



Documents in Shipping:

A Step-By-Step Guide to Filing Export/Import Paperwork



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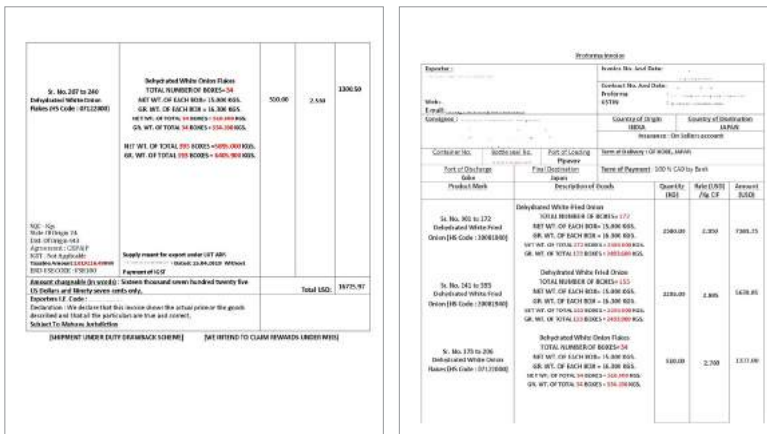
Documents are a necessary evil in international trade and the shipping process. For exporters and importers, a trade transaction means having to deal with piles of paperwork. For clarity on the paperwork process, Cogoport has prepared a detailed guide to documents in the shipping process with sample images. While it does not cover every document that might be required – as the selection would vary from case to case – it is a comprehensive list of the key documents you will come across at every stage of the shipping process.

PRE BOOKING PHASE

1

PROFORMA INVOICE

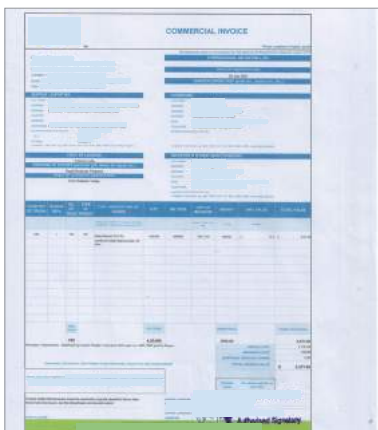
A preliminary bill of sale issued by the exporter to the importer before the goods are shipped or delivered. It contains a description of the goods, their price and weight, among other details.



2

COMMERCIAL INVOICE

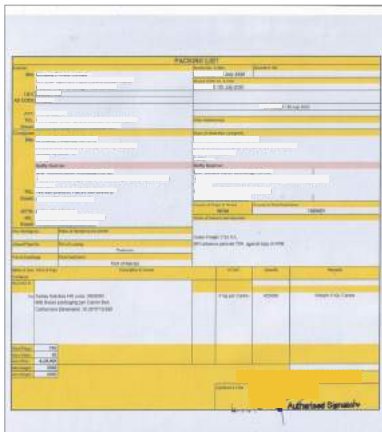
This is a contract of sale issued by the exporter to the importer that contains both their names and addresses, the value and quantity of goods, and accompanying documents. It helps determine transportation tariffs and customs duties. In an international transaction, the commercial invoice is the basis for all other documents.



3

PACKING LIST

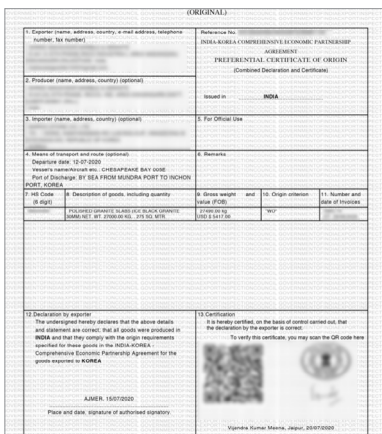
An itemised list of the shipment's contents, it facilitates cargo examination during clearance. It is prepared by the exporter and submitted to the customs house agent.



