



The Ultimate Guide to Sending Your Products from China to Amazon's Warehouse

Over the past 3 years we've received one question from new sellers more than any other: How do I get my products from China to Amazon once the factory is finished manufacturing them?

First, I want to be clear: if you use Guided Imports, we take care of the entire process for you. In fact, if it happens in China, we do it for you. Now back to the question.

There are technically 2 ways you can do it. But for the purposes of covering ALL the options, let's say there are 4 ways you can accomplish this. It's just that two are a subset of the main two. The 4 ways we will discuss in detail are:

1. Have your supplier ship it direct
2. Have a Freight Forwarder or 3PL
3. Have an alternate 3rd party ship it
4. You can have the supplier ship it to YOU

We will also cover the differences between Sea freight, Air freight, and Air express delivery options so you understand when to use which service.

Before we cover any of these, we need to first understand what the pre-shipping requirements are for getting your products to Amazon, regardless of which option you chose.



Pre-Shipment Requirements

Amazon gives very specific instructions for the requirements related to prepping your shipment for delivery to their fulfillment centers. The specifics for product prep are linked [here direct from Amazon's site](#). And the details for packaging and shipping [are linked here](#). But as an overview, the three aspects in this process are as follow:

1. Labeling each product unit correctly
2. Packaging your units for shipping, and labeling each package correctly
3. Shipping your products to Amazon's fulfillment centers properly

Product Labeling

Every unit you send to Amazon needs to be labeled with a scannable barcode so that the fulfillment center can scan it and quickly and accurately pick and pack products when fulfilling orders. (If you're selling *comingled*, you can ignore this).



Make sure labels are scannable.

Amazon's official barcode requirements can be found by clicking the button.

CLICK HERE

If you're having your supplier ship the product direct to Amazon, or having them picked up by a freight forwarder, you'll need to communicate these instructions to your supplier. While many of them will be familiar with this process, you want to be absolutely sure they are doing it correctly.



Communicate clearly with suppliers

And this doesn't mean sending them the pdf of Amazon's instructions, as I can almost guarantee you they won't read it, won't understand it, or won't remember it. But by gosh they will sure give it the old college try. And it won't be pretty.

You need to make sure they have a diagram of exactly where to put the labels with all measurements in centimeters (guide and video later). You should also have your inspection company double check the prep and labels as well. And yes, I assumed that you're having your production inspected. If you choose not to hire an inspection company, then please stop reading now, as I guarantee you'll fail and the entire shipment will either be refused for delivery at Amazon or it won't even make it out of customs. We've seen it far too many times. And I'm not talking about dozens, I'm talking about literally hundreds of times that we've received panicked calls from sellers (*that didn't utilize our services, by the way, as we have this written in stone as a requirement*) who didn't use an inspection company and had their entire production refused by Amazon.

If this happens, you'll need to spend a lot more money to have the shipment rerouted to a prep company in the US to relabel, re-prep, and repackage whatever was done incorrectly. In fact, just last month a veteran seller called us to get advice since this exact thing happened. He thought he'd save some money by skipping the inspection because he trusted his supplier. He had to send all 10,000 units to a local prep company and they had to not only relabel the cartons, but every individual unit. That sound you hear is his profit margin being obliterated (and him weeping).

Don't be that guy. **Inspect every single production** coming from China. Every time.

When labeling, you need to make certain that:

- The labels are applied on flat surfaces. If they're put on curve or a carton edge and part of the label wraps around, it won't be able to be scanned. Same thing if the label is "warped" or sticks to itself and truncates the code. Even though this seems like common sense, it's worth mentioning.
- The only barcode showing is your own. If the product has an existing barcode you need to cover it up with yours. Multiple visible barcodes will at a minimum delay the receiving process of your products. However, the result is usually more severe, resulting in lost or mislabeled inventory.
- The labels are printed so they won't fade, smear, or otherwise degrade in any way. They must be scannable for a minimum of 24 months. Inkjet printers are notorious for this, so if you're printing the labels, use a laser/thermal printer. If your supplier is printing the labels, chances are they have a high-quality printer, but it doesn't hurt to ask.
- All Amazon barcodes must be printed in black ink on white, non-reflective labels with removable adhesive. Dimensions must be between 1"x2" and 2"x3" (1"x3" or 2"x2", for example)
- When printing Amazon barcodes onto labels, make sure:
 - There's sufficient white space between the Amazon barcode and the printed text (*1/4 inch on sides, 1/8 inch on top & bottom*)
 - ASIN or SKU
 - Product name
 - Product condition (new or used)
- Allow at least 1/4 inch between the edge of the label and the edge of the packaging



Packaging & Shipment Labeling

In addition to labeling each unit, you need to consolidate your products into boxes (referred to as *cartons* in the industry) and label each of those packages to be shipped to Amazon's fulfillment center. Keep in mind that Amazon will often require you to split up your shipment into multiple (usually 3) shipments. This is a geographically strategic decision on their part and it makes sense. But that doesn't hide the fact that it is not only more work, but usually costs you more money as well.

The reason they do this is because they want to make sure that they have enough of your inventory in locations spread across the US to ensure that any Amazon Prime orders will be delivered to the customers in the 2 days that they promise it will. Makes sense, right? We will do a deep dive into this as well as talk about the new policies (and fees) associated with splitting your shipments a little later.

For now, let's focus on the packaging and labeling guidelines Amazon has so generously condensed and put into pdf form.

You can download the very helpful Amazon Packaging & Shipping Guide below.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Also, Amazon has very specific instructions for packaging certain products. You'll want to pay close attention to this list and make sure that if you are selling any of these products, that you follow the guidelines or you'll find yourself in a very unpleasant situation.

At Guided Imports, some customers will have us pack and prep their items for FBA delivery and others will want the supplier to do this. In the later instance, we make sure all pertinent information is given to suppliers in both English and Chinese in our production manual and supplier agreements. We also ensure the QC inspection double checks to ensure these special items have been properly packaged and prepped.

Amazon has specific instructions for packaging the products listed below.

