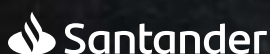




**GoGlobal**

# Selling to customers in Singapore: A guide for SMEs in the UK



# Contents

<b>Selling to Singapore: Main benefits and challenges</b>	<b>4</b>
Intellectual property (IP) theft in Singapore	
<b>Business culture in Singapore</b>	<b>7</b>
Business etiquette	
Meetings and negotiations	
<b>Preparing to do business in Singapore</b>	<b>9</b>
Work out your export strategy	
Research the market	
Form a detailed plan	
<b>Getting your goods out of the UK</b>	<b>12</b>
Get an EORI number	
Get an export licence	
Agree incoterms	
Make a customs declaration	
Arrange for goods to be transported	
Check for trade barriers out of the country	
<b>Getting your goods into Singapore</b>	<b>16</b>
Complete the relevant documentation	
Prepare a packing list	
<b>Singaporean customs explained</b>	<b>18</b>
Tax and duty	
Additional documentation for food and drink businesses	
<b>Additional documentation for certain products</b>	<b>20</b>

## Introduction

Singapore is one of the easiest places in the world to do business. While small, the wealthy city-state boasts a first-class business environment closely aligned with British laws, business practices and technical standards.

Seen as a springboard into Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific, Singapore is one of the UK's largest trading partners in the region. The UK and Singapore have a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and a Digital Economy Agreement (DEA). Plus, English is the official language of business in Singapore.

In 2022, total UK exports to Singapore amounted to £14 billion. This was an increase of 21.1%, or £2.4 billion, compared to 2021, making Singapore the UK's 20th largest trading partner. There are opportunities for UK businesses looking to export across a broad range of industries, most notably financial services, technology, infrastructure, healthcare and maritime.

# Selling to Singapore

## Main benefits



### Ease of doing business

The World Bank ranks Singapore as the second-easiest place in the world to start, run and do business. The UK and Singapore signed a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in December 2020 and a Digital Economy Agreement in June 2022. The UK-Singapore Bilateral Investment Treaty (UKSBIT) has been in force since 1975 and is set to be reviewed and updated after new negotiations were announced in March 2023.



### Diverse customer base

Exporting to Singapore gives you a more varied customer base, reducing your dependence on the domestic market. By targeting the Singaporean market, you spread your business risk and increase your chances of success.

### Brand recognition and global image

Establishing a presence in Singapore can elevate your brand's reputation and credibility worldwide. Being associated with Singapore can attract attention from other international markets, potentially opening doors to new global opportunities.

### Common business environment

As well as speaking a common language and having strong historical ties, Singapore and the UK have similar business and legal practices, and share common technical standards. This helps to make Singapore an easier market for UK exporters to move into.

### English is the language of business

While Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English are all spoken in Singapore, English is the official language of business, which is a huge plus for UK exporters. Learning some basic phrases in your business partners' language can also help negotiations.



### World's premier shipping hub

Singapore is the world's top shipping hub, retaining the number-one position for nine years running. Location, a deep shipping industry ecosystem and supportive government policies all count towards that highest ranking.

### One of the least corrupt countries

Singapore is the fifth least corrupt country in the world, according to the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2022. That's ahead of the UK (18th), France (21st) and the United States (24th).



## Main challenges



### Geographic distance

The physical distance between the UK and Singapore presents logistical obstacles in terms of shipping, delivery times and inventory management. You need to plan your supply chain carefully, taking into account associated costs and complexities.

### Expensive to do business

The cost of operating a business in Singapore can be high, especially when compared to other Southeast Asian countries. The strong Singaporean currency can make it expensive to hire local employees. Plus, office space in Singapore is priced at a premium.

### Pricing, cost and currency exchange

Pricing your products competitively while considering exchange rates, shipping costs, customs duties and local market dynamics can be complex. Striking a balance between profitability and affordability for your target customers is crucial. You also need reliable and secure payment processing systems that support transactions in different currencies.



### Time-zone differences

Conducting business across time zones can hinder communication, especially when it comes to customer support and timely decision-making. Consider having dedicated support channels, or outsourcing customer service to accommodate inquiries and provide assistance during local business hours.

