

A Beginner's Guide to First-Time Car Shipping



Shipping Your Car for the First Time



Whether you are prepping for a big cross-country move, finally letting go of your old reliable car so that you can get a newer model, or just heading south for the winter, one thing is for certain: you are about to ship your car. If this is your first time, then this is the guide for you. Hopefully, you've started reading this weeks or months in advance of your shipping date, because car shipping takes time. But if you don't have the required time for standard car shipping, don't fret too much. You will still be able to ship your car, but you will just have to pay extra for expedited shipping.

Once you learn the ropes of car shipping, you will see how simple the process is. There is a checklist of things you need to know about car shipping to ensure that you make the right choice for your needs. In the sections below, our car shipping professionals here at Direct Express Auto Transport give you a comprehensive car shipping guide covering everything you need to know. Read on to learn how to ship a car the right way, and [schedule a shipment](#) with our [award-winning team today!](#)

What Factors Affect the Price You Pay to Ship a Car?

Convenience aside, one of the main reasons that people ship their cars is cost. However, not all car shipments cost the same. There are a wide variety of different factors that are going to affect how much your car shipment is going to cost. Answering the following [car shipping questions](#) will help you determine the cost of shipping your vehicle.



Enclosed or open-air transport? The first things you come across as you learn how to transport a car are the phrases "enclosed transport" and "open-air transport." These phrases sound a lot more complicated than they are. Open-air transport simply means that cars are shipped on a trailer that's "open," or exposed to the outside. Roughly 97% of cars are shipped via open-air transport. Yours probably will too. Generally, the only cars that are shipped via enclosed transport are rare and expensive cars that need a fortified shipping method. Open-air transport is very safe, but just not quite as safe as having four walls, a floor, and a ceiling to protect the vehicle. Open-air transport is also far cheaper and more readily available than enclosed transportation. You have probably noticed on the highway a full load of ten new cars being delivered to an automobile dealership in Open transport. That's because the car manufacturers know it's very safe.



Do you need door-to-door shipping? Most probably yes! After Direct Express Auto

Transport assigns your vehicle to a carrier, we instruct the driver to pick up and deliver as close as possible to both your addresses. That is in the spirit of door to door. There are actually very few instances where a huge car carrier is able to pull up to your door.

Everybody gets that. The carrier will first locate your address on Google Maps or something similar. He will search for a large area nearby that he can safely park his transport truck to unload your vehicle. Typical meeting places are grocery store parking lots, malls, extra wide roads or rest areas. You get the idea. Then the driver calls your origination contact and they agree on a nearby location to meet. Most people understand why the car transporter is selecting some place other than the actual address. Because it is not practical. The parties agree to a time and things usually go smoothly. The whole scenario repeats at the destination. Door-to-Door shipping is the fastest and best way to ship your car!



Where's the car coming from? Where's it going? Which [state](#) or town you need shipping from and to will affect the price. Some big metropolitan areas (such as Los Angeles or New York) have tons of shipping options, which leads to shipping companies all trying to undercut each other's prices — which means great deals for you at the end of the day. Other parts of the country (such as the northern tip of Maine or many of the nation's smaller towns) are totally out of the way for many of the more trodden shipping routes. As you would expect, shipping your car to or from one of these out-of-the-way destinations is going to cost you more.



Expedited shipping or standard shipping? The ideal scheduling scenario for car shipping involves booking well in advance of your shipping date. Sometimes, however, the ideal just isn't possible. If you're booking on a short timeline, Direct Express Auto Transport uniquely offers an Expedited and Rush shipping option to accommodate your schedule. Here's how it works. You pay a bit more upfront, which means that the trucker will end up making more by delivering your car, which causes a higher demand for your vehicle, which leads to it getting on a trailer much quicker than if you ship the basic Standard way. Unlike enclosed shipping, expedited shipping doesn't cost an exorbitant amount more than standard shipping. In fact, a sizable percentage of car shipping customers end up choosing our expedited shipping. And are glad they did!