- ✓ [Packaging Products Containing Liquids](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Pellets, Powders, and Granular Products](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Sharp Units](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Glass, Ceramic, Breakable, and Fragile Units](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Batteries](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Plush Units](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Baby Products](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Apparel, Fabric, and Textiles](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Jewelry](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Small Products](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Plexiglas](#)
- ✓ [Packaging Adult Products](#)

If you are selling any of these products, make sure to click on each one that applies, as they all have different guidelines:

Each box or pallet that you ship to an Amazon fulfillment center must be properly identified with a shipment label. Follow these guidelines for labeling your boxes:

- Print the full set of labels. Because each label is unique, do not photocopy, reuse, or modify labels for use on additional boxes.
- Labels supported measure 3-1/3" x 4".
- Don't place labels on a seam or opening on the box as they will be damaged when the box is opened.
- The FBA shipment label and the carrier label (UPS, Fed Ex or other) should both be placed on a flat surface of the box, so that barcodes do not fold over edges or corners.

- Both labels must remain uncovered so that they are scannable and readable.
- Each box you include in the shipment must have its own FBA shipment label printed from your Shipping Queue in Seller Central.
- Each pallet you send needs four labels, one in the top center of each side.
- If you are shipping multiple case-packs in a master carton, apply the unique shipping label on the master carton you are using for shipping products to Amazon fulfillment centers. You do not need to apply the unique shipping labels to the individual case packs inside the master carton.

HELPFUL GUIDES & VIDEOS HERE

You can create a shipment in Seller Central by following this guide. You can print shipment labels within the Shipping Queue. Many clients have found the following instructional video helpful when trying to decipher all of Amazon's shipping and labeling requirements.

Side Note: Unexpected Additional Costs Due to Required Shipment Split

I alluded to it earlier, but another situation to think about that doesn't fit into any of the categories we are covering, is the possible added costs of having your products split into multiple shipments and sent to various Amazon warehouses. This is something they routinely do, and come July 2017, they will be doing it with more frequency—more on that later.

This topic needs to be addressed because it can potentially affect every shipping option covered in this guide. It can also diminish your margin and impact your bottom line, so we will cover it now.

Once you create the shipment in Seller Central, Amazon will tell you to which warehouse you're supposed to ship your goods. Sometimes they will require that you split your cargo into multiple shipments, each one going to a different Amazon warehouse. When this happens, they usually require up to 3 different shipments, but never more than that.

Nevertheless, this is minor annoyance typically adds more work and more cost to your shipping expense.

Case in point: Let's look at an example that shows how much more expensive it can be to ship 3 boxes, instead of one. For this example, we're going to assume you're shipping these from Ningbo, China to 3 different Amazon warehouses (TX, VA, and KY) The top pallet is a shipment that would go to just one Amazon warehouse (TX); the ideal situation (and is an option you can choose, more on that later)



1 Box Shipment @ 75 lbs
Total Weight = 75 lbs



3 Box Shipment @ 25 lbs ea: Total Weight = 75 lbs

Each of the 3 boxes: 20x20x20 inches the one BIG box is 50x50x50 inches

Now, let's look at the freight quotes for each of these 4 shipments.

The screenshot below is the quote for shipping the one larger shipment from Ningbo, China to Amazon's Dallas, TX distribution center. As you can see, the \$563.75 quote is for 3-5 day express shipment.

I also checked out sea freight and it was more expensive for this size shipment. There's a cutoff point where sea freight becomes more economical. You can read all about it in an upcoming guide or post to the Guided Import's website.

The screenshot shows a search result for a freight quote. At the top, it says "87 Results" and "Sort by Recommended | Cheapest | Quickest". The quote is from "Seller: Primorus Worldwide" with a "Reviews" section showing five stars. The price is "\$563⁷⁵" with "Est. 3 - 5 Days" delivery. A green "BOOK" button is visible. Below the price, it says "What charges are included?". There is a section for "Valid until May 8, 2017" and "Remarks [1]". The main quote details show a lightning bolt icon, the word "Express", and the route "315012 Ningbo, CN > 75201 Dallas, TX, ...". At the bottom right, there are two icons: a green checkmark for "Customs brokerage" and a red circle with a slash for "Insurance".

One big 75 lbs. Box to Amazon's warehouse in Dallas

Below we find the first of three shipments that we need to send to Amazon since they asked us to split our shipment. The air express quote is for \$281.12 from Ningbo to Amazon's Virginia warehouse.

103 Results

Sort by **Recommended** | Cheapest | Quickest

A screenshot of a shipping quote interface. On the left, a dark blue sidebar contains the text "Best Value" in a diagonal banner, the price "\$281.12", "Est. 3 - 5 Days", a green "BOOK" button, and a "Valid until Apr 29, 2017" notice. The main area shows "Seller: Global Forwarding Enterprises LLC" and "Reviews" with five stars. Below this, a lightning bolt icon and the word "Express" are followed by the route "315012 Ningbo, CN > 20190 Reston, VA...". At the bottom right, there are two red circular icons with labels "Customs brokerage" and "Insurance".

One of three 25 lbs. shipments. This goes to the VA warehouses

Below is the 2nd of three shipments. This one is headed to their Dallas warehouse and will cost \$281.12.

87 Results

Sort by **Recommended** | Cheapest | Quickest

A screenshot of a shipping quote interface, similar to the one above. The sidebar on the left shows "Best Value", "\$281.12", "Est. 3 - 5 Days", a green "BOOK" button, and a "Valid until Apr 29, 2017" notice. The main area shows "Seller: Global Forwarding Enterprises LLC" and "Reviews" with five stars. Below this, a lightning bolt icon and the word "Express" are followed by the route "315012 Ningbo, CN > 75201 Dallas, TX, ...". At the bottom right, there are two red circular icons with labels "Customs brokerage" and "Insurance".

Two of three 25 lbs. shipments. This goes to the TX warehouse

Below is the last of the three shipments we had to send out. This one is on its way to Amazon's gorgeous fulfillment center in Hebron, KY and costs a familiar \$281.12.

145 Results

Sort by **Recommended** | Cheapest | Quickest

Best Value

\$281¹²

Est. 3 - 5 Days

BOOK

What charges are included?

Valid until
Apr 29, 2017

Remarks [1]

Seller: Global Forwarding Enterprises LLC

Reviews ★★★★★

Express 315012 Ningbo, CN > 41048 Hebron, KY...

