United Kingdom Guide: Overview

Don’t miss opportunities that are just across the pond.

The United Kingdom is the fifth-largest export market in the world for U.S. goods, and ranks as the largest European consumer of American imports. As a long-time ally, the UK has strong ties both economically and politically with the U.S.

Yet for all of our similarities, doing business in the UK still means doing business in another country. There are rules to adhere to, regulations to follow and customs compliance matters that can be the difference between a successful business venture and a costly mistake. That’s where UPS comes in. We can help minimize the mistakes and maximize your opportunities for success.

As one of the world’s largest customs brokers, we speak the import/export language in more countries than just about anyone. A trusted brand in the UK for almost 30 years, we’re well versed in reducing supply chain costs and increasing your speed to market. And we’re supported by the experience of our people who have made us one of the largest global transportation companies, known for reliable delivery, boosting efficiency, and providing the technology solutions to make it happen.

Let this guide be your playbook for your shipping needs into the United Kingdom. You’ll find the information, resources and compliance expertise you need to take your business across the pond. Best of all, you’ll know that you’re not alone, because when you choose UPS, you get a global logistics partner working by your side every step of the way.

UPS in the United Kingdom

- Established: 1988
- Employees: Approx. 8,000
- Delivery Fleet: 3,400+ vehicles
- Airports Served: 4
- Operating Facilities: 48
- UPS Supply Chain Solutions® Facilities: 9
- Air Brokerage Facilities: 2
- UPS® Locations: More than 3,200 (UPS Centres, MBE Centres, UPS Access Point® locations)
- Special Expertise: Top trading industries include industrial manufacturing (machine tools, aircraft, motor vehicles and parts, electronics and telecom equipment), high tech and retail
- Efficiency: Strategic facilities located near major airports and cities

Country Facts (4 parts of the United Kingdom)

- Capital of England: London
- Population of England: 55,330,000 (2018 est.)
- Area of England: 130,281 km² (50,302 mi²)
- Language of England: English
- Capital of N. Ireland: Belfast
- Population of N. Ireland: 1,887,788 (2018 est.)
- Area of N. Ireland: 14,115 km² (5,457 mi²)
- Language of N. Ireland: English, Irish
- Capital of Scotland: Edinburgh
- Population of Scotland: 5,450,000 (2018 est.)
- Area of Scotland: 78,789 km² (30,420 mi²)
- Language of Scotland: English, Scots, Scottish Gaelic
- Capital of Wales: Cardiff
- Population of Wales: 3,188,203 (2018 est.)
- Area of Wales: 20,732 km² (8,005 mi²)
- Language of Wales: English, Welsh


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You’ll be gobsmacked by the possibilities we offer.

Since establishing our own UK-based operations, UPS has continued to enhance our capabilities and expand our services to stay out in front of our customers’ needs. From packages to pallets to ocean containers, we have your shipping covered, and the customs brokerage network to keep it all moving seamlessly. Combine that with our value-added options, and you’ve got everything you need to keep calm and carry on.

UPS® Export Services to the United Kingdom (as of June 2018)

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<td>Manchester</td>
<td>2 days — 9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>2 days — 10:30 a.m.</td>
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Calculate the times and costs for your shipping needs [here](#).

Customs Brokerage Network

UPS is one of the world's largest customs brokers. Our expertise with the United Kingdom's unique documentation and customs requirements helps ensure compliance, while reducing the chance of potential delays and extra fees. We offer 24/7 customs services with commodity and security inspections to facilitate smooth entry into the country and wheels-up clearance procedures that begin before our planes even land. Learn more about all UPS Customs Brokerage Network options [here](#).

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UPS Import Services from the United Kingdom

| UPS Worldwide Express Plus® | Bill shipper | UPS Broker of Choice® — Onsite | UPS Air Freight Direct®, UPS Air Freight Consolidated® |
| UPS Worldwide Express NA1® | Bill receiver | Dangerous Goods/Dry Ice | UPS Air Freight Consolidated® |
| UPS Worldwide Express™ | Bill third party | UPS Import Control® | UPS Ocean Freight: Full container, Less-Than-Container load (LCL) |
| UPS Worldwide Freight® | | UPS Paperless® Invoice | UPS Preferred® LCL |
| UPS Worldwide Saver® | | UPS Proactive Response® | |
Prepare to have your idea of UK business shaken, not stirred.

