



HOLIDAY

SHIPPING SURVIVAL GUIDE

FOR E-COMMERCE RETAILERS

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With more people shopping online for the holidays than ever before, the busiest season is just about to begin for e-commerce retailers. How can online sellers meet the shipping demands of consumers to survive the holiday craze? Throughout this guide, we take a look at the different ways to optimize the shipping of virtually any e-commerce business. Excellent shipping practices are the key to wrapping up a successful holiday season!

8 Tips for Holiday Shipping

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



1 Always ship products as fast as possible

During the holidays, expectations for delivery are high and tolerance for delays are 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 Get the lowest shipping rates

Many factors affect shipping rates such as weight, dimensions, distance and delivery speed. In order to protect your profit margin, make sure you are using the cheapest option for each shipment. Analyze different shipping class costs and delivery times before the holiday rush starts to preserve your ROI.



5 Double-check delivery addresses

You never want a package going to the wrong address. Ensure your recipient addresses are correct by using the address verification feature provided by Stamps.com or the USPS ZIP Code™ search tool.



6 Package products for safe travel

Vases, mugs, gadgets, pictures — many of your products are fragile, breakable and at risk of being damaged during transit. Take extra care to properly package products to avoid costly replacements and unhappy customers.



7 Protect yourself from losses

Don't lose sleep over the possibility of lost or damaged shipments. The U.S. Postal Service® offers Certified Mail™, Signature Confirmation™, package insurance and more. Be sure to research your options and select the appropriate service.

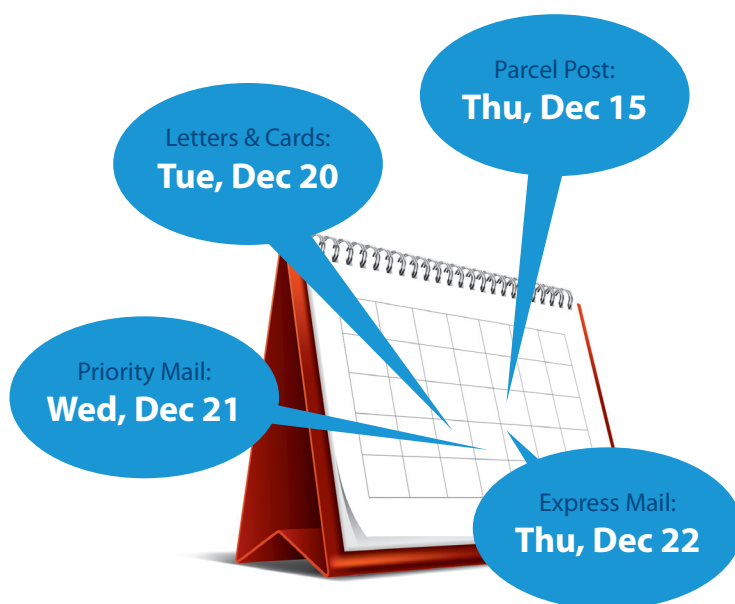


8 Eliminate trips to the Post Office™

If you are shipping with Priority Mail® or Express Mail®, 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.

Important USPS Shipping Deadlines

Make sure your package arrives before Sun, Dec 25.



7 Popular Free Shipping Promotions

Learn about free shipping offers to improve your sales.



#1: Store-Wide Free Shipping

Benefit: Free shipping on all items. This is by far the most compelling promotion for consumers. This type of promotion works for e-commerce retailers who have higher profit margins and can sustain profits on all items.

72%

of consumers said if a merchant eliminated a free shipping service, they'd switch to another site that did offer free shipping.

Source: FreeShipping.org

#2: Free Shipping with a Minimum Order

Benefit: This promotion motivates consumers to buy more, increasing their average revenue per order. This is the most commonly used promotion because it can increase profits for virtually any type of e-commerce business.

#3: Free Shipping on Select Items

Benefit: This promotion can be used to spike the sales of closeouts or overstock items. This type of promotion works for e-commerce retailers with both big and small products, allowing sellers to offer free shipping on lightweight items that are inexpensive to ship.

#4: Site-to-Store Free Shipping

Benefit: This promotion offers free shipping for items purchased online and picked up in store, giving retailers a great opportunity to increase the traffic of both their online store and physical retail store.

#5: Free Shipping by Recipient Location

Benefit: This promotion offers free shipping on product deliveries to select areas, allowing e-commerce retailers to select highly populated locations for potentially greater profits or distant locations like Hawaii and Alaska to gain a competitive edge.

