

What Does LTL Mean in Trucking? A Beginner's Guide to Less-Than-Truckload Shipping

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If you ship products for your business but don't always need a full truck, you've probably heard of LTL. But what does LTL actually mean in trucking?

LTL stands for **Less-Than-Truckload** – a cost-effective shipping method that lets you share truck space with other businesses. It's perfect for small to midsize companies that want to move freight efficiently without paying for space they don't use.



What is LTL Freight?

Less-Than-Truckload (LTL) freight shipping is when multiple shippers combine shipments onto one truck. Each shipper pays only for the space their freight takes up, making it a budget-friendly alternative to Full Truckload (FTL).

Typical LTL shipments:

- Weigh between 150 and 15,000 lbs
- Are palletized and boxed
- Don't require the full capacity of a truck

Learn more about the [importance of LTL freight management in your supply chain](#) for growing businesses.

How LTL Shipping Works

LTL carriers operate using a **hub-and-spoke system**:

1. Freight is picked up from the shipper.
2. Taken to a local terminal (spoke).
3. Consolidated with other shipments at a regional hub.
4. Delivered to the final destination via local trucks.

This network allows flexibility and better truck utilization.

LTL vs. FTL: Key Differences

Feature	LTL (Less-Than-Truckload)	FTL (Full Truckload)
Space Utilization	Share with other shippers	One shipment fills the truck
Cost	Shared cost	Fixed full-truck rate
Speed	Slightly longer	Direct and faster delivery
Risk	More handling	Less handling, safer

When to choose:

1. Use **LTL** for small, budget-sensitive shipments.
2. Use **FTL** for high-volume, time-sensitive freight.

Discover how to avoid [4 costly mistakes when shipping LTL freight](#) to keep your cargo secure and budgets in check.

Benefits of LTL Freight Shipping



1. **Cost Savings:** Only pay for what you use.
2. **Environmentally Friendly:** Fewer trucks = lower emissions.
3. **Accessorial Services:** Liftgate delivery, inside pickup.
4. **Scalability:** Great for growing businesses shipping less frequently.

Not sure which freight method is right for you? Compare [spot freight rates vs contract rates](#) to make smarter budget decisions.

How is LTL Freight Priced?

LTL pricing depends on:

1. Freight Class (density, stowability, handling, liability)
2. Weight and dimensions
3. Distance (origin to destination)
4. Additional services (residential delivery, liftgate, etc.)

Example:

Shipping 2 pallets (400 lbs total) from Atlanta to Dallas might cost \$150–\$250 depending on carrier and services.

To dive deeper into freight cost control, explore how to [reduce freight costs without complicating logistics](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is considered an LTL shipment?

An LTL shipment refers to freight that is too large for small parcel carriers but doesn't require a full truckload. Typically, this includes shipments between 150 and 15,000 pounds that are palletized or crated and occupy only a portion of a truck's trailer.

Q: Is LTL cheaper than FTL?

Generally, yes—LTL is more economical for small shipments. Since shippers only pay for the space they use, LTL freight shipping is an ideal cost-saving strategy for small and midsize businesses trying to reduce freight spend without sacrificing delivery reliability.

Q: How does LTL work with multiple carriers?

LTL freight often transfers through a carrier's hub-and-spoke system, which may involve partnerships with regional carriers. As your freight moves between hubs, different LTL trucking companies may handle it, depending on the route, service area, and delivery timing.

Q: What is the meaning of LTL in logistics?

In logistics, LTL stands for "Less-Than-Truckload," referring to the transport of smaller shipments that don't require a full trailer. It's an efficient way to consolidate freight, optimize logistics costs, and increase shipment frequency for companies that don't ship in bulk.

Q: What are common challenges of LTL freight?

Challenges include longer transit times, potential for freight damage due to multiple handling points, and complex pricing models. However, these can be mitigated with careful packaging, using a reliable freight brokerage service, and leveraging TMS platforms for visibility.



Partnering with The FSL Group for LTL Success

At **The FSL Group**, we simplify LTL shipping for small and midsize businesses. With our freight audit and pay service, carrier management, and transportation management system, you gain:

- Accurate, transparent billing
- Contract optimization
- Real-time shipment visibility
- Strategic carrier partnerships

Let us help you ship smarter.

Ready to Cut Costs on LTL Shipping?

At The FSL Group, we believe that smart logistics shouldn't be reserved for enterprise giants. Whether you're shipping a few pallets a week or looking to upgrade your entire supply chain, we're here to make your freight operations more cost-effective, transparent, and efficient. The sooner you start, the sooner you'll save.

Contact us today for a free consultation or start your Free Freight Audit Trial. Let's simplify your supply chain and move your business forward.