### Cultural differences

Though there might not be a language barrier, the Singaporean market does have distinct cultural nuances, consumer preferences and buying behaviours. As such, you must adapt your marketing, messaging and products to resonate with Singaporean customers.

### Payment processing and currency exchange

You need to set up reliable and secure payment processing systems that support transactions in different currencies. This means understanding best practice around currency exchange and managing foreign-exchange risks.



### Bureaucracy

UK companies can find the laws and regulations around conducting business in Singapore confusing. Complaints typically revolve around struggles to get the correct licences and permits, and complicated customs regulations.

### Protecting intellectual property

While Singapore has one of the strongest intellectual property (IP) regimes in Asia, it's important to note that IP rights are territorial – rights granted in the UK don't provide protection elsewhere. It's always advisable to consult legal experts (more on IP on page 6 below).



## Intellectual property (IP) theft in Singapore

Singapore has a strong intellectual property (IP) legal framework, which is widely regarded as one of the best in the world. However, it's important to know that the country has a "first-to-file" system, meaning that the first person to file an IP right in Singapore will own that right once the application is granted.

As such, you must register your rights in Singapore as soon as possible before you begin exporting. It's advisable

to consult legal experts who specialise in international IP law to navigate trademarking, copyright and patent protection in Singapore.

The UK Intellectual Property Office has Singapore-based [IP attachés](#), who can provide support and advice to UK companies exporting to Singapore.

**The World Bank ranks Singapore as the second-easiest place in the world to start, run and do business. Plus, the UK and Singapore signed a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in December 2020 and a Digital Economy Agreement in June 2022.**

# Business culture in Singapore

Singapore is a cosmopolitan society composed of Chinese, Malay, Indian and various other ethnicities. One of the most competitive markets on the planet, Singapore is pro-business and highly ambitious.

While you have to be cautious about making any generalisations, here are some top tips to help you navigate the business culture in Singapore.

## Business etiquette

**Be punctual:** Don't underestimate the importance of punctuality in Singapore. Turning up late to a business meeting is bad form anywhere. In Singapore, it's considered disrespectful and even insulting. Always aim to arrive to meetings a few minutes early.

**Initial greetings:** A handshake is the typical way to greet people in Singapore, sometimes accompanied by a slight bow. Make sure you greet the most senior people in the room first before moving down the hierarchy. Similarly, you should introduce your team in order of importance. Use "Mr" and "Ms" when addressing business partners, until you're told otherwise.

**Business cards count:** Exchanging business cards is an important part of Singaporean introductions. They are typically shared after the initial introductions. Custom dictates that you should present and receive business cards with both hands. Study a partner's card for a moment before respectfully putting it away.

**Dress code:** Singapore has a tropical climate all year round, making lightweight suits a great choice for men and women. Ties are common for men but won't always be needed; the same applies to jackets. A formal skirt and blouse combination is also fine for women. Wear shoes and other accessories that are high-quality yet understated. Avoid making bold fashion statements.

## Meetings and negotiations

**Expect tough negotiations:** Singapore has consistently been ranked as one of the most competitive countries in the world. As such, when it comes to negotiations, you should expect Singaporean business partners to be tough on price and deadlines.

**Take a calm approach:** While Singaporeans are hard negotiators, they're rarely aggressive and prefer calm business dealings. Avoid being confrontational, speaking loudly or showing too much emotion, both positive and negative. Holding eye contact for too long can also be considered aggressive.

**The importance of "face":** Like many Asian cultures, the principles of "saving face" and "losing face" are crucial in Singapore. This all boils down to respect. So, always be deferential towards Singaporean partners and forge solid relationships built on trust.

## General advice

**Relationships:** When forging business relationships in Singapore, trust and intuition are equally as important as statistics and data. Many Singaporeans value solid relationships over speedy contractual agreements. Getting to know your business partner is essential, so be prepared to take the time to build trust.

**Hierarchy is respected:** Hierarchy plays a key role in Singaporean society. Authority is highly respected. It's important that you figure out who the key players are quickly in any given situation and show them the respect they deserve.



# Preparing to do business in Singapore

**Expanding your small business into the Singaporean market presents a fantastic opportunity to grow, diversify and increase your sales, revenue and profits.**

Expanding your small business into the Singaporean market presents a fantastic opportunity to grow, diversify and increase your sales, revenue and profits.

