

The 5 Essential Checklists for International Shipping

By IZZI Logistics

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Master the Art of Importing and Exporting

Global trade is full of opportunities—but also risks, costs, and complex regulations. A missing document, an incorrect HS code, or a misunderstood Incoterm can delay your cargo, increase expenses, or even result in penalties.

This e-book was created to help importers and exporters—especially small and medium-sized businesses—navigate international shipping with confidence. Inside, you'll find five practical checklists covering the most critical areas of global logistics: documentation, customs compliance, dangerous goods, freight costs, and Incoterms®.



These checklists are designed to be simple, actionable, and reliable—a tool you can reference before every shipment to avoid costly mistakes and keep your cargo moving smoothly.

At IZZI Logistics, we believe that knowledge is power in global trade. By mastering these fundamentals, you'll protect your business, strengthen customer trust, and unlock new opportunities worldwide.

THE EXPORT DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST

01

Without correct paperwork, your cargo can get stuck, delayed, or even seized by customs.

- **Commercial Invoice:**

Must include buyer/seller details, country of origin, and HTS code.

- **Packing List:**

Quantity, dimensions, and weight of each package.

- **Bill of Lading (BOL) or Air Waybill (AWB):**

Contract of carriage and receipt for the goods.

- **Shipper's Letter of Instruction (SLI):**

Authorizes the freight forwarder to act on your behalf.

- **Certificate of Origin (COO):**

Qualifies goods for reduced tariffs under FTAs.

- **AES/EEI Filing:**

Required when any Schedule B item exceeds \$2,500, or if the shipment needs a license, is ITAR-controlled, or goes to a restricted country.

- **Proforma Invoice:**

Often requested before the sale is confirmed.

THE CUSTOMS & COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

02

Avoid fines and delays at customs by preparing in advance.

- **HS Code Classification:**

Ensure accurate duties and avoid penalties.

- **Destination Country Import Requirements:**

Permits, licenses, or certifications.

- **Incoterms® 2020 Rules:**

Define who is responsible for costs and risks.

- **Export Control Regulations:**

Check if licenses are required under BIS/OFAC.

- **Denied Party Screening:**

Screen buyers against restricted lists.

- **FTA Certificates:**

Claim preferential duty rates when applicable.

- **Other Agency Requirements:**

FDA, EPA, USDA may apply depending on product.

THE DANGEROUS GOODS (HAZMAT) SHIPPING CHECKLIST

03

Hazardous cargo requires compliance with strict international standards.

- **Proper Classification:**

Assign goods to one of the 9 UN hazard classes.

- **Safety Data Sheet (SDS):**

Required for handling and documentation.

- **Correct Packaging & Labeling:**

UN-certified packaging with placards.

- **Shipper's Declaration for Dangerous Goods:**

Must be signed by certified staff.

- **Training Requirement:**

Only trained personnel can prepare DG shipments.

- **Segregation Rules:**

Some goods cannot be transported together.

- **Emergency Contact Information:**

Carriers require a 24/7 phone number.

THE FREIGHT QUOTE & COST ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

04

Understand your freight quote and avoid hidden costs.

- **Shipping Rates:**

Compare modes of transport and rates.

- **Accessorial Charges:**

Customs clearance, drayage, handling fees.

- **Taxes & Duties:**

Clarify who pays at destination under Incoterms.

- **Cargo Insurance:**

Protects against loss or damage.

- **Demurrage vs. Detention:**

Know the difference and plan accordingly.

- **Fuel Surcharges:**

Watch for BAF/CAF adjustments.

- **Cut-off Dates & ERD:**

Confirm deadlines with carrier.

THE INCOTERMS® SELECTION CHECKLIST

05

Your choice of Incoterms defines responsibilities, costs, and risks.

- **Risk vs. Control:**

Decide how much of the process you want to control.

- **Logistics Capability:**

Assess if you can manage overseas procedures.

- **Cost and Pricing:**

Know what costs are included in your final quote.

- **Type of Transport:**

Ensure terms match mode (ocean, air, ground).

- **Named Place/Port:**

Always specify location (e.g., FOB Houston).

- **Insurance:**

CIF only provides minimum coverage (Clause C).