



Importing Resources Guide

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DIY GUIDE TO IMPORTING AN EPA/DOT EXEMPT FOREIGN VEHICLE INTO THE U.S.

#INTRO

If you're reading this guide most likely you have been exposed to the myriad of awesome vehicles abroad like the original Mini Cooper, the Suzuki Cappuccino, or Nissan Figaro. Perhaps you have approached a customs broker to realize your dreams only to find that the thousands of dollars they charge to import a vehicle has put the dream of owning a fun, quirky and cheap vehicle out of reach. Dust off those dreams – this guide will navigate you through the complex process of importing a foreign vehicle yourself.

DISCLAIMERS: I am not a licensed customs broker. The information here was obtained through research and the consultation of CBP officers and import specialists. Each port and CBP office may have their own particular way of doing things so I am not liable for any issues that arise during your importation. That said, my information has helped many people successfully import their own vehicles. Also, CBP understands the complexity of filing one's own import entry and will offer significant assistance and latitude to first-timers. Remember, they work for you and are there to help.

SHOULD YOU IMPORT A VEHICLE

Importing a vehicle into the USA can be a frightening experience for someone who's inexperienced in doing so. The internet is full of stories of US Customs seizing vehicles which makes some question whether it's worth the risk. Yes, there are some risks, but for people importing a single vehicle at a time for personal use the process can be relatively easy. I recently successfully imported my own vehicle (a KEI truck) and have compiled this guide as a resource for anyone else who is interested in doing the same. While I cannot guarantee that your experience will be as smooth as mine, this guide will certainly help you avoid the major pitfalls. If you decide you would like to import a vehicle, please read further.

This guide assumes that you live near or intend to travel to the seaport that will receive your vehicle. If this isn't the case you can hire a customs bonded shipping company to transport

the vehicle to a customs bonded warehouse near you from which to file entry. The other method is to hire someone to file the entry at the original seaport, get the vehicle released and then transport it normally directly to your doorstep.

THE U.S. IMPORT PROCESS FOR VEHICLES

When importing anything into the U.S. the importer must file something called an entry. It is a process in which an entity notifies the U.S. government what, when, where and how a commodity is entering US commerce. Simply being in U.S. territory, such as the seaport, does not count as an entry until the paperwork's been filed and CBP approves it.

If the cost of obtaining the vehicle (not including carrier fees and insurance) is \$2499.99 and less, an informal entry can be filed. Otherwise the much more complicated formal entry must be filed.

CERTAIN LAWS THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Due to lobbying by Mercedes-Benz of America, Congress passed laws that require the EPA and DOT to restrict the import of non-US origin vehicles unless they meet U.S. safety and environmental standards. Whether or not U.S. vehicles are inherently superior to vehicles from other countries is outside the scope of this document. What is important is that **YOUR VEHICLE WILL BE SEIZED UNLESS IT MEETS THESE REQUIREMENTS**. Luckily, there is a 25 year old exemption for "classic vehicles". If a vehicle is 25 years or older from the date of manufacture (month and year) it can legally be imported into the U.S. without having to meet DOT standards (21 years to be exempt from EPA standards).

Some vehicles, such as the 1990 Suzuki Carry that I imported do not specify the month of manufacture. In such cases, there are resources online that can decode the VIN and tell you approximately a range of months that it would have been manufactured. On my Carry the VIN showed the truck looked to be have been built around February so I used that as the month of manufacture and imported my vehicle in February. Customs would have to articulate, based on observations or facts, that the vehicle wasn't manufactured on the date specified to seize the vehicle. FYI, seizing and detaining are different. Customs may detain anything for inspection but to actually seize and take ownership of the item (forfeit) Customs requires an administrative or criminal violation. Ergo, if you state the vehicle was manufactured on 4/1990 and an engine label or seat-belt tag says differently or there is evidence that the model you're importing did not exist in the configuration for the year you claimed than your vehicle can be seized. Keep things on the up and up and be as transparent as possible and you will be fine.

KEY DEFINITIONS

1. There are certain key terms that you should be aware of:
 1. Importer – the entity that is filing the customs entry (files the customs paperwork and pays the duties)
 2. Consignee – The entity that will be receiving and owning the commodity (you)
 3. Date of Import – When the commodity enters the Customs territorial borders of the U.S. (e.g. when a ship enters the port)
 4. Date of Entry – When the paperwork is filed with Customs to apply for entry.

