

# HOLIDAY SHIPPING GUIDE 2013

FOR E-COMMERCE RETAILERS

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE FOR SHIPPING TIPS, INTERNATIONAL SELLING GUIDELINES AND RETURN SHIPPING TRENDS

## 5 tips FOR HOLIDAY SHIPPING

Follow these simple tips to maximize your shipping just in time for the holidays.

**#1**  **SHIP PRODUCTS AS *fast* AS POSSIBLE**

During the holidays, expectations for delivery are high and tolerance for delays is low. Try to ship products out the same day the order was placed to keep customers happy! Maintain an accurate list of shipping carrier pickup times to ensure your shipments are mailed at the earliest possible opportunity.

**#2**  ***Pre-pack* YOUR ORDERS DURING DOWNTIME**

Survive the holidays by pre-packing orders during the calm before the storm. Fulfill orders for commonly shipped items and write package weights on the surface of boxes. This way, you'll be ready for an unexpected rush.

**#3**  **KEEP A HEALTHY *inventory* OF SHIPPING SUPPLIES**

The last thing you want is a lot of holiday orders and nothing to package them with. Keep a good inventory of supplies and order enough necessities and free USPS® packaging to last you throughout the holidays.

**#4**  **ELIMINATE *trips* TO THE POST OFFICE™**

If you are shipping with Priority Mail® or Priority Mail Express®, save time by scheduling a free USPS Pickup online. There's absolutely no additional charge for home or office pickups, no matter how many packages you have.

**#5**  **ALWAYS *update* YOUR CUSTOMERS**

Use Email Notifications for Package Tracking: When a purchase is made online, customers want to know that their packages are in transit. Make sure your shipping system can automatically send out a shipment notification email that includes a link to the tracking number. It will help eliminate Customer Support calls and make for happier customers.

★  
There are only **26 days** between Thanksgiving and Christmas (compared with 32 days in 2012).

# USPS *Priority Mail* SHIPPING TIPS

Use these quick tips when sending Priority Mail packages.

## ★ *Bulk order* PRIORITY MAIL BOXES

Need to order Priority Mail Boxes and envelopes in bulk quantity? Call the USPS High Volume Shipping Supply Center at 1-800-222-1811. They can arrange a pallet of items to be sent to your house or office.

## ★ *Regional* RATE BOXES

For products like shoes and clothing, Priority Mail Regional Rate Box A is the lowest cost option for packages traveling across the U.S. and weighing between 2 lbs. and 15 lbs.

## ★ SHIPPING AN ITEM *over 20 pounds?*

Use Priority Mail Flat Rate. You pay the same low flat rate whether it weighs 1 lb. or 70 lbs., and cost efficiencies start at 20 lbs.

## ★ SHIPPING A *1 pound* ITEM?

With no surcharges and a number of free boxes you can use, regular Priority Mail is the cheapest option to ship anywhere in the U.S.

## ★ PRIORITY MAIL FLAT RATE *padded envelopes*

These are a great option to lower shipping costs. The Padded Envelope is flexible enough to include a small box inside to protect your items, but you are only charged for the low shipping cost of an envelope.



# 91%

of Priority Mail packages are delivered within 1-2 days

## IMPORTANT USPS SHIPPING *Deadlines*

Make sure your packages arrive at their destinations before December 25th!

DOMESTIC DELIVERY		INTERNATIONAL DELIVERY			APO/FPO DELIVERY	
Mail Class	Cut-Off Date	Destination	Cut-Off Date (First Class Package)	Cut-Off Date (Priority Mail)	Military Destination	Cut-Off Date
Parcel Select	December 14	Africa, Central America, South America	December 2	December 2	APO/FPO AE Zips 090-092	December 10
First Class Packages and Letters	December 20	Asia, Pacific Rim, Australia, New Zealand	December 9	December 9	APO/FPO AE Zips 093	December 3
Priority Mail	December 21	Mexico	December 9	December 11	APO/FPO AE Zips 094-098	December 10
Priority Mail Express	December 23	Canada, Caribbean, Europe, Middle East	December 9	December 12	APO/FPO AA Zips 340	December 10
					APO/FPO AP Zips 962-966	December 10

E-commerce spending in the U.S. will increase 15.1% to \$61.8 billion in November and December 2013 compared to 2012.

