

**Title:**

Shipping containers - Steel boxes that have revolutionized logistics

**Word Count:**

336

**Summary:**

A brief history of shipping containers and an overview of some of the impact they have had on transport and logistics.

**Keywords:**

containers, shipping, shipping containers, container freight, containerized freight, container truck, container

**Article Body:**

Everyone has seen them and wondered what is inside them, or even if there is anything inside at all. Shipping Containers, or just plain containers.

Shipping containers were invented in 1956 and changed dockyards from labor-intensive to capital-intensive institutions virtually overnight.

Shipping containers are large steel boxes that were originally designed to reduce the time a ship spent in port. Money was saved in port charges, as well as enabling a ship to make more round trips each year. A container ship can dock, unload and reload, if necessary, all in a fraction of the time it would have taken to unload a ship in the pre-container era.

Shipping containers are 40 feet long and have a multitude of uses. We see them stacked up in freight yards and on ships. we see them on trains and trucks and we see them outside factories being loaded or just used as temporary storage.

Container ships and therefore shipping containers were developed to speed loading time at the dockside and to reduce theft by dock workers. Before containers were introduced, thousands of individual packing cases had to be loaded by hand, time consuming and therefore expensive. Dock workers went on strike as they saw their jobs disappearing and the endless stream of pilfered goods too.

Container ports were built to handle the new container ships, with massive gantry cranes to manipulate the shipping containers easily from train to yard and then from yard to ship.

The time savings at the port are only the beginning, as the shipping container is quickly transferred to a truck and on to its final destination, without any risk of theft. Transit time is reduced and more perishable cargoes can be carried.

There are non-standard containers too. They are all the same size outside, but some have hangers to allow clothes to be transported and unloaded directly to the shop floor. There are ventilated containers for crops like coffee and cocoa and there are containers with extra-wide doors or lashing bars for extra load security.