Customs brokerage
Insurance

Last of the three 25 lbs. shipments. This goes to the KY warehouse

Ok, let's look at the comparison between the one 75 lbs. shipment and the three 25 lbs. shipments:

Cost for the one 75 lbs. shipment to Amazon - **\$563.75.**

Cost of the three 25 lbs. shipments to Amazon - **\$843.36**

Cost savings of shipping to just one warehouse - **\$279.61**



As you can see, you would save a significant amount of money by shipping to only one warehouse. And the kicker is Amazon defaults your account to accepting these multiple shipments. You can change this by going into your Seller Central (SC) account, clicking on your **Settings** and then clicking **Fulfillment by Amazon** as shown below.

Fulfillment by Amazon Settings

Optional Services		Edit
MWS Label Service:	Enabled	
Learn more		
Web Services - Default Labeling Preference:	I will label my Items	
Default - Who Preps?:	Merchant	
Learn more		
Default - Who Labels?:	Merchant	
Learn more		
Inbound Settings		Edit
Inventory Placement Option:	Distributed Inventory Placement (default setting)	
Learn more		
Show Restricted Items Warning:	Enabled	
Learn more		
Show Listing Approval Warnings:	Enabled	
Learn more		
2D Barcodes for Box Content Information:	Disabled	
Learn more		
Repackaging Settings		Edit

Click the Edit button to make the change.

Here you want to look in the **Inbound Settings** block and change the **Inventory Placement Option** as shown below.

Inbound Settings

Inventory Placement Option:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Distributed Inventory Placement (default setting) Amazon will determine the distribution of your inventory among one or more fulfillment centers during the shipment creation process. This may include multiple shipments for individual seller SKUs. Learn more
	<input type="radio"/> Inventory Placement Service All quantities of a single seller SKU will be assigned to a single fulfillment center determined by Amazon during the shipment creation process. A per-unit service fee applies. Learn more By selecting this option, you acknowledge that your use of this service is subject to the Inventory Placement Service Terms and Conditions .
Show Restricted Items Warning:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Enable <input type="radio"/> Disable
Show Listing Approval Warnings:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Enable <input type="radio"/> Disable
2D Barcodes for Box Content Information:	<input type="radio"/> Enable

[Cancel](#) [Update](#)

Choose Inventory Placement Service

Now you have officially chosen to sign up for the Inventory Placement Service and send all your inventory to a **single** fulfillment center. When the shipment arrives at the fulfillment center, it is then split up by Amazon employees and sent to different fulfillment centers for you. A per-item service fee applies for this service which we will cover soon.

Be advised: Effective July 19, 2017, Amazon will **increase** how often you are asked to send items to multiple destinations when creating your shipping plan. For each shipping plan, you may choose to follow Amazon's guidance or use the Inventory Placement Service, which gives you the option to ship to fewer destinations. A per-

item service fee applies when you use the Inventory Placement Service. The fee depends upon the number of destinations you choose.

This announcement from Amazon shouldn't come as a shock. They regularly adjust their fees for just about every service they provide sellers. If you're wondering what the new fee structure looks like, I've posted it below. You'll notice that the fees will depend on how many locations Amazon **was** going to assign your shipment. And then how many locations you choose to ship to.

Confusing, I know. But in comparison to the current fee structure, this new policy will actually provide you a price break in certain circumstances. Still, it doesn't make up for the fact that Amazon will be asking sellers to split their shipments more often than they previously did.

Here's an example: If you create your shipment in SC and find out that Amazon wants you to send your shipment to 3 different warehouses, your fee to reduce that number will depend on if you choose to reduce that number to two, or have it sent to just one warehouse.

Take a look:

Inventory Placement Service fees (standard-size)			
Prior to July 19, 2017			
\$0.30 + \$0.10/lb. above the first 2 lb.			
Effective July 19, 2017			
Amazon-recommended shipment destinations	Selected shipment destinations (per-item fee)		
	Three	Two	One
Three	Free	\$0.10 + \$0.10/lb. above the first 2 lb.	\$0.30 + \$0.10/lb. above the first 2 lb.
Two	Free		\$0.20 + \$0.10/lb. above the first 2 lb.
One	Free		

Looking at the image above, the first column titled **Amazon-recommended shipment destinations**, has the words: **Three**, **Two** and **One**. This is how many different locations Amazon recommends for your shipment. The next column heading, **Selected shipment destinations** (per-item fee), is sub-divided into 3 columns, one for each number of locations to which YOU chose to send your

shipment.

So, let's say Amazon recommends to ship your order to TX, KY, and VA. That's 3 locations. But instead, you choose to send it to just the TX location. So, per the chart, you will pay a per-item fee of 30 cents + 10 cents per pound above the first 2 pounds. If you had chosen instead to send it to two locations, say TX and KY, then you would get a price break: 10 cents per item plus 10 cents per pound above the first 2 pounds. Clear as mud? Great!

The point of this section is to show you that unexpected things can, and do, pop up that you may not have factored into your product's landed cost calculations. That, and to alert you that soon Amazon will be asking sellers to split their shipments more often.



Finally! The Various Methods of Shipping Your Products to Amazon's Fulfillment Centers

You can send your goods to an Amazon fulfillment center using any of the 4 ways I described at the start of this guide. As a refresher, they are:

1. Have your supplier ship it direct to Amazon
2. Have a Freight Forwarder ship it Amazon
3. Have an alternate 3rd party ship it Amazon
4. You can have the supplier ship it to YOU

We will cover each method in detail as well as list the Pro's and Con's.

Shipping to Amazon Direct from Your Supplier in Asia

This is a popular method for newer sellers, as it's the easiest and sometimes doesn't require coordination with additional vendors. Many factories have a

preferred freight forwarder and they are usually happy to let you use them. They're happy because now they get to upcharge you for shipping!

After being in China for a decade, I've seen more disasters and horror stories come about as a result of allowing your supplier to ship direct to Amazon. Almost all experienced sellers, and certainly all legitimate businesses will opt to contract with their own freight forwarder, rather than have the supplier ship direct.