Though James Bond, King Arthur, football (soccer to the U.S.), whisky and the Titanic may be among the UK’s most famous exports, there’s so much more to the UK and its business than we may realize. From the bustling metropolis of London and its surrounding areas to picture-postcard countrysides and more than 19,000 miles (or over 30,000 km) of coastline, each region has its unique qualities and industries. Our nearly 30 years in the country have given us the chance to know what businesses thrive where and the possibilities that these places hold. We’ve also teamed up with the U.S. Commercial Service (part of the International Trade Administration) to provide assistance in matching customers with your business.

1. Scotland
   - Agriculture: Livestock and field crops; malted barley is used in Scotch whisky
   - Forestry: Accounts for 50% of all timber production in the UK
   - Fishing: Two-thirds of British seafood comes through Scotland’s ports
   - High Tech: Midland Valley is home to “Silicon Glen”
   - Electronics
   - Financial services: Edinburgh ranks only behind London for these services in the UK
   - Oil and gas production
   - Distilling: Scotch is a leading export
   - Tourism

2. Northern Ireland
   - Agriculture: Consolidation has resulted in larger but fewer farms
   - Services: Have taken the place of manufacturing as the largest economic driver, especially retail, financial services and real estate
   - Tourism

3. North East
   - Known for its abundance of salt and coal
   - Dunston is home to MetroCentre, Europe’s largest shopping center
   - Pharmaceuticals
   - Commodity and petrochemicals
   - Plastics and polymers: One of the world’s first locations for manufacturing at a large scale
   - Home to a number of emerging electronics companies
   - Coal mining: Done on an industrial scale longer than anywhere in the world
   - Brewing
   - Largest automotive plant in the UK

4. North West
   - Has largest food processing plant in Europe
   - Aerospace and automotive manufacturing: Home to Bentley’s main facility and the primary manufacturer of ice cream trucks worldwide
   - Pharmaceuticals
   - Paper manufacturing
   - West Cumbria known as “Energy Coast” with its power stations, gas terminal and wind farms
   - Development in Liverpool and Manchester is boosting the economy

5. Yorkshire and the Humber
   - Food and beverage processing: Including beer and Coke’s largest bottling/canning facility in the world
   - Financial services
   - Industrial manufacturing: Steel and heavy machinery
   - Richmond area houses largest army base in Europe
   - Coal mining: Region has second largest power station in Europe

6. Wales
   - Agriculture: Livestock
   - Forestry: Government’s Forestry Commission handles large areas for production of timber
   - Energy: Oil refining; region includes some of Europe’s largest wind farms
   - Automotive parts manufacturing
   - Electronics manufacturing
   - Services: Financial, government and hospitality are more than 50% of GDP
   - Tourism

7. West Midlands
   - Industrial manufacturing: Automotive, aircraft and parts
   - Electrical engineering
   - Food processing
   - High Tech
   - Brewing: Including largest cider factory in the world
   - Agriculture
   - Synthetic fibers
   - Home to Britain’s biggest coal producer
   - Steel manufacturing

Sources:
- Wikipedia.com
- Britannica.com

Continued on following page.
Prepare to have your idea of UK business shaken, not stirred. (cont.)

8. East Midlands
- Industrial manufacturing: Including automotive, aerospace, motorcycles and trains
- Lead mining
- Construction and building materials
- Textiles and clothing
- Food processing
- Healthcare: Including largest UK hospital and largest teaching hospital in Europe
- High Tech
- Finance
- Home to Peak District, the second most popular national park in the world

9. East of England
- Industrial manufacturing: Power equipment, tools, engines
- Food processing
- High Tech
- Printing
- Healthcare and pharmaceuticals
- Automotive manufacturing
- Aerospace
- Film: Location of Elstree Studios, home of the original Star Wars trilogy

10. South West
- Region with the largest area
- Aerospace
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Food processing: Famous for producing Cheddar cheese
- Brewing
- Industrial machinery

11. South East
- Largest population of all regions and the second-largest regional economy in the UK
- High Tech
- Healthcare and pharmaceuticals
- Automotive and parts manufacturing
- Industrial machinery
- Oil refining
- Film: Location of Pinewood Studios, home to James Bond and Harry Potter

12. London
- Economic and cultural center of the country
- Financial services: Primary location for Europe’s large-scale securities trading; world center for aviation and marine reinsurance
- Media: Home of the BBC
- Tourism: Most visited city in the world by international tourists; tourists spend 100 million nights annually in London
- Clothing
- Manufacturing: Concentrated around products that travel on the river/sea, including petrochemicals, timber, grains and sugar
- Food processing

Sources:
Wikipedia.com
Britannica.com
Is everything tickety-boo?