If you're wondering where to begin, we've prepared a comprehensive, step-by-step guide for UK businesses aiming to sell their goods in Singapore. This guide will provide valuable insights and support to help you embark on this exciting journey.

**Before considering exporting to Singapore, you must be clear on your reasons:**

- Is it a key part of your growth strategy or something you think you should be doing?
- What are you aiming to achieve and over what period of time?
- Do you have enough time and resources to focus on exporting, or are you too occupied with business at home?
- Is everyone in the business on board? Is the product ready? Are you prepared if an export order comes in tomorrow?
- How will exporting affect your current business?

By stepping back, analysing and defining your export strategy for Singapore, you'll lessen the chances of making mistakes and increase your likelihood of success.

### Explore markets on Santander Navigator

Different markets hold different opportunities, but also varied policies and regulations. Explore our recommended markets for growing your business or browse other markets and opportunities. [Learn more](#)

## Research the market

Market research is an essential part of any business venture. Before exporting to Singapore, you need to understand the demand for your products and customer expectations. Not taking the time to research the market risks costly and time-consuming mistakes.

### Market research helps you figure out:

- which market to enter and the best way to do it
- where your products fit in the market you've selected
- who your target customers are
- which other businesses you're competing with
- what similar products are selling for
- what might prevent or hinder you from entering a market

Attending trade shows and fairs is a good way to showcase your products, network with prospective customers, and gain insights into your market.

The UK Department of Business & Trade website provides tips on visiting your target market and explains what [research you can do when you're there](#).

### Making decisions about the market

Ultimately, you must decide how you're going to reach the market and what you need to do to carve out a share for your business.

**Number of markets:** Decide how many regions you're ready to enter at the same time. Always align your ambition to the resources you have available.

**Where to focus:** Don't stretch yourself too thinly. Take the time to gain a deeper understanding of the market and show potential customers in Singapore that you're committed to their country.

**Route to market:** There are many routes to market – distributor, agent, recruitment, direct, online and so on – and it's essential to fully research your options and choose which is best for your business. The decision isn't always clear, so don't rush it.

**Choose carefully:** Once you've decided on your best route to market, pick your partners, employees or online portals carefully. The wrong selection now could set you back months or even years. For example, you should see a distributor as your biggest customer and treat them as such.

Once you've decided, don't waver. Focus on it. Find the best distributor, agent, employee or whichever you've chosen. Be patient – you don't need to take the first thing you're offered.

### Online research

The best way to start your market research is online. Start by researching your competitors and actively engaging with their content, including company websites, social media profiles and marketing campaigns. Read customer reviews and industry and media product reviews (if applicable), too.

Ask yourself: What aspects of your competitors' approach do you find appealing? What could your business do better? How can you make your business stand out from the crowd?

You should also use [Google Trends](#) to understand the number of online searches for related products or services in Singapore.

The UK Department of Business & Trade website has lots of [guidance on using the internet to research overseas markets](#).

### Visiting Singapore for research

While it might be expensive and time-consuming, travelling to Singapore for in-market research is an invaluable way of making connections and getting first-hand experience of the people, cultures and market.

You're also better placed to examine your competitors and assess the demographics, tastes, preferences and behaviours of potential customers in Singapore.

## Form a detailed plan

At this stage of the process, it's time to pull everything together into a detailed plan. Define all the key elements and the objectives, including the following:

- **The financial investment needed:** Be certain that the amount you're required to invest is something you can both afford and justify. Will the returns exceed the costs?
- **The non-financial resources needed:** Do you have the people, the time, and the right skills in place?
- **Timescale:** How long are you prepared to invest? How soon do you need exports to be self-financing?
- **Level of risk:** Assess the risks you will be exposed to – how do they compare to your risk appetite? Do the potential returns warrant the exposure?
- **Route-to-market strategy:** One of the key decisions is how you'll enter the market. Make an informed choice and focus on it.
- **Milestones along the way:** Consider what you need to achieve and by when to be successful.
- **Expected outcomes:** What progress do you want to have made after three, six and 12 months? Two years? Three years?

