

Freight Terminology Guide

Plain-language definitions for common freight brokerage, dispatching, trucking, and logistics terms.

Use this guide as a quick reference. Contract language and regulatory meanings can be more specific; always review the controlling document or official requirement.

Accessorial: An additional charge for services beyond standard pickup and delivery, such as detention, layover, lumper, or extra stops.

Authority: Government-granted operating permission associated with certain transportation activities.

Backhaul: A return movement, often used to bring a truck toward its home market or next preferred area.

Bill of Lading (BOL): The primary shipping document describing the freight, parties, and shipment details.

Blind Shipment: A shipment arranged so one party does not see the identity of another party on selected documents.

BOC-3: A federal filing designating process agents for service of legal documents.

Broker: A person or company arranging transportation by authorized motor carriers for compensation.

Carrier: The motor carrier that physically transports the freight.

Carrier Packet: Documents used to qualify and contract with a carrier.

Consignee: The party receiving the freight.

Consignor/Shipper: The party tendering or shipping the freight.

Deadhead: Miles traveled with an empty truck or trailer.

Detention: Time a driver is held beyond agreed free time at pickup or delivery, potentially creating an extra charge.

Dispatch: The coordination of a carrier's truck, driver, load options, schedule, and communications.

Double Brokering: Improperly re-brokering or transferring a load without authorization; often associated with fraud and serious risk.

Drayage: Short-distance movement of containers, commonly between ports, rail ramps, and nearby facilities.

Dry Van: An enclosed trailer commonly used for general freight.

ETA: Estimated time of arrival.

Factoring: Selling invoices to a finance company for faster payment, usually for a fee.

Flatbed: An open-deck trailer used for freight that may be loaded from the side, top, or rear.

FMCSA: Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Freight Class: A classification used in less-than-truckload pricing based on characteristics such as density and handling.

Fuel Surcharge: A separate charge intended to account for fuel-cost changes.

Gross Revenue: Total revenue before expenses are deducted.

Hours of Service (HOS): Rules limiting and structuring a commercial driver's driving and on-duty time.

Intermodal: Freight moved using more than one transportation mode, often rail and truck.

Lane: The origin-to-destination route or market pair for a shipment.

Layover: Extra time, often overnight, caused by a delay that may qualify for additional compensation.

Less Than Truckload (LTL): Freight that occupies only part of a trailer and is combined with other shipments.

Load Board: A platform where available freight and trucks may be posted and searched.

Lumper: A third-party worker or service that loads or unloads freight, often at warehouses or distribution centers.

MC Number: An identifying number historically associated with certain FMCSA operating authority records.

Motor Carrier: A business transporting property or passengers by commercial motor vehicle.

POD: Proof of delivery, typically a signed delivery document.

Power Only: A movement where the carrier provides the tractor and pulls another party's trailer.

Rate Confirmation: A written document stating the agreed load terms and rate between broker and carrier.

Reefer: A temperature-controlled trailer.

RPM: Rate per mile, commonly calculated by dividing revenue by miles.

Shipper Packet: Documents used to qualify, contract with, or set up a customer.

Spot Rate: A price negotiated for a specific shipment or short-term need.

TONU: Truck ordered not used; a charge that may apply when a truck is dispatched but the shipment is canceled or unavailable.

Tracking and Tracing: Monitoring shipment status, location, milestones, and exceptions.

TMS: Transportation Management System used to organize loads, contacts, documents, status, and billing.

Truckload (FTL): A shipment generally using most or all of a trailer for one customer.

UCR: Unified Carrier Registration, an annual registration program applying to certain interstate transportation businesses.

USDOT Number: A federal identifier used in motor-carrier safety and registration records.

W-9: A tax form used to provide a business name and taxpayer identification information.

My Additional Terms

Term	Definition / Notes