When exporting to the UK, you want everything to run smoothly — tickety-boo — to capitalize on opportunities, so it helps to know a bit about the political landscape, trends that could affect how and when you do business, as well as UPS’s logistics experience in the UK. From Brexit to the growing need for machinery to the demands of an aging population, these insights offer a glimpse into the types of information you need to stay on top of this evolving economy.

**BREXIT**

**What’s next for exports to the UK?**

With the formal two-year process to leave the European Union to be complete by the end of March 2019, economic changes for the UK are coming, but with details still to be worked out, those changes are unclear. UK retailers and consumers are aware of the growing likelihood of rising costs that will affect them due to import tariffs. And a stronger dollar compared to the British pound could even reduce exports to the UK. Importers also may be looking at new licensing requirements, duties and customs documentation. In addition, the UK may enter into bilateral agreements with the EU and possibly join the European Economic Area (EEA) and/or the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). There’s much left to decide. Stay tuned.

**Sources:**

**MACHINERY MANUFACTURING**

**Domestic supply can’t meet demand.**

Production of machinery in the UK is falling behind local demand, especially as the British government is investing heavily in infrastructure projects and property values rise, spurring construction. Due to the low number of machinery manufacturers in the UK, the manufacturing productivity level for machinery is currently 20 percent higher in the U.S. than the UK, producing better quality for a lower price. Add to this a much more cost-effective machinery import tariff than emerging markets such as Brazil and India, and the opportunities for machinery exports to the UK get better and better.

The state of Texas is taking full advantage of this growing market. It ranks first in machinery exports to the UK among all 50 states, and makes up 16 percent of the entire U.S.-UK manufacturing trade.

**Sources:**

**HEALTHCARE**

**An aging population drives imports and innovation.**

With approximately 18 percent of its population 65 and over and 2.4 percent 85 and over, the UK is looking to invest in innovative healthcare technology to improve care and reduce costs. Of all the medical devices sold in the UK, approximately 60 percent are imported.

As the population ages, products and equipment related to home healthcare, assistive technologies and preventive care are in especially high demand. And despite Brexit, the approval process for medical devices in the UK should change very little. Meeting relevant EU standards will still be required to sell throughout the region. The UK is also a member of the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN), and may also join the European Economic Area (EEA) and/or the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

**Sources:**

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You wouldn’t hit the street in the UK without knowing a few rules of the road first, would you? The same goes for shipping. Before you accelerate into trade traffic, there’s some basic information you should know to make sure it’s done right and the journey is as fast and easy as possible. Trust us to be your shipping instructor, providing the answers you need as we guide you through paperwork and customs information. We’re right there with you, preparing your business for the road ahead.

Driving on the left side of the road is right, right?

Special Clearance Requirements

In addition to the commodities that UPS prohibits or has placed stipulations (restrictions) to all countries served (listed here), the following commodities to the United Kingdom are prohibited or restricted.

- Alcoholic Beverages
- Beef Jerky
- Electronic Cigarettes
- Furs
- Hazardous Materials
- Knives

For details, search Special Clearance Requirement here.

Essential Paperwork

Select the links below to access the forms you need.

U.S. Export Forms: from the U.S. to the UK
- Commercial Invoice — Non-document shipments must include one original and two copies. Shipments of documents do not require an invoice.
- UPS Paperless® Invoice is accepted by Customs for small package exports to the United Kingdom.
- U.S. Certificate of Origin — A certificate of origin is not required for the import clearance of textiles. The need of a certificate of origin for the import clearance was reversed on October 24, 2011.
  - Textiles: The country of origin must be stated on the invoice for each invoice line. If the customs authorities doubt the correctness of the declared country of origin they may request an additional proof which might be a certificate of origin.
  - Electronic Export Information

U.S. Import Forms: from the UK to the U.S.
- Commercial Invoice — Non-document shipments must include one original and two copies. Shipments of documents do not require an invoice.
- UPS Paperless® Invoice is accepted by Customs for small package imports into the United Kingdom.

To learn more about how to complete these forms, download this detailed reference guide.

Find and search all international forms here.

