



*the 5 most common
freight shipping mistakes*

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introduction

Freight shipping can be complicated. If you've been shipping for any amount of time, you're already aware of this fact. Freight shipping mistakes happen every day and these mistakes can impact your company's bottom line. In this white paper, we cover some of the more common (and costly) mistakes made by even the most experienced shippers. We'll help you correct these mistakes and keep your company's shipping costs in check.



*mistake #1:
bill of lading (BOL)
inaccuracies*

The BOL is the most important document associated with your freight shipment. This is the document that you, as a shipper, need to make sure is 100% correct. Accuracy is key; guesses about weight or freight class can become expensive mistakes when all is said and done. Carriers pay very close attention to this document and will exercise their right to inspect your freight. With that said, here are a few different wrong turns to avoid when filling out a BOL:

- **Listing the Incorrect Weight** – Accurate weighing is key to keeping your shipment at the quoted cost and on track to its destination. DO NOT LIST APPROXIMATIONS! Remember to include the weight of the pallet and other packaging in the final total weight. We also recommend having your scales tested and calibrated annually to avoid costly reweighs (there's no harm in more frequent fine tuning, of course!).

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- **“Fudging” your Freight Class** – The rate that you pay for a freight shipment is based, in part, on the classification of the product that you are shipping. Your freight is grouped into one of 18 classes based on the product that you are shipping – classes can range from 50, on the low end, to 500 at the highest. The class is based on an evaluation of four transportation characteristics: density, stowability, handling, and liability. Together these characteristics establish your product’s transportability; the lower the product class, the lower the rate per pound. It may be tempting to list a cheaper class on a BOL, but carrier reclassifications (like reweighs) are a common and costly occurrence. It’s better to accurately class your shipment now than leave it up to inspection later.
- **Wrong billing information on the BOL** – This is especially important for companies using a third-party logistics (3PL) partner for their freight shipping. Previously negotiated discounts and reduced pricing for your company can only be applied if the correct “bill-to” is listed. Neatly write in the company that your freight is billed through so the correct pricing is applied to your shipment and delays/errors in billing are avoided.



mistake #2: living and dying by transit times

It's important to remember that freight carrier transit times are estimations and can vary due to weather, traffic, and mechanical issues. Yes, a carrier's goal is to stick as closely as possible to the transit times provided and deliver to a happy consignee. However, we live in an imperfect world and things don't always work out that way. Schedule your shipments as soon as you know there is a shipping need. This will ensure prompt delivery and satisfied customers.

For time sensitive deliveries such as tradeshow shipments, waiting until the last minute leaves very little margin of error, and could be the difference between a great show, and standing in an empty booth, missing out on valuable leads. Plan ahead and keep realistic expectations in mind when scheduling a shipment. Carriers do have guaranteed shipment options that cost a bit more, but paying a little extra when you know you need it is better than the fallout that comes from the alternatives.

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mistake #3: incorrectly packaging your freight

Incorrect packaging is one of the main causes of shipment damage. It's easy to blame the carrier for such incidents, but most carriers take every precaution to ensure your freight arrives at its destination safely, and free of costly damage claims. If you're shipping a full truckload, your freight stays on one truck from pickup to destination, reducing the chance of damage. Less-than-truckload (LTL) freight is a different story, as trailer transfers and shifting is common, so packaging is key. Know what you're shipping and pack accordingly – obviously different items will need different levels of packaging (e.g. glassware vs. ball bearings). You'll also want to be sure that your shipment is secured on a pallet, carton, or in a crate.



mistake #4: not properly handling freight claims

Sometimes the unthinkable does happen and your shipment arrives damaged or short on quantity, even though you packaged everything correctly. First things first - freight that you receive at your location needs to be properly inspected before using or storing in your warehouse. Immediately after inspecting the freight, document the damages with pictures and accurate descriptions. Next, it may be tempting to dispose of the damaged freight, but you must keep the freight in case an inspector needs to examine the shipment. All that's left to do now is notify the carrier or your 3PL freight partner of the damages and await the confirmation of the filed claim. You can expect to hear some sort of confirmation within 30 days of the filed claim. However, it may take longer to find a resolution.

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mistake #5: overpaying for freight

This last “mistake” may seem a little obvious, and the previous four mistakes obviously contribute to overpayments, but its one mistake that we see frequently. Working with a 3PL partner is one of the main ways to avoid mistakes/inefficiencies and keep your freight costs low. For starters, a 3PL partner audits your freight invoices to verify that your company is paying the correct amount for your freight shipments and, if you are overpaying, will work directly with your preferred carriers to provide accurate pricing or correct any issues. A good 3PL partner will also go out of their way to educate and inform you about freight shipping and provide the customer service needed to survive in a very competitive space.



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conclusion

These are the most common mistakes that we, as a 3PL partner, frequently encounter with carriers and customers. While we don't expect mistakes to become non-existent, we hope we provided you with a good checklist for your next freight shipment. Keep this list handy and remember that accuracy and attention to detail is a recipe for a healthy freight operation at your company.



about us

PartnerShip handles hundreds of shipments a day and we've seen it all. We're here to help and to answer any questions you may have about your shipping. We're also here to ease your mind of any and all shipping concerns that you may have and help you cultivate an efficient shipping operation.

Request a free shipping analysis by following the link below and providing some brief information about your company's shipping habits. One of our experienced freight shipping experts will analyze your operations and we'll let you know if you're already an efficient shipper or if freight shipping challenges are holding you back.

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528 E Lorain St • Oberlin, OH 44074 • 800-599-2902 • PartnerShip.com • sales@PartnerShip.com