How to Prepare Your Vehicle for Shipping

Just like you'd prepare yourself for a cross-country trip, you'll need to prepare your vehicle for its very own journey. Here are a few essential steps to make your vehicle ready for cross-country shipping.



Thoroughly clean your car and take photographs. Before shipping your car, you are going to want to wash its exterior and do a deep clean of its interior. Though it may seem counterintuitive to clean and wash your car before it's about to spend hundreds of miles on American highways and freeways, it's actually the best way to ensure that any damages incurred during the shipping process, though unlikely, are properly documented. Once you've washed and cleaned your car, you are going to want to take extensive photographs of the interior and exterior.



Document pre-existing damages and remove valuables from the inside of your car.


Hopefully, you are shipping with a company that isn't going to try to shuck any responsibility on dents, dings, and minor windshield cracks. As far as cleaning and documenting the inside of your vehicle, this is more of a precautionary measure in case someone climbs into the cab of your car and messes with things (very rare, but it does happen, especially if shipping with a cut-rate company). This is also a good time to take any valuables from the car, be it paperwork or important items you're keeping in the glovebox.



Get your gas tank about a quarter full. In the final days leading up to handing your car off to the shippers, you are going to want to get your gas tank down to about a quarter tank. This will be enough gas for the inevitable shuffling around of cars on and off of the truck at each stop, but also not too full, as the added weight of a full tank of gas (especially if every car has one) would weigh down the load and cause the truck to have worse gas mileage.



Hand over a set of keys to the driver. Finally, when you present your car to the transporter, you are going to need to hand over a set of keys. Ideally, you have multiple sets and can give the driver your spare key. Regardless of whether it's a spare or the only key you own, you're going to have to hand over a key so that the driver can do the inevitable shuffling around of cars with each pick up and drop off. Amazingly, you do not need to show proof of ownership when you hand the car over to the truck driver, so don't worry about your title or registration. Anybody standing there with the keys and willing to sign the Bill of Lading can ship it.



Check Your Insurance Coverage and the Shipping Company's Insurance Coverage

If you're shipping your car for the first time, one of your primary concerns is undoubtedly going to be the safety of your vehicle. Even if you elect to go with open-air shipping, your car is going to be very safe. There is statistically less than one claim for every two hundred shipments. And those are usually innocuous, things like a small scratch or dent on the bumper. Since your vehicle will be sitting on the middle or back of the car transport truck — at least, behind the freight truck itself — there is little chance that a pebble or other piece of debris will put a dent in your windshield or puncture the undercarriage of your vehicle. Even so, you should have your vehicle insured. To cover their bases, today's top car shipping companies will insure your car while it is in their possession. In fact, one of the best ways to tell a good shipping company from a mediocre one is by checking their shipping policies. Steer clear of any company that does not have at least a six-figure insurance policy. *If you're looking for the best of the best, you are probably going to want to find a company that insures your car for at least \$100,000 or more.*

It's better to be over-insured rather than under-insured. For this reason, your car shipping company doesn't have to be your only source of insurance. Check with your car insurance company to see what your coverage is for shipping. Your personal vehicle insurance shouldn't be the only coverage you have during the shipping process. Still, it's good to have, especially if you get into a dispute with the trucking company about damages incurred on the road.