UPS Paperless® Invoice

UPS Paperless® Invoice simplifies your paperwork by eliminating the need for paper commercial invoices. It allows you to integrate order and shipment processing electronically, and it reduces customs holds by streamlining the customs clearance process through transmitting information digitally.

Learn more about UPS Paperless® Invoice here.

Prepayment of Duties and Taxes Online

A new service for consignees of cross-border shipments to prepay duties and taxes online prior to delivery for any package that is cleared by UPS brokerage. This service is available from the U.S., or any export country, to the UK and 15 other destination countries when UPS is the broker.

Imports from Outside the EU

Goods that are imported from outside the European Union (EU) require:

- Correct commodity code
- Payment of duty and VAT, in some cases, and a VAT return if you have filed a VAT registration (Additional duties may apply, such as anti-dumping duties.)
- Registration with the Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system
- Declaration to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) via the CHIEF system
- Single Administrative Document (SAD), also known as a form C88, can be filed manually or electronically
- Import license for certain goods, such as firearms

For details, search for United Kingdom imports here and banned imports here.

Unique Customs Info

Use the following information to help ensure that your shipments are compliant with the United Kingdom’s customs requirements for exporting and importing.

Import Value Limits to the UK:
- Duty: In most cases, when the value of the shipment is equal to or less than the de minimis value (private and commercial shipments – 135.00 GBP) the shipment may enter the country duty free but tax is raised.
- VAT: Shipments valued up to 15.00 GBP will not be charged VAT. Shipments valued above 15.00 GBP require customs clearance as a formal entry.

This regulation does not apply to alcoholic beverages, tobacco and perfume.

Find more information unique to the United Kingdom here.
All you need to know from A to Zed.

British playwright George Bernard Shaw is famously said to have quipped that the United States and Great Britain are “two countries separated by a common language.” But when it comes to doing business in the UK, you have to know more than changes in spelling (‘ou’ instead of ‘o’; ‘s’ in place of ‘z’) or that “lorry” is the word for truck. That’s why we have the information to guide you through what you need to know about shipping, so everything can be spot on (exactly right).

**Helpful Links**

- **American Chamber of Commerce in the UK**
- **British-American Business Council**
- **Doing Business in the UK — U.S. Commercial Service**
- Export.gov
- International Trade Administration
- United States Trade Representative: Export Assistance for Small- and Medium-Sized Businesses
- U.S. Export Assistance Centers

**Online Tools**

Use the convenient links below to help you with your shipping needs.

- **Calculate Time and Costs**: Find delivery dates, time and shipping costs for UPS® Services.
- **Days of Operation**: Find UPS-observed holidays in the United Kingdom.
- **Flex Global View®**: Provides better supply chain visibility and a fast response to critical shipping milestones with event notifications and flexible reporting.
- **Import/Export Country Regulations**: Find country-specific facts and requirements that may impact your international shipment.
- **UPS’s Quantum View® Manage**: Get up-to-date information about shipments you send or those you’re expecting from one Web-based format that is easily customizable.
- **UPS Import Control®**: Take control of your inbound international shipments.
- **UPS Paperless® Invoice**: Speeds up the customs clearance process and eliminates the need for paper commercial invoices by transmitting data electronically.
- **UPS Shipping Systems**: Compare solutions side-by-side to see which one works best for you.
- **UPS TradeAbility®**: A suite of Web-based tools to help companies manage and track their international trade.

**UPS Cost Definitions**

UPS offers a variety of billing options to fit your business:

**Options**

- Charges can be billed to the shipper, receiver, or a third party payor.
- Charges for international shipping typically include freight, duties and taxes.
- Customers using UPS’s automated shipping systems can choose to have the shipping charges billed to one party and duties and taxes to another. Or, via the Split Duty VAT (SDV) option, customers can bill the freight and duty to one party and the tax/VAT to another.

**The following are a few of the UPS international billing options customers may choose:**

- **Shipper pays all charges (also referred to as “Free Domicile”).**
- **Receiver pays all charges (also referred to as “Free Collect”).**
- **Shipper pays all charges; receiver pays duties and taxes.**
- **Shipper pays shipping charges; a third party (could be in another country) pays the duties and taxes.**

**Note:** A “Duties and Tax Forwarding Surcharge” is applied whenever the shipper requests that the duties and taxes be billed to a payor outside the destination country. The third party’s UPS account number is required.