4

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGIN

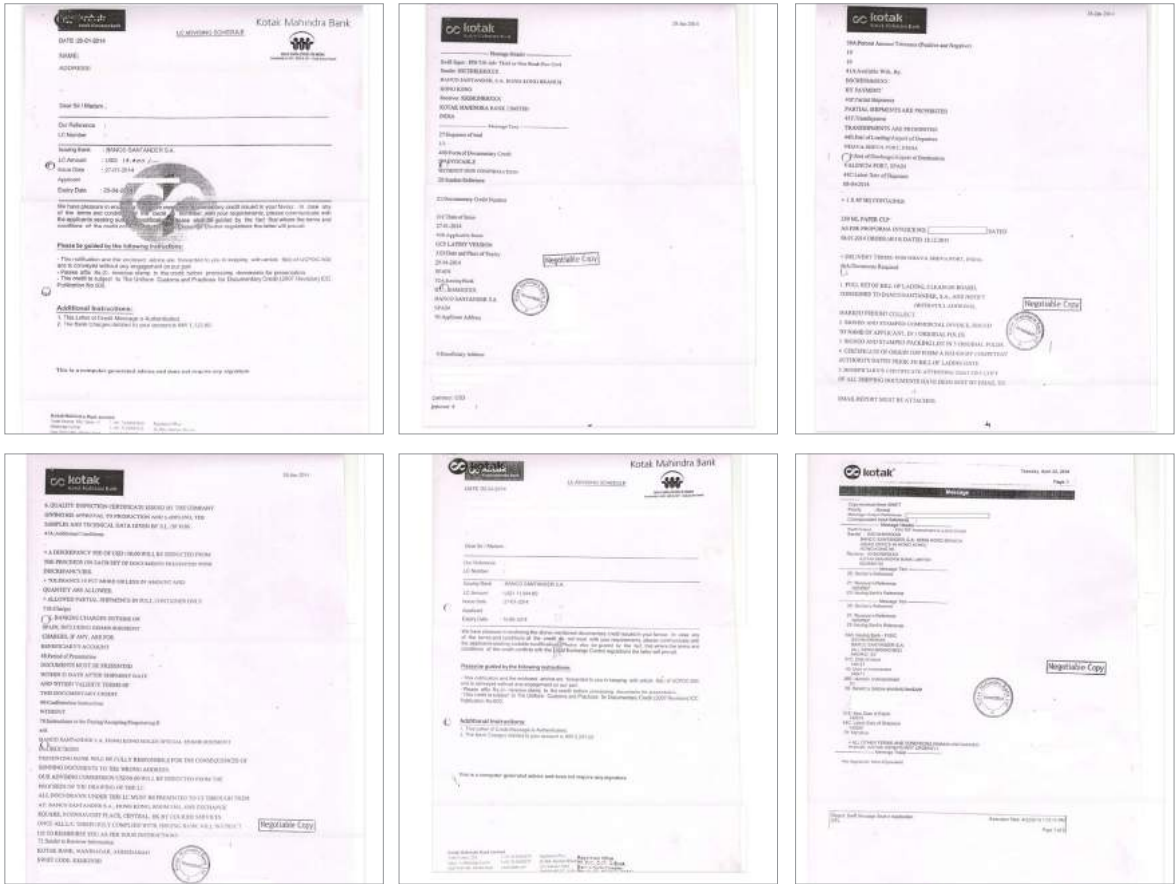
It confirms the country of origin of a shipment and is used in transactions between members of a trading bloc or where special privileges are granted to goods produced in certain countries. Also called a declaration of origin, it is issued by a chamber of commerce of the exporting country, a trade promotion office or an exporter approved for self-certification.



5

LETTER OF CREDIT

This document is issued by the importer's bank to the exporter/exporter's bank. It serves as a promise, on behalf of the importer, to pay the exporter an agreed upon sum.

