

# How the customs clearance process works

The leading cause of international shipping delays is missing or incomplete paperwork. Until all required info is provided, shipments can be held at or before customs—a procedure known as *caging*.

If you're importing, use this guide to understand how the shipper will navigate customs clearance and how your shipment could be affected. If you're exporting, see the steps you can take to clear customs with confidence.



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- Complete the right paperwork
- Confirm your submitting party
- Upload customs documents
- Track your shipment

- Your shipment proceeds to customs
- Additional information is required

- Watch your shipment clear customs
- Additional information is required

# Prepare to ship

## PREPARING TO SHIP



### STEP 1: Complete required paperwork

To clear customs, all documents need to describe the contents, value, and purpose of the shipment. Before you submit the shipment, you must prepare all the required paperwork. Follow our **document checklist** to see the documents you might need. Here are a few tools\* to simplify the process.

- ✓ **Advanced research: FedEx® Global Trade Manager (GTM)**  
Estimate duties and taxes. And look up country-specific regulations, HS code classifications, denied party screening, and more. Plus, find out what documents are required. *This is ideal for you if you're an experienced shipper.*
- ✓ **Generate paperwork: FedEx Ship Manager® (FSM)**  
When you're ready to ship, create customs clearance documents along with your shipping label.

\* FedEx automation and features vary by region. Consult [fedex.com](https://www.fedex.com) for information.



### STEP 2: Confirm if you need another party to make entry for you

A submitting party, such as a customs broker or clearance specialist, may need to file entry into the destination country. Check country-specific requirements to see if your shipment needs one.



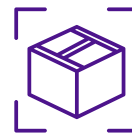
### STEP 3: Upload customs documents before pickup

You can submit documents online through **FedEx® Electronic Trade Documents (ETD)**. This can help you avoid delays at customs and keep your shipment on track.



**Follow these tips to submit accurate and complete paperwork:**

- **Double-check** all contact info.
- Use **clear, specific** product descriptions. Avoid generic terms like “parts” or “accessories.”
- Ensure Harmonized System (HS) codes match product descriptions **exactly**.
- **Monitor** your shipment status and respond promptly to any requests for other documentation.



### STEP 4: Track the shipment

After the pickup is scheduled, watch the shipment go through each stage of its international journey.



**If you'd like to be notified of a delay**, turn on notifications in Ship Alerts, FedEx Delivery Manager®, or your Advanced Tracking settings.

# Monitor your shipment before customs



**PASS:** The shipment proceeds to customs

Before submitting your shipment to customs, your customs broker or clearance specialist will review and verify your paperwork. They'll be looking for any potential issues that could cause a delay at customs.

**PAUSE:** Additional information is required

If your submitting party discovers an issue, they may reach out to request additional information. You can provide those details directly to the contacted party. Or upload documents through the **FedEx Import Tool** if your shipment is headed to a qualified destination.\*

Please note that incomplete or missing information may result in potential delays and storage fees.

\* Available in select markets/countries. Search fedex.com to see if this tool is available. Features may vary.



## Clear customs—and a path forward

Once we've received complete and accurate documentation, we'll facilitate the clearance.

**PASS:** Watch the shipment clear customs

To keep a close eye on your shipment's progress, **set up advanced tracking dashboards**. Once your shipment is marked "International Shipment Release-Import," you'll know it's cleared customs!

**PAUSE:** How to handle a delay at customs

If your notifications are on, you should receive an update about the clearance delay. This means customs is caging the shipment until they have the information they need. Submit missing info quickly to limit delays and storage costs.



### Get post-clearance assistance

Continue to get guidance from FedEx after the customs process. Learn about **duty and tax** refunds and get help if you need it. And keep up with the latest **international shipping regulations**.

# Document checklist for international commercial shipments

You may not need every document listed below. Requirements depend on the destination, goods, value, and tariff treatment claims. Use **FedEx Global Trade Manager** for help figuring out which documents you'll need for your shipment.



## Commercial Invoice

### TO AVOID DELAYS, PLEASE INCLUDE:

- ✓ **Who's involved:** The name, address, and contact details for the shipper, consignee, and importer.
- ✓ **What you're shipping:** An itemized list with a description of each product, including what each is made of and used for. Be specific. Vague entries like "gifts" and "parts" are the leading cause of delays.
- ✓ **Value details:** The unit price, line-item totals, overall invoice value, and currency.
- ✓ **Country of origin**
- ✓ **Quantities:** The number of units, unit weight, and total weight.

### Ideally, your shipment will include these details:

Harmonized System (HS) codes, reason for shipping (e.g., sale, return, repair), payment terms, Incoterms® (international trade rules defining buyer and seller responsibilities), invoice number and date, signature, freight and insurance details, and transport method.

## OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Certificate of Origin
- Electronic Export Information (EEI) Filing
- Export Packing List
- Inspection Certificate
- Insurance Certificate
- Overview of export license
- Shipper's Letter of Instruction
- Supply Partner Government Agency (PGA) certifications