

Your guide to receiving goods from overseas

Customs charges explained

When you receive an item from overseas, you become the importer by law. This means you could be liable for any customs charges before delivery. The following guide will talk you through how these charges work.

Packages sent to the UK from outside the EU are subject to customs control. At Royal Mail, we are legally obliged to present HM Revenue & Customs with any item liable for customs charges. If you are expecting a package and aren't sure whether any fees are outstanding, don't worry. Royal Mail will pay the customs charges on your behalf and send you a 'Fee to Pay' postcard, outlining how much you need to pay before we can release your item from your local delivery office. The customs charges could be made up of excise duty, customs duty and VAT*. Any package assessed by HM Revenue and Customs as being liable for customs charges will also incur a Royal Mail handling fee of £8.

Ways to pay

If you are collecting your item from your delivery office you can pay outstanding fees by cash or a cheque made payable to 'Royal Mail'. If you wish your item to be delivered you can pay with stamps or a franking machine impression. Simply attach them to your 'Fee to Pay' postcard and send it back to the delivery office. Alternatively, you can pay online at www.royalmail.com/fee2pay.

Items that attract customs charges are kept at the delivery office for three weeks. If they aren't paid for and collected or delivery requested during this time, they are returned to the sender.

What else should you know?

When a package arrives in the UK from outside the EU, it must have a customs declaration attached with all details completed by the sender.

Any information left off customs declarations forms can lead to delays within customs, and may result in the item being returned to the sender. So it's well worth telling friends and family living overseas about the importance of completing customs declaration accurately and in full, before sending the packages to you in the UK. It is an offence to make a false declaration.

We recommend you look into customs duty, excise duty and VAT on the Internet before buying goods from outside the EU, because the advertised cost and actual cost may differ. This will help to ensure you don't get any costly surprises later on.

Find out more

To find out more about sending or receiving packages to and from overseas, visit www.royalmail.com/customs or call Royal Mail Customer Services on **08457 740 740**.

For further information about customs charges, please see HMRC Notice 143: A Guide for International Post Users at www.hmrc.gov.uk

* VAT is payable on goods over the value of £18 and on gifts sent between private individuals over the value of £36.