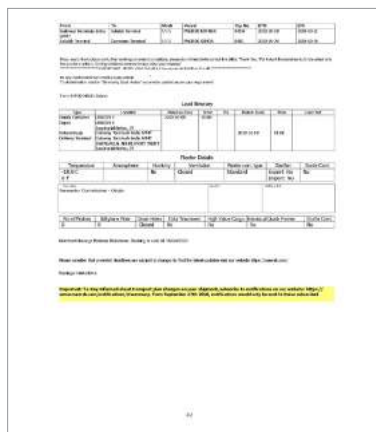


BOOKING PHASE

1

BOOKING NOTE

A contract for reservation of space on a carrier between the exporter and shipping line, it has the name and address of the booking party, carrier details, pick-up date, container yard from where empty containers would be picked up, load and discharge ports, and rates. It is submitted by the exporter to the carrier.





VESSEL DETAILS				
Factory Shiftd	Sample Acc. Vessel Name & Date	Voyage No.	Factory Address	
N	N			
PACKING DETAILS				
Package From	Package To	Package Kind	From Desc	To Desc
1	18	PLT		

I/We declare that the particulars given herein are true and are correct. This declaration is made by provision of Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, as amended from time to time including restoration / reparation of foreign exchange to / from India.

CHA: Agent: 022110
 CHA AGENCY: Signature
 Signature: Signature

2

SHIPPING BILL

An application filed by the exporter seeking customs clearance after the ship has been granted "entry-outwards" or permission to move out of the country. Post-submission, the shipping bill (also called a bill of export) is verified and the value of goods assessed by customs.

INDIAN CUSTOMS ED SYSTEM
 PART - I: SHIPPING BILL SUMMARY

Includes fields for: Exporter, Consignor, Consignee, Commodity Code, Description of Goods, and Value.

INDIAN CUSTOMS ED SYSTEM
 PART - II: VESSEL DETAILS

Includes fields for: Vessel Name, Voyage No., Port of Origin, and Port of Destination.

INDIAN CUSTOMS ED SYSTEM
 PART - III: ITEM DETAILS

Includes a table for item description, quantity, and value.

INDIAN CUSTOMS ED SYSTEM
 PART - IV: EXPORT DECLARATION

Includes fields for: Declaration of Origin, Duty Paid, and other export-related details.

INDIAN CUSTOMS ED SYSTEM
 PART - V: DECLARATION

Includes a large area for the exporter's declaration and signature.

3

VGM DECLARATION

A declaration by the exporter of the shipment's verified gross mass (VGM), which is the weight of the empty container (tare weight) plus cargo weight, including packaging and dunnage. Without the VGM declaration, which is submitted to carrier and port authorities, the container cannot be loaded on the ship.

4

GATE PASS

A gate-in permit without which export containers transported by road cannot enter port terminals. A gate pass is issued by port terminals and includes details such as vehicle number, shipping line, vessel name, container number, seal number and ISO code. (Sample image is of Form 13, which is what a gate pass is called at the Nhava Sheva port in Maharashtra.)

5

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS

The exporter's instructions to the shipping line or freight forwarder on the processing and invoicing of their shipment. The information in the Shipping Instructions is fed into the bill of lading to be consequently released by the carrier.

The form is titled "Shipping Instructions" and is for export trade under Incoterms. It includes fields for:

- SHIPPER: Name, Address, City, Country, Telephone, Fax, Email, Website, and a checkbox for "SHIPPER'S RESPONSIBILITY CONSIGNMENT".
- CONSIGNEE: Name, Address, City, Country, Telephone, Fax, Email, Website.
- COMMODITY: Description, Quantity, Unit, and a checkbox for "SHIPPED BY WEIGHT".
- PACKING: Description, Quantity, Unit, and a checkbox for "SHIPPED BY WEIGHT".
- SHIPMENT: Description, Quantity, Unit, and a checkbox for "SHIPPED BY WEIGHT".
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6

MARINE INSURANCE

A document issued by an insurance company certifying that the shipment is insured. It includes an abstract of the insurance contract's most important provisions

The form is titled "Marine Insurance" and includes fields for:

- Policy No. and Description.
- Insured's Name and Address.
- Policy Period and Dates.
- Amount of Insurance.
- Insured's Name and Address.
- Policy Period and Dates.
- Amount of Insurance.
- Insured's Name and Address.
- Policy Period and Dates.
- Amount of Insurance.

