

The 411 to Tradeshow Shipping

We know tradeshow shipping can be confusing. When you've been to as many tradeshows as we have, you've seen it all. Here's some of our sage tradeshow shipping wisdom, gathered in one place for your reference.

Before the Show

When preparing for a show review your show's exhibitor manual closely! You will save money by familiarizing yourself with move-in and move-out dates, as well as advance warehouse and show site shipping information. Be sure to order any utilities you might need (electric, water, special services, etc.) well in advance, when discounts of up to 33% can be realized. The closer the show date approaches, the more expensive these types of items become.

Important Materials to Ship with Your Booth

It seems obvious, but we've seen it a thousand times — booths showing up at the tradeshow floor missing the basic essentials to make unpacking and setup a breeze, including:

- Clear packing tape
- Velcro — two-sided self-stick
- Scissors
- Permanent markers
- Stapler and staples
- Shrink wrap

Place at least two labels on each box in the event pieces get separated during transit. Clearly mark your company name and booth number on each box/label.

Advance Warehouse vs. Show Site

You have two options to ship your tradeshow shipment to your show: the advance warehouse or directly to the show site. If you plan to ship your booth and materials to the show well in advance of the show date, you will want to ship your materials to the advance warehouse. If time is tight and you cannot get your materials there early, shipping to the show site is a viable option as well.

When shipping to the advance warehouse, your freight may arrive up to 30 days prior to the show dates; check your show's exhibitor service kit for information on shipment types and dates. If your freight is ready early, we suggest shipping to the advance warehouse whenever possible. Shipping to the advance warehouse gives you the ability to track your freight and ensure that it has been received, with time to double-check. Your freight will already be in place when you arrive for setup. Although some show decorators may charge slightly higher drayage for a shipment sent to the advance warehouse, the pros generally outweigh this cost.

When shipping to the show site, your freight may only arrive during the scheduled times of exhibitor move-in. Shipping to the show site brings into play the risks of your shipment not arriving in time, being refused by the facility, or incurring additional charges. If your freight is sent directly to the show site, the carrier controls your delivery time. Carriers are assigned an unloading number according to driver check-in time, so make sure they arrive early!

Furniture (ship it)

All tradeshow decorators offer a wide array of furniture for rent, including tables, chairs, bag stands, literature racks, waste baskets, and more. Renting furniture ensures that the decorator handles delivering items to your booth (usually the day before the show opens) and picking them up after the show. While this is certainly easy, we've found that furniture rental can add upwards of 20% to your total show costs.

PartnerShip Tradeshow Select's solution? Go to your local low price warehouse (Costco, Sam's Club, Wal Mart, etc.) and buy collapsible furniture. Then just include it with your pallet and ship it to the show. Your one-time expense of buying a few hundred dollars worth of booth furniture could pay for itself after one show.

Carpet (ship it)

Depending on the venue selected for your event, you can expect either a bare concrete floor or ballroom carpet greeting you when you arrive in your booth space. Not very fun to stand on for eight to ten hours a day for the duration of the show. The solution? Carpet.

All major tradeshow decorators offer carpeting and padding for rental. It is important to note that standard carpet sizes are 9' x 10' even if your booth size is 10' x 10'. This is because most booths utilize a back wall and do not utilize the rear 1' of the booth space.

Renting carpet and padding for the show, similar to renting furniture, can be an expensive proposition. We recommend investing in a portable interlocking floor system that you can easily ship with your booth exhibit to the show. A typical 10' x 10' booth space will cost less than \$300 to carpet. Rather than renting a couple hundred bucks worth of carpet at every show, just buy some and ship it with your booth.

Material Handling/Drayage

Drayage is the charge for moving your exhibit materials from the dock to your booth space on the tradeshow floor before the show, as well as for moving your materials back to the dock at the end of the show. Drayage is typically calculated on a fee per 100 lbs. of freight per shipment. Drayage fees vary depending on the type of shipment, the amount of handling, the time of day, and other factors. Be sure to review and anticipate drayage fees when you prepare your show budget.

