

Your selection of a car hauler partner to provide reliable, affordable and damage-free transport of your vehicles is an important decision. Use this glossary of auto transport terms to make a more informed and intelligent decision regarding the shipment of your vehicles.

A

ATA

[American Trucking Association](#); an industry organization comprised of trucking professionals and motor carrier companies which works to advance the trucking industry's public image, business interests, and its legislative agenda. The ATA also provides educational programs and promotes safety on our nation's highways.

Accessorial Charges

Additional charges beyond the cost of freight transportation for a variety of related services and privileges that are made available in connection with the transportation of goods. With respect to auto transport, accessorial charges may include, but are not limited to, things like charging dead batteries; adding fuel to a vehicle; repairing flat tires; etc. Accessorial charges cover services other than vehicle shipment and delivery.

Agent

A person authorized to transact business for and on behalf of another party.

Autorack

A specially designed multi-level rail car used to transport automobiles. Autoracks have two or three decks, can carry up to 20 vehicles and have metal side panels and end doors to protect automobiles while in transit. Bi-level or double-deck Autoracks usually transport trucks and large SUV's, while tri-level or triple deck Autoracks usually transport passenger cars. A dedicated train with 70 Autoracks is capable of transporting more than 1,000 vehicles at one time.

Auto Transport

Moving or shipping automobiles as freight. Auto shippers are strongly encouraged to seek out reputable, fully-insured, financially strong car haulers. A new generation of smart, customer-focused auto transport companies are making nationwide auto transport more convenient and affordable than ever before. By leveraging the power and convenience of the internet to provide an instant price quote and estimated transit time for door-to-door pickup and delivery anywhere in the United States, offering online tracking of vehicles while in transit, and by combining both short-distance truck and long-distance rail service options, these car haulers also offer the flexibility to use the auto transport mode that best meets practically any price and timing requirements.

Auto Transport Cost

Auto transport cost may vary, based upon a number of factors: the distance transported; the mode of auto transport selected (i.e. truck, rail or a combination thereof); the quantity of vehicles shipped at one time; timing/urgency; and the vehicle(s) model, make, size and weight.

B

Backhaul

Refers to the car hauler's opportunity to pick up a second load of vehicles close to the destination where they delivered their first load; i.e., returning to the origin of the first load. A to B, then B to A.

Bill of Lading (BOL)

A document used by some car haulers, acknowledging that they received your vehicle for shipment. For international shipments, the Bill of Lading is the official document representing ownership of the vehicles, as well as the contract for its transportation. Be sure to read and understand the Bill of Lading before signing it. You must also sign the Vehicle Inspection Report which is included with the Bill of Lading before and after shipment of your vehicle.

Bi-Level Rail Car

A type of rail car used for auto transport, called a bi-level because it has two decks, an upper and a lower. Bi-level capacity is between 8 - 12 vehicles. They are often used to transport vans, pickups and SUVs, or passenger vehicles that have radio antennas or higher profiles that exclude them from fitting on a tri-level rail car.

BBB

[Better Business Bureau](#); a private, non-profit organization which monitors and reports the business practices of companies. The purpose of the BBB is to act as a mutually trusted intermediary to resolve disputes, to facilitate communication, and to provide Reliability Reports on companies.

Booking

Arrangement with a steamship company for the acceptance and transport of vehicles.

Booking Number

A reference number for bookings made with an ocean carrier. It should be unique without duplication for a three-year period.

Buckloader

A specially designed mobile ramp that is used to load and unload vehicles from a rail car. The ramp can be raised or lowered based on the height of the autorack. The Buckloader was named after the manufacturer, [Buck Equipment](#).

C

Carload – (a) The quantity of vehicles required for the application of a rail car-load rate. (b) A rail car loaded to its weight or space-carrying capacity.

Car Hauler/Carrier

A company which provides auto transport service; the physical transport of a vehicle.

Car Carrier / Auto Transport Equipment

A specially constructed semi-trailer (unpowered unit) usually capable of transporting up to 9 vehicles. Some include hydraulically operated ramps. Some vehicles are backed onto the trailer while others are driven nose first to help maximize space or meet overhang requirements. Each vehicle is firmly blocked and tied down to help protect it during transit. Large vehicles are usually transported on the upper level of multi-deck transport trailers.