Once you're up and running, regularly review your plan and compare it to your results. Measure if you've successfully passed your milestones and achieved the outcomes you expected. Highlight any anomalies and work to put them right; be vigilant in keeping the plan on track.

If it's working, great. If not, feel free to question everything. Are you delivering the resources and investment agreed upon? Is the plan itself wrong or how you're executing it? Don't be afraid to change tack if you need to but be sure of the reasons first.

Visit the [Santander Navigator website](#) for more guidance on how to create an export plan.

Make sure you're comfortable with the plan and the details. Discuss it with the relevant people in your company to make sure everyone's on the same page. Getting colleagues to buy into your strategy now will save a lot of questions later.

**Once you've decided on your best route to market, pick your partners, employees or online portals carefully. The wrong selection now could set you back months or even years.**



# Getting your goods out of the UK

## Get an EORI number

You need an Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) number to trade internationally and move goods out of the UK. Assigned by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), this is an identification number unique to your business and made up of two parts:

- The country code of the issuing state
- A code that's unique in the member state

In the UK, this is usually your VAT registration number followed by the UK code of 000.

You'll need to provide your EORI number when completing and lodging a customs declaration via the Customs Declaration Service (CDS). Without it, the customs authorities won't be able to process your document. You'll also need an EORI number to use the UK government's [online export licensing system to get an export licence](#) (see [Get an export licence](#)).

To check whether you have a valid EORI number, you can use the [UK government's designated tool](#). If you don't have one, you can apply to have a number allocated to your business. Just visit the [online portal and follow the application process](#).

## Get an export licence

If your product requires an export licence, you'll need to apply to the UK government for one. The export licensing process can take some time, so plan ahead and submit your application as early as possible.

You can go to the government's website to see a [list of goods that require export licences](#). But for small businesses, these are the most relevant types of products:

- Food and drink products
- Animal products
- Plants and plant products
- Drugs and medicines
- Medical devices
- Chemicals

You need an export licence to meet the strict controls put in place by the UK government's Export Control Joint Unit. They help control the movement of certain products across international borders.

If these controls apply to the products you're looking to move into Singapore and you don't have the correct export licence, it's likely that your goods won't clear customs. You'll also need an EORI number (see [Get an EORI number](#)) to use the UK government's [online export licensing system to get an export licence](#).

## Agree incoterms

International commercial terms (more commonly known as incoterms) are the rules that apply when shipping goods overseas. Published by the [International Chamber of Commerce \(ICC\)](#), they're a set of standards accepted by governments and legal authorities around the world.

When an exporter agrees to sell goods to a buyer (importer), both parties need to agree on who's responsible for shipping the goods and who's responsible if anything happens while the goods are in transit.

Designed to protect both the seller (exporter) and the buyer (importer), incoterms define which tasks, costs and risks are associated with each party, and at what point the costs and risks transfer between them.

The terms define who's responsible for:

- moving the goods between agreed points
- completing customs documents
- providing insurance (see [Cargo insurance](#))
- paying tariffs and duties

All international purchases will be processed on the agreed incoterms, which must be clearly stated on the relevant shipping documents. For most modes of shipment (road, rail and air), standard incoterms will apply. For sea and inland waterway transport, however, there are separate incoterms.

The ICC regularly reviews and amends incoterms – you can find the [latest incoterms on its website](#). For more information about incoterms, visit the [UK Department for Business & Trade website](#).

## Cargo insurance

In most trade agreements, having cargo insurance in place will be an incoterm. Who is responsible for arranging this (buyer or seller) will depend on the terms agreed as part of the contract.

Cargo insurance protects you from any financial loss if your goods are damaged or lost before you've fulfilled your commitments in the contract. This might be while goods are being moved (whether this is by road, rail, sea or air), loaded, unloaded or put in storage.

When moving your goods internationally, many freight forwarders (see page 15) will cover your goods under their liability insurance policy. However, as this covers only a very small amount of the goods' overall cost, you should arrange a comprehensive insurance policy to cover the difference.



**Cargo insurance protects you from any financial loss if your goods are damaged or lost before you've fulfilled your commitments in the contract.**

## Make a customs declaration

No goods can enter or leave the UK without a customs declaration (import or export declaration) submitted to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). Customs declarations are also necessary for security, as certain goods need a licence or permit (see page 12) before they can be exported.

