



LTL vs. FTL Freight:

Which is right for your shipment?

When it comes to your freight shipping, one size definitely doesn't fit all! That's why it's important to review your options and select the freight service type that's right for your business and budget.

The Basics

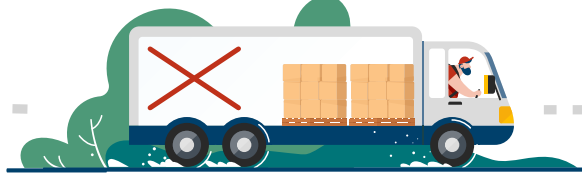
While there are many similarities between LTL and FTL shipping, depending on your specific needs, one option is likely a better fit than the other. Pay attention to the important differences between these two modes in order to determine which is best for your business.

Less-Than-Truckload (LTL)

Combines shipments from multiple businesses into one full truckload. Used for shipments that are too large for parcel shipping, but don't fill an entire freight truck.

You should consider LTL if your shipment:

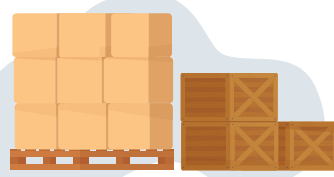
Doesn't fill an entire truck



Weighs between

150 LBS. **15,000 LBS.**

Consists of 6 or fewer handling units



Can endure additional handling in transit



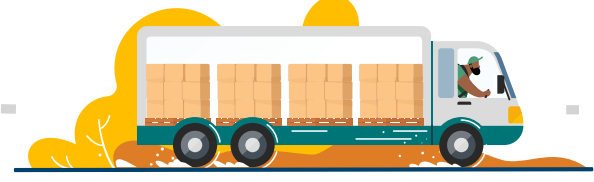
LTL shipments are loaded in and out of trailers and warehouses multiple times in transit. While most are delivered without complication, this additional handling does increase the potential for damage in transit — making LTL shipping best for more durable freight.

Full Truckload (FTL)

Moves freight from one shipper to a single destination. Used for larger freight that fills an entire trailer or when you want a dedicated truck for your goods.

You should consider FTL if your shipment:

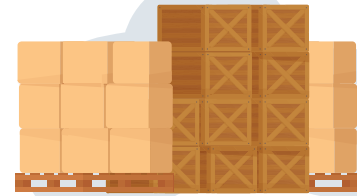
Can fill an entire trailer



Weighs more than

20,000 LBS.

Consists of 10 or more handling units



Is fragile or high-value



With truckload shipping, the trailer is loaded and sealed before driving directly to the delivery location. With far less handling in transit, this mode is ideal for your high-value or fragile freight.

Is time sensitive



FTL delivery times are typically shorter than LTL since the freight is handled by a single carrier, with no stops in transit*

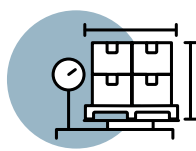
*Stops may be required in some situations due to the Electronic Logging Devices (ELD) Mandate.

Rates

In addition to the characteristics of your shipment, one of the biggest differences between these freight service types is the way shipping rates are calculated. While there are common factors that will impact all freight rates — such as delivery speed and accessorials — there are still some differences to be aware of in order to avoid any surprises!

The core value of LTL shipping is cost savings. If you're only shipping a few pallets (meaning your freight doesn't require a full trailer), then LTL will most likely be your most cost-effective option.

Main determining factors of LTL rates:



SIZE AND WEIGHT

Unlike FTL (where you pay to use the entire truck), your LTL rate is largely dependent upon the amount of space you take up in the trailer. The more room you require in transit, the higher your rate will be.



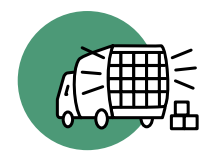
COMMODITY FREIGHT CLASS

Freight classification (or class) was designed by the National Motor Freight Traffic Association (NMFTA) as a way to help categorize freight shipments and streamline rates across the industry. A shipment's freight class is determined by a number of factors — including the commodity's density, stowability, handling and liability — and will have a significant impact on your final rate.

LTL rates can vary substantially based on the type of goods being shipped, even if other factors (such as destination or delivery speed) remain the same.

Since FTL shipping rates cover the use of the entire trailer (even if the full trailer space isn't utilized), this mode should be used thoughtfully to remain an efficient option. FTL typically becomes more cost-effective as the shipment's weight and volume increases.

Main determining factors of FTL rates:



INDUSTRY CAPACITY

FTL rates are determined largely in part by the state of the market — including the current economy, number of available drivers and availability of trucking equipment. Unless a contract has been pre-arranged with the carrier, pricing can fluctuate significantly with industry capacity.



TRANSPORTATION TYPE

Your final FTL rate will be determined in part by the type of transportation equipment needed. While most truckload shipments are delivered via dry van, depending on the goods being shipped, you may require special equipment like a refrigerated trailer or flatbed truck.



FUEL COSTS

To help cover fuel costs, carriers pass along some of the expense to the shipper in the form of a fuel surcharge. Surcharges are based on distance traveled and the current cost of diesel fuel, which can fluctuate greatly week-to-week.

Need help determining the best freight shipping strategy for your business?
Contact Unishippers today to get started!

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