Carrier – Common

A licensed, bonded and insured for-hire carrier contracted to multiple shippers.

Carrier - Contract

A licensed, bonded and insured for-hire car hauler contracted to one particular shipper.

Carrier - Private

A licensed, bonded and insured not-for-hire car hauler contracted to or owned by a shipper and does not offer services to the general public.

Chock

A specially designed wedge that keeps a vehicle's wheel from moving. Chocks are used in auto rail cars to prevent vehicle movement during transit to protect both the vehicle and the unloaders.

Coloading

The ability to load more than one shipper's vehicles on a single conveyance. This allows vehicle shippers to lower their auto transport costs (they effectively can get a full-load price even if they're only shipping one car); and it helps the car hauler achieve maximum load efficiency.

Consignee

The person or customer to whom the vehicle is delivered, or who agrees delivery will be made to an agent acting on his/her behalf. Also called the "receiver."

Consignor

The individual or organization shipping vehicles to a consignee, also referred to as the "Shipper".

Container

A rectangular receptacle that resembles a truck trailer without wheels (chassis) that is lifted onto flat rail cars, vessels or trucks. Common sizes are 40' and 53'. Containers are designed for all modes of intermodal transport and are often used to transport non-working or salvage vehicles. Specially-designed containers are used to transport vehicles on ocean-going vessels.

Customs Broker

A private business that provides documentation and entry preparation services required by a foreign country and U.S. Customs on behalf of an Importer/Exporter of Record. Importers hire customs brokers to carry out Customs related responsibilities; the broker is covered by Power of Attorney to act on behalf of the Importer/Exporter of record.

Cut-off Time

The latest possible time a vehicle shipment may be delivered to the rail terminal, vessel or designated port location.

D

Delivery Network

A complex system of connected trucks, railroads and ships used to transport cars. Car haulers with access to all modes of auto transport have a powerful delivery network that provides efficient auto shipping to meet their customers' time and cost requirements.

Destination

The location where transport of a vehicle is completed; the place where the car hauler actually turns over the vehicle to a consignee or their agent. Also termed "Final Destination." Car haulers need both the origin and the destination of a shipment to give you an accurate auto transport quote.

Diversion

A change made in the route of a shipment in transit. Also referred to as Reconsignment.

D.O.T.

United States [Department of Transportation](#); the agency which oversees federal highway, air, railroad, and maritime administration functions. D.O.T. is also responsible for highway, bridge and rail transportation planning, construction and maintenance.

Door-to-Door

A term used to describe vehicle pick-up and delivery from the customer's front door (or its current location) to the receiver's front door (its final destination). Most car haulers make every effort to provide door-to-door auto transport. However, there are some instances when door-to-door may not be possible due to narrow streets, road or load restrictions, low power lines, etc.. If door-to-door is not possible, vehicle pick-up and delivery may be made at a nearby parking lot or any convenient nearby destination, dock, hub, yard or terminal.

Door-to-Ramp

Auto transport from the customer's front door or the vehicle's current location to the destination intermodal ramp or terminal closest to the receiver.

E

En Route / In Transit

A term used to denote the vehicle is “on the way” or in the process of being shipped from origin to destination.

Enclosed Auto Transport

Auto transport using a fully enclosed van, semi trailer or rail car, usually with metal sides and a top. Enclosed auto transport offers increased protection against weather, road debris and other hazards especially over long distances. Enclosed truck transport is a premium service which usually costs more than standard open auto transport. Enclosed rail transport is standard and often costs less than open truck transport when moving cars more than 500 miles.

ETA – Estimated Time of Arrival

Most auto transport companies provide a vehicle ETA. A good car hauler will provide ETA updates along with online tracking so auto shippers can manage their business effectively.

Expedited

A service intended for the prompt dispatch of vehicles that require quick delivery. This type of auto transport generally costs more than standard service.

Export

Shipment of a vehicle to another country.

Export Declaration

A government document permitting vehicles to be shipped out of the country.

F

FMCSA

[Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration](#); an organization which provides a public database listing car hauler licensing and insurance information. This organization also regulates Motor Carrier licenses. You should make sure that any car hauler you use is currently licensed with the FMCSA.