Source: eMarketer



# Grow revenue: SELL TO INTERNATIONAL BUYERS

Easy guidelines to expand your e-commerce business overseas.



## LOOKING TO START SELLING *internationally?*

Start with English-speaking countries. Canada, UK and Australia all have established infrastructure – internet connection, delivery systems and payment solutions. Along with the U.S., these four countries represent 44% of entire International e-commerce sales!



## USPS SERVICE *updates*

Between natural disasters like floods and earthquakes or labor disputes, mail delivery can be disrupted in other countries. USPS.com has a great resource for shippers that provides updates of any possible shipping delays. This allows you to communicate potential delays to your buyers.



## PAY ATTENTION TO COUNTRY *PRODUCT restrictions*

Each country has shipping restrictions on what types of products can be imported. To avoid having your product being held in Customs, learn beforehand if it is prohibited for a specific country.

### Some odd prohibited items:

- Germany: Playing cards
- Italy: Clocks, shoes, non-wood toys
- China: Used clothing
- Mexico: Jewelry



## UNDERSTANDING *customs forms*

Don't know which customs forms to use? Generally, you'll use the one page form (Form 2976) for First Class Package International Service and the four page form (Form 2976-A) for Priority Mail and Priority Mail Express International.



## NERVOUS? BUY INTERNATIONAL *PACKAGE insurance*

If you are shipping a high value product to an international destination, make sure to buy insurance. It works the same way as domestic insurance and is usually just a little more expensive.

### USPS INTERNATIONAL DELIVERY OPTIONS

Mail Class	Delivery Time	Weight Limit	Pricing
Priority Mail Express International	2 to 5 business days	Up to 70 lbs	Starts at \$32.59 online
Priority Mail International	6 to 10 business days	Up to 70 lbs	Starts at \$27.40 online
First Class Package International Service	11 to 20 business days	Up to 4 lbs	Starts at \$6.16 online
First Class International (Letters)	11 to 20 business days	Up to 3.5 ounces	Starts at \$1.10

# Return SHIPPING TIPS

Simple Practices to Uncomplicate Your Returns

## #1 A RETURN SHIPPING *policy* IS A MUST

Make sure to include your return shipping policy clearly on your e-commerce website. Many of your customers will be buying gifts for their friends and family, which could end up being returned. An unclear or absent return shipping policy may deter customers from making purchases on your site.

## #2 PRE-PAID RETURN SHIPPING *labels* CAN SAVE YOU MONEY

Not only can pre-paid return shipping labels be printed online for convenience, but they also allow for more control on postage costs. You can choose the mail class option (delivery speed and cost) to have your products returned!

## #3 *Prevent* RETURNS

Your customers make returns if they are not satisfied with your products. Minimize customer disappointment by creating accurate product descriptions and using product photos that allow for close up magnification and views from different angles. Even better, consider adding video to your product description pages.

**USPS Real-Time Package Scanning**

As of October 1, 2013,  
**98%**  
of USPS mail carriers  
carry *real-time*  
package scanners.

**USPS Free Saturday Delivery**

Free Saturday Delivery  
from the USPS equals to  
**52**  
more service days  
per year.

**UPS® and FedEx® Surcharges**

**25%**  
of U.S. addresses encounter  
a **Delivery Area Surcharge**  
or an **Extended Delivery Area Surcharge** when  
shipping with UPS or FedEx.

## How Return Shipping Impacts Purchase Decisions

Online buyers who claimed that they look at a retailer's return policy *before making a purchase* (up 3% from 2012)

66%

Online customers who have *returned or exchanged* an item in 2013 (up 11% from 2012)

62%

Online customers who stated that they would *recommend a retailer* to a friend if the retailer had a lenient and easy to understand return policy

49%

Online shoppers who mentioned that they would *shop more frequently* at websites with hassle-free return policies

67%

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