Here are a few reasons why having your supplier ship your products directly to Amazon's warehouse can be a bad idea:

- Many sellers who ship direct from their supplier to Amazon neglect to have a Quality Control (QC) Inspection performed on their goods. Why? Because their supplier told them they would do a great job with their in-house inspection. This is where it almost always goes off the rails. Do you honestly think that the supplier, who has a vested interest in completing the sale of all the products they just manufactured will tell you if the products are of poor quality? Or weren't made to spec? Or had inferior components swapped in **after** a better-quality sample was approved by you? NO! You'll hear about it from your customers when they start writing scathing 1 star reviews and destroy your business before it even starts. Therefore, if for some odd reason you decide to ship direct from your supplier, you **MUST** hire a 3rd part QC Inspection company.



Hire a 3rd Party Inspection Service

- There are multiple types of QC inspections that you can order. We recommend a During Production (DUPRO) inspection for any supplier you're using for the first time. Then follow that up with one of the available post-production QC inspections. You can learn more about the [various types of QC inspections in a previous post we authored here.](#)
- Even if you provide your supplier with a thorough QC checklist, which is always a good idea anyway, you shouldn't trust the supplier to make unbiased assessments of the quality of your products. Here at

Guided Imports we've arranged over a thousand QC inspections and I'm still surprised at how routinely Chinese suppliers will make easy mistakes. If you take one thing away from this entire guide, it should be to always, always, always enlist the services of a 3rd part QC inspection company.

Another negative aspect of having your supplier ship your products directly to Amazon is a big one, and it's getting more common every day.

- Once you have your supplier label, prep, and barcode your products, and then you email him the Amazon carton labels, **they now know your exact supply chain, sales platform, and product packaging.**

Previously, this wasn't an issue, but in 2016 Amazon started to allow Chinese suppliers to sell direct via their FBA platform. Not only that, Amazon just held a HUGE conference in China teaching them how to effectively do exactly this. They had about 1,800 suppliers show up. [pause for dramatic effect] See where I'm going with this?

The last thing you want to do is give your supplier a roadmap for success with your product, because the chances are better than average that they will start selling your product with a different logo and undercut you in a way that makes it very hard to compete. Your sales will suffer and you'll either need to significantly ramp up your marketing and listing optimization efforts, or lower the price to stay competitive. When this happens, and your supplier sells the same item against you, it becomes a race to the bottom. And that is a race the factory will ALWAYS win.



Another critical thing to keep in mind when having your supplier ship direct to Amazon is logistics. Since you're not using a 3rd party freight company, you need

to ensure that all logistics and customs paperwork is in order.

Here are a few things you'll want to keep top of mind:

You must be listed as the **Importer of Record (IOR)**. Amazon will not act as your IOR and will likely refuse delivery altogether. Being listed as IOR means you're responsible for ensuring the imported goods comply with all Federal and local laws and regulations

When importing into the U.S. you must arrange for all freight, customs clearance, and duties paid up to Amazon's receipt of your packages and ensure you fill out and file a completed duty entry and associated documents. You must also pay the assessed import duties and other taxes on those goods.

Amazon **will not** be responsible for or collect any duties, taxes or shipping costs associated with FBA inventory. All shipments are required to use Delivered Duty Paid (DDP), or sometimes referred to as "Free Domicile." **TIP:** Be sure your shipping terms to the Amazon fulfillment center are marked as DDP. You can still buy the product FOB or EXW from your supplier and ship from China, just ensure they're delivered to Amazon as DDP. If your goods show up to Amazon with any shipping charges or taxes/duties unpaid, even \$1, they will be refused entry and you will be up a creek without a paddle.

However, an Amazon fulfillment center may be listed as the "deliver to" party on your shipping documentation as long as you are listed as the IOR. Here are some examples of how this should appear on the shipping documentation:

Example 1:	Amazon.com.kydc [Seller Legal Name] c/o FBA 1850 Mercer Drive Lexington, KY 40511 USA
Example 2:	Amazon.com.dedc [Seller Legal Name] c/o FBA 500 McCarthy Lewisberry, PA 17339 USA

While Amazon will not act as the IOR, they may be listed as the Ultimate Consignee on your shipping documentation only if the name of the Amazon entity is followed by **“in care of FBA.”**

If you list Amazon as the Ultimate Consignee, your customs broker must contact Amazon at sellerimports@amazon.com **in advance of shipping any inventory** to obtain the EIN or Tax ID # required for customs clearance.

To schedule a delivery appointment, download the [FBA Booking Form](#), fill it out and e-mail it to your carrier. Most of the shipment information is found in the Summary of the shipping workflow. You must also have your carrier create an account and log into our [Carrier Appointment Request Portal](#) and supply them with a copy of the [User Manual for Carriers](#). Amazon’s fulfillment centers will usually respond to your carrier within 24 hours to determine the best delivery time.



Compliance Requirements – A Critical but Overlooked Requirement

Another critical step in the process of importing your goods from Asia into the US/Amazon is making sure your product meets all federal and local regulations and compliance guidelines and safety certifications.

If you miss this step, there’s a good chance your goods will not clear US customs. It is the responsibility of the seller to research all rules, regulations, and compliance requirements prior to shipping their goods. In fact, you’ll want to get into the habit of having this step completed before you even start the manufacturing process.

This is an area where many sellers struggle for several reasons. First, they erroneously assume the supplier will be familiar with any regulations and

compliance protocols regarding their products. I would advise against this. Strongly. Suppliers are likely producing goods for dozens of countries and can't be expected to keep current on all the dynamic rules regarding products entering those countries.

If you're dealing with a very specialized factory, for example they manufacture drones, there's a fair chance they may be knowledgeable about its compliance and regulation standards. After all, this is the only product they make and part of their sales pitch is to tout the compliance of said product in your country of import. They likely have all their certifications for the United States, such as GE, FCC, UL, and RoHS. But be sure to ask them if they import to the US before you even consider buying the product. In fact, you should make this one of the first things you ask any supplier when evaluating any product. If they don't currently import a product into the US with some regularity and volume, then you're likely going to run into trouble in the long run due to missing or incorrect compliance certifications or safety protocols.

It is beyond the scope of this guide to delve deeper into this area. Suffice it to say that compliance certifications and all the federal, state, and local regulations are the responsibility of the seller. You need to put in the time to research this step or risk having your goods seized, or worse, slipping them by and getting sued later by a customer who suffered an injury because your product didn't have the proper testing or compliance certification.