Force Majeure

Force of Nature; accidents or incidents caused by the force of nature which are beyond the power of people to control.

Freight

Goods or property transported, such as vehicles.

Freight Forwarder

One who assembles small shipments of vehicles into one large consolidated shipment which is then tendered to an auto carrier. Upon reaching destination, the shipment is separated into small shipments and delivered.

Freight Prepaid

Freight and charges are required to be paid by a shipper before an original bill of lading is release.

I**Inoperable Vehicles**

Vehicles that are not in running condition or non-drivable. If a vehicle cannot be driven onto a car carrier or rail car, it is considered to be "inoperable".

Insurance

The US Department of Transportation requires that all auto transporters be fully licensed and insured, and most car haulers provide replacement-cost insurance for the cars they transport. You can also inquire if additional or expanded coverage is available, as well as what type of coverage is included or offered by your personal insurance company while your vehicles are in transit or stored.

Intermodal/Multimodal

The process of shipping a vehicle using more than one mode of auto transport. Offered by only a few select car haulers, intermodal auto transport integrates both short-distance truck transport and long-distance rail service options. Leveraging the ability of rail to efficiently move one ton of freight 467 miles per gallon of diesel fuel, Intermodal transport offers significant cost-savings and flexibility to use the shipping mode that best meets practically any price and timing requirements.

In-Transit

A term used to describe when a vehicle is in the process of being moved from one location to another. Also referred to as "enroute".

L**Local Move**

A term used to describe auto transport from pickup to delivery by a single carrier, usually within a radius of 200 miles from origin to destination.

M**Marine Insurance**

Broadly, insurance covering loss or damage of goods at sea. Marine insurance typically compensates the owner of vehicles for losses sustained from fire, shipwreck, piracy and various other causes but excludes losses that can be legally recovered.

Modifications

Changes or additions to a vehicle from its original state, such as spoilers, roof racks, 4 x 4 lift kits, running boards, camper cabs, etc. Modifications can affect a vehicle's overall dimensions and weight, which may require a different mode of auto transport or additional fees.

O

Origin

The location where transport of a vehicle starts, or originates. Car haulers need both the origin and destination of a shipment to provide an accurate auto transport quote.

Oversized Vehicle

A vehicle larger than a standard passenger car or heavy duty truck, such as a cargo van or utility truck.

P

Port-to-Port Service

The transport of a vehicle from one ocean port to another by ship.

Pick Up and Transit Time

Pick up and transit times may vary based on the auto transport company you choose. Auto transport usually averages between 1 to 3 weeks, depending on pick-up and delivery locations, availability of the vehicles, shipping capacity, and distance. Most car haulers also offer expedited service at an additional fee.

Preparing a Vehicle for Transport

The customer, or consignee, is responsible for preparing the vehicle for transport, including the removal of all personal items from the vehicle. Be sure to also disarm all alarms, provide all sets of keys to the vehicle and remove any loose parts, antennas, protruding accessories, low hanging spoilers and non-standard vehicle add-ons. A vehicle should have only a quarter tank of gas when being shipped. It is also advisable to clean your car prior to transport to ensure accurate vehicle inspections and avoid damage claims.

POD – Proof of Delivery

A document used by some car haulers which serves as receipt for the delivery of a vehicle shipment. The Proof of Delivery is similar to a Vehicle Inspection Report and documents the condition of the vehicle at the time of delivery. You should carefully inspect your vehicle and note any transportation-related damage, if any, before signing the Proof of Delivery. The driver should then countersign the document.

POV – Personally-Owned Vehicle

A vehicle that is owned by a private individual. Consumers often ship their personal vehicles to winter homes in Florida and Arizona, or ship a car sold online to its new owner.

R

Ramp

Another word for an intermodal terminal. Ramps were originally structures, permanent or temporary, from which trailers or machinery are driven onto or off of a railroad flatcar.

Ramp-to-Door

Shipping a vehicle from the intermodal terminal/ramp closest to the customer, to the receiver's front door (vehicle's final delivery location).

Ramp-to-Ramp

Shipping a vehicle from the intermodal terminal/ramp closest to the customer, to the intermodal ramp closest to the receiver.

Receiver

The customer or consignee named as the person responsible for receiving the vehicle.

