Commercial Invoice Data Checklist

SECURE TRANSPORTATION SINCE 1996



A practical checklist of the information a commercial invoice needs before equipment is exported, imported, or moved across a border for an event, project, or repair

1. Purpose:

This checklist helps exporters, project managers, tour and event teams, and IT asset owners gather the data a commercial invoice needs before goods reach a border.

A complete invoice reduces:

- customs queries and holds
- incorrect duty or VAT charges
- delays caused by vague descriptions
- re-work when the invoice and packing list disagree
- disputes about who is responsible for clearance

This checklist is particularly useful for:

- **permanent exports and imports of equipment**
- **IT hardware shipments to European sites**
- **repair and return movements**
- **demo, loan, and exhibition equipment**
- **shipments that do not qualify for an ATA Carnet**

2. What a Commercial Invoice Is:

A **commercial invoice** is the document customs uses to identify the goods, their value, who is sending them, who is receiving them, and why they are moving. It is needed even when no money changes hands, for example when equipment moves between two offices of the same company.

It does not replace a packing list, a carnet, or a licence where one is required. It works alongside them, and the details on each must match.

3. When to Use This Checklist:

Use this checklist when:

- goods are leaving or entering the UK
- equipment is moving between a UK site and an EU site
- a freight forwarder or customs agent has asked for invoice data
- goods are going abroad for repair, test, or return
- a carnet is not the right route for the movement

Complete it before transport is booked, not on the day of collection.

4. Parties and References:

- ☐ Exporter (seller or sender) legal name and address
- ☐ Exporter EORI number
- ☐ Exporter VAT number where relevant
- ☐ Consignee (receiver) legal name and address
- ☐ Importer of record, if different from the consignee
- ☐ Importer EORI or local tax number
- ☐ Named contact, phone, and email at both ends
- ☐ Invoice number and invoice date
- ☐ Purchase order or project reference
- ☐ Delivery address, if different from the consignee address

5. Goods Description:

Descriptions should be specific enough for a customs officer to identify the item without opening the case.

- ☐ Plain-language description of each line
- ☐ Make and model
- ☐ Serial number or asset ID where available
- ☐ Quantity of each line
- ☐ Commodity (HS) code for each line
- ☐ Country of origin for each line
- ☐ Condition: new, used, or for repair

Good examples:

- Rack-mount server, used
- 24-port network switch, new
- LED video wall panel, used
- Laboratory centrifuge, for repair

Avoid vague descriptions such as:

- IT equipment
- Spares
- Samples
- Various items

6. Values and Currency:

- [ ] Unit value for each line
- [ ] Line total and invoice total
- [ ] Currency stated clearly
- [ ] Basis of value noted where no sale is taking place
- [ ] Freight and insurance costs shown separately if required
- [ ] Any discount shown, not hidden

Important note: goods moving free of charge still need a realistic value. A value of zero is one of the most common reasons for a customs query.

7. Terms and Reason for Movement:

- [ ] Incoterm agreed and stated, with the named place
- [ ] Party responsible for duty and VAT confirmed
- [ ] Reason for export stated: sale, temporary use, repair and return, return after repair, or internal transfer
- [ ] Any licence, permit, or control reference recorded
- [ ] Customs procedure agreed with the agent or forwarder

8. Packing and Transport Details:

- [ ] Number of packages, cases, or pallets
- [ ] Type of packaging

- [ ] Gross weight and net weight
- [ ] Dimensions where requested
- [ ] Marks and numbers on the cases
- [ ] Mode of transport and planned route
- [ ] Packing list prepared and matched to the invoice line by line

9. Declaration and Sign-Off:

- [ ] Declaration that the information is true and correct
- [ ] Name and position of the person signing
- [ ] Signature and date
- [ ] Company letterhead or stamp where the destination requires it
- [ ] Copies retained with the shipment record

10. Common Invoice Mistakes to Avoid:

- descriptions too vague to classify
- missing or wrong commodity codes
- values that do not look credible
- invoice and packing list showing different quantities
- no EORI number for the exporter or importer
- Incoterm stated without a named place
- reason for export left blank
- serial numbers on the invoice that do not match the equipment

11. Recommended Supporting Documents:

- packing list
- transport booking or waybill
- ATA Carnet, where the movement qualifies
- proof of ownership for used equipment
- repair order or return authorisation
- export licence where required
- contact sheet for the agent, driver, and receiving site

12. Why this checklist matters:

A complete **commercial invoice data set** helps:

- clear customs first time
- avoid storage and waiting charges at the border
- keep project and event timelines on schedule
- make sure duty and VAT fall to the right party
- give the driver and agent one clear set of facts

For cross-border equipment moves, the paperwork is usually what holds a vehicle, not the road.

13. Related Secure Transportation services:

- Customs, Export and Cross-Border
- Customs Clearance (incl. ATA Carnets)
- Export Case Packing
- Secure Transport UK and Europe
- Warehousing, Pre-Staging and Storage
- Project Management

14. Quick Pre-Dispatch Summary Checklist:

- ☐ Exporter and importer details complete, with EORI numbers
- ☐ Every line described, coded, and valued
- ☐ Origin and condition shown for each line
- ☐ Incoterm and reason for export stated
- ☐ Packages, weights, and marks recorded
- ☐ Packing list matches the invoice
- ☐ Declaration signed and dated
- ☐ Copies with the driver, the agent, and the project file