



Shipping Terms

Bill of lading (B/L) - This is the official legal document that represents ownership of cargo; the negotiable document to receive cargo; and, the contract for cargo between shipper and carrier.

Box - Another (less formal) name for a shipping container. This is how they are often referred to in the industry.

Break bulk - loose cargo, such as cartons, stowed directly in the ship's hold as opposed to containerized or bulk cargo. The volume of break bulk cargo has declined dramatically worldwide as containerization has grown.

Bulk cargo - commodity cargo that is transported unpackaged in large quantities. These cargos are usually dropped or poured as a liquid or solid, into a bulk carrier's hold. Examples of bulk cargo are grain, seed, and coal and iron ore.

Carrier - any individual, company or corporation engaged in transporting goods. Container shipping lines are sometimes referred to as ocean carriers.

Charter rate - a rate for shipping freight agreed upon between the owner of a vessel and the person wanting to use the vessel (the 'charterer').

Container - a reusable steel rectangular box for carrying cargo that first came into common use about 50 years ago. The sizes of containers are standardized so that they can easily be moved between specially adapted containers ships, trains and trucks.

Container terminal - a docking, unloading and loading area within a port designed to suit the sizes and needs of container ships.

FEU - 'Forty-foot Equivalent Unit'. This is a container that is the same height and width as a TEU but twice the length. As a result, it has twice the capacity.

Freight rates - The charge made by a shipping line for the transportation of freight aboard one of its ships from one place to another.

Gantry crane - a type of crane used to load and unload container ships. It lifts objects with a hoist and can move horizontally on a rail or pair of rails.

Intermodalism - a system whereby standard-sized cargo containers can be moved seamlessly between different 'modes' of transport, typically specially adapted ships known as containerships, barges, trucks and trains. Because the cargo does not need to be unloaded from the container every time it is moved from one mode to the other it is a very efficient and fast system of transportation.

International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) - prescribes the numbers of lifeboats and other emergency equipment that ships must have, as well as safety procedures including continuous radio watches when a ship is at sea.

International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code) - a code agreed between the signatories of the 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) on minimum security arrangements for ships, ports and Coast Guard agencies. The Code was introduced by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the overseer of the original SOLAS agreement, in the wake of fears of terrorist attacks on ships and ports after the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001.

Knot - a nautical measurement of speed equal to 1.15 miles or 1.85 kilometers per hour on land. The speed of ships is measured in knots.

Manifest - a list of cargo being carried by a ship as declared by the shipper.



Pallet - a term used for a load-carrying platform onto which loose cargo is stacked before being placed inside a container. It is designed to be moved easily by fork-lift trucks.

Reefer - Industry term for a temperature-controlled container. Inside each one is a complex system of coils, wires and electrical fittings, which are managed by a computer that controls everything from the temperature and humidity to ventilation and gas levels, all working to prevent the deterioration of fresh food or other sensitive goods over long distances and periods of time.

Shipper - any person or organization paying for its cargo to be shipped from one place to another.

TEU - 'Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit'. This is the industry standard to measure containers. A 20-foot container's dimensions are twenty feet long (6.09 meters), 8 feet wide (2.4 meters) and 8 feet six inches high (2.6 meters). These dimensions have been set by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Vessel - another word for a boat or ship. Container ships are sometimes referred to as vessels.

World Customs Organization (WCO) - an intergovernmental organization comprised of customs administrations from 170 countries who participate to communicate and co-operate on customs issues.

Shipping List: A shipping list, packing list, waybill, packing slip (also known as a bill of parcel, unpacking note, packaging slip, (delivery) docket, delivery list, manifest or customer receipt), is a shipping document that accompanies delivery packages, usually inside an attached shipping pouch or inside the package itself. It commonly includes an itemized detail of the package contents and does not include customer pricing. It serves to inform all parties, including transport agencies, government authorities, and customers, about the contents of the package. It helps them deal with the package accordingly.

Shipping List Details:

Shipping lists vary depending on the business and its products. Every shipment to a customer should contain a shipping list that includes the order date, the products included within the box, and the quantity of each product. Some businesses may want to include the weight of the product next to the item. Many receivers use the shipping list as a guide or checklist when unpacking their order. If something is missing from the box, they cross-check it with the shipping list and then alert the seller.

Shipper: Person or Company that transports or receives goods

Consignor: Seller who initiates shipment

Consignee: Receiver of goods

Charter: Taking on rent or lease

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