The form is titled "Marine Insurance" and includes fields for:

- Coverages: Fire, Theft, Pilferage, Breakage, etc.
- Amounts: Total Sum Insured, etc.
- Conditions: Standard Marine Conditions, etc.
- Insured's Name and Address.
- Policy Period and Dates.
- Amount of Insurance.

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7

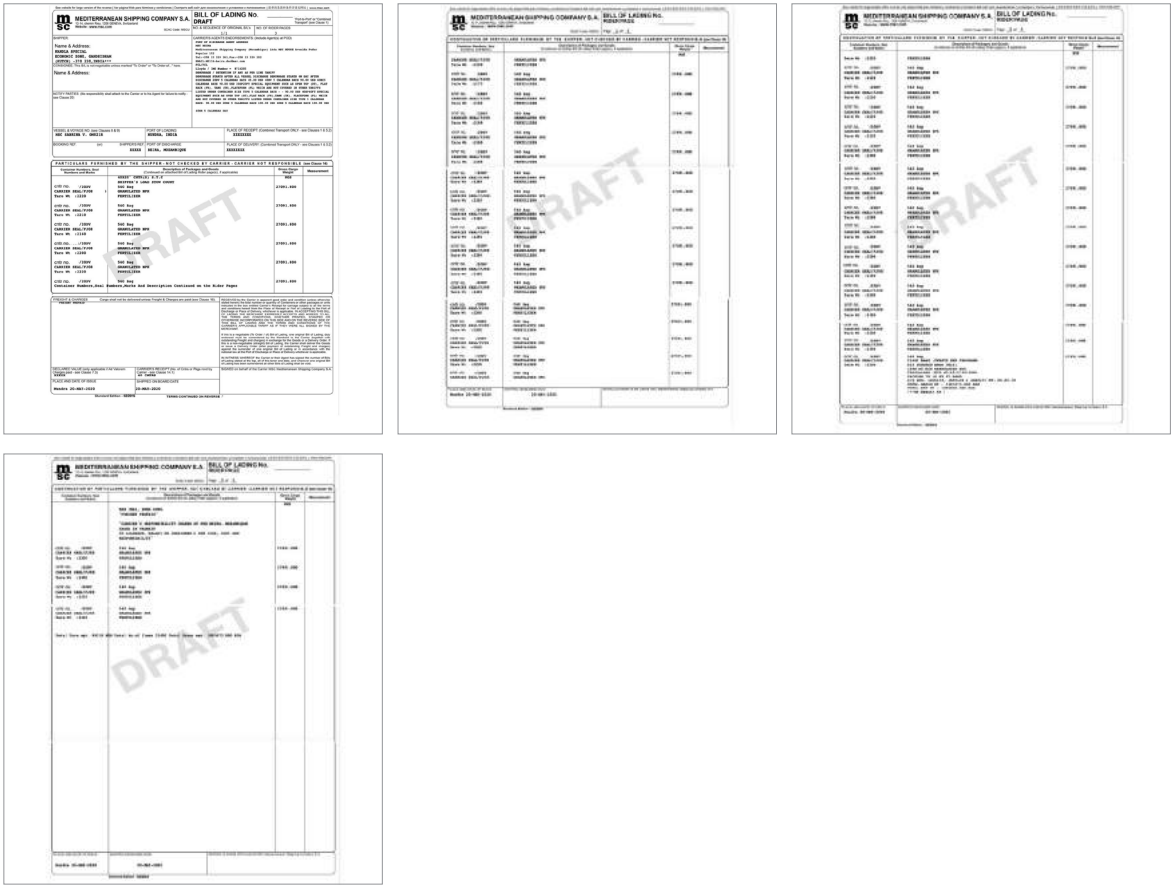
LET EXPORT ORDER

After customs authorities satisfactorily inspect the goods and assess their value, they endorse the shipping bill with a "Let Export Order" and "Let Ship Order". This means the exporter can hand over their shipment to the carrier, which, in turn, can ship it. This is the final compliance requirement for exporting a shipment.

