



GoGlobal

Selling to customers in the US: A guide for small businesses in the UK



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Introduction

The United States has the world's largest and most lucrative consumer market, making it a very attractive destination for ambitious UK businesses looking to expand their global footprint. With a population of over 336 million, the US opens up unparalleled – and profitable – opportunities for businesses across a range of sectors and industries.

Arguably the greatest opportunity is gaining access to that huge and diverse market. The US economy is very much consumer-driven, with buyers spending more than \$14.3 trillion in 2022 alone. It's also a highly mature market, with well-established distribution channels that make it easier to get goods and products into consumers' hands.

Another advantage is that US customers tend to show a preference for UK brands. Past research has found that American consumers hold 'Brand Britain' in high esteem, seeing the UK as a source of high-quality, premium products. This gives UK businesses a competitive edge.

Entering the US market means that UK businesses can leverage the potential of e-commerce to reach a much wider audience. Online sales in the US have been growing exponentially in recent years and reached \$1.03 trillion in 2022. America leads the way in digitisation, with e-commerce being the fastest-growing subsector of the retail and wholesale market. For UK businesses wanting to take their online sales channels into international territories, this creates significant chances for growth.

Note: The information in this guide is correct at the time of writing (June 2023).

Selling to the US

Main benefits



Increased revenue

Expanding your market reach into the US allows you to sell to a much larger pool of customers. With such a vast population, the US presents a huge potential revenue stream for small and medium-sized UK businesses like yours.

Strong customer buying power

Generally, the US market has higher average incomes and purchasing power compared to many other countries. This means that consumers in the US may be willing to spend more on your products or services, which can help make your business more profitable.

Diverse customer base

Exporting to the US gives you a more varied customer base and makes you less reliant on the market at home. By targeting the US market, you spread your risk and increase your chances of success.

High e-commerce potential

With America's well-developed e-commerce infrastructure and culture of online shopping, you have a great opportunity to reach American customers through online marketplaces, your own e-commerce website, or partnerships with US-based platforms.

Access to business resources

The US offers a wealth of business resources, including incubators, accelerators, venture capital (VC) firms, and networking opportunities. Make the most of these resources and benefit from valuable support, mentorship and investment.

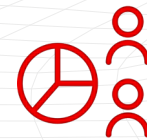


Brand recognition and global image

Successfully entering and establishing a presence in the US market can enhance your brand's reputation and credibility across the world. Being associated with the American market can attract attention from other international markets and potentially open doors to new opportunities worldwide.

Industry insights and trends

The US market often sets trends and serves as a barometer for consumer preferences worldwide. By entering that market, you can gain valuable insights into industry trends, consumer behaviour, and emerging market demands, which can help you refine your products, expand your offering and stay ahead of the competition.



Potential to scale and grow

The size and diversity of the US market provides ample room for growth and scalability. Successfully penetrating the US market can lay the foundation for expanding to other regions or leveraging your success to attract international investors or partners.



High value placed on innovation

The US is known for being at the forefront of innovation and early adoption of new technologies and trends. If your business offers innovative or cutting-edge products, the US market can be receptive to those offerings and provide a platform for growth and expansion.



Main challenges



Pricing and cost considerations

Pricing your products competitively while factoring in exchange rates, shipping costs, customs duties and local market dynamics can be complex. It's crucial to strike a balance between profitability and affordability for your target customers.

Lots of competition

The US market is highly competitive, with a diverse range of businesses offering similar products or services. It can be challenging to differentiate yourself and capture customers' attention amid this intense competition.

Geographic distance

The physical distance between the UK and the US can pose logistical challenges in terms of shipping, delivery times and managing inventory. You'll need to carefully plan your supply chain and consider the associated costs and complexities.

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.



Complex regulations

The US has specific regulations and standards that you most likely won't be familiar with. It's vital that you understand and keep to the laws around things like product labelling, safety standards, customs rules and so on to avoid any legal or operational issues.

Time zone differences

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

Cultural differences

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

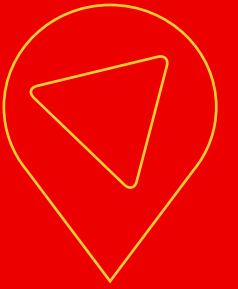


Brand awareness and trust

Building brand awareness and establishing trust in a new market can be difficult. Consumers in the US may not be familiar with your brand or may already buy from local competitors. It takes time and effort to gain their trust and loyalty.

Protecting intellectual property

Safeguarding your intellectual property rights can be complex in a new market. It's advisable to consult legal experts who specialise in international intellectual property law to navigate trademark, copyright and patent protection in the US.



