit. They also provided maximum protection and security to guard against damage and loss.

 *Tip: Pricing for sealed divider service depends on several factors, including the weight of the freight, origin, destination and how much trailer space you use.*

Reverse Logistics


Reverse logistics might sound complicated, but it's simply the process of moving freight from its final destination back to the original shipper or elsewhere. A carrier will pick up, package, ship and often deliver goods back to the original location. Reverse logistics services are ideal if you have seasonal returns, merchandise changeouts, stock adjustments, product recycling, disposal of spoiled or damaged products, recall events or returnable container tracking.

 *Tip: Only a handful of carriers offer reverse logistics. Check if your carrier provides the service.*



Tradeshow Service


These are specialized shippers that offer turnkey tradeshow freight shipping. Tradeshow shipments almost always need to be delivered on a specific date and time window. They also need to get picked up quickly after the show to avoid additional fees.

 *Tip: Shipping freight to and from tradeshow can involve complex regulations and requirements. What's more, those regulations can vary depending on the event center. To avoid the nightmare scenario — exhibiting without a booth — look for a company with tradeshow industry experience.*



Retail Shipping

Retail shipping involves moving freight to stores and warehouse distribution centers. The service allows a carrier to coordinate with the receiver's schedule to ensure delivery.

 *Tip: If you're shipping to a big-box retailer, you may be able to specify the beginning and end date of the purchase-order delivery window — without racking up extra fees.*

 *Tip: The peak retail shipping season starts to heat up in August, with the heaviest activity happening during late October and early November as companies race to get their goods to stores and warehouses before the holidays. Over the course of that season, you'll find tight capacity and higher-than-normal freight rates, so you'll want to have your shipping strategy planned well in advance.*



Hazmat Shipping

The key term here is “hazmat,” which refers to a hazardous material. What qualifies as hazmat? Any substance or material that could harm the public, handlers or carriers during transportation.

You'll need to follow hazmat shipping procedures if the materials you are shipping fall into one of the nine hazardous material classes:

1. Explosives
2. Compressed gases
3. Flammable liquids
4. Flammable solids
5. Oxidizers and organic peroxides
6. Toxic materials
7. Radioactive material
8. Corrosive material
9. Miscellaneous

Special requirements and restrictions

- » If you prepare hazardous material shipping papers you'll need to provide detailed information on the BOL which clearly indicates the materials are hazardous, describes the materials and details the shipping weight and method.
- » All employees handling, loading, unloading, transporting or completing paperwork for hazmat shipments must be hazmat-certified — and recertified every three years.

3 Reasons to Consider a 3PL

It's a conundrum. Shipping is a key aspect of practically every business these days. But navigating the complex world of freight shipping can quickly siphon away the time and energy you need to focus on your day-to-day operations.

That's where a third-party logistics company (3PL) can make a tangible impact. In a nutshell, 3PLs are shipping specialists that partner with small to midsize businesses to solve pressing issues and help them anticipate what's around the corner.

Here are three ways they can help.



Live support

The best 3PLs provide you with 24/7 support professionals. They'll get to know your business, step in to untangle with your most complex shipping challenges and craft custom, cost-effective solutions for them.



Cost savings

Because 3PLs work with a range of customers, they can leverage the combined shipping volume to negotiate competitive rates with national, regional and local carriers — and then pass along discounted rates to their SMB clients.



Integrated shipping tools

The best 3PLs offer what's known as a transportation management system (TMS). A TMS is a powerful tool that allows you to manage and automate your shipping processes. You can seamlessly create shipments, compare rates, consolidate billing and more, all from an intuitive, user-friendly interface.



Looking for freight shipping help? Look to Worldwide Express.

Freight shipping is complicated, but it doesn't have to bring on headaches — or chip away at your bottom line.

We're Worldwide Express. We know shipping. We'll take the time to understand your unique shipping needs and create solutions to help you meet your goals. You'll rest easy knowing you've got an experienced partner on your side.

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