We have seen countless sellers neglect this step and run into trouble during customs or after they've already started selling the product. Curiously, the most overlooked certification is that of products that come into contact with water or food. You need to obtain certification from the FDA for virtually all products that contact drinking water or food. And often times that certification is expensive. Over the years, we've seen many sellers fined by multiple agencies for selling cookware, water bottles, and other food-related products that didn't have the required testing or certification.

A few of the more common compliance certifications needed for various products:

- CPSIA – The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act. This is more of a framework for regulations and applies to many products, especially toys.

- FDA – Food and Drug Administration. Extensive regulations with varying degrees of control over any and all products that come in contact with food.
- FFA: The Flammable Fabrics Act (FFA) sets requirements for fabric flammability. The FFA also requires American importers to issue product certificates, along with other documents.
- FCC: The Federal Commission of Communications (FCC) regulates all electronic communication devices sold in the United States. Most FCC regulated products must comply with the applicable labelling requirements.
- UL: UL is a certification company that certifies electrical products per various standards. It is NOT required, but highly recommended.

Regardless of the certification required, be sure to ask your supplier if they have the necessary certifications. As I mentioned before, do not rely on them, but many times they are a good place to start since they will be versed on the more popular certifications.

Word of warning: Chinese suppliers are notorious for fake certifications and test reports. So, when they send pictures, or even show you the documents in person, keep this in mind. The only way to find out if they are authentic is to ask the issuing company (i.e. SGS and TUV) to verify the validity of the product. In some industries, especially consumer electronics, fake product certificates are actually more common than authentic certificates.

When in Doubt, Test the Products

Having your products tested before delivery is a veteran move and likely one of the best investments you can make for your business. There are several companies in China & Hong Kong that can test your products according to a your required standards. Depending on the product and the certification, you can expect to pay between a couple hundred and a few thousand. Again, if this is an important product for your business, it's a good idea to get it lab tested.

I'll wrap this section up with a word of caution: spend some time researching this important requirement before you even start to negotiate with the factory regarding your potential product. It could save your business.



As you can see, there are a lot of steps involved when it comes to actually importing your goods into the United States and arranging delivery to Amazon. That is why having your supplier ship direct to Amazon is risky at best, and disastrous at worst.

The good news is that any legitimate freight forwarder can handle all of this for you. (*Shameless plug incoming*) If you use Guided imports for your sourcing or shipping needs, we also handle all of this for you so you don't have to worry about it. While most freight companies will handle the customs process for you, be sure to ask and check if they require any documents outside of the usual Letter of Authority, or Power of Attorney, as some 3PLs refer to it. You'll need to fill out this authorization form each time you use a new freight forwarder as it authorizes them to act on your behalf and clear the shipment through Customs.

If the shipping service does not provide customs clearance services, then it is up to you to contact a Customs Broker to handle the process. I would recommend avoiding this additional step and finding a freight company that will handle the entire process, from origin to destination, or door-to-door.

After reading that you may be asking yourself, why in the world do sellers choose to have their goods shipped direct from their factory to Amazon? Because on the surface it appears to be the easiest method, especially if the supplier can handle all of the shipping and customs. But in China, as experienced sellers know, just like **higher price = quality** here, the **easier route = more danger**. The other reason that this happens is if the seller is in a critical time crunch and every day counts. If

they absolutely need their product delivered as soon as possible, they will often have the supplier ship it direct. Again, if this is the case it's even more reason to contract with a 3rd party QC company to inspect your products during production (especially if it's your first run) AND before they ship.

Aside from the issue of the supplier potentially stealing your "secrets", and the fact that you need to trust they will correctly handle all the above shipping and receiving requirements from Amazon, there's nothing wrong with shipping direct from your supplier IF you use a 3rd party QC inspection company to ensure your production is up to spec. And IF you're supplier uses a quality freighting partner that is familiar with the plethora of Amazon's receiving eccentricities. But the sellers I'm talking about are the ones that rely on the in-house QC of the supplier and have blind faith that they will confirm the quality of their own products.



We have a group of advisors for Guided Imports that serve as sort of a council, or cabinet, and offer their wisdom and advice. This wisdom is based off their combined industry experience of over 70 years between the three of them. One was a former Director of Global Sourcing for Amazon and worked directly with Jeff Bezos, the other 2 are C level executives in multinational import/export companies. You would be absolutely astounded at the similarities we all have with our "bad" experiences. China is the "Wild West" of manufacturing. The laws in the USA and the rest of the Western world rarely apply here. The culture here in China is an integral part of business. And all of us have had nightmare scenarios happen to us, and to people we know, friends, clients, etc. I can tell you unequivocally, that if you do business in China long enough, you will join the "nightmare" club. It's just a part of doing business here. But you can minimize, or at the very least, delay your chances of joining this club if you listen to the advice of those who have done this before.

I can think of at least a dozen examples in the past 6 months of people who used this method (direct from supplier to Amazon with no 3rd part QC) that ended up calling us in panic mode, begging us to help them, or give them a name of

somebody that could help them out of the situation in which they put themselves. Everything from incorrect labels and packaging mix ups to the supplier swapping in low quality components and rusted products; we've seen just about everything. And they all have one thing in common: the client didn't listen to the expert in the room.

One mistake in production can mean the difference between a very profitable quarter and bankruptcy. One day I'll write a book detailing all the unbelievable, outlandish, and crazy things I've seen here in China, but for now just trust the experts whose business it is to help customers succeed in China. **/end rant.**



Shipping Your Products from Your Supplier to Your House Then to Amazon

This method is far more secure and makes much more sense than shipping direct from your supplier to Amazon. This way you get to personally inspect and label all your products and thus keep your information away from the prying eyes of your supplier. The chance that they will end up selling against you on Amazon is highly unlikely.

Remember, Chinese factories are great at manufacturing, but more clueless than you can imagine regarding ecommerce. They've had the ability to sell online for as long as Amazon, Shopify, and the rest of them have existed. The main reason they didn't is because they didn't know how. Combine that with the fact that it would require adding an entirely new department, or at a minimum more people, to handle the sales and marketing side and they were very content to be the manufacturer of goods and not the seller.

That has changed.

In fact, there are no less than 5 companies whose entire business model is approaching Chinese factories and offering to set up an Amazon/Shopify sales

operation and manage it for them. So you can bet your bottom dollar that a significant number of suppliers are already selling online, and that number is steadily growing every single day.