Preparing to do business in the US

Expanding your small business to the US market provides an exciting opportunity to grow, diversify and increase your sales, revenue and profits. But there are many challenges to navigate and overcome, which can be a daunting prospect when the landscape is so unfamiliar.

With all these things to think about, you might be wondering where you begin. To help you, we've laid out a step-by-step guide for any UK business looking to sell its goods in the US.

Expanding your small business to the US market provides an exciting opportunity to grow.

Work out your export strategy

You must be clear on why you want to export and whether you're ready for the challenge.

- Is it a key part of your growth strategy or just something you think you should be doing?
- What are you aiming to achieve and over what period of time?
- Can you truly focus on exporting or are you too occupied with the business domestically?
- Is everyone in the business on board? Is the product ready? Are you prepared if an export order comes in tomorrow?
- Will exporting affect your current business?

By taking the time to step back, analyse and define your export strategy for the US, you lessen the chances of making mistakes and increase your likelihood of success.



Research the market

Before you can enter the US market, you need to research it thoroughly and understand the demand for your products. Without the right information, it's much easier to misjudge things and end up making 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 might prevent or hinder you from entering a market

Online research

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

Visiting the US for research

Admittedly, travelling to the US isn't cheap, particularly if you're operating on a budget. But if you can afford to get over there, this type of 'in-market research' is a really useful way to make contacts and connections and get specific information about the market.

You're also better placed to examine what your competitors are doing and assess the demographics, tastes, preferences and behaviour of potential customers in the US and what you need to do to cater to them effectively. 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 carve out a share of the business.

- **How many markets?** Decide how many markets you're ready to enter at the same time. Match your resources to your ambition.
- **Where to focus:** Don't stretch yourself too thin. Take the time to gain a deeper understanding of the market and show potential customers in the US that you're committed to their country.
- **Route to market:** There are many [routes to market](#) – distributor, agent, recruitment, direct, online and so on. Choose which is best for your business by understanding the differences, the positives and negatives of each one. The decision isn't always clear and is one to make carefully. Is the best option to work with a local distributor or agent? This is a low-risk strategy on the face of it, with little fixed cost, but to offset that is the risk of lower returns.
- **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.

Whatever the choice, once you've decided, don't waver. Focus on it. Find the best distributor, agent or employee, whichever you've chosen. Be patient – you don't need to take the first thing you're offered. Look around. Ask a lot of questions. Seek advice from people you trust within the market and within your company. Take the time to make the right decision, as it could be the deciding factor in your exporting success.

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:

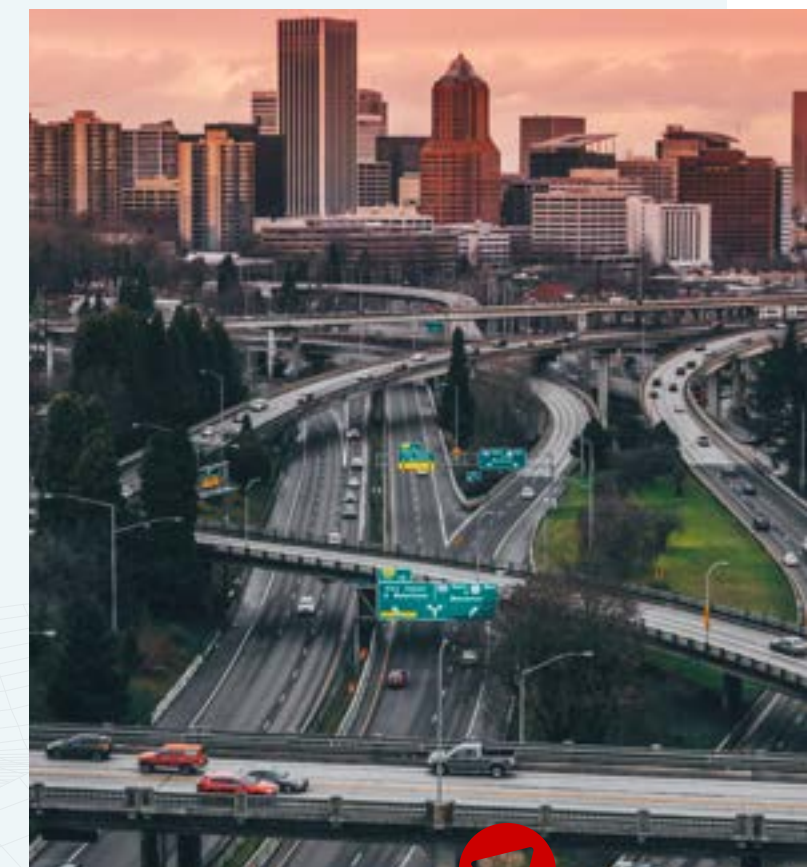
- **The financial investment needed:** Be certain that the amount you're required to invest is something you can both afford and justify. Will the returns exceed the costs?
- **The non-financial resources needed:** Do you have the people, the time, the right skills in place?
- **Timescale:** How long are you prepared to invest? How soon do you need exports to be self-financing?
- **Level of risk:** Assess the risks you're exposed to and compare them to your attitude towards risk. Do they match? Do the potential returns warrant the exposure and the risk?
- **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?

