



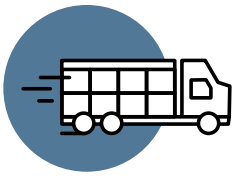
Understanding Freight Modes, Delivery Options and Choosing the Right Solution

Freight shipping isn't a one-size-fits-all process and every shipment is different. What you're shipping, how fast it needs to get there and how it's handled all play a role. That's why it's important to understand your options when it comes to **freight transport** modes and shipping services. The more you know, the easier it is to choose the right solution for your business. Unishippers is here to guide you every step of the way!



Truck Freight: The Backbone of Domestic Shipping

Truck freight, also known as road freight, is the most widely used form of freight shipping in North America. It's flexible, cost-effective and perfect for businesses moving goods across the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

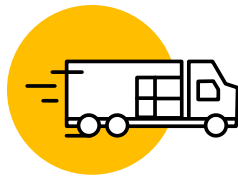


Truckload (TL)

TL shipping is ideal when your freight:

- Fills an entire trailer (usually 10+ pallets or 15,000–20,000 lbs.)
- Requires faster delivery, typically door to door
- Needs minimal handling due to high value or fragility

Because the truck is dedicated to one shipment, TL freight services usually result in faster transit times and fewer touchpoints. This reduces the risk of loss, damage or theft — a major plus for high-value goods.



Less-than-truckload (LTL)

LTL shipping allows multiple businesses to share trailer space, making it a cost-effective option for smaller shipments (150-15,000 lbs.). Your freight typically travels on a pallet or in a crate and is handled multiple times during pickup, sorting and delivery.

While LTL freight shipping is more affordable, it often means longer transit times and more frequent handling. However, express LTL options are available for time-sensitive needs.



Partial truckload (PTL) & volume LTL

If your shipment is too big for standard LTL but not quite large enough for FTL, you have two flexible options:

- Partial truckload (PTL): A middle-ground choice under the truckload umbrella, PTL doesn't require freight classification and often avoids additional handling fees.
- Volume LTL: Similar to PTL but offered by LTL carriers, this option provides pricing based on volume, not standard rates.

WHEN TO USE TRUCK FREIGHT

Truck freight is the go-to option for most domestic shipments. Choose it when:

- You're shipping within the U.S., Canada or Mexico
- Your freight doesn't need air or sea travel
- You want flexible pickup and delivery windows

Whether you need an entire truck or a few pallets of space, truck freight is a reliable and accessible choice.



Air Freight: Fast, Secure and Reliable

Air freight is ideal for urgent, high-value shipments, offering fast, reliable delivery both domestically and internationally. Whether you need overnight U.S. delivery or rapid global transport, air shipping provides the speed, visibility and protection your time-sensitive cargo demands.

WHEN TO USE AIR FREIGHT

Choose air freight when your shipment:

- Must arrive in 1–3 days
- Is fragile, high-value or time-sensitive
- Needs high-end protection or secure handling
- Must reach a location not easily accessible by ground or sea
- Has delivery needs that trump cost



Ocean Freight: Economical for Global Reach

Ocean freight is a cost-effective option for non-urgent international shipments, offering less-than-container load (LCL), full container load (FCL) and breakbulk services. It's ideal for heavy or bulky goods, with flexible port-to-port or door-to-door delivery options.

WHEN TO USE OCEAN FREIGHT

Go with ocean freight if:

- You're shipping internationally and don't need rapid delivery
- Your cargo is oversized or not suitable for air transport
- Cost savings matter more than speed
- Shipping industrial goods, raw materials and wholesale products



Cross-Border Freight: North American Trade Made Easy

Cross-border freight shipping connects the U.S. to Canada and Mexico through dedicated ground transport. It's faster than traditional LTL routes and more affordable than air freight.

Why cross-border freight works

Many freight services specialize in cross-border shipments and have tools in place for smooth customs clearance. These include:

- Tracking and delivery status tools
- Compliance with U.S. (CTPAT, FAST) and Canadian (ACE, PARS) regulations
- Certified carriers that expedite processing at the border

WHEN TO USE CROSS-BORDER FREIGHT

Ideal for businesses that regularly:

- Ship high volumes to/from Mexico or Canada
- Need affordable alternatives to air shipping
- Want consistent transit times and customs support



Intermodal and Multimodal Freight: Combining Transport for Flexibility

With **intermodal freight**, you coordinate each leg of the journey yourself. You choose the carrier and mode for each segment, which can give you more control and sometimes better rates. This setup can be beneficial if your business wants direct control over cost and transit time.

Multimodal shipping is managed by a single provider, even if multiple modes are used. You deal with just one BOL, one invoice and one point of contact.

It's simpler and more convenient, especially for businesses without dedicated logistics staff — but may offer fewer savings opportunities than intermodal.