While you can make a customs declaration yourself (using special software), many exporters tend to appoint a customs agent/broker or freight forwarder to do it for them. That way, they can be sure their goods will be cleared for arrival and departure at UK borders.

Incorrect documentation is one of the main reasons that goods are held up at the border, so your customs declarations must be accurate. In the UK, you make declarations via HMRC's CHIEF or CDS online platforms. (CHIEF will be discontinued in late 2023.)

Once you submit your declaration, HMRC checks and validates it and then assigns it a movement reference number (MRN). This allows your goods to leave the country.

### Information found on a customs declaration

The customs declaration has several data elements that you must complete for HMRC to accept it. These include the following:

- **Commodity code:** Used to classify imported or exported goods. Having the correct code helps make sure you're keeping to customs rules and paying the right taxes and duties. It also indicates whether any licences are needed. You can search for commodity codes on the government's [Trade Tariff website](#).
- **Information about goods and their journey:**
  - The goods' origin
  - The mode of transport used to move the goods
  - Where the goods are being dispatched from
  - Where the goods will arrive
- **Valuation:** This must be correct, since the value of your goods often acts as a basis for calculating customs duty.

- **Consignee:** The party receiving the goods
- **Consignor:** The party exporting the goods (This isn't a full list – there are many more data elements in a customs declaration.)

### CustomsClear: Customs declarations made simple

Deloitte's CustomsClear is easy-to-use software that helps your business submit customs declarations for goods imported and exported between the UK and EU. [Learn more on Santander Navigator](#)

### Customs agents/brokers and freight forwarders

You might choose to have a third party – such as a customs agent/broker or freight forwarder – to submit customs declarations on your behalf.

- **Customs agent/broker:** Offers customs clearance and representation services for businesses and traders exporting goods around the world. Their role is mainly to act on your behalf in lodging export declarations to the HMRC platforms.
- **Freight forwarder:** Handles shipping arrangements, working with shipping companies to transport goods to the eventual customer. They don't physically move the goods but do all the logistics work to make sure exports can cross international borders. Importantly, they complete the customs declarations for you.

Unless you're moving goods in high volumes, you might find the cost of installing the special software needed to submit declarations, plus the admin costs, expensive compared to the fees charged by a third party.

Without either the software or a third party acting for you, you won't be able to upload your customs declarations and, as such, move the goods into Singapore. The right customs agent/broker or freight forwarder will give you a choice of solutions that best match your business's needs and help to simplify the entire process.

## Arrange for goods to be transported out of the country

### Logistics

When you're ready to ship your goods, you can use any combination of road, rail, air or sea to transport them. Which option (or options) you choose will depend on the following:

- Cost
- When you want the goods to arrive in Singapore
- The size and weight of your goods, whether they're perishable, and whether there are any security considerations
- Whether any special requirements apply, such as export licences

There are many logistics providers operating today. For example, you might look for a haulier if you're transporting goods by road, or a freight forwarder if you're sending goods around the world. If you're exporting goods in small volumes, it may be easier, cheaper and quicker to use a parcel courier.

As well as moving your goods, logistics providers can also offer services for warehousing, order fulfilment, inventory management, and more.

### Freight forwarders

To send goods to Singapore, you could consider hiring a freight forwarder. Acting as the middleman between you and the shipping company, airline, rail or road haulage

company, they manage the whole process of getting the goods from the UK to Singapore, including:

- transporting your goods from where they're made or stored to the port or airport, for shipping
- preparing all the relevant paperwork (including customs declarations)
- booking sea or air freight
- setting up cargo insurance and tracking delivery as needed
- arranging warehousing and storage, if necessary
- managing customs clearance and the payment of import duty on the Singaporean side

You should use an experienced operator who's a member of the British International Freight Association (BIFA).

[Find a freight forwarder on the BIFA website](#)

### Provider directory: Santander Navigator

Finding trusted providers takes time, but they're often invaluable to achieving your goals.