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

Once you're up and running, regularly review your plan and compare it to your actual 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 in the plan? Is the plan itself wrong or the manner in which you're executing it? Don't be afraid to change tack if you need to but be sure of the reasons first.

Visit the UK Department of Business and Trade website for more guidance on [how to create an export plan](#).



Whatever the choice, once you've decided, don't waver. Focus on it.

Getting things in order to start trading

Be aware of the laws and regulation

When selling into the US, there are lots of rules, laws and regulation you need to understand and follow, to avoid any legal issues arising later.

The US is very different to the UK in that it has a federal system, with each state having its own procedures and regulation. The laws in one state might not apply in another, so you must treat each state as a separate entity.

Because it's so complicated, it's highly recommended that you seek guidance from legal professionals with expertise in international trade or specific areas of US law. [The US Embassy website has a list of American lawyers based in the UK.](#)

Here are some key legal areas to consider:

Taxes

The American tax system is hard to understand, with taxes being imposed not only by the federal government but by individual states, counties and cities. [The Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\)](#) oversees the federal tax system in the US. [The Federation of Tax Administrators](#) website explains state tax in further detail.

Sales tax

There isn't any value added tax (VAT) in the US, but there is sales tax. Sales tax is imposed on retail transactions only, so it generally becomes due when someone buys a taxable product or service.

Each US state has its own sales tax regulation and the requirements can vary. Even though rates are typically set at state level, some states authorise county, city or local taxing districts to set their own rates and rules. With so many jurisdictions generating rates, rules and boundaries, keeping to sales tax laws can be a nightmare. And you don't need a physical presence in a state in order to have to register and charge sales tax. You'll be responsible for sales tax as soon as you make \$100,000 in sales or conduct 200 transactions in a state.

With all of this in mind, it's important to understand whether you need to collect sales tax and how to register with the relevant authorities. Consider consulting a tax professional to get accurate guidance on navigating the sales tax rules.

It's highly recommended that you seek guidance from legal professionals with expertise in international trade or specific areas of US law.

Intellectual property rights

Protecting your intellectual property (IP) is crucial when entering the US market. Your IP protection in the UK doesn't apply in the US, so make sure your trademarks, copyrights and patents are properly registered and enforceable overseas. Brush up on US IP law and be prepared to take action against any infringement or unauthorised use.

It's advised that you get IP protection abroad if you plan to trade in the US or sell to American customers online. [The Intellectual Property Office](#) can help you protect, manage and enforce your IP internationally.

Import and customs regulation

Familiarise yourself with US import regulation and customs procedures and know what paperwork you need to provide. It will also help to understand product classifications, duty rates and labelling and packaging standards.

Product safety and standards

Keeping to US product safety and standards regulations helps make sure your products are legal and safe. Depending on what you sell, key regulations might include the [Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act \(CPSIA\)](#) and specific industry standards administered by organisations like the [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) or the [Federal Communications Commission \(FCC\)](#).

For more information on legal standards in the US, visit [The National Institute of Standards and Technology website](#).

Packaging and labelling

The FDA enforces strict regulation around packaging and labelling for consumer goods. For example, there are specific labelling rules for [food](#), [drugs](#), [cosmetics](#) and [medical equipment](#).

Consumer protection laws

The US has robust consumer protection laws at the federal and state levels. Familiarise yourself with laws such as the [Federal Trade Commission Act \(FTC Act\)](#), which prohibits deceptive advertising and unfair business practices. Be aware of regulations related to product warranties, refunds and consumer privacy.

Contract and commercial law

It'll help to know something about US contract law and commercial practices. If you enter into any agreements, partnerships or distribution contracts, consider seeking legal advice. That way, you'll make sure those contracts meet US legal standards and protect your business interests.

