Canadian Small Business Shipping Checklist

Set your business up for shipping success

1. Know Your Products

- [ ] Measure and weigh each product (including packaging).
- [ ] Identify fragile or oversized items needing special handling.
- [ ] Confirm which products can ship across provinces or internationally.

2. Plan Your Shipping Budget

- [ ] Estimate average cost per order (packaging + carrier fees + insurance).
- [ ] Factor in return shipping costs.
- [ ] Set aside funds for peak season surcharges or rural delivery fees.

3. Choose Carriers Strategically

- [ ] Compare Canada Post, major couriers, and discount platforms.
- [ ] Check delivery speed vs. cost for local, cross-country, and U.S. shipments.
- [ ] Sign up for small-business discounts where available.

4. Get Packaging Right

- [ ] Pick sturdy, size-appropriate boxes or mailers to avoid oversize charges.
- [ ] Use eco-friendly or branded packaging to impress customers.
- [ ] Stock up on labels, tape, and protective fillers (bubble wrap, paper).

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5. Set Transparent Shipping Policies

- [ ] Decide on free, flat-rate, or real-time calculated rates.
- [ ] Communicate cut-off times for same-day or express shipping.
- [ ] Show all fees upfront—48% of shoppers abandon carts over unexpected costs.

6. Integrate & Automate

- [ ] Connect your eCommerce platform to shipping software.
- [ ] Automate label printing, tracking emails, and rate calculations to save time and reduce errors.

7. Offer Tracking & Updates

- [ ] Enable real-time tracking for all shipments.
- [ ] Provide delivery estimates.
- [ ] Send proactive updates for delays or back-ordered items.

8. Simplify Returns

- [ ] Write a clear, customer-friendly return policy
- [ ] Include return labels or instructions inside the package.
- [ ] Track return shipments to speed up refunds or exchanges.

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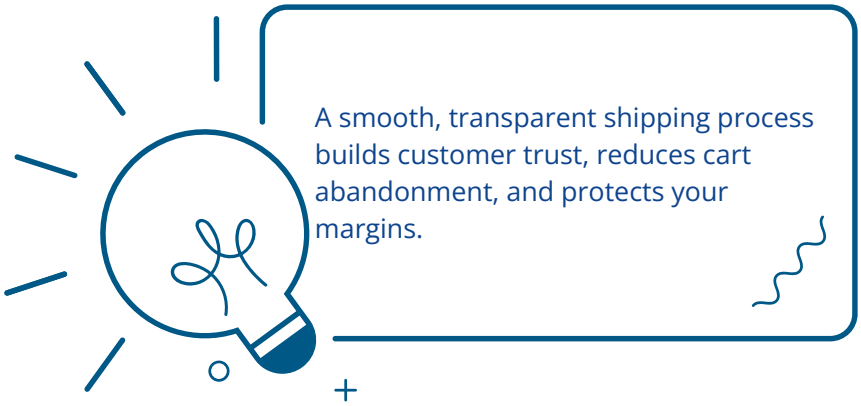
9. Stay Compliant

- [ ] Understand tax, duty, and customs paperwork for cross-border shipping.
- [ ] Keep accurate shipping and inventory records for CRA reporting.

10. Review Regularly

- [ ] Audit carrier bills quarterly for hidden fees or better discounts.
- [ ] Re-evaluate packaging sizes to lower dimensional-weight charges.
- [ ] Adjust shipping policies based on customer feedback and seasonality.



A smooth, transparent shipping process builds customer trust, reduces cart abandonment, and protects your margins.

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