Take a look at our network of providers from across the globe and see how they could help. As a valued Santander Navigator member, you can also access exclusive offers and discounts. [Learn more](#)

## Check for trade barriers

A trade barrier is something that slows down, limits or prevents you from exporting to or investing in an overseas market. It can increase costs, cause delays, or prevent you from exporting altogether. As a result, it's important to check for any issues that may hinder you when selling goods or services in Singapore.

The UK government website has an [online service](#) you can use to check for current trade barriers or report any new ones.

**Cargo insurance protects you from any financial loss if your goods are damaged or lost before you've fulfilled your commitments in the contract.**



# Getting your goods into Singapore

## Complete the relevant documentation

The documents needed to export goods to Singapore will depend on the products you're selling. Your freight forwarder or customs agent/broker can help you with this process.

Aside from the documents required for transporting goods and for insurance, you may also need the following:

- A **clear written contract** that covers:
  - where and when the goods will be delivered
  - who arranges transport for the goods and insurance
  - who handles customs procedures and pays any duties and taxes
  - what currency payment will be in, and what payment method will be used
- **Export documents** such as the following:
  - Know Your Customer (KYC)
  - GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade)/DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade) declaration
  - Purchase order/letter of credit
  - Bill of lading/airway bill
  - Bill of entry
  - Commercial Invoice and packing list
  - Technical write-up for specific goods if any

**You may need extra documentation to export certain goods.**

## Prepare a packing list

A packing list is a crucial element of all customs declarations. It helps with border security, making sure that dangerous or hazardous goods are properly screened and that the correct procedures for these products are being followed.

Customs authorities use packing lists to make sure they're applying the correct duties and tariffs, while hauliers, airlines and shipping companies use them to track the weight and measurements of the loads they're carrying.

Without a packing list, your shipment simply won't clear customs. It should clearly set out:

- what's on each pallet/container
- the pallet/container number
- the contents of the pallet/container
- your contact details

If the details on the packing list are incorrect, customs authorities will likely have to inspect your goods before they can release them. Not only can that delay your goods from moving on, but you might have to pay extra costs for the time your goods are held at the border.

## Commercial invoice

This is a document the buyer needs so they can pay you. In most cases, it's also used to assess what customs duties and taxes are due. The invoice should describe the goods, provide your address, and set out the terms of delivery and payment.

## Pro forma invoice

You prepare a pro forma invoice before shipping your goods. It tells the buyer what goods you're sending, their value, and other key details.

If you're being paid "pro forma", it means paid in advance. The buyer will use this document to determine what amount they need to pay you.

## Air waybill

A receipt an international airline issues for goods, providing evidence of the contract between the consignor (you, the exporter) and the airline. It obliges the airline to carry the goods to the airport of destination, in line with the conditions given.

## Bill of lading

A contract containing the details of the international transportation of goods by sea. It serves as proof that the carrier has received the goods from you (as the goods' owner). Importantly, it's a document of title which proves ownership of the goods.

For ships, there are two types:

- **A straight bill of lading:** Non-negotiable, this shows that the carrier has accepted the goods, and obliges them to carry the goods to the port of destination, according to specific conditions.
- **A 'shipper's orders' bill of lading:** This is negotiable. It can be bought, sold or traded while the goods are in transit.

## Customs bond

A document proving that a bond has been posted with the customs authorities to cover any potential duties, taxes and charges that may fall due. It allows the buyer (importer) to take possession of the goods before paying customs duty.

## Transportation entry

The carrier will need to submit one of these documents if your goods are subject to a customs bond and are being transported from a port of arrival to the intended port of entry.

## Manifest for aircraft

If you're transporting goods to Singapore by air, Singapore Customs will need a set of documents containing the following:

- General declaration
- Air cargo manifest
- Crew list
- Crew purchase list
- Crew baggage declaration
- Stores list

The commander of the aircraft (or their agent) will complete these forms and submit them to the relevant customs officer.

