

The Basics of Intermodal Shipping

In this Freight Paper we're going to discuss the basics of Intermodal Shipping. We'll get you a definition of Intermodal and how it's different from rail shipping, as well as packaging information, weight limits, and transit times. For more information on truckload quotes and freight, download our [Trailer Equipment Guide](#), available for Free in our [Freight Papers archive](#).

What is Intermodal Shipping?

Intermodal Shipping is a combination of rail and truckload freight shipping. While traditional rail shipments require direct rail access at the warehouse or shipping location, with Intermodal Shipping, freight can be picked up and moved via a dry van or container, and then shipped in that trailer or container, riding on a rail car. Intermodal Shipping is often used for long distance freight shipments because of its cheaper price. The transit times, however, can be longer than standard truckload shipping. And once freight is on the rail it cannot be stopped until it reaches its final destination.

What about Intermodal packaging?

Packaging, like any freight shipment, is key for intermodal shipping. Contrary to [LTL shipping](#), where pallets are moved on and off trucks between terminals, with Intermodal Shipping, the actual containers themselves are moved. Cranes and other heavy equipment accomplish this, so dunnage and blocking/bracing materials are **VERY IMPORTANT**. The key is to limit movement of freight inside the container to an absolute minimum. All Intermodal Freight must be palletized or crated (no loose boxes), and those pallets and crates must be securely fastened inside the container or dry van.

Are there weight limits for Intermodal Shipping?

Because full containers are being moved from wheel to rail and back again, the weight limit for Intermodal Shipping is 42,500 lbs. Any shipments heavier than that will need to be split into multiple containers. While this can be accomplished, you'll need to alert your [freight broker](#) if you're looking to move multiple containers under the same shipment.



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We Are Transparent with
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We Treat our Customers
as Partners

We Excel by Actively
Embracing our Core
Company Values:

- Support
- Produce
- Respect
- Balance
- Develop

Can you ship anything using Intermodal Shipping?

Unfortunately, there are a fair amount of limits in terms of what commodities can be shipped using Intermodal. You'll need to check with your freight broker to get a full list of prohibited items, but some common things that cannot be shipped with Intermodal Shipping are: fruits, vegetables, fish, [over-length or over-dimensional items](#), batteries, hazardous material, frozen food, tobacco products, or motor vehicles.

What information is needed for an Intermodal Shipping Quote?

Getting an Intermodal quote is very similar to a full truckload quote. You'll need the pickup and delivery locations (lane), product description, total weight, pallet or crate count, value, and how soon you need the freight picked up. You'll need to give at least 24 hours notice to get a proper quote before you need it shipped, but capacity is usually determined for Intermodal Shipping about a week in advance, so we suggest giving more than just a day heads up for a quote. Also keep in mind that Intermodal transit times can be longer than truckload or LTL transit times, so patience is key.

For more information, contact us at www.FreightPros.com or **888-297-6968**. Happy Shipping!