Drayage service provides for:

- Completing inbound carrier's receiving documents
- Unloading and delivery of the goods to your booth space from the receiving dock
- Storing of empty cartons/crates and extra products at an on-site warehouse
- Returning empty cartons/crates and pickup of the exhibit materials from your booth space to the receiving dock and loading back onto the truck of your chosen carrier
- Completing outbound carrier's shipping documents

Common mistakes that typically result in additional drayage charges include:

- Multiple small shipments arriving separately – it's always best to consolidate your shipment if the weight is over 200 lbs.
- Shipments being delivered after the deadline date
- Missing your target date
- Trucks arriving during "overtime" hours, which include all weekend shipments

Insurance

Check with your company's insurance provider for insurance available to you while exhibiting. You are encouraged to make sure your property is sufficiently insured from the time it leaves your place of business until it returns after the show. Speak with your insurance provider about types and levels of coverage recommended for your particular situation.

Your shipment will also be covered by the carrier's liability, which is different than insurance. Liability is the carrier's financial accountability for lost or damaged goods. Each carrier has specific limits of liability coverage. If your material gets damaged or lost during transport, you must file a claim with the carrier directly.

At the Show

Always bring master copies of literature and your shipment information (including the pro number) with you to the show, in the unlikely event that your shipment is lost or delayed. If the worst happens, you'll have a method for tracking down your shipment and materials to hand out to customers.

Show Office

Once you arrive at the show and determine your booth location, it's always a good idea to locate the show office — it will be your key support center while you are there. If you have questions about show procedures, rules and regulations, or just need general show information, visit the show office.

Preparing for Show Opening

First thing's first — set up your display! After you set up, have your empty packing material and containers ready for removal and storage during the show by labeling them with your company name and booth number. The official service contractor will clear the floor of all labeled material to be stored throughout the show and return the items to your booth upon show close. If at all possible try to break down your boxes and store your move-out materials under a table in your booth, this way you won't have to wait — sometimes for hours — to receive your empties at the end of the show.

Once the Show is Open

Be aware of your dismantle schedule and instructions in advance to avoid any possible confusion. Leave enough time for empty containers to be returned to you from storage.

You will need to confirm your outbound shipping arrangements with your carrier. If your designated carrier does not show to pick up your shipment please be aware that the official show contractor has the right to "force" the freight out with another carrier of their choice.

Closing Day

Once the show is closed, pack up all of your materials to be shipped out and leave them in your booth. Please pay special attention to any move-out bulletins you receive, which will include timelines for turning in your outbound paperwork. You will need to complete the official show contractor's Outbound Material Handling Form and turn it in at the service center desk once you have your exhibit material packed up and ready to go. Please double check that the carrier information and billing information are correct on your form. Show site personnel will collect your materials and take them to the dock for pickup. To ensure that your materials stay together and minimize the possibility of lost or damaged items, you may want to shrink wrap your materials. Be aware that if you need shrink wrap and/or shrink wrap service from the decorator it will cost you extra money.

After the Show

After the show, make notes of what you learned from your show experience — these will be valuable throughout your exhibiting future. Keep copies of any forms, invoices, and show materials. The next show may be handled by someone else or may be too far in the future to remember all the details when the time comes. Remember to take the time to compare your costs with your benefits after the show as well.

The Next Show

Sometimes your schedule demands that you exhibit at another show, in another state, in a few days. This is when you definitely need an expert in handling and expediting your tradeshow materials. PartnerShip Tradeshow Select can help move your booth and materials in a timely manner, to be sure you are ready to go. We do all the tracking and communication with the carriers to assure this is one thing you don't have to worry about.

PartnerShip Tradeshow Select is here to provide you with simple, dependable, and exceptional tradeshow shipping – all while saving you money. For a quote on your next shipment to or from a show visit [TradeshowSelect.com/Quote](https://www.tradeshowselect.com/Quote) or call us at **800-599-2902**.