Ro-Ro Ship

Ro-Ro stands for "roll-on, roll-off". Ro-Ro ships are specially designed with ramps to transport a large quantity of drivable vehicles over the water. Wheeled vehicles such as automobiles, trucks, and semi-trailers are driven on and safely secured for the ocean voyage, then driven off at the destination port.

S

SED – Shippers Export Declaration

A form which is often required prior to exporting a vehicle.

Shipper

The person for whom the car hauler agrees to move vehicles to a specified destination and at a specified price. Also called "Consignor".

T

Terminal

A facility provided by a railroad or car hauling company at an intermediate point in its network for the handling of freight; and for the breaking up, making up, forwarding and servicing loads, and interchanging with other carriers. Also referred to as a "ramp" when referencing a rail terminal.

Tractor

A semi-truck (powered unit) used to pull a load or semi-trailer (unpowered unit).

Tracking

The ability to follow a vehicle shipment through the delivery cycle. A few auto transporters even offer online tracking on their web sites, so you can check the status, location and ETA of your shipment at any time.

Terminal to Terminal Transport

An alternative to door-to-door pick-up and delivery; a term used to describe pick-up and delivery from a conveniently located truck terminal, rail ramp, dock, hub or yard.

Tie-downs

Straps or chains that a car hauler uses to secure a vehicle on a tow truck or multi-level car carrier. Many car haulers are switching to straps to minimize damage in transit.

Tri-Level Rail Car

A type of railway car with three levels or decks and especially constructed to carry automobiles. Tri-level rail cars are used to transport passenger vehicles and can hold 12 - 16 vehicles.

V

VAT – Value Added Tax

A tax on the estimated market value added to a vehicle at each stage of distribution, ultimately passed on to the consumer. The VAT is only assessed on the portion of service provided by a car hauler in a country that charges VAT, such as Mexico and Canada. The invoicing party is responsible for collecting and remitting this tax.

Vehicle Inspection Report

A comprehensive report, included with the Bill of Lading (BOL) or Proof of Delivery (POD), detailing the condition of the vehicle at the time of pickup. Upon delivery, you will be given the opportunity to examine the vehicle, review the Vehicle Inspection Report and compare it to the vehicle condition described at the time of pickup. You must note and record any discrepancies in the vehicle's condition at that time – and before signing the delivery receipt - in order to file a possible damage claim. The driver should also countersign the report.

Vehicle Damage

While damage during auto transport is rare, it may happen. Work with your auto transport company to seek reimbursement for any damage that happened during the shipping process. A successful claim often depends on how well the damage was documented on the Proof of Delivery or Vehicle Inspection Report upon receipt of the vehicle.

VIN - Vehicle Identification Number

The unique 17-digit serial number assigned to a vehicle by the manufacturer. VIN numbers contain codes which contain vehicle characteristics such as country of origin, manufacturer, make and model. Some auto transport companies use VIN decoders to upload vehicle characteristics into their system to help them build loads more efficiently and to track vehicles enroute.

Vehicle Size Classifications

Vehicle size classes are a way of classifying automobiles to estimate auto transport fees prior shipment. Passenger cars are generally classified as vehicles from 0-60" in height, or as mini-compact, sub-compact, compact, mid-size or large cars based on their industry standard interior volume index measured in cubic feet. Other classifications include SUV/Minivan and Truck. Oversize Vehicles, also known as non-passenger vehicles, are defined as cargo vans, and special purpose vehicles such as utility trucks. The larger the vehicle, the higher the cost to transport it.

W

Waybill or Consignment Note

A document issued by a shipper or car hauler giving details and instructions for the shipment of a vehicle; typically including the names of the consignor and consignee, the point of origin, the vehicle's destination, the route, modes of auto transport, and the amount charged for pickup, transport and delivery.

Wheel Straps

Reinforced straps used in an auto rail car which go over the wheels and secure the vehicle to the floor to minimize transportation damage.

ShipCarsNow is a federally-licensed car hauler integrating both short-distance truck transport and long-distance rail service options. ShipCarsNow provides affordable, reliable damage-free transport of your vehicle anywhere in the United States. Please visit www.ShipCarsNow.com call 1-866-207-3360 for additional information. We make auto transportation easy!