

Shipping — The Questions to Ask

Parcel Delivery

When you have objects to transport, there are many shipping companies to choose from. Check your local directories under Couriers, Freight Forwarding, Parcel Delivery or Packaging Service for names of companies serving your area. Some of the well-known companies are CanPar, DHL, Federal Express, Loomis, Purolator and UPS. Canada Post and Greyhound are also worth investigating. Freight companies might be useful for shipping large works or your booth to trade shows. Each company may have differences in services. Some offer more services but are more expensive. Some will ship art but not insure it; others will not ship art at all.

Start by gathering information from each company you're considering: their rates, destinations, types of parcel service, package requirements or recommendations.

Dimensional Weight

Be aware that rates may be based on dimensional weight rather than the actual weight of a parcel. Dimensional weight is a standard formula used by the industry. If your shipment weighs significantly less than the box is expected to hold, charges are based on the dimensional weight. This would be the case, for example, if you are shipping a paper sculpture or work made of feathers. If your package is heavier than the dimensional weight, charges are based on the actual, or gross weight.

Ask Questions

Don't stop at getting companies' printed information. Craftspeople are advised to ask probing questions about the shipping process. In order to ensure that you package your work sufficiently, it helps to know:

How do they ship your parcel?

How many people handle it?

What kind of drops should your parcel be able to withstand?

It may surprise you to know that parcels may be tossed from person to person, or that a drop of six feet is common. Canada Post apparently has a conveyor belt for parcels that drops them as much as two storeys. You need to package your work to survive the company's routine handling, so find out what is routine.

What does the company not accept for shipping?

CanPar states on their Web site that they will not accept paintings and other art objects for shipment. Their customer service department explains that original art is irreplaceable, and if it were damaged in transit, "there is no way to accurately assess the value as there is no comparison point." They say they are able to ship works like ceramics or pottery, if they are replaceable.

Ask for an account.

If you plan to ship regularly, it's convenient to get an account with 30-day terms.

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