

Import–Export Documentation Checklist – 2026

A step-by-step guide to essential documents in international trade

Designed for First-Time Exporters, Students & Trade Professionals

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Note: This checklist covers standard documents for general merchandise trade. Requirements may vary by country, product, and Incoterms. Always consult official sources and your freight forwarder.

1. Pre-Shipment Documents

	Importer Exporter Code (IEC) from DGFT
	GST Registration & LUT filing (for zero-rated exports)
	RCMC (Registration-cum-Membership Certificate) if required
	Commercial Invoice (signed & stamped)
	Packing List (detailed weight, dimensions, packages)
	Purchase Order / Contract from buyer
	Proforma Invoice (if advance payment)
	Letter of Credit (if payment via LC)
	Export Order Confirmation
	AD Code Registration with Bank

2. Shipping & Transport Documents

	Shipping Bill (filed via ICEGATE)
	Bill of Lading (Original + copies) or Airway Bill
	Marine Insurance Policy / Certificate
	Certificate of Origin (GSP/Form A/India-UAE CEPA etc.)
	Phytosanitary Certificate (for agri products)
	Health Certificate (for food/animal products)
	Fumigation Certificate (wooden packaging)
	SDF Form (Shipping Bill Declaration)
	GR Waiver (if applicable)
	Mate's Receipt (from shipping line)

3. Post-Shipment & Payment Documents

	Bank Realization Certificate (BRC/e-BRC)
	Bill of Exchange (for DP/DA payment)
	Export Invoice with EGM details
	Customs Certified Shipping Bill copy
	Proof of Export (ARE-1 if excise applicable)
	Duty Drawback / RoDTEP claim filing
	IGST Refund claim (if applicable)
	Foreign Inward Remittance Certificate (FIRC)
	Advance Authorization closure (if used)

Common Dock Delays & How to Prevent Them

Understanding triggers helps you plan better and save costs.

Delay Trigger	Typical Impact	Prevention Tip
Document mismatch	Full examination → 3–7 days hold	Triple-check alignment before filing
Risk profiling flag	Physical scan → detention charges	Use experienced CHA for smooth clearance
Late Shipping Bill filing	No Let Export → container left behind	File early—monitor ICEGATE status
Vessel delay (carrier side)	Extra storage (sometimes free)	Choose reliable shipping lines
Missing certificates (Phyto/Health)	Seizure or return	Prepare product-specific docs in advance

Pro Tips to Avoid Dock Delays & Costs

	File Shipping Bill BEFORE vessel departure (ideally 48–72 hours early)
	Match Invoice, Packing List & Shipping Bill exactly (HS code, value, description)
	Use correct HS Code & Incoterms—common trigger for examinations
	Plan carting 3–5 days before vessel ETA to buffer delays
	Track Shipping Bill status daily on ICEGATE for Let Export Order
	Keep digital + physical copies of all docs at dock
	Consult licensed CHA for high-risk shipments (e.g., restricted goods)
	If examined: Expect demurrage—negotiate storage waiver with line
	Missed vessel? Rollover fees + 7–14 day delay—always confirm ETD/ETA

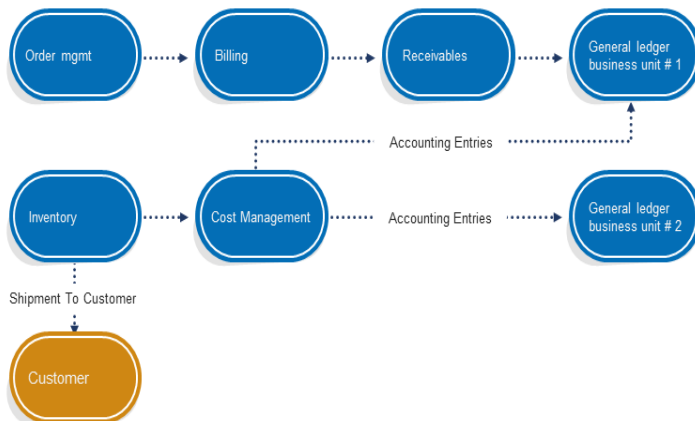
Critical Timeline: Dock Entry to Vessel Onboarding

Avoid customs holds, examinations & missed sailings—plan ahead to prevent demurrage & rollover costs.

Stage	Key Document/Action	Recommended Timeline	Risk & Cost if Delayed
Goods Reach Dock/CFS	Carting Order + Full Docs Ready	3–5d before vessel cut	Demurrage starts (~\$5,000–15,000/day)
Customs Verification	Shipping Bill Filed + All Supporting	File early via ICEGATE	Mismatch → Hold → Physical Examination
Examination (if flagged)	Officer Physical Check	Random/risk-based (1–7d)	Detention charges + delay buildup
Let Export Order (LEO)	Customs Approval Stamp	Must before loading	No LEO → Container not loaded
Container Loading	Preventive Officer Supervision	Before vessel sails	Missed → Rollover (7–14 days late + fees)
Shipped on Board	Mate’s Receipt + EGM Filing	Post-sailing by carrier	No EGM → No drawback/refunds

Shipping Process Flow from Order Management to Customer

This slide is 100% editable. Adapt it to your needs and capture your audience's attention.



Visual Summary: INTERNATIONAL CARGO EXPRESS SHIPPING TIMELINE

Source: Professional logistics illustration | Always verify processes with your CHA/freight forwarder.

INTERNATIONAL CARGO EXPRESS

SHIPPING TIMELINE



CUT OFF AT PORT

LCL Cut Offs are generally 7 days in advance of sailing
FCL Cut Offs are generally 2 days before sailing
Airfreight Cut Offs are generally 1 day before flight

OFFLOADING AT PORT

LCL freight takes an average of 3-6 days to become available
FCL freight takes an average of 1-2 days to become available
Airfreight takes an average of 1 day to become available

***Days on this timeline are a guideline only. Each shipment can be impacted differently by various stages of the shipping process.**

Visual Summary: Export Journey from Factory to Vessel Onboarding

Source: Professional logistics illustration | Always verify processes with your CHA/freight forwarder.