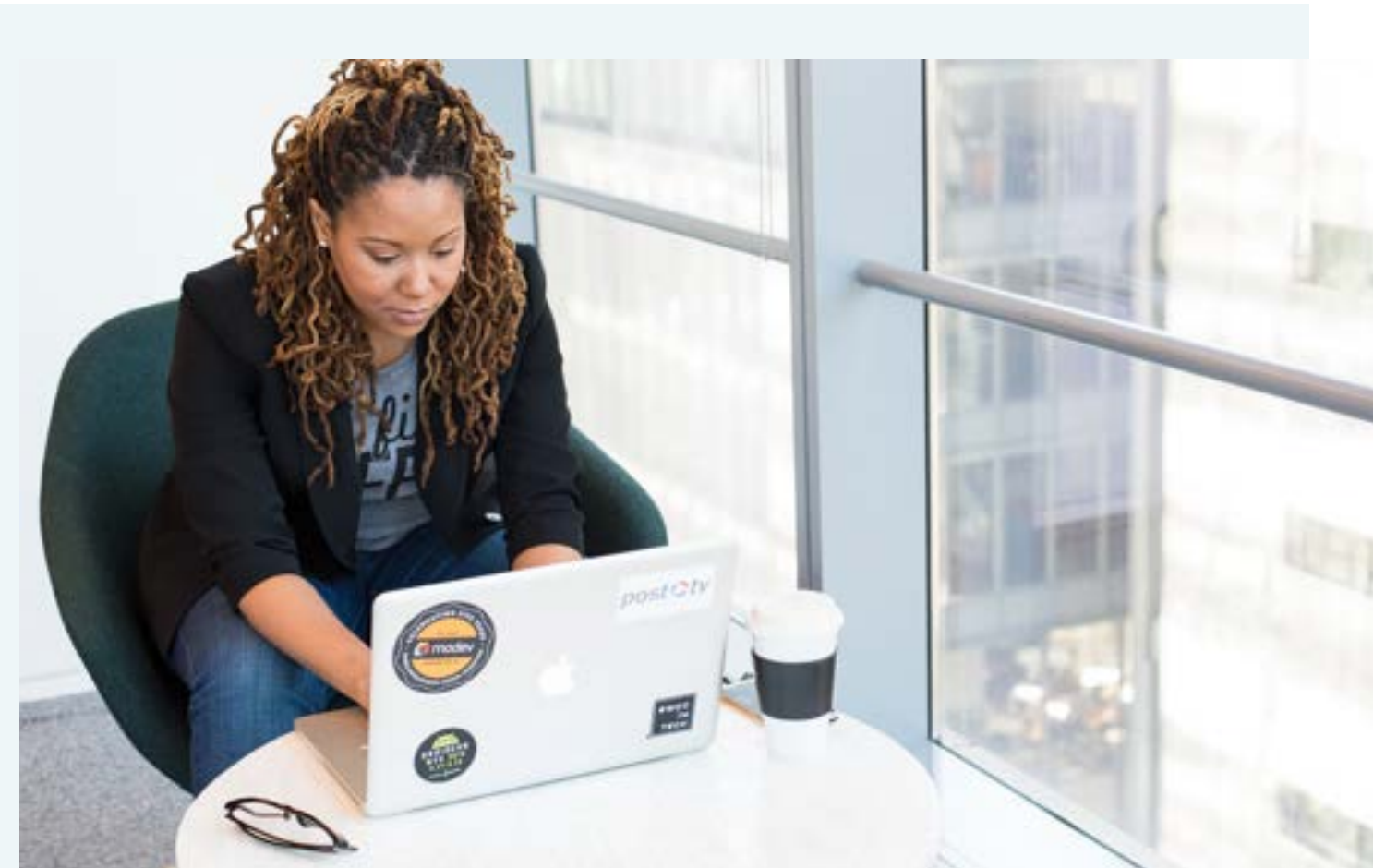
Data protection and privacy

If your business collects or processes personal data from US residents, you may need to comply with US data protection and privacy laws.

Visit the [UK government's online service](#) for more information on the rules and restrictions that apply when moving goods from the UK to the US.



Protecting your intellectual property (IP) is crucial when entering the US market. Your IP protection in the UK doesn't apply in the US.



Register with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

To do business in the US, you must register with the country's [Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\)](#). This is both for tax purposes and to make sure you have the correct information when filing certain customs-related paperwork.

Employer identification number (EIN) and importer number

When you register with the IRS, you'll get an [employer identification number \(EIN\)](#) (also known as a federal tax identification number). This number is unique to you and used to identify your specific business in the US.

Having an EIN means you can use it as your [importer number](#) on certain customs paperwork – specifically, the

[customs import declaration](#) and [importer security filing and additional carrier requirements](#) (see page 18). When you fill out these documents, you'll be asked for this number.

