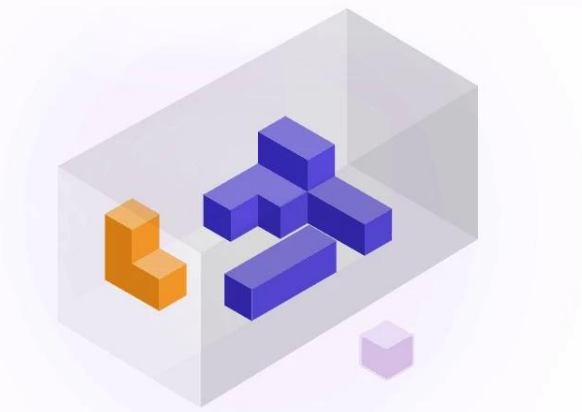


Less Container Load

Delivery of collective cargoes from 1m³ to 15m³, transported in a common [container](#) with other shippers in order not to overpay for delivery. It is considered the most economical way to deliver small quantities of goods



Difference Between LCL & FCL

[FCL \(Full Container Load\)](#) and LCL (Less Container Load) are terms used in international sea freight transportation. FCL and LCL are different both by definition and practice. If you need to transport a small cargo that can not be sent by regular post, but the cost of air freight is already prohibitively high for such cargo, and for transporting the whole container it is still too small, then sending the combined cargo is what you need.

The dimensions of the cargo for the collective shipment

According to the world standard, if the volume of the shipment does not exceed half the volume of the container (a 20-foot standard container has a volume of 33.2m³), a combined shipment – LCL applied.

What is LCL shipping?

LCL stands for **less than a container load** and describes sea shipping for cargo loads not large enough to fill a full 20ft or 40ft shipping container.

Since LCL shipments fill less than a full 20ft or 40ft shipping container, these are grouped with other cargo. This is why LCL shipments are sometimes called **groupage shipments**.

What is a loose cargo load?

A loose cargo load, while sometimes confused with LCL, is a load that is **not palletized**. This term can apply to shipments that do not require palletization and/or cannot be containerized due to their dimensions.

Sometimes **loose cargo** is used to describe goods that simply have not been palletized yet. Almost all carriers require palletization of goods to avoid damage and allow for smoother

loading and unloading.

What Are the Benefits of Less than Container Load (LCL) Shipment for Businesses?

Less than Container Load (LCL) shipment comes with a number of advantages for businesses, particularly those with smaller cargo volumes or those not requiring a full container for their shipments.

The key benefits include:

- **Cost Efficiency:** LCL allows businesses to ship minimal sizes of cargo without the need to pay for the entire container space. This approach provides a cost-effective solution, as in this scenario, businesses only pay for the portion of the container they are using.
- **Flexibility in Cargo Volume:** LCL is an excellent solution for businesses that need to adjust the volume of their shipments frequently. This option provides the flexibility to ship smaller amounts of cargo as needed without waiting to accumulate enough goods to fill an entire container.
- **Frequent Shipping Options:** With LCL, businesses can ship goods more frequently instead of waiting to gather enough cargo for a full container load (FCL). This can result in reduced lead times and more regular replenishment of stock.
- **Reduced Capital Tied Up in Inventory:** By enabling smaller and more frequent shipments, LCL minimizes the amount of capital tied up in inventory. This can be especially helpful for businesses with limited storage space or those operating on a just-in-time inventory system.
- **Ease of Entry into New Markets:** For businesses looking to expand into new markets, LCL offers a low-risk entry option. Companies can test new markets with smaller shipments without the significant financial commitment of a full container.
- **Enhanced Supply Chain Management:** LCL allows for better supply chain management and agility. Businesses can respond more swiftly to market demands and changes, adjusting their shipping volumes accordingly.

LCL Shipping Quote

With SWWLS, you have the power to access an instant LCL (Less than Container Load) shipping quote. Utilize the Freight Rate calculator below to calculate your LCL shipping costs in seconds!

LCL Shipping Costs

LCL cost is calculated primarily by volume, usually in cubic meters (CBM). The more space you need, the more you pay.

Weight is also taken into account when determining LCL shipping costs, but because container ships can handle huge amounts of weight, volume usually matters more to overall costs.

LCL price Quotes from freight forwarders include the following:



Pickup: The cost of picking up your shipment from the warehouse or factory.

Origin: LCL shipments need to be loaded onto containers along with other shipments, or consolidated, at a Container Freight Station, or CFS. This is sometimes referred to as container stuffing.

Main leg: The cost of the [sea journey](#). Although this is the main leg of the shipment, it may not be the most expensive part. In certain instances, charges at the CFS can be very significant because they require significant machine and manpower.

