Tour Carnet Prep Checklist

SECURE TRANSPORTATION SINCE 1996



A practical checklist for preparing ATA Carnets and supporting documents for tours, live events, pro AV transport, and temporary export of professional equipment

1. Purpose:

This checklist is designed to help production managers, tour managers, logistics coordinators, and equipment owners prepare the information commonly needed for **ATA Carnets** and associated customs paperwork.

A well-prepared carnet pack reduces:

- border delays
- missing item declarations
- customs queries
- incorrect stamp sequences
- costly duties or penalties
- confusion when equipment leaves and re-enters the UK

This checklist is particularly useful for:

- **live events**
- **concert tours**
- **pro audio and AV transport**
- **broadcast and production equipment moves**
- **temporary export of event equipment**
- **European touring schedules**
- **road cases, backline, lighting, LED, and staging support equipment**

2. What an ATA Carnet Is:

An **ATA Carnet** is an international customs document that allows goods to be **temporarily exported and re-imported** without paying duties or taxes in each country, provided the goods return in substantially the same condition.

For tours and events, it is commonly used for:

- audio consoles
- speakers and amplifiers
- lighting desks and fixtures
- LED wall components
- cameras and broadcast kits
- backline equipment
- flight cases
- staging accessories
- technical tools and support equipment

A carnet does not replace good logistics planning. It works best when supported by accurate item lists, route planning, and clear border instructions.

3. When to Use This Checklist:

Use this checklist when:

- moving event or production equipment between the UK and EU
- taking professional equipment abroad temporarily
- planning a multi-country tour
- preparing for exhibitions, conferences, or trade events
- sending demo or loan equipment to an event
- coordinating return transport after the event or tour

This checklist should ideally be completed **before the carnet application is finalised** and before transport is booked.

4. Key Information to Confirm Before Applying:

Before beginning carnet preparation, confirm the following:

- [ ] The goods are travelling temporarily and will return
- [ ] The countries on the tour route accept ATA Carnets
- [ ] The carnet is the correct customs route for this movement
- [ ] The equipment list is complete and final
- [ ] Ownership of the equipment is clear
- [ ] The travel dates are realistic and confirmed
- [ ] Return arrangements are understood
- [ ] The responsible person for the carnet is identified
- [ ] Drivers or tour staff understand the importance of carnet handling

If any of the above is unclear, resolve it before application.

5. Equipment List Preparation:

The item list is the most important part of carnet preparation. Errors here are one of the main causes of customs delays.

Confirm the equipment list includes:

- [ ] Accurate item descriptions
- [ ] Quantity of each item
- [ ] Serial numbers where available
- [ ] Unique identifiers where no serial exists
- [ ] Make and model where relevant
- [ ] Country of origin if required
- [ ] Item value in the correct currency
- [ ] Total shipment value
- [ ] Clear grouping of related equipment where appropriate

Best practice for descriptions

Descriptions should be specific enough for customs to identify the item clearly.

Good examples:

- Digital mixing console
- Wireless microphone receiver
- LED wall panel
- Moving head light fixture
- Flight case containing audio cabling
- Camera control unit
- Guitar amplifier head

Avoid vague descriptions such as:

- Equipment
- Tech kit
- Cases
- Miscellaneous items
- Stage gear

Important note

Every item listed on the carnet should match the goods physically travelling. Do not include items that will not travel, and do not travel with items not listed unless the carnet is updated correctly.

6. Serial Numbers and Item Identification:

Where available, record serial numbers for each piece of equipment.

Checklist:

- [ ] Serial numbers captured accurately
- [ ] Checked against physical labels on the equipment
- [ ] Matched to the correct description
- [ ] Photos taken for high-value or difficult-to-identify items if useful
- [ ] Non-serialised items clearly grouped and described

If an item has no serial number:

- use a unique label or asset ID where possible
- make the description especially clear
- ensure the item can still be identified by customs without confusion

7. Route and Country Planning:

Carnets work best when the journey plan is understood in advance.

Checklist:

- [ ] Departure country confirmed
- [ ] Destination country or countries confirmed
- [ ] Planned border crossings known
- [ ] Ferry / Eurotunnel / airport route confirmed
- [ ] Temporary import and re-export sequence understood
- [ ] Return route confirmed
- [ ] Backup route considered in case of disruption

Important:
If the route changes during the tour, carnet handling may also need to change. Always review whether the revised route still matches the planned border sequence.