## Manifest for vessels

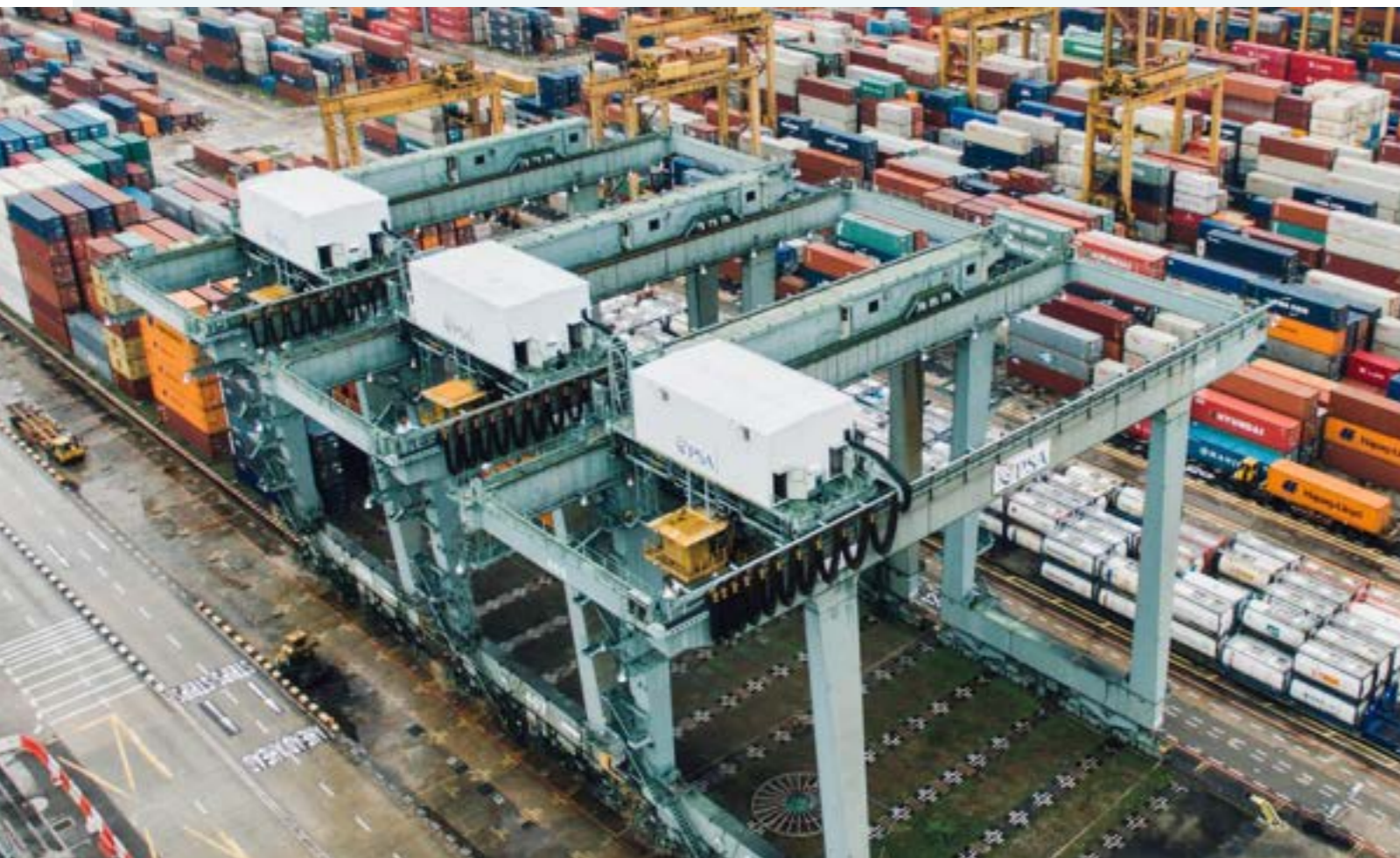
If you're transporting goods to Singapore by sea, Singapore Customs will need a set of documents containing the following:

- Vessel entrance or clearance statement
- Inward cargo declaration
- Ship's stores declaration
- Crew's effects declaration
- Passenger list – crew list

The master of the vessel (or their agent) will complete these forms and submit them to the relevant customs officer.

# Singapore customs explained

The process for clearing Singaporean customs can be daunting if you've never encountered it before. In this section, we break down some important things to know about the Singaporean customs process.



