PRACTICAL BUYER GUIDE

Shipping from China Importer Decision Guide

Choose the transport mode, compare the complete quotation and check import responsibilities before you commit to a booking.

A better freight decision follows four checks

01 Mode
What is the cargo and how urgent?

02 Route
Which gateways and final address?

03 Terms
Who clears import and pays taxes?

04 Quote
Are services and exclusions comparable?

Use this guide when:

You are sourcing from one or more Chinese factories; comparing air, express, sea LCL or FCL; reviewing DAP and DDP terms; or choosing among quotes that use different chargeable-weight assumptions.

First principle

A low ocean or air line-haul price is not automatically the lowest door-delivered cost. Compare the same cargo, delivery point, service scope, validity date and tax treatment.

Tools to use alongside the guide

Shipping Cost Calculator | https://www.ddpatlas.com/tools/shipping-cost-calculator

Volumetric Weight Calculator | https://www.ddpatlas.com/tools/volumetric-weight-calculator

Freight Intelligence | https://www.ddpatlas.com/freight-intelligence

01 / Match the mode to the actual shipment

Use the matrix to develop a shortlist. It is not a rate promise or a universal ranking of speed. Confirm the quote terms and schedule with the forwarding provider.

Mode	Usually useful for	Verify before booking
Express	Small parcels; speed-sensitive goods	Dimensional billing, restrictions, customs, surcharges
Air freight	Time-critical cartons or pallets	Air chargeable weight; terminal vs door
Sea LCL	Smaller loads sharing container	CBM/W-M tariff, CFS fees, minimums
Sea FCL	Shipment suited to a dedicated box	Container size, inland drayage, demurrage

Five origin and routing questions

01 Where are all supplier pickup locations?

02 Is the cargo ready at the same time from every factory?

03 Do the ocean or air options cover the final destination?

04 Is direct service available, or is transshipment required?

05 What happens if a cut-off, inspection or customs release slips?

Important note on published connectivity data

Country-level LSCI, port-level PLSCI and country-pair LSBCI explain liner-network structure. None is a forecast of your shipment delay or a substitute for a carrier itinerary.

02 / DAP vs DDP: agree the responsibilities

Incoterms® 2020 allocates delivery, risk and cost obligations between seller and buyer. Always name the place of delivery and check whether the required importing entity can legally complete customs clearance.

Item	DAP	DDP
Transport to named destination	Seller	Seller
Export clearance	Seller	Seller
Import clearance	Buyer	Seller
Import duties / taxes	Buyer	Seller (subject to contract and law)
Risk until named destination	Seller	Seller
Final unloading, generally	Buyer	Buyer

DDP is not automatically feasible

Foreign sellers may face restrictions on acting as importer of record or handling local taxes. DDP must not be offered as a blanket promise where local law, customs, VAT or regulated goods require another structure.

Written confirmations to request

- Named delivery point including postcode or warehouse code.
- Who is importer of record, and whose tax/customs identifiers are used?
- Who pays duty and import VAT, and what is excluded?
- Who bears warehouse appointment, unloading or storage charges?

Reference: ICC Academy, “DAP & DDP Incoterms® 2020 explained,” academy.iccwbo.org/incoterms/article/incoterms-2020-dap-or-ddp/

03 / Compare the full cost, not just $/kg

Illustrative air chargeable-weight example

Ten cartons, each 60 × 40 × 50 cm, with 8 kg gross weight per carton. Using a 6,000 cm^3/kg divisor solely for illustration:

Total cargo volume	**1.20 CBM**
Actual gross weight	**80 kg**
Volumetric weight	**200 kg**
Illustrative chargeable basis	**200 kg**

Calculation: 10 × (60 × 40 × 50) ÷ 1,000,000 = 1.20 CBM. Volumetric weight = 10 × (60 × 40 × 50) ÷ 6,000 = 200 kg. Actual weight = 10 × 8 = 80 kg. Final billed weight and rounding depend on carrier and contract rules.

Use this quote comparison worksheet

Cost or term	Quote A	Quote B
Origin pickup / consolidation	_____	_____
Main freight + fuel / seasonal fees	_____	_____
Export / import handling	_____	_____
Customs, duty and tax scope	_____	_____
Delivery to exact final address	_____	_____
Validity + exclusions	_____	_____

Illustrative arithmetic only; not a published carrier quote. Confirm mode-specific divisor and actual chargeable rules. Reference: IATA European Air Cargo Programme Handbook, volume weight section.

04 / Booking-ready importer checklist

Cargo facts

- [ ] Supplier/factory addresses and ready dates
- [ ] Carton count, L × W × H, gross weight, CBM
- [ ] Commodity description, material, intended use and HS classification

Route and responsibility

- [ ] Destination postcode, delivery hours, receiving requirements
- [ ] Chosen transport mode and alternative route
- [ ] Named Incoterms® 2020 rule and place; importer of record

Quote and documents

- [ ] All-inclusions and exclusions in writing
- [ ] Quote validity and chargeable-weight basis
- [ ] Commercial invoice, packing list and shipping document plan
- [ ] Customs permits, product compliance and insurance responsibility

A quote request you can send

“Please quote pickup from [China location] to [final destination]. Cargo: [product], [cartons], [dimensions], [gross kg], [CBM], ready [date]. Provide options for [air/LCL/FCL], quote validity, Incoterms, customs/tax responsibilities, total delivered charges, exclusions and estimated milestones.”

Useful DDP Atlas links

Request an estimate: https://www.ddpatlas.com/ship-now

Compare shipping costs: https://www.ddpatlas.com/tools/shipping-cost-calculator

Read the China shipping guide: https://www.ddpatlas.com/shipping-from-china