So, having your products shipped from the supplier to your house adds a level of privacy to your supply chain. The downside of doing this is obvious: it increases your costs and delays the products from getting to Amazon by at least a few days, and usually longer.

The added costs are due to having to pay for an additional step in the shipping process. Once you have your goods and prep, bundle, label, inspect, and whatever else you want to do to them, you still need to arrange shipping to Amazon's warehouses. And here again, you'll want to pay close attention to Amazon's requirements for receiving your goods. The good news is that you've already cleared customs, so now it's just a matter of finding a carrier that is familiar with Amazon's mildly complex receiving process. For your convenience and reference, here are the specific requirements for having a freight carrier deliver your goods to Amazon:

When you select a carrier, you are responsible for making sure they comply with the requirements below. The failure of a carrier to comply with these terms may cause the delivery to be refused. Amazon recommends that you familiarize yourself with these requirements. (Or you can just use one of their preferred partner carriers and be done with it). But it's still valuable information to know in case you get a call about any missing paperwork, reference IDs, or tracking numbers.



Amazon Carrier Requirements When Delivering Your Goods

- The carrier must have a complete list of Amazon Reference IDs, Shipment IDs, and tracking (PRO) numbers included on or with the Bill of Lading (BOL); Amazon will require this information when scheduling a dock appointment. Amazon Reference IDs and Shipment IDs are found in the Summary of the shipping workflow in SC. PRO numbers are obtained from your carrier.
- The carrier must communicate box and pallet counts **before** an appointment will be scheduled. The fulfillment center may request Unit counts if they are provided to the carrier. Floor-loaded trailers should be indicated on the carrier freight bill and when requesting an appointment.
- Upon arriving at the fulfillment center, the carrier must provide a physical BOL document that meets Amazon requirements. Alternately, the carrier may use an electronic BOL document, if the carrier provides a soft copy to the fulfillment center prior to the scheduled arrival.

Scheduling advanced delivery appointments

The carrier you select to deliver your shipment will need to schedule an advanced delivery appointment. Please ensure that both you and your carrier complete any required steps prior to requesting a delivery appointment.

- Amazon does not allow deliveries from the general public - only professional carriers are allowed to make delivery appointments to Amazon fulfillment centers.
- All carriers must register with Amazon before appointments will be granted.
- No shipments will be accepted at an Amazon fulfillment center without a scheduled appointment. If the scheduled appointment is missed by 30 minutes or more, the freight will be refused at no cost to Amazon. A new appointment

request will need to be submitted and approved by the carrier for attempted re-delivery.

- Carriers are required to schedule a delivery appointment no less than 24 hours ahead for all inbound deliveries.
- A standing appointment may be requested for regularly scheduled appointments, but Amazon Reference IDs and Shipment IDs notification are still required 24 hours in advance of the appointment.
- If a shipment is delayed due to unforeseen weather conditions, the carrier must notify Amazon. Appropriate schedule changes will be made based on availability.

To schedule a delivery appointment, follow these steps:

1. Download and complete the FBA Booking Form. Most of the shipment information is found in the Summary page of the shipping workflow.
2. E-mail the form to your carrier along with a link to the User Manual for Carriers.
3. Have your carrier create an account (if they don't already have one) and log into the Carrier Appointment Request Portal to request an appointment.

Amazon will respond to your carrier's request within 24 hours, at which time they will schedule a delivery appointment date and time based on availability.

Important: When scheduling appointments, carriers need to **explicitly mention the shipments are for Fulfillment by Amazon and provide the FBA Shipment ID** (found in the Summary page of the shipping workflow); this will help expedite appointment scheduling and help ensure accurate receipt of your inventory.



Shipping Your Products from Your Supplier Via a 3PL

One of the two most common methods for getting your products from your supplier to Amazon's fulfillment centers is by using a 3rd party logistics (3PL)

service, or freight forwarder.

There are three potential drawbacks to this method: cost, possible time delays, and suppliers still being able to steal your product's supply chain and packaging.

You'll be paying the 3PL to not only pick up, ship, and deliver your goods, but they can also handle the entire Customs process for you too. This way you don't have to hire a customs broker and bring yet another cook into the kitchen. The other downside is the potential for delays when using a new 3PL. They may not be familiar with the specific process involved in successfully delivering your goods to Amazon's warehouse. In this case, you can use the section of this guide as a reference and get them up to speed quickly.

The 3rd, and likely most significant drawback to using a 3PL is that your goods still will need to be packaged, labeled, and prepped for delivery to Amazon. As mentioned before, this is like handing your supplier the keys to your business and inviting them in. This never used to be a threat until very recently. But now that the flood gates are open, it's probably a safe bet to assume that most Chinese suppliers have a desire to get into selling on Amazon and will be looking for any advantage they can get to help them achieve this goal.

There was a reason that they didn't sell online before, and we briefly covered it: they didn't know how. In general, the manufacturing community over here is very naïve when it comes to product marketing and ecommerce. Yes, there was still the odd entrepreneurial factory owner that had an American connection selling all his factory's products for him through a shell Amazon account, but it was not very common at all.

It wouldn't surprise me if most factories in China are currently selling online, or will be by the end of 2017. Amazon is doing their best to speed this up by conducting instructional seminars throughout Mainland China aimed at educating supplier how to go about selling on FBA.

That covers the negatives, which admittedly are negligible, aside from the supplier taking your product sales from you.

The main reason that this method is popular is because it's been around for literally hundreds of years and businesses are familiar with the concept of shipping companies. There is also the advantage of ease of consolidation. Since most 3PLs will work with you to set up door-to-door delivery, from your factory's

loading dock, to the dock of the Amazon warehouse, they can also handle the Customs clearance process.

There are several acceptable freight forwarders from which to choose. Notice I didn't say great, or fantastic. While I mentioned that the shipping industry is one of the oldest industries in the world, the sad fact is that it hasn't kept up with technology. The majority of freight forwarders run on antiquated systems and more than you would believe still use paper. Because of this, trying to get an accurate quote from a shipping company can be one of the more frustrating tasks you'll likely ever do. But there is good news.