Destination: At arrival in the destination country, LCL shipments need to stop at a CFS for deconsolidation, or unstuffing.

Delivery: The cost of trucking your goods to the destination warehouse.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following are some frequently asked questions about less than container load (LCL) shipping and freight forwarding.

[LCL Vs. FCL Shipping: What's the Difference?](#)

In global container shipping, FCL and LCL are two distinct cargo transportation methods, each catering to different shipment sizes and requirements.

- **Full Container Load (FCL):** FCL is used when a shipper has enough cargo to fill a

whole container. This method helps streamline the shipping process, as there's no need for cargo consolidation. In addition, it offers quicker loading and unloading times, leading to expedited delivery.

- **Less than Container Load (LCL):** LCL is an ideal option for smaller cargo that cannot fill an entire container. This process involves combining shipments from multiple shippers into one container, which maximizes container space and helps reduce costs. This method requires careful planning and coordination due to the additional steps of consolidating multiple shipments and handling logistics at both loading and unloading points. LCL is an excellent choice for small shipments, though it requires meticulous planning to ensure efficient transit and handling.

Both LCL and FCL are crucial for international shipping, as they provide different options for shippers. Selecting the most suitable method depends mainly on the actual volume of cargo since each approach offers its own advantages both in terms of efficiency and cost.

How Do I Book an LCL Shipment?

To book an LCL shipment, the initial step is to engage with a digital freight forwarder such as [SWWLS](#). As a one-stop shipping solution for businesses, they are responsible for orchestrating the entire logistics process for your LCL shipment on your behalf.

Once you've created an account, you'll need to choose the LCL option and provide the details of your cargo, including its size, origin, and destination. After receiving your request, the forwarder will provide you with shipping quotes, which will include the suitable shared container space. In addition, you may be offered additional value-added services like cargo insurance and financing options.

By approving one of the suggested quotes, you confirm the booking, reserve container space, and schedule the shipment.

The process also involves submitting necessary documents for shipping and customs. The freight forwarder manages the consolidation of your cargo at the origin, the transportation phase, its deconsolidation at the destination port, all related customs clearance activities, and lastly, makes sure your load reaches its final destination efficiently.

What is the Role of a Container Freight Station (CFS) in Less Than Container Load (LCL) Shipping?

In Less Than Container Load (LCL) shipping, a Container Freight Station (CFS) plays a pivotal role in the efficient handling and management of cargo. It serves as a critical hub where individual shipments are consolidated into or deconsolidated from containers, optimizing the LCL shipping process.

- **Consolidation of Cargo:** For outbound LCL shipments, a CFS is the point where cargo from various shippers is gathered. Each shipper's cargo, often too small to fill an entire container on its own, is combined with others' shipments, making up a full container load. This consolidation process is essential for maximizing container space utilization and cost efficiency in LCL shipping.
- **Deconsolidation and Distribution:** Upon arrival at the destination, the consolidated container is brought to a CFS, where it undergoes deconsolidation. Here, the mixed cargo is separated back into individual shipments. Each consignment is then prepared for the final phase of the journey, either for pickup by consignees or for further distribution.
- **Storage and Handling Services:** CFS facilities are equipped to provide temporary storage for LCL cargo before it is consolidated for shipping or, after deconsolidation, awaiting pickup. They offer a range of services, including sorting, labeling, and palletizing, ensuring the cargo is correctly handled and ready for the next step in the shipping process.
- **Supporting Customs Clearance:** CFS provides secure storage for LCL shipments during customs inspections, enhancing the efficiency and smooth flow of the clearance process.
- **Enhancing Cargo Security:** As a controlled environment, a CFS offers added security for LCL shipments. With regular monitoring and checks, these stations ensure the safety and integrity of cargo, minimizing the risk of theft or damage.

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What Happens to My Cargo During the Consolidation Process?

As part of the consolidation process for LCL shipping, your cargo is combined with other shipments at a Container Freight Station (CFS). This process involves careful handling and sorting of each consignment to utilize container space efficiently. Your cargo is securely packed and arranged in a way that maximizes space and reduces the risk of damage. This organized co-loading with other shippers' goods forms a full container load, ready for the next phase of transport.

How Does LCL Shipping Work?

In LCL shipping, each shipper pays only for the container space used by their cargo, making it a cost-effective choice for smaller shipments. The process begins by having the cargo delivered to a Container Freight Station (CFS). This is where the cargo from different shippers is consolidated into one container. Once filled, the container is shipped to its destination. Upon arrival, the container goes to another CFS, where it is deconsolidated, and each shipment is separated and prepared for final delivery to respective recipients. This method is efficient for small-to-medium-sized cargo that does not require a full container. A freight forwarder is an essential part of this operation since they are responsible for coordinating the entire process.