8. Responsibility and Handover:

Someone must take clear responsibility for the carnet.

Checklist:

- [ ] Named person responsible for carnet documents
- [ ] Backup contact identified
- [ ] Driver or courier briefed on carnet handling
- [ ] Tour manager briefed on customs process
- [ ] Document storage plan agreed
- [ ] Physical carnet protected from damage or loss
- [ ] Copies of the carnet retained separately
- [ ] Contact number available for customs support if needed

The carnet should never be treated as just another document in the cab. It is a critical customs control document.

9. Before Departure Checklist:

Use this final check before the goods leave the UK.

- [ ] Carnet has been issued and checked
- [ ] Item list matches final loaded goods
- [ ] Quantities checked
- [ ] Serial numbers spot-checked
- [ ] Driver has the carnet and understands what it is
- [ ] Driver knows where the first customs stamp is required
- [ ] Border process has been explained
- [ ] Contact details for support are in place
- [ ] Packing list matches carnet list
- [ ] Vehicle booking and route are confirmed

10. Border and Customs Handling Guidance:

At each relevant crossing, the carnet may need to be presented and stamped correctly.

Checklist:

- [ ] Driver knows which office to attend
- [ ] Carnet pages are checked before leaving the office
- [ ] Stamps are in the correct sections
- [ ] Dates are visible and correct
- [ ] No pages are left unsigned where a stamp is required
- [ ] Any discrepancy is challenged before leaving the customs point

Important reminder:
A missed or incorrect stamp can cause serious issues later, including customs penalties or problems proving re-import.

11. During the Tour:

Keep control of both the goods and the paperwork throughout the tour.

Checklist:

- [ ] Equipment remains matched to the carnet list
- [ ] No unlisted goods added without review
- [ ] No listed goods removed without documentation
- [ ] Carnet stays with the responsible person
- [ ] Route changes reviewed for customs impact
- [ ] Return timing monitored
- [ ] Any incidents or losses recorded immediately

12. Return to the UK:

Return movements are just as important as departure.

Checklist:

- [ ] Return route confirmed
- [ ] All carnet-listed goods present
- [ ] Missing or damaged items logged
- [ ] Driver briefed on UK re-entry process
- [ ] Correct customs office identified if needed
- [ ] Re-import stamp obtained where required
- [ ] Final carnet condition checked before filing

Failure to complete the return process properly can create problems even if the outbound journey went smoothly.

13. Common Carnet Preparation Mistakes to Avoid:

The following issues commonly lead to delays or customs queries:

- incomplete item descriptions
- incorrect quantities
- missing serial numbers
- values that do not appear credible
- route not thought through in advance
- carnet not carried by the right person
- driver not briefed on customs steps
- missing or incorrect stamps
- last-minute loading changes not reflected in the carnet
- assuming all border points operate the same way

14. Recommended Supporting Documents:

Alongside the carnet, it is often helpful to prepare:

- packing list
- vehicle schedule
- driver details
- tour itinerary
- venue contact list
- proof of ownership where required
- commercial invoice if relevant to the route
- emergency support contacts
- load manifests for each truck or van

These documents help support faster customs conversations and stronger operational control.

15. Why this checklist matters:

A strong **tour carnet prep checklist** helps:

- reduce customs delays
- improve driver and tour team confidence
- protect event timelines
- improve cross-border planning
- prevent avoidable paperwork errors
- reduce the risk of duties, fines, or disputes
- support smoother UK and European touring logistics

For live events and pro AV transport, good carnet preparation often decides whether the show stays on schedule.

16. Related Secure Transportation services:

- Pro Audio & AV Transport
- Event Transport
- UK & European Courier Transport
- Customs Clearance (incl. ATA Carnets)
- Export Case Packing
- Warehousing & Storage
- Project Management

17. Quick Pre-Departure Summary Checklist:

Use this short version as a final sign-off before dispatch:

- [ ] Carnet issued and checked
- [ ] Final item list confirmed
- [ ] Serial numbers reviewed
- [ ] Driver briefed
- [ ] Route and customs points confirmed
- [ ] Support contact available
- [ ] Return plan understood
- [ ] Copies retained safely
- [ ] Goods loaded to match carnet exactly