## Tax and duty

If you import a product into Singapore, you'll be charged Goods and Services Tax (GST) of 8%. You'll also need to pay duty on the following product categories:

- Intoxicating liquors
- Tobacco products
- Motor vehicles
- Petroleum products and biodiesel blends

To see a list of goods on which you'll pay duty (known as dutiable goods), and their respective rates, visit the [Singapore Customs website](#).

It's essential to know whether you must pay duty and/or GST when your goods enter Singapore. To make sure you're keeping to the regulations, follow these steps.

## 1. Activate your customs account

The first thing you'll need to do is register with the [Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority \(ACRA\)](#) or the relevant [Unique Entity Number \(UEN\) Issuance Agency](#) to get a Unique Entity Number (UEN).

Once registered, you'll need to [activate your account with Singapore Customs](#).

## 2. Check if your goods are controlled

Next, you must check if the goods you intend to export are controlled or subject to restrictions by Competent Authorities (CAs) in Singapore.

You can check on the [Singapore Customs website](#) by searching the product name, Harmonized System (HS) code or CA product code. If the item is restricted, the name of the CA will be shown next to its HS code.

## 3. Apply for an Inter-Bank GIRO

To pay duties and taxes, you'll need an Inter-Bank GIRO (IBG). You can find the IBG application form on the [Singapore Customs website](#), along with lots of other useful forms.

Once you've filled out the document, you'll need to send it by post to the address given on the form.

## 4. Provide security

Businesses must provide security for transactions involving:

- dutiable goods
- goods being temporarily imported for approved purposes
- the operation of licensed premises, such as licensed warehouses and excise factories

The security should be in the form of a banker's guarantee, finance company guarantee or an insurance bond. For more information, see the [Singapore Customs website](#).

## 5. Get a customs import permit

To get a customs import permit, you'll need to register as a [declaring agent](#) and apply for a [TradeNet user ID](#). It's also possible to appoint a [declaring agent](#) to obtain the permit on your behalf.

You must submit your permit application via TradeNet, which you can access through TradeNet front-end software from an [approved software vendor](#) or via the [government portal](#). For more information, see the [Singapore Customs website](#).

## 6. Prepare documents for customs clearance

Next, you'll need to prepare documents for customs clearance, as detailed in the previous section.

It's important to know that any permits Singapore Customs issue have a validity period. As such, you must make sure the permit you present for goods clearance is valid. For more information, see the [Singapore Customs website](#).

## 7. Keep hold of your trade documents

You must keep all documents relating to goods you've bought, imported, sold or exported, for five years from the date your permit application was approved.

You must produce these documents – which you can store as [physical hard copies](#) or as [images](#) – to Singapore Customs whenever they ask for them.



# Additional requirements for food and drink businesses

## 1. Check product classification

The Singapore Food Agency (SFA) classifies food products into different categories, each with specific conditions and requirements. [View the food categories.](#)

## 2. Apply for a trader's licence or register with SFA

Before you can import food into Singapore, you'll need to [obtain a relevant trader's licence or register with SFA.](#)

## 3. Comply with relevant food laws

It's vital to make sure your food products [comply with relevant legislation.](#)

## 4. Meet SFA's other conditions

Typical [products with additional conditions](#) include:

- meat and meat products
- eggs and egg products
- fish and fish products
- fresh fruits and vegetables
- processed food
- novel food
- genetically-modified crops

## 5. Meet SFA's requirements on labelling

Labelling on pre-packed food must comply with the [Labelling Guidelines for Food Importers and Manufacturers.](#)

## 6. Apply for an import permit

As detailed above, you'll need an import permit.

## 7. Arrange for an inspection

Certain food products will need to be booked in for an inspection. This includes meat, eggs, seafood, and fresh fruits and vegetables.

**You must keep all documents relating to goods you've bought, imported, sold or exported, for five years from the date your permit application was approved.**



## Alcohol

You'll need an [import permit](#) to import alcohol. There are [additional labelling requirements](#) for alcohol products, too. In Singapore, alcohol labels must display the following information in English:

- A mark of origin
- The level of alcohol content
- A list of ingredients
- Details about your local importer



## Further information

For more information on any of the content included in this guide, please refer to Santander Navigator for dedicated support.

[Register for or log in to Santander Navigator now](#)