Choosing the Right Freight Transport Mode

Now that you've explored the major freight transportation types, how do you decide which one is right for your business? Consider the following:

- **Speed vs. cost:** Air is fastest but most expensive. Ocean is cheapest but slowest. Truck sits in the middle.
- **Distance and destination:** International? Consider ocean or air. Regional? Truck or cross-border ground shipping may be best.
- **Cargo type:** Fragile or high value? Opt for FTL or air. Heavy or bulky? Ocean or intermodal may be more efficient.
- **Special needs:** Oversized, hazardous or perishable goods often require specialty freight services with added handling and documentation.

WHEN TO USE INTERMODAL OR MULTIMODAL

Use combined freight services when:

- No single mode provides an efficient route
- You're shipping to remote locations
- You want to balance speed, cost and accessibility

This approach works well for supply chains that span regions with limited infrastructure.





Freight Shipping Service Levels: Guaranteed, Expedited and Everything In Between

When timing is critical, selecting the right freight shipping services can make or break your delivery. Not every shipment follows a standard timeline — and not every carrier offers the same options. Whether you need guaranteed delivery on a specific day or require freight to move over the weekend, there’s a freight service level designed to meet your needs.

To help you choose the right option for your next shipment, here’s a quick comparison:

SERVICE LEVEL	KEY BENEFIT	TYPICAL DELIVERY TIME	BEST USE CASE
Standard Freight	Cost-effective	Based on general transit	Non-urgent freight
Standard Guarantee	Predictable arrival	On standard service day	Delivery windows without full urgency
Weekend Guarantee	Fast without using air	Monday delivery from Thurs/Fri pickup	Avoiding Monday air freight cost
Day-Specific Guarantee	Exact date	Flexible time of day	Projects and critical installs
Time-Specific Guarantee	Precise arrival	Narrow delivery window	Appointment-based delivery
Expedited Freight Services	Fastest ground shipping	Same-day to overnight	Emergency shipments
Air Freight Shipping	Fastest overall	Hours to one day	High-value, urgent international freight

Specialty Freight Services: Advanced Handling for Unique Shipping Needs

Some shipments go beyond the basics. Whether you're moving hazardous materials, delivering sensitive goods or managing complex returns, certain freight requires extra planning, compliance and care. That's where [specialty freight](#) services come into play.

These freight shipping services are designed for cargo that doesn't fit inside a standard box — or on a standard truck. From oversized freight to tradeshow displays, this guide covers common specialized handling options and when to use them.

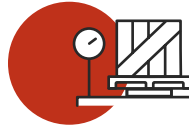


Hazmat Shipping

If your shipment includes substances that could endanger people, property, or the environment during transit, you'll need hazmat shipping. Hazardous materials are divided into nine classes:

- Explosives
- Flammable solids
- Radioactive material
- Compressed gases
- Oxidizers and organic peroxides
- Corrosive material
- Flammable liquids
- Toxic substances
- Miscellaneous dangerous goods

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) requires all hazardous materials to be shipped according to strict hazmat transportation regulations.



Oversize Freight

Freight is considered oversized if it exceeds standard dimensions — typically 8.5 feet wide, 13.5 feet tall or 53 feet long. Heavy haul shipments (over 80,000 lbs.) and over dimensional freight may require special permits, escorts or rerouting to comply with DOT regulations. Super loads — such as industrial tanks or construction equipment — exceed even those thresholds and require highly specialized planning.



Temperature-controlled Freight

Temperature-controlled freight, often moved in refrigerated trucks or reefers, is critical for goods that must stay within a specific temperature range. These trailers maintain cold or ambient environments and often feature real-time tracking and alerts.



Tradeshow Shipping

Shipping to or from a tradeshow requires precise timing and coordination. Tradeshow freight services handle delivery based on show-specific requirements and ensure timely pickup afterward to avoid storage fees.



White Glove Services

White glove freight services are a premium service which includes packaging, loading, room-of-choice delivery, installation, debris removal and even assembly. White glove teams are trained to handle delicate or high-value shipments with extreme care, minimizing risk and maximizing customer satisfaction.



Retail Shipping

Retail supply chains are built around timing and inventory coordination. Retail freight shipping ensures your products arrive at stores or distribution centers within a tight delivery window — often scheduled around a retailer's receiving hours.



Reverse Logistics

Returns are a normal part of doing business. Reverse logistics moves products from the customer or end location back to the manufacturer, distributor or another destination in your supply chain.

Confident Freight Decisions Start Here

Smart freight shipping starts with the right combination of freight transport modes, service levels and specialty freight services. Unishippers connects you to the solutions that fit your needs — backed by expert guidance and a trusted carrier network. Let's simplify your shipping starting today. Reach out for a free shipping consultation!

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