#6: Membership-Only Free Shipping

Benefit: This promotion offers free shipping to paying members of a special program, which is a great way to build consumer loyalty and increase repeat purchases.

#7: Flat Rate Shipping

Benefit: This promotion offers one low shipping rate regardless of price, number of items or weight, encouraging customers to buy confidently knowing shipping charges won't skyrocket as they add items to their shopping cart. This type of promotion effectively helps reduce the percentage of shopping carts abandoned during checkout.

90%

of consumers who shop online said free shipping offers entice them to spend more.

Source: FreeShipping.org









Shipping an item over 20 lbs.? 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.

Improving Customer Communication with SCAN Forms

Use SCAN Forms to let your customers know their package has shipped.

Did the package ship? With the U.S. Postal Service's SCAN Form (Shipment Confirmation Acceptance Notice), you and your customers will always know the answer. This tool links all your shipments for the day to a single barcode on a piece of paper. Postal employees scan the barcode on the SCAN form rather than scanning each package individually. Once scanned, the package information is automatically recorded in the USPS tracking system, providing the recipient confirmation that their package has left the seller and has entered the USPS mailstream for delivery.

SCAN Form Do's and Don'ts

-  **Do** double-check your list of SCAN Form shipments. If you remove an item after the SCAN form is printed, the form is no longer valid.
-  **Do** create SCAN Forms for shipping labels with online postage software like Stamps.com. SCAN Forms are available to online postage customers only.
-  **Do** have all SCAN Form shipments printed and mailed on the same date and from the same ZIP Code. Different print dates and ZIP Codes are restricted by the USPS.
-  **Don't** duplicate SCAN Form shipments by including the same package on more than one form.
-  **Don't** use SCAN Forms for every mailpiece. You must buy electronic Delivery Confirmation or electronic Signature Confirmation in order to use a SCAN Form.
-  **Don't** print SCAN Forms early in the day. Wait until you've finished printing shipping labels for the day to avoid printing multiple SCAN Forms.



TIP Need a lot of free USPS Supplies in bulk quantity? Call the USPS High Volume Shipping Supply Center at 1-800-222-1811.



e-Halloween

Internet Retailer reported that Halloween is the second biggest e-commerce holiday of the year, right behind Christmas.



Did you know...

- U.S. shoppers will spend an estimated **\$6.8 billion** on Halloween-related items this year*
- The typical U.S. household will spend about **\$72** on costumes, candy, decorations, and other Halloween-related items in 2011*

*Source: National Retail Federation

11 Ways to Improve Your Packaging

Easy-to-use tips to ensure your packaging is as good as your products.

- 1** To ensure your shipments shoot through the USPS processing equipment, **make sure delivery and return addresses appear only on one side of packages and do not contain commas, periods or additional punctuation.** Ideally, addresses should be parallel to the longest edge of the package.
- 2** **Closely monitor package weight.** Reducing package weight by a single ounce can be the difference between saving a couple dollars per shipment, or paying higher rates for a heavier weight class.
- 3** **Remove batteries from all items.** Packages that buzz, tick or beep during shipping may cause a stir with the USPS.
- 4** **Reinforce your packaging.** Tape the opening and seams of boxes with 2-inch-wide clear, brown, reinforced or paper packing tape. Do not use cord, string and twine or masking, duct and basic tape.
- 5** **Protect your shipping labels during wet weather.** Place a strip of clear packing tape over the address area, taking care to avoid any barcodes that require scanning.
- 6** **Ship perishable items on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday,** ideally via next-day delivery. When shipping perishables on a Thursday or Friday, make sure they can endure very hot or cold temperatures for up to four days.
- 7** **Insure your valuable shipments.** Low-cost package insurance is available for all mail classes with the USPS and Stamps.com. Also, consider keeping receipts and taking pictures of valuable items you send as record of proof.
- 8** **Include an extra address label within your packages.** In the rare case the external shipping label is lost or unreadable, the USPS will safely return your package to you using the extra address label.
- 9** When shipping an item via USPS Priority Mail, **use a paper Tyvek® envelope versus a box.** The boxes weigh more than the envelopes and cost more to ship.
- 10** **Box fragile items twice to avoid damages.** First place the item in a normal size box, then place the box inside a second, bigger box with resilient packing material.
- 11** **For the holidays, include a free festive treat inside your shipments.** Candy canes or small candies are inexpensive and likely to entice customers into making a repeat purchase.

Important E-commerce Dates



Halloween

Monday, October 31



Black Friday

Friday, November 25



Cyber Monday

Monday, November 28



Green Monday

Monday, December 12



Free Shipping Day

Friday, December 16



TIP

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.