Very recently, as in the past 12 months, some of the companies in the freight industry have broken through the technology barrier in an effort to modernize the process. A few of them have made great strides to become almost completely cloud-based. This means you get real-time tracking of your vessel, updated timelines, live-chat with company employees, and best of all you know exactly when your shipment is due to arrive at its destination.

Granted, the number of companies starting this revolution can be counted on one hand. Nevertheless, there is real hope that some of the others will follow. It will almost certainly be the USA-based freight companies, as many of the Chinese shipping services are stuck in the stone-age and show no signs of even wanting to change.

When you [book shipping via our website](#), we get you quotes from freight forwarders who are familiar with Amazon as well as some of the new, innovative companies I mentioned previously. Typically, you can expect to pay a bit more for the companies that are pushing the tech envelope, but for many sellers, the added convenience of real-time tracking and updated progress is worth the added cost.



Shipping Your Products from Your Supplier Via a 3rd Party Supply Chain Management (SCM) Company

The final method for shipping your goods from China to Amazon is via a SCM. The difference between a 3PL and a SCM is that the SCM typically offers additional services that work in tandem to alleviate your workload in some way.

First, we'll list the potential negative aspects of using a SCM:

1. **Potential time delays** - The time delay comes in when you think about adding the additional stop to the shipping route. No longer is it going from point **A** to point **B**. It's going from point **A**, with a quick detour to point **B**, then on to the final destination, which in this case is point **C**.
2. **Higher initial costs** - Depending how you utilize them, the costs of the SCM company may be higher than those of a 3PL because typically they're going to do more than just ship your product. They may be able to bundle, prep for FBA, do QC inspections, repackage, product photography, backup supplier sourcing, etc. Obviously, if you choose not to use any of the additional services offered, then your cost will be about the same as a 3rd Party Logistics service.

The advantages of using a SCM can be best be described in one word: **consolidation**.

Since most SCM companies offer additional services that you'll require anyway, it makes sense to utilize them to help simplify your supply chain and have just one company conducting the entire process. This makes it far easier to track your product throughout not only the logistics and shipping phase, but also the entire sourcing and production phase, should you choose to utilize the additional services of a SCM.

This is the category in which Guided Imports leads. By offering a proven and comprehensive one-stop solution for ecommerce sellers who import from China, we can effectively offer them a single point of contact for their entire China-side operation.

Here is a list of the various services we offer (most of which are included in our A-Z package):

- Product sourcing & procurement
- Product validation & cost analysis
- Supplier negotiation
- Supplier relationship management
- Private label manufacturing expertise
- Comprehensive production reporting and updates
- Customer care team
- Production manuals and purchase agreements
- Quality control inspections at all phases
- Product sample consolidation and rating
- Product Photography
- Product Bundling, Labeling, Kitting
- Packaging
- Amazon FBA specific requirements
- Complete logistics, customs, and shipping services

By offering a true all-inclusive solution, we are able to virtually remove China from our client's "to-do" list which allows them to focus on growing their scaling and building their brand.

This also has the advantage of offering clients a single point of contact for their entire production and supply chain services, whereby streamlining their operations and bringing all associated data, timelines, and metrics together in one, easy to read report.

More than One Choice

While our customers tell us that using Guided Imports has been a smart business decision for them, we realize that there are other choices in this space. There are

a few quality SCM companies out there to work with, but potential customers should pay close attention to the details when choosing a partner with whom to trust their China-side business operations.



Here's a checklist of important factors to consider when choosing an SCM:

- ✓ **Are they U.S.-owned?** This is extremely important since the entire business culture, quality perceptions, and customs of a Chinese company vary greatly compared to those of a U.S. company.
- ✓ **Are there actual U.S. employees IN China?** Many U.S.-owned sourcing or SCM companies operate by proxy from their office in the states. They typically outsource their China operations to a local Chinese company, effectively negating the advantage of being U.S.-owned entirely. If they DO have an office in China, chances are it is not staffed by Americans or Europeans.
 - Again, this is important because when dealing with China, you need someone with boots on the ground who has your back and understands that the typical U.S. consumer expects a very high level of quality from their products.
 - **Do the American employees in the China office speak Mandarin?** It is essential that supplier communication be carried out in Mandarin (or Cantonese). There are too many minute details that can be lost in translation if you try and communicate in English. A proven and experienced sourcing or SCM company will have their U.S. employees in their China office fluent in Mandarin for exactly this purpose.
- ✓ **Do they even have a China office?** Many sourcing or SCM companies advertise that they have a China office, but 9 times out of 10, it is a part time rental, or shared space. This technique is used to register a company in China so they can advertise they have an office.
 - Check them out! Ask to visit their office or for pictures of their office. You should see their logos, their staff that are pictured on the site, and an organized workspace if they are truly a legitimate office.
- ✓ **Do they sell on Amazon?** You'd be surprised at just how many sourcing

agents and companies ask for your business but are also selling their own products on Amazon!

- Guided Imports respects our client's products and intellectual property, and we prohibit ALL employees from selling any products on any of the online sales channels. And we actively audit this as well. We are well aware how protective sellers are of their products, and we want to offer the most secure and confidential solution possible.
- ✓ **Do they charge a commission?** SCM companies that charge a commission may not always have your best interest at heart. They get paid more money the more money you spend. So, they may push you to order more products, or utilize more services that otherwise might not be necessary.
 - It may make more sense to find a company that charges a flat fee, or at least is transparent with their bundled fees.
- ✓ **Do they have a "backroom" deal with a supplier?** This may be difficult to prove, but there are techniques you can utilize to detect whether the sourcing or SCM company has a side deal with a factory. This is very common with Chinese sourcing companies, as it's viewed as standard operating procedure. Basically, the sourcing company will have a deal with a few suppliers that will award them more money if they push their new clients to use those select suppliers.
 - They're probably getting an additional % of your order or some other bonus payment to incentivize them to send their customers to that supplier.
 - After 5+ years of living and doing business here in China, we've made it very clear to suppliers that we operate on 100% transparent basis and any kickbacks of any kind are not permitted with Guided Imports. This ensures we chose the supplier based on merit and quality, not money.
- ✓ **Do they have any legitimate business partnerships or industry recommendations?** An established, proven sourcing and SCM company will usually have multiple affiliations, partnerships, or recommendations from industry experts or other proven services.
- ✓ **Do they have experience?** There are new sourcing and SCM companies popping up every day! Due to Amazon FBA's popularity, many successful sellers are trying to get onto the sourcing and importing side of things.
 - This is usually a BAD idea since they have no working knowledge of

living and working in China. This is critical! Chinese culture, especially the cultural concepts of guānxi, trust, “face”, and other crucial business concepts are absolutely KEY to getting the most out of supplier relationships.