What Are the Alternatives to LCL Shipping for Smaller Cargo Volumes?

For smaller cargo volumes in international shipping, the primary alternative to LCL (Less Than Container Load) shipping is [Air Freight](#). Air Freight is a good choice for shipments that are too small to fill a container but need faster delivery times than LCL can offer. This method is often chosen for time-sensitive and high-value goods due to its quicker transit times. Even though it is generally more expensive than ocean freight options like LCL, Air Freight provides the advantage of shorter shipping durations and easier logistics. It's an ideal choice for businesses requiring rapid, reliable transport for their smaller-volume international shipments.

What is the Role of a Freight Forwarder in LCL Shipping?

In LCL Shipping, freight forwarders streamline the shipping process for businesses. They oversee and orchestrate the entire logistics process, including the consolidation and deconsolidation of your LCL shipments. With the help of a trusted freight forwarder, such as SWWLS, you will be able to get a shipping quote, reserve your container space, secure cargo insurance, complete customs clearance, and have your goods delivered to your business or other specified location. This solution allows business owners to focus on their core operations, confident that their shipping requirements will be taken care of in a professional manner.

LCL or Air Cargo: Shipping Rates

This is a question we often get from from importers and exporters: If you have a small shipment, should you ship by LCL or air?

The answer is that it largely depends on how quickly you need your goods – and how much you're willing to pay.

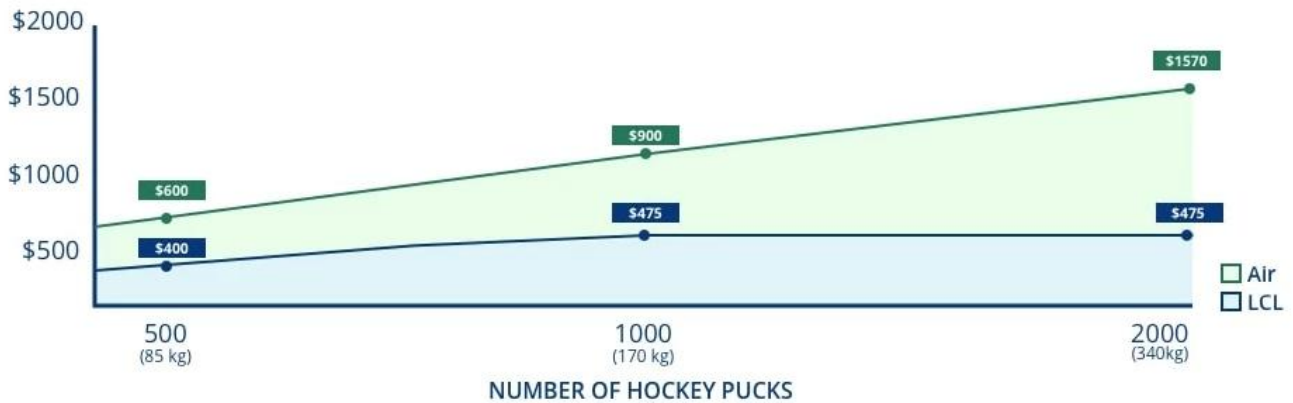
Let's say you're shipping 500 hockey pucks from Shanghai to Los Angeles (that's approximately 0.06 CBM and 85 kg in case you were wondering).

These aren't accurate rates, but let's say that if you ship the hockey pucks by LCL, it costs about \$400 and by air, it's \$600.

Now let's double it to 1,000 hockey pucks. LCL is now \$475, but air has jumped to \$900.

Doubled again, 2,000 hockey pucks is still \$475 on LCL, but air is all the way up to \$1,570.

SHIPMENT PRICES: LCL VS AIR



As shipment size and weight increase, air rates rise dramatically faster than LCL rates. Increases in weight are even more impactful.

On the other hand, an air shipment is much faster: in this example, your shipment would take 7-9 days by air, and 25-30 days by LCL. Again, these are not exact transit time but are illustrative of the differences between air cargo and LCL shipping.

Here are a few tips for choosing between air and LCL:

- When you ship LCL, you will be charged for a minimum of 1 CBM. That means if you have a shipment smaller than that, you won't get a lower price.
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- Air and LCL costs are both calculated by both weight and volume. But for air, weight is the more important factor - that is, relatively small weight increases mean much higher prices. On the other hand, for LCL, space makes a bigger difference than weight. Bottom line: LCL will be much cheaper for heavier goods.
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- Air freight prices and transit times do not vary much based on the destination city. For example, air freight from Shanghai to Los Angeles will be roughly the same in cost and time as air freight from Shanghai to New York. However, for LCL, this difference in distance will increase both cost and transit time.