Be Prepared for Your Car's Shipment Schedule to Change

Shipping cars can be a complicated process. Think of it this way: any auto transport trailer is going to be loading and unloading, picking up and dropping off at least a half dozen, sometimes even a dozen or more cars both before and after picking up your vehicle. That's a big logistical task. Knowing how to transport a car means knowing as many variables as possible and planning for them on the open road. As we'll cover in the next section, you are going to want to ship with a company that has a strong logistical team so that the best, most logical, and most efficient routes are chosen from the get-go. This will help your car ship quickly and on time. No matter how good a car shipping company is, changes in schedule can still happen. Inclement weather, accidents on the road, and other unforeseeable factors that are totally out of a shipping company's control can all influence shipping times. Often, delays occur due to customers being late when either dropping off or picking up their vehicles. And once one delay happens, chances are that the delays are going to compound,

because typically once the first drop off or pick up runs late then the next one runs later, then the driver needs to sleep before the next round of pick ups, which may push one or two back until the next day. And so on. This is why you will always get a range of dates for when your car is going to be delivered, rather than an exact day/time. Generally speaking, the longer the distance between the drop-off and pick-up spot, the more of a chance that your vehicle is going to be delayed. This is all the more reason to get on top of shipping your car early. If you need your car to be at its final destination at a very specific time, you are going to want to go with the expedited shipping route. **Remember, shipping a car is not like shipping a Fedex package. It's four thousand pounds or more of mettle. A customer needs to be more understanding.**



How Do You Select the Best Company to Ship Your Car?

The most important factor to consider is the shipping company itself. After all, this is the organization that's going to get your car from point A to point B. You want the team you work with to be fast, safe, and affordable — [with service you can trust](#). Here are some factors to consider when selecting a company to ship your car.



Ship with a company with great logistical and customer service teams.

Ship with a company that does its very best to stop delays from happening in the first place. A good logistical team is paramount to a happy first-car-shipping-process. Look for reviews highlighting quality, professional drivers who are on time. Usually, with great drivers comes great dispatchers. Likewise, reputable car shipping companies with the best drivers and dispatchers also usually have the best service. A great customer service team will make shipping your car much easier than a non-responsive, non-accommodating one.



Ship with a company with a proven track record. Don't just take the company's word for their service. Consult vetted car review sites to see what customers are saying about the shipping company. Trustpilot is an excellent place to start. So is the BBB and Google Reviews. Look for keywords about timeliness, professionalism, and ease for the person shipping the car. Try to discern the helpful [reviews](#) from the vindictive ones. If you are searching on a trusted review site like Trustpilot, the site will do a lot of the vetting for you.



Get the best bang for your buck without skimping on quality. Deals on car shipping really do exist — you just have to find them. Another reason to start your search early is so that you can shop around to find the perfect price. Consider yourself lucky that you are getting a car shipping quote in 2020 instead of 2005. Back in the day, many quotes took forever to process, required a lot of your personal information, and had clauses in them that required you to ship with the company giving the quote or else you were required to pay a fee. It was actually our company, Direct Express Auto Transport, that was the first to change all that. These days, following our lead, most car shipping companies now have online quote calculators that can give you a quote right from your phone or computer. Our quote calculator is still the best and most accurate.



Ship with the Best. Ship with Direct Express Auto Transport.

Now that you know a lot more about how to ship a car, it's finally time to start finding a shipping company, look no further than right here at Direct Express Auto Transport. Founded in 2003, our reputable auto transport team forged new paths through the complicated road of car shipping to make things easier, safer, and saner for customers. In 2004, we pioneered [Original Auto Transport Quote Calculator](#) — the first-ever online car shipping quote calculator — nearly four years before our competitors implemented one. Our Original Auto Transport Quote Calculator asks you seven simple questions, none of which require any personal information, and gives you an affordable 100% transparent quote in seconds. Combined with our excellent service, fast shipping times, and both uncovered and covered shipping options, our Online Quote Calculator has earned us a spot as one of the nation's most reputable car shipping companies.

Don't take our word for it: listen to our thousands of happy customers. [With an A+ rating from the Better Business Bureau and a 94% 5-star rating on Trustpilot](#), we deliver on our promise of fair rates, great coverage, and excellent customer satisfaction. Want to learn more about how to ship a car? Visit our [Blog](#) for a host of great car transport tips, or contact our team for direct assistance. **[Ready to ship with us? Use our Online Quote Calculator to start the shipping process with our team today!](#)**