- After 5+ years of living here, I’m still learning about the nuances of these concepts. But I can tell you unequivocally that without expertise in this area, you will not reap the rewards from your supplier, that otherwise would have been freely offered if the required level of guānxi was attained.
- Relationships are MUCH more important in China than in the USA, and only those companies that operate in China and put in the time to cultivate and grow supplier relationships will be successful.
- I’ve seen well over a dozen U.S. sourcing companies start up and shut down within months because they simply didn’t understand the importance of Chinese business culture and how it integrates into daily supplier interactions.

General FAQ’s About Shipping

What are incoterms?

Incoterms are terms of sale that define who arranges for the payment and handling of the goods during shipping. They also provide instructions to transportation carriers, forwarders, customs brokers, and other service providers involved in shipping your merchandise.

Incoterms define the point to which the seller must deliver the goods for the buyer; depending on the incoterm, this could be at the seller’s door, the port in the country of origin, the destination port, or at the buyer’s door.

Here's a chart summarizing each of the current incoterms. We recommend Amazon sellers stick with either **EXW** or **FOB**. Keep reading to find out why.

DESCRIPTION	COSTS				RISK		INSURANCE		FREIGHT/RISK	MORE DETAILS
	All modes of transport				Sea and inland waterways					
EXW Ex Works	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: Seller's premises. Risk: Seller's premises.	Seller is only responsible for making the goods available at the seller's premises. The buyer bears the full risk from there to the destination.
FCA Free Carrier	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: Freight handler. Risk: Freight handler.	Seller is responsible for delivery to the custody of the carrier, which is provided by the buyer. Risk is transferred as soon as loading has taken place.
CPT Carriage Paid to	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: Destination. Risk: From freight handler.	Seller delivers the goods to the carrier at an agreed place of delivery and pays for transport to the named destination. Risk is transferred at the place of delivery, whereas seller pays for transport to the destination.
CIP Carriage and Insurance Paid to	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: Destination. Risk: From freight handler.	Seller delivers the goods to the carrier at an agreed place of delivery and pays for transport and insurance to the named destination. Risk is transferred at the place of delivery, whereas seller pays for transport and insurance to the destination.
DAT Delivered at Terminal	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: Destination. Risk: Destination.	Seller delivers the goods unloaded at a specified place (inside the agreed terminal). Risk is transferred as soon as the goods have been unloaded.
DAP Delivered at Place	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: Place of destination. Risk: At the time of transport at destination.	Seller delivers the goods to the disposal of the buyer at the arriving means of transport at the agreed place. Seller assumes the risk until the goods are made ready for unloading from the arriving means of transport.
DDP Delivered Duty Paid	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: Destination. Risk: Destination.	Seller is responsible for bringing the goods to the destination, paying any duty and making the goods available to the buyer. Risk is transferred as soon as the buyer has access to the goods ready for unloading at the agreed destination.
FAS Free Alongside Ship	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: Shipside in part of export only. Risk: Shipside in part of import only.	Seller is responsible for delivery of the goods at the quay alongside the ship, from the point onwards, but not onto the buyer.
FOB Free on Board	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: On board ship. Risk: On board ship.	Seller is responsible for delivery of the goods loaded on board the ship. Risk is transferred as soon as the goods have been set down inside the ship.
CFR Cost and Freight	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: Port of destination. Risk: On board ship.	Seller covers cost of freight, duty unpaid, to the named port of destination. Risk is transferred as soon as the goods have been set down inside the ship.
CIF Cost, Insurance and Freight	[Seller]				[Buyer]		[Buyer]		Freight: Port of destination. Risk: Port of destination.	Seller covers cost of insurance and freight, duty unpaid, to the named port of destination. Risk is transferred as soon as the goods have been set down inside the ship.

Which of the incoterms should I choose and why?

We recommend Amazon sellers choose either **EXW** or **FOB**.

For EXW, the supplier fulfills his obligations by having the goods available for you to pick up at his premises or another named place (i.e. factory, warehouse, etc.). Buyer (you) bears all risk and costs starting when he picks up the products at the seller's location until the products are delivered to his location. Seller has no obligation to load the goods or clear them for export.

For FOB, the supplier clears the goods for export and delivers them when they are onboard the vessel at the named port of shipment (ex: FOB Ningbo). Buyer (you) assumes all risks/cost for goods from this moment forward.

My supplier is asking me for “shipping marks”. What are these and how do I get them?

Shipping marks are printed on the outside of the cartons (boxes) that contain your products. They indicate what is inside as well as a few other pieces of information. Shipping marks will usually be printed on both the long side and short side of the carton and contain:

Long side of carton

- ✓ Your company name and Logo (logo may be omitted)
- ✓ Product Order Number
- ✓ SKU Number
- ✓ Country of Destination

Short side of carton

- ✓ Net weight and gross weight of carton
- ✓ Dimensions of carton
- ✓ Carton number (ex: 1 of 100)
- ✓ *OPTIONAL*: You can also include any information that would be helpful (fragile, this side up, color, size, model, etc)
- ✓ *OPTIONAL*: You can also include a Barcode that contains all of the above info if you want to make it easier

Where can I find compliance requirements (FDA Certification, Duties, etc.) and other information on regulations for the product I’m importing?

You can start looking for this information online by conducting various searches. You can then also talk to your supplier. If they export mainly to the U.S., it’s likely they will have an idea of what requirements are needed. But remember: NEVER rely solely on the information from your supplier when it comes to verifying these requirements! Always double-check with a customs broker.

When it comes to government regulations, most customs brokers are able to point you in the right direction, but you should reach out to the agency directly to

make sure you know exactly what is required.



Final Thoughts

Hopefully this guide provides helpful information regarding the four main ways to get your products from your factory in Asia, to the Amazon warehouses. As with anything that involves Amazon, you can expect this information to change based on Amazon's propensity for terms of service and fee revisions.