

SHIPPING BASIC QUESTIONS

When shipping your freight to a trade show, discern answers to the following questions and avoid the costly consequences.

1. **What are you shipping?** Provide your transportation carrier with an accurate piece count of the items being shipped, including dimensions and type of freight (e.g., crates, cases, pallets, cartons). This info allows the carrier to allot the appropriate amount of space in the trailer or plane before it needs to be loaded, and also provides a fairly accurate cost estimate. Also inform the carrier of any special instructions regarding your shipment, like if your crates have to be shipped standing up, if they can't be stacked, or if the crates are on rollers and have to be locked and strapped to the truck walls to keep them from rolling around.
2. **What else do you need?** Confirm any optional special-equipment requirements for loading and unloading your freight. Although these items may be considered "standard equipment" by many specialized trade show exhibit carriers, they may not be available on your truck unless you specifically request them (and are willing to pay additional fees for them). Specialty items include: pallet jacks for moving pallets or crates from the dock into the truck, dollies for moving large or heavy boxes and equipment, stacker bars for stacking and securing freight, ratchet and tie-down straps to prevent freight from moving while in transit, and moving pads for cushioning freight that is not crated or palletized.
3. **What is the value of your shipment?** Notify your carrier if you will purchase additional valuation coverage (generally purchased in increments of \$1,000 to supplement the minimal insurance coverage automatically placed by the carrier) in case of loss or damage to your freight while in transit. Valuation is the worth of your shipment to the moving company, and the valuation charge is the compensation to the carrier for assuming more liability for your items than what is provided in the base transportation charges.
4. **When is your freight being picked up by your driver?** The budgetary quote from your carrier will be based on specific pick-up and delivery dates and times that take into consideration the number of miles to be covered. If your freight isn't ready to hit the road on that pick-up date, you might incur an "aborted pick-up fee," and your freight might need to be expedited. You'll likely have to add another driver or change the mode of shipping from ground to airfreight, both of which are pricier options.
5. **Where is your freight being picked up by your driver?** Does the carrier have the complete addresses and contact information for all the locations where pick up(s) are scheduled (e.g., your exhibit house, corporate office, marketing-collateral fulfillment house, promotions vendor, etc.)? Your transportation carrier can handle multiple locations, but I've seen shipments delayed due to exhibitors not providing the specific hours that freight can be loaded, or failing to include accurate contact information for each individual site. Obviously, delayed pick-ups can mean delayed deliveries.
6. **Where is your freight going?** The quickest way to not get your shipment to a show is to provide inaccurate or incomplete shipping information. But there's more to getting your freight from Point A to Point B than filling out a shipping label and affixing it to a box. Specifically, you need to tell your transportation carrier whether the shipment needs to go to the trade show's advance warehouse, or direct to the show site. If you don't make the distinction, you might be sitting in your booth space waiting for your freight to arrive from the advance warehouse, while it's still en route direct to the show and set to arrive the following day. Not only will you not have your freight, but your setup costs will escalate as the installation laborers twiddle their thumbs until it arrives. What's more, the additional day it takes the freight to travel direct to show site can result in late-delivery penalties if you miss your on-site targeted delivery deadline.
7. **What is the delivery window?** Provide the earliest and latest dates for when freight is accepted at the advance warehouse or at the show, especially if the show's general services contractor (GSC) has designated a targeted date and time. You can find dates for both advance warehouse and direct-to-site deliveries in the material-handling section of your exhibitor services manual. Also include the times at which the driver can check in at the marshaling yard with your freight. Failing to provide this info to your transportation carrier is like playing Russian roulette with your setup schedule - there's no telling when you'll get your goods.
8. **What is the full name of the trade show venue?** There can be confusion, especially in major cities, if a specific street address or hall designation isn't provided. I've witnessed freight delivered to the wrong convention center in cities with multiple exhibition facilities, and to the wrong Marriott or Hilton since there can be multiple chain

hotels in metropolitan areas. Unless you want your carrier to guess which venue is the correct destination, provide the full venue name and street address.

9. **What is your full exhibitor name and booth number?** Ensure your bill of lading and shipping labels match the way your name appears in the show's exhibitor list and directory. The ability of the labor crew on the docks to deliver freight to the correct place on the show floor is in direct relation to its ability to compare what's on the labels to what's listed in the directory and on the floor plan. Include the full name of the show as opposed to its acronym. There are so many shows, and several have similar acronyms. Don't tempt fate - spell out the show name, just to be sure, on all of your shipping paperwork and labels.
10. **Which GSC is running the docks?** Since the show's GSC manages the advance warehouse, marshaling yard, and shipping docks, it's a good idea to acknowledge it on the inbound bill of lading and address labels. I like to include a "care of" indicator on my labels, followed by the name of the GSC, such as Freeman, Global Experience Specialists Inc., etc. Some convention centers are so large that they can house multiple shows at the same time. By adding the name of the GSC to your shipping documents, a driver who inadvertently shows up at the wrong dock can more easily be identified - and redirected - to the correct area.
11. **Where is the marshaling yard?** To help your driver locate the show's marshaling yard, include a map and/or address of the site (this information is typically included in your exhibitor kit). Marshaling yards are generally in the same empty lots near the convention center regardless of the trade show, but depending on the experience of the driver and the accurateness of the GSC's signage, they can be hard to find. In fact, I've had drivers miss their targeted check-in times when there wasn't a physical address for them to punch into their GPS - and that was an expensive mistake as they drove around in circles trying to locate their check-in point.
12. **What is the final destination of your freight?** Is your shipment on a one-way trip? Or have you scheduled a round-trip shipment to the show and back to the freight's origin? I'm amazed at how many exhibitors don't book their freight round-trip with the same transportation carrier. A ridiculous amount of freight gets forced back to the GSC at the end of every show because exhibitors don't arrange for a carrier to come pick it up. So plan ahead and make sure your freight gets home as quickly, safely, and inexpensively as possible by simply ensuring you book a round-trip shipment.

<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=847&catID=91#.UdM0ydhinA1>