8

DRAFT BILL OF LADING

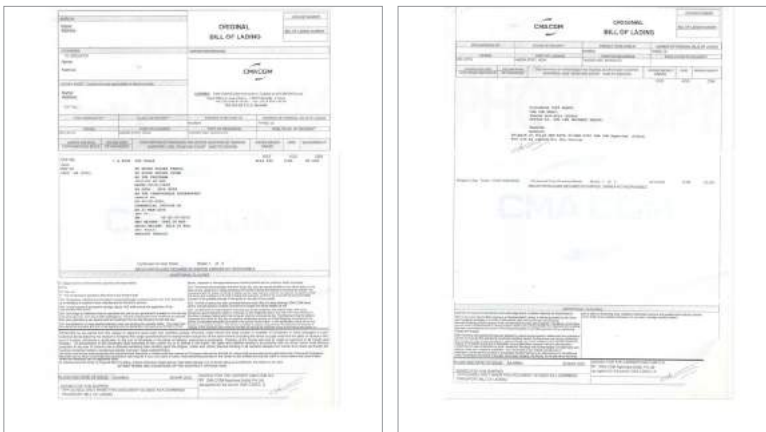
This is released by the shipping line to enable the exporter/importer to confirm the relevant details before the final bill of lading is released.



9

DRAFT BILL OF LADING

Issued by the carrier to the exporter, it is a contract of carriage of goods as well as a receipt of goods accepted for transportation. A bill of lading contains details of the exporter, importer, shipping line and freight forwarder, pick-up date and vessel name, cargo specifications and shipping instructions, among others. There are various types of bills of lading. You can read all about them in our blog here.

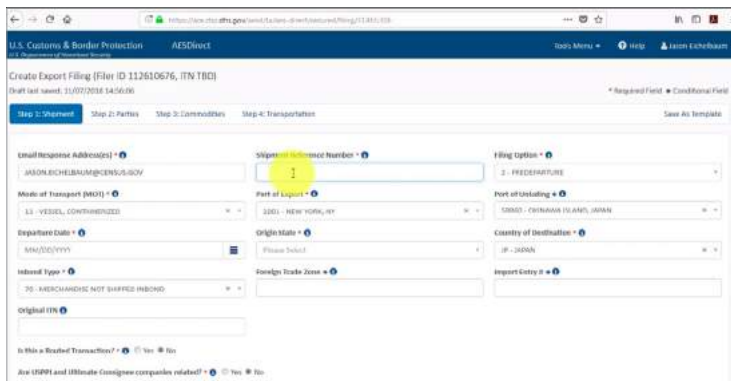




10

ELECTRONIC EXPORT INFORMATION

Electronic export information (EEI) is an electronic declaration of goods exported from the US and filed in the Automated Export System (AES Direct). It is mandatory when the shipment under Schedule B commodity number is valued at more than \$2,500 or if it requires an export licence. (Schedule B is a US-specific classification code for export goods). The exporter prepares the EEI and the carrier files it. The EEI is used by US Customs and Border Protection to ensure compliance with export regulations and by the US Census Bureau for statistical purposes.



11

EIC CERTIFICATE

Export Inspection Council (EIC) – India's official export-certification agency – issues various certificates (sample below) vouching for the safety and quality of goods exported from the country. Its certification system includes lab testing and consignment-wise inspections. Based on the importing country's rules, EIC certificates are mandatory for some goods (food, meats, dairy products, honey). But exporters can also volunteer for it.

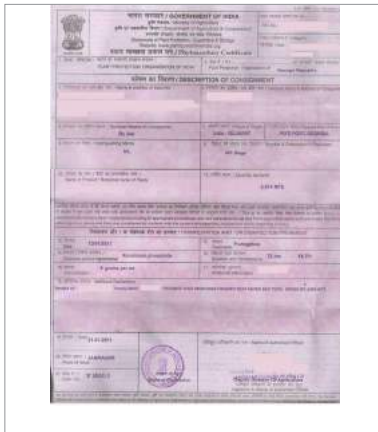




12

PHYTOSANITARY CERTIFICATE

A Phytosanitary certificate is an official document issued by the plant protection organisation of the exporting Country to the plant protection organisation of the importing country. Certifying that the plants or the plant products covered by the certificate have been inspected according to appropriate procedures and are free from quarantine pests and conforms with the current phytosanitary regulations of the importing country.

