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LANDFALL GUIDE · EVERYDAY LIFE

How do I ship my belongings to the UK?

THE SHORT ANSWER

If you've lived outside the UK for at least 12 months and you've owned and used your belongings for at least six, you can usually bring them in free of import duty and VAT under Transfer of Residence relief. Apply before they arrive. Think hard about what's worth shipping, because US electrical items and cars often aren't.

For US citizens and green card holders moving to the UK. Build your free, personal move plan at **yourlandfall.com/plan**.

General information, not personal tax, financial, legal or immigration advice.

Transfer of Residence relief

You can usually import your personal belongings **without paying import duty or VAT** if:

- you've lived **outside the UK for at least 12 consecutive months**
- you've **owned and used** the items for at least **six months** (vehicles too)
- you're moving your **main home** to the UK
- the items are for your own use

Apply for **Transfer of Residence (ToR) relief** online **before** your goods arrive. Your moving company will need the reference. You generally can't sell, lend or hire out the items for 12 months after import.

Choosing a mover

- Get **at least three quotes** and check what's included: packing, customs clearance, delivery and unpacking.
- **Sea freight** (a shared or full container) is cheaper but takes weeks. **Air freight** is faster for a few essentials.
- Check the **insurance**: what it covers, and whether it's based on replacement value.
- Make a **detailed inventory**, which you'll need for customs and insurance.

What's worth shipping

Usually worth it: furniture you love, books, clothes, artwork, kitchenware, sentimental items.

Often not worth it:

- **US appliances and electronics.** The UK runs on **230 volts** with **Type G** three-pin plugs. US devices on 120 volts need a transformer unless they're dual-voltage. Most laptops and phone chargers are fine with an adapter; hairdryers, kitchen appliances and power tools usually aren't.
- **Large American furniture.** UK homes, doors and staircases are often smaller. Measure first.
- **Your car.** Importing a US vehicle means approval tests, changes such as headlights, and registration. Selling and buying here is often simpler.

Things you can't, or shouldn't, bring

- **Firearms and weapons** are tightly controlled.
- **Certain foods, plants and seeds** are restricted.
- **Medicines**: bring prescriptions and letters, and check rules for controlled drugs.

What to do next

Build your move plan. Shipping sits in the “before you leave” stage.

See every step for your move. Answer five questions and get a free plan in the right order: yourlandfall.com/plan