If you haven't registered with the IRS and received an EIN, you can still get an importer number by applying to [US Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\)](#).

Remember that individual US states have different tax laws, so make sure you know your liabilities within the state in which you're operating. Depending on the kind of business you're doing, you may need other specific business licences or permits, which you can get from the relevant Secretary of State's office.

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 it's vital that you 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 the US 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 17) 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 14) 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 it's vital that your customs declarations are 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 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 a number of '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.)

Customs agents/brokers and freight forwarders

You might choose to have a third party – such as a customs agent/broker or freight forwarder – 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 goods themselves, but do all the logistics work to make sure goods can cross international borders. Importantly, they complete the customs declarations for you (see page 17).

Unless you're moving goods in high volume, 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 to the US. 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 the US
- 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 volume, 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 the US, you might hire 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 the US, 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 at the US 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](#)

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 into the US.

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



Getting your goods into the US

Complete the relevant documentation

You'll need to prepare the relevant documentation for your goods to be able to enter the US. Your freight forwarder or customs agent/broker can help you with this process. Here are the main documents you must complete and supply.

Importer security filing (ISF) and additional carrier requirements

If you're sending goods to the US by sea, you must submit this electronic filing to the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) no later than 24 hours before your goods are loaded onto the sea vessel.

Your ISF will include information, such as:

- seller's name and address
- buyer's name and address
- your importer number (see page 13)
- consignee's registration number
- manufacturer's/supplier's name and address
- country of origin

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, it's likely that customs authorities will 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 by '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 being transported from a port of arrival to the intended port of entry.

Manifest for aircraft

If you're transporting goods to the US by air, the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) 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 the US by sea, the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) 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.

Additional documentation for food and drink businesses

If you're sending food and drink products or any type of animal or plant product to the US, there are a number of specific licences and certifications you'll need to arrange.

Export health certificate

Food items and products of animal origin will most likely need an export health certificate (EHC) signed by an official veterinary surgeon before you can export them to the US market.

The main categories of goods include the following:

- Dairy (you must state the country of origin)
- Fish
- Eggs
- Meat (currently limited to lamb, pork, and pig meat from approved premises only, as poultry/beef exports to the US are currently banned)
- Pet food
- Gelatine and collagen
- Animal hides

To apply for an EHC, visit the [UK government's website](#).

Import permit

To get your goods into the US, you must follow the conditions laid out by the [Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service \(APHIS\)](#). As such, you may need an import permit – if so, you would have to apply for one.

The permit displays the conditions that must be met on the export health certificate. It's usually valid for a number of shipments within a 12-month period.

Other certifications you might need

You must provide the following documents alongside those listed on pages 18 to 19 when exporting products to the US. Without these certifications and licences, it's likely that your products will be rejected or seized at the border. This could not only harm your business's reputation but make it difficult for you to try and enter the market in the future.

- **Registration of food facility:** A document certifying that a facility involved in manufacturing, processing or storing food is registered with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

- **Prior notice of food imports:** A document to inform the FDA that you're importing food.
- **Manufacturer identification code:** A code identifying the foreign manufacturer of a product.
- **Notice of FDA action:** A document showing the FDA's decision to release or refuse clearance of FDA-related goods.
- **Import inspection:** A document certifying that imported meat, poultry and certain agricultural products under the responsibility of the USDA have been inspected upon arrival to the US and found to comply with national regulations.
- **Veterinary certificate for animal products:** Issued by the exporting country, a document confirming that products of animal origin have been inspected according to appropriate procedures.
- **Import licence for wildlife:** Import permit for endangered animals.
- **CITES document:** Three separate documents only required for products of endangered species.
- **Import permit for plant and plant products:** Used when importing plant and plant products under chapter seven of the CFR part 319.37-3. Should be completed 30 days before arrival.
- **Phytosanitary certificate:** A document confirming that the products have been inspected according to appropriate procedures and comply with conditions set out in the respective import permit (see page 20). Issued by authorities of country of export.
- **Import permit for milk and cream:** Obtained from the FDA and valid for one year.
- **Alcohol dealer registration:** Certification that the importer/dealer has been registered with the alcohol and tobacco tax bureau.
- **Import permit for alcohol:** Valid for an unlimited time, but about 65 days are needed for processing and the applicant must be based in the US.
- **Alcohol label approval:** Needed before importing. Application submitted electronically via the Certificate of Label Approval (COLA) online system.



To get your goods into the US, you must follow the conditions laid out by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

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

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