

Sea Freight Documentation Guide

Sea freight costs less per kilo than air, but delays at the destination port can erase the saving. Most of them come down to documents.

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Bills of lading

☐	ORIGINAL BILL OF LADING	A document of title. The cargo is released against presentation of the originals.
☐	TELEX RELEASE	The originals are surrendered at origin and the carrier releases the cargo electronically. Faster, as nothing needs couriering.
☐	SEA WAYBILL	Not a document of title; release goes to the named consignee without presentation.

Choosing a container

☐	20' STANDARD	Heavy, dense cargo.
☐	40' STANDARD AND 40' HIGH CUBE	Larger volumes and lighter or taller cargo.
☐	REEFER	Temperature-controlled cargo.
☐	OPEN TOP AND FLAT RACK	Out-of-gauge cargo that cannot be loaded through container doors.
☐	SHARED CONTAINER (LCL)	Cargo that does not fill a container.

Before the vessel arrives in Nigeria

☐	FORM M	Opened before shipment.
☐	PAAR	Issued by Nigeria Customs ahead of clearance.
☐	MATCHING INVOICE AND PACKING LIST	Descriptions, quantities and values consistent with the Form M.

Free time, demurrage and detention

☐	FREE TIME	Days allowed after discharge before charges begin.
☐	DEMURRAGE AND STORAGE	Charged daily when a container stays in the port beyond free time.
☐	DETENTION	Charged when an empty container is returned late.

Tip

Ask whether your supplier can arrange a telex release or sea waybill. It removes the risk of original documents arriving after the vessel.

Regulations, permits and procedures change. This guide is general information, not legal or customs advice. Funteg confirms the exact requirements for each shipment. Published 9 October 2026.

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