**Get transit times, delivery dates and shipping costs here**

**Customs Clearance Classification**

Use this glossary to help you understand how the items you ship are defined by United Kingdom customs. This will help ensure a speedy clearance process for all your deliveries.

**Document**

A document is generally defined as a written, typed or printed communication of no commercial value. As a result, documents generally pass through customs quickly and do not incur duties or taxes. Commodities considered documents are country-specific. There is no weight limit on shipping documents unless a country-specific rule applies. Documents can be shipped as packages or in UPS Express® Letter envelopes and boxes (as long as the destination country does not prohibit documents in boxes).

**Document Shipment**

A shipment generally containing written, typed or printed communication of no commercial value. Document shipments are usually considered non-dutiable shipments and generally do not require export documentation (commercial invoice, etc.).

**Samples**

A low-value commodity that essentially has no commercial value. For goods to qualify as a sample they must be mutilated or marked to render them not suitable for commercial use.

**Non-Document/Dutiable**

Any commodity not meeting the document qualifications of the destination country. Access the **GI-International Countries** options to view the destination country’s Document Checklist for document qualifications. Non-documents cannot be shipped in UPS® Letter envelopes.

**Non-Document Shipment**

A shipment, either commercial or non-commercial, containing a commodity other than documents for which duties may be charged, on the value listed on the invoice, at the destination country.

For further glossary details, click here.
Congratulations on all your ventures in the British market. Use the following step-by-step checklist to prepare your shipments for delivery across the pond. Taking the time to cover all the steps now will help to ensure that your items arrive promptly and safely.

1. Select an International Service
   Now that you’ve familiarized yourself with the regulations in the United Kingdom, choose the UPS international shipping services that best fit your import and export needs, from guaranteed delivery times to destinations and more.
   - Choose an international service here
   - Use the following additional links to help you make your decision:
     - Calculate times and costs of specific services
     - Calculate landed costs using UPS TradeAbility® Tool

2. Choose an International Billing Option
   Different businesses have different billing needs. UPS international billing offers a variety of options to best fit the requirements of your specific business model.
   - Choose a billing option here

3. Prepare Your Shipping Label
   You are now ready to prepare your shipping label and fill out any final international forms required for your shipments.
   - Fill out necessary forms and labels here

4. Create Required Documentation
   Now that you’ve selected your shipping and billing options, let UPS guide you through the process of filling out each of the required export or import forms you’ll need to get your shipment to its final destination.

5. Entrust It to Your Worldwide Delivery Partner
   It’s time to let UPS handle it from here. You can either drop off your shipment to one of thousands of UPS locations, including at The UPS Store® locations and drop boxes, or you can schedule a pickup using UPS On-Call Pickup™ service. We’ll gladly pick up all of your ground, air and international shipments for a single fee, regardless of how many packages you have.
   - Find a drop-off location here
   - Schedule a pickup here

6. Check Your Shipment Status
   Your shipment may have left your hands, but it hasn’t left your sight. Use your UPS tracking number to access information about your shipment at any point in the delivery process. You can receive information online at ups.com, by email or through Quantum View™ alerts.
   - Track your shipment here
   - Learn about more ways to track here

That’s all there is to it. And it will get easier every time you do it. Keep this guide as a reference, and thank you once again for choosing UPS as your global delivery and logistics partner.

UPS Capital® Services

UPS Capital services offers a full range of financing and insurance options to help you operate with greater productivity and minimize risk when shipping from the U.S. to the UK. These options include:

- Flexible Parcel Insurance
  - Protect your goods against loss, damage or delay, including time- and temperature-sensitive items. Select coverage at the time of shipping, with no upfront costs or deposits. If there’s a loss, you’re covered up to the full invoice value of the goods.

- Cargo Insurance
  - This option insures your goods in transit anywhere in the United Kingdom or the world, no matter how they move or where they are in your supply chain.

- Trade Credit Protection Services
  - Offered in partnership with Euler Hermes®, this option enables you to grow your business in the United Kingdom safely while protecting you against customer insolvency, bankruptcy and political risk.

- Global Asset-Based Lending
  - For customers with goods warehoused offshore, or in transit from faraway places, that’s working capital that’s not really working for you. With this option, you can borrow against offshore-warehoused or in-transit goods, as well as domestic inventory and receivables. This provides a secure revolving line of credit that can improve your company’s liquidity and financial flexibility.

Learn more about all UPS Capital® services options here