International Trade Week 2026 | Export Toolkit

10 questions to help you spot potential risks, costs and opportunities in your international trade processes
International trade can open valuable new markets, but the detail matters. From commodity codes and customs procedures to Incoterms, origin and landed costs, small mistakes can create delays, unexpected costs and compliance problems.

Use this quick health check to see how confident you are in your current import and export processes.

How healthy is your international trade process?

For each question, give yourself:

2 points:	Yes, we're confident and can demonstrate this
1 point:	We think so, but we're not completely sure
0 points:	No / we're not sure

1. Commodity Codes

Are you confident your goods are classified correctly? Commodity codes can affect customs declarations, duty rates, trade measures and other requirements.

Ask yourself:

- Do we know the correct commodity code for the products we import or export?
- Have we checked that the classification is still appropriate?
- Do we have evidence to support the classification?

Score: ____ / 2

2. Customs Requirements

Do we understand what is required for our imports and exports? International shipments involve more than simply getting goods from A to B.

Ask yourself:

- Who is responsible for the customs declaration?
- Are our customs procedures appropriate for our business?
- Are we keeping the records and evidence we need?
- Do we know when additional customs procedures or authorisations might apply?

Score: ____ / 2

3. Incoterms

Are we using the right Incoterm for each transaction? Incoterms® help define responsibilities between buyer and seller — including costs, delivery responsibilities and the point at which risk transfers.

Ask yourself:

- Do we understand the Incoterm we're using?
- Does it reflect what we actually do operationally?
- Have we considered who is responsible for transport, insurance, customs clearance and other costs?
- Are our sales and purchasing teams using the terms consistently?

Score: ____ / 2

4. Rules of Origin

Do we know where our goods originate? Origin can affect whether preferential tariff treatment is available under a trade agreement, as well as other customs requirements.

Ask yourself:

- Do we know the origin of the goods we're trading?
- Can we provide the evidence needed to support an origin claim?
- Are we confident we're applying the relevant rules correctly?

Score: ____ / 2

5. Import Duty & Landed Cost

Do we know the true cost of getting our goods to their destination? Consider: Product cost + transport + insurance + duty + taxes + customs/ clearance costs + other associated costs = landed cost

Ask yourself:

- Have we calculated our landed costs?
- Do we know what duty may apply?
- Have we factored in the costs of customs clearance and transport?
- Do unexpected costs regularly appear after an order has been agreed?

Score: ____ / 2

6. Documentation

Are our commercial and customs documents accurate and consistent? Incorrect or inconsistent documentation can cause delays and additional work.

Ask yourself:

- Are commercial invoices completed correctly?
- Do product descriptions accurately describe the goods?
- Are quantities, values, weights and currencies consistent?
- Do our documents contain the information required by our customs process and customers?

Score: ____ / 2

7. Product Requirements

Have we checked whether our products meet the requirements of the destination market? Different markets can have different rules covering products, labeling, packaging, safety, certification etc.

Ask yourself:

- Have we checked the requirements for the specific destination?
- Are any licences, certificates or approvals required?
- Does the product need different labelling or documentation?
- Have we checked whether the requirements have changed?

Score: ____ / 2

8. VAT and Tax

Do we understand the VAT and tax implications of our transactions? International trade can create different VAT and tax considerations depending on what you're selling or buying, where the goods are going and who the customer is.

Ask yourself:

- Have we checked the VAT treatment of our transactions?
- Do we understand who is responsible for import VAT where applicable?
- Are our invoices and records consistent with the treatment we're applying?
- Do we know when specialist tax advice may be needed?

Score: ____ / 2

9. Export Controls & Restrictions

Have we checked whether our goods, customer or destination are subject to restrictions? Not every product or destination can be treated in the same way.

Ask yourself:

- Have we considered whether export controls apply?
- Have we checked the destination and end user where appropriate?
- Are any licences or permissions required?
- Do we have a process for checking higher-risk transactions?
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Score: ____ / 2

10. Your Overall Process

If someone in your team was absent tomorrow, could someone else manage an international shipment? This is the ultimate test.

Ask yourself:

- Are our import/export processes documented?
- Does the team know who is responsible for each step?
- Do we have reliable suppliers, freight forwarders and customs contacts?
- Do we know where mistakes are most likely to occur?
- Do we regularly review our international trade processes?

Score: ____ / 2

Your Score

17-20 Points - Looking good!

You appear to have a good level of confidence across the key areas covered by this health check - however it is important not to be complacent.

Next step: identify one area where a periodic review could make your process even more robust.

11-16 Points - Worth a closer look!

You've got some good foundations, but there are areas where you're relying on assumptions, individual knowledge or processes that may not be fully documented.

Next step: pick your three lowest-scoring areas and review them with the relevant people in your business.

0-10 Points - Time for a trade health check!

There may be significant opportunities to improve your processes, reduce avoidable costs and minimise the risk of delays or compliance problems.

Next step: don't try to fix everything at once. Start by identifying the areas with the greatest financial or operational risk.

Need a Second Pair of Eyes?

International trade doesn't have to be complicated, but the details matter. Import Export Support provides practical support to businesses involved in importing and exporting, helping them navigate the processes, paperwork and requirements involved in international trade.

If you've identified an area you'd like to review, drop us an email or call:

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