

# A Guide to Importation of Personal & Household Effects into USA

---

## TO QUALIFY FOR DUTY FREE ENTRY

- Migrants may import used personal and household effects and professional equipment (eg tools of trade) which have been in the owner's use and possession abroad for at least one year and are for the continued use of the owner in his new residence. The year of use need not be continuous nor does it need to be the year immediately preceding the date of importation. Articles valued at \$300 or more and passed free of duty under your personal customs exemption cannot be sold within 3 years, unless duty is paid.
- Returning US citizen may re-import all personal belongings and tools of trade, which were exported by him from the US, known as "American Goods Returned". Returning US citizens may also import free of duty household effects acquired abroad as long as they are not imported for another person or for sale and have been used overseas for at least one year. This privilege does not include articles placed in storage outside the home.
- Original Works Of Art by recognised artists, owned and used for at least one year, imported as part of a household removal and not for resale or disposal. US Customs will require itemised invoices indicating the name of the artist and may also require a biography of the artist and list of exhibitions held if the artist is not on Custom's list. Invoices referring to sculptures must specifically state that the item is an original. An Additional customs entry fee may apply at destination (approx \$100).
- Antiques, which are over one hundred years old at the date of export. US Customs will require itemised invoices indicating year of production and an antiquity statement from either the seller or the importer, certifying that the items declared are over 100 years old. An additional customs entry fee may apply at destination (approx \$100).
- Silverware and ornaments when imported as part of normal household goods.

Unless the above criteria are satisfied import duty is payable. After deducting your exemptions and the value of any duty free articles, a flat rate of duty of 10% will be applied to the first \$1000 worth of merchandise. Various rate of duty apply then on merchandise over \$1000.

Inheritance bequests, wedding trousseaux and computers are liable to assessment for duty. If inheritance bequests were used by the inheritor as a child in the deceased's home and are not intended for re-sale, a letter of circumstance to this effect can often secure duty free entry. US Customs will require a relevant extract of the will or copy of probate from court if the deceased died intestate.

**VISITORS** should beware of sending goods in advance. Customs may require a copy of the I94 immigration form (as completed on the plane by non US nationals) which will only be available after you arrive. Customs require copies of valid visas where applicable.

**CUSTOMS CLEARANCE** - We will supply US Customs Form 3299, Declaration for Free Entry Of Unaccompanied Articles, which should be completed and returned to us and returned to us with a full descriptive inventory on the form provided prior to shipment. These documents will be forwarded to our US destination representative and presented to US Customs. All shipments must be customs cleared within 5 working days of arrival, failing which the goods will be transferred to a Customs warehouse for storage until custom clearance can be made (minimum charge approximately \$200 for the first month). With the advent of 9/11 US Customs in line with other US government agencies are continually employing new & more stringent initiatives to improve security.

The main points noted by our US representatives are: The picture in

copies of passports must clearly show facial features. A valid address in the US must be supplied (PO Box addresses are unacceptable). If you have no permanent address the address of where you will be residing with a friend or relative, or a hotel address must be provided.

## WOOD PACKAGING

Any wood packaging used in personal effects consignments (crates, pallets etc) must be constructed of approved treated timber and must be stamped with the internationally recognised ISPM symbol verifying this. Any non-compliant timber may be destroyed, treated or re-exported to the country of origin at the owner's expense. Export cases supplied by us are compliant, embossed GB FC0122 DB HT Forestry Commission.

## RESTRICTED/ PROHIBITED ARTICLES

The following articles are either restricted and require an import permit from the relevant authority, or are prohibited by US Customs:

- Wood or wood products used in supporting, protecting or carrying a commodity, such as crates constructed of timber, excluding manufactured wood materials such as fiber board, plywood, whisky and wine barrels and veneer, Loose wood packing materials, sawdust, and Pieces of wood that are less than 6 mm thick in any dimension.
- Firearms and ammunition (other than those intended for legitimate hunting or lawful sporting purposes) are subject to restrictions and import permits approved by the Bureau Of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). For further information contact the AFT at Department Of Treasury, Washington, D.C.20226 Tel 202 927 8320
- Hunting trophies generally require a Fish and Wildlife Service import licence
- Pornographic materials
- Switch blades
- Seditious and treasonable material
- Certain foodstuffs and plants
- Items made from animals on the endangered species list (eg ivory)
- Hazardous items (eg fireworks, toxic or poisonous substances)
- Narcotic drugs
- Unprocessed furs and skins
- Merchandise from embargoed countries e.g. Cuba, Libya, Iraq, Iran, N.Korea

This information is not definitive and is intended as a guide only. Destination regulations can change without notice and for specific guidance we strongly recommend that you obtain direct rulings from the relevant authorities. Please visit the US Customs Service website at <http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/home.xml> or speak to U.S. Customs Service, London Attaché Office, American Embassy, 24 Grosvenor Square, London, W1A 1AE. Phone: 020 7499-9000 Ext. 2771 or 2772. Fax: 020 7499-1212. Hours of Operation:9:00am to 5:00pm

Print