LCL or FCL

LCL is great for small loads, but sometimes it's worth paying for a full container even if you don't have enough to fill it.

Why?

Because LCL costs more per CBM than FCL. So once a shipment hits a certain volume, an entire container could be the better choice. For a slightly higher price, you'll get the benefits of shipping FCL, including faster transit time and lower chances of damage.

One caveat: if you're shipping to an Amazon warehouse, it's often easier to get an appointment to drop off LCL shipments. So even if you save money by shipping FCL, you might end up with extra demurrage and detention charges due to warehouse appointment delays.

So what's the tipping point?

It depends on your shipment's dimensions, but generally speaking, once volume hits around 10 CBM, you might start to consider FCL.

Additional LCL Fees

Labeling and Palletization for Amazon Shippers

If you are shipping your goods to an [Amazon FBA](#) warehouse, you will need to have them labeled and palletized according to Amazon's requirements.

Having your factory label your boxes is the most efficient option, and generally, palletizing at the factory is cheaper than at the consolidation center. However, before having your supplier palletize, make sure they're familiar with Amazon's standards and requirements so you don't get charged extra LCL fees.

Customs Bonds

Any time you import to the US, you'll need to set up a customs bond, which is essentially insurance for Customs and Border Patrol in the event your company does not pay.

If you ship infrequently, choose a singly-entry bond. For frequent shippers, an annual bond will likely be worth it.

Duties and Taxes

Duties and taxes are calculated by Customs and Border Patrol when your goods arrive at port, but you can estimate in advance how much you will owe and calculate your LCL fees more accurately.

What paperwork do I need for my LCL shipment?

For the rundown on all the paperwork you'll need to ship LCL, head on over to our [key freight documents guide](#).

How long does LCL shipping take?

Sea shipping generally takes approximately 6-10 weeks, depending on your origin and destination. LCL tends to take slightly longer than FCL due to consolidation and deconsolidation.

Expert tips for getting the best LCL shipping rates

1. Request quotes from multiple [freight forwarders](#).

Having multiple quotes will not only allow you to choose the best price. It will also give you insight into market rates and help you better understand LCL shipping rates and charges. That is, sometimes you'll get a quote that is way above or below market LCL shipping rates - but you won't know unless you have a range of quotes to compare.

2. Don't forget to take pallet dimensions into account.

Suppliers always provide box dimensions for your goods, but make sure to also request dimensions including pallets. Pallets take up container space - space you'll be charged for.

3. Remember that fragile goods might need more space, and therefore cost more.

In most LCL shipments, pallets are stacked in order to maximize container space. But if you're shipping flatscreen TVs, you won't want anything stacked on top of them. That means costs will be higher because your shipment leaves less room in the container for other packages.

4. Avoid hidden LCL charges and fees by booking [port-to-door or door-to-door](#) service with your freight forwarder.

The day might come when you get an LCL quote that seems impossibly cheap. What could be bad about that?

Well, it could turn out that LCL charges you thought were included were in fact not part of the quote.

To prevent this, Sandeep Bhalotia, CEO of logistics provider PlanYourCargo, recommends booking port-to-door or door-to-door service for LCL. “You might get a discount at the origin, but if service to the door is not included, the discount might be offset with high charges at the destination,” he explains. “A quote that includes service to your door means all charges are validated in advance.”

5. Understand the interior dimensions of the container.

A 20ft container is not actually 20 feet – at least not from the inside. Make sure you know containers’ interior dimensions to understand how much container space you really need – and help decide if LCL or FCL is right for you.

6. If you’re an Amazon FBA shipper, know your warehouse guidelines.

Amazon FBA has strict warehouse guidelines and these sometimes change. If you know what the requirements are, you can often arrange to have your supplier take care of them, which saves you money down the line.

LCL Freight: How to ship LCL cargo on air-shipment.com

If you choose to book your LCL cargo shipment on air-shipment.com, we’ll take care of a lot of the confusing and time-consuming details. For example:

- At air-shipment.com, we handle the complex details of shipping LCL cargo.
- When you input the volume and weight of your LCL freight on our platform, our tool will advise if it's viable to consider FCL.
- As a marketplace, we offer real-time quotes from multiple providers, eliminating the need for back-and-forth communication and providing transparent freight market rates.
- You can also arrange insurance and customs solutions when booking your shipment.
- Tracking your LCL freight and staying in touch with your freight forwarder throughout the journey is easy through our platform.