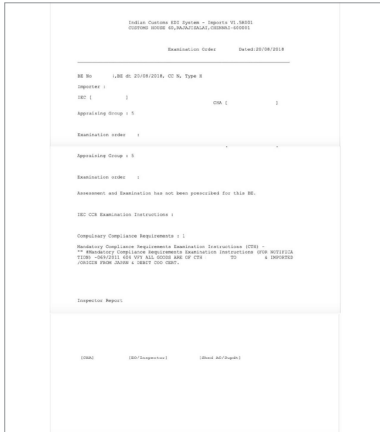


DISCHARGE PHASE

1

BILL OF ENTRY

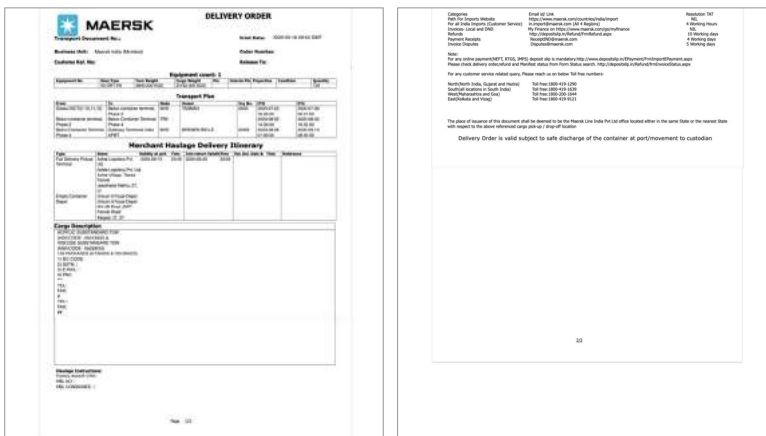
This is a legal declaration filed by the importer with the customs department and includes the nature, value and quantity of the imported goods. It is used by customs authorities at the port of destination to inspect and clear the goods.



2

DELIVERY ORDER

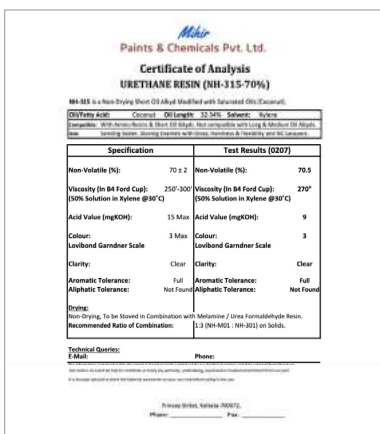
The delivery order (DO) is issued by the carrier to the importer to take delivery of the goods at the port of destination. On completion of import customs clearance, the importer presents the DO to the cargo custodian to claim the goods.



3

CERTIFICATE OF ANALYSIS

Some export shipments (food, wine, drugs) need a certificate of analysis to clear customs at the country of import. It states that the goods adhere to product specifications and production standards. It is issued by a regulatory authority or quality assurance entity appointed by the exporter or importer, usually after the products have undergone tests at an authorised laboratory in the country of export. The certificate includes the test results.



4

FUMIGATION CERTIFICATE

Also called a pest-control certificate, it is issued by a fumigator and confirms that any wooden packing material (pallets) used in a shipment or the container itself is free of pests. Certain countries don't allow the entry of imported goods without a fumigation certificate.



To sum it all up, these documents are either mandatory or the ones you are most likely to come across. For the complete list of papers your shipment requires, seek the guidance of your partners and agents in the shipping process. Also, remember to fill all your paperwork accurately and completely for a smooth shipping experience.

To find, compare & book the best freight rates from the world's best shipping lines and verified freight forwarders

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