5. Date of Export – When the commodity was exported from the country of origin
6. Duties – A customs tax to be paid on commodities entering the U.S. The duty on vehicles for the transportation of goods, i.e. trucks, is 25% and 2.5% for passenger vehicles.
7. Port of Entry – the port through which the commodity will enter the US
8. HTS Code – Harmonized Tariff Code. Each commodity has a classification code that determines what duties will be paid on its import. You can search HTS codes at: hts.usitc.gov. Perhaps the most difficult part of the process is determining the proper HTS code. Passenger vehicles start with the HTS heading 8703 and vehicles for the transport of goods start at 8704.
9. Customs Ruling – If the HTS classification of a specific commodity is in question, e.g. should a KEI Mitsubishi Minicab with off-road tires, suspension and a dump bed be classified as a dump vehicle for off-highway use or as a standard vehicle for the transportation of goods, Customs may publish a customs ruling that will make clear exactly which HTS applies to the commodity. See (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/3pxljn19bj1uamu/086305.doc?dl=0>) for example.
10. Customs Bonds – Bonds for the purpose of insuring that Customs will receive payment of fees for the importation of goods. There are ISF bonds, entry bonds and DOT bonds. Informal entries do not require the purchase of bonds.
11. Importer Security Filing 10+2 (ISF) – In 2009 a new requirement went into effect requiring formal entries by sea to submit cargo and carrier information in advance to CBP. ISF filings are required for formal entries but an ISF bond is not.
12. Harbor Maintenance Fee (HMF) – Certain ports require the payment of a HMF which is .125% of the value of the cargo. For a list of ports that require HMF see: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title19-vol1/pdf/CFR-2011-title19-vol1-sec24-24.pdf>
13. Merchandise Processing Fee (MPF) – MPF is paid on all imports. For formal entries it is 0.3464% of the value of the cargo up to a max of \$485. For informal entries, it is \$2 if the entry or release is automated and not prepared by CBP personnel, \$6 if the entry or release is manual and not prepared by CBP personnel, and \$9 if the entry or release, whether automated or manual, is prepared by CBP personnel.

The following section pertains to the importation of vehicles valued at less than \$2500. If this does not apply to you then skip to the section on filing a formal entry for vehicles valued at \$2500 and above by clicking on this link [here](#)

#Informal_Entry

HOW TO FILE AN INFORMAL ENTRY FOR VEHICLES VALUED LESS THAN \$2500

Fortunately, for shipments worth less than \$2500 a formal entry is not required. The importer can do what's called an "informal entry". An informal entry is the simplest type of entry and does not require a customs bond nor does it require obtaining an importer number. CBP assumes that those doing an informal entry are typically not knowledgeable about the import process so one can simply go to the Customs office at the port the cargo is

entering into and request assistance on how to do an informal entry. That said, if you read this guide you will know exactly how to file your own informal entry so you won't need to ask for their assistance.

THE PROCESS STEP-BY-STEP

-=STEP 1=-

Contact a vehicle exporter. They will either have an inventory of vehicles you can choose from or they can export a vehicle that you have purchased from auctions. If importing from Japan (which applies to most of us) I would highly recommend Japancardirect.com. They have a great track record of delivering vehicles that meet or exceed the customer's expectations. Tradecarview.com is another great resource. It is a marketplace for Japanese exporters and contains a large listing of Japanese vehicles for sale and features convenient search functions.

Price quotes are generally given as CIF or FOB. CIF means that the exporter will arrange and pay for transportation of the vehicle to the port, shipping from the port to your country and insurance. An FOB quote only includes the cost of transporting the vehicle to the outbound port and it is up to the customer to arrange for shipping and insurance. CIF is certainly the more convenient option.

If purchasing a single vehicle, the most common shipping method is roll-on roll-off (RORO). The vehicle will literally be driven onto the ship and off which avoids fees for renting port equipment to unload cargo. Another benefit to not using a shipping container is that if the container gets selected for x-ray inspection by Customs, Customs will charge the importer significant fees which can be avoided by using RORO.

*****IMPORTANT*****

Make sure the vehicle will be thoroughly steamed cleaned so that it is pest free before export. Otherwise, it may fail USDA inspection and you will be forced to return the vehicle or pay \$\$\$ to house and clean it.

Typically when registering a vehicle at your local Department of Licensing they will require a vehicle title. In some countries such as Japan, the vehicle title is turned over to the government in order to get approval for export. This approval is in the form of an export certificate. The exporter will provide you with the original export certificate and hopefully an English translated copy. Make sure that the translation features a stamp or seal certifying that the translation is accurate to avoid issues with the DOL when you go to register your vehicle.

-=STEP 2=-

Pay for the vehicle. This is almost always done via bank transfer. If an exporter asks for payment by Western Union or MoneyGram, run! They are most likely a scam. Assuming you went CIF, after the exporter receives payment they will airmail you an original Bill of Lading (BOL) from the shipping line as well as a commercial invoice and a certificate of

insurance. The exporter will offer dates of arrival. Make sure the date of arrival you choose is at least 25 years past the vehicle's date of manufacture if you intend to file DOT and EPA exemptions. The shipping line will then contact you and provide you a notice of arrival/freight invoice with specifics like the arrival date, the commodity being transported and instructions on how to provide payment for the collect charge. The collect charge covers fees the port charges against the shipping line. For my import, the collect charge amounted to \$123. You will also need to mail the original BOL that you received from the exporter to the shipping line. Pay the collect charge and mail the BOL so that the shipping line receives them at least two days before the ship makes port if you intend to take receipt of the vehicle ASAP (assuming there isn't a customs hold).

-=STEP 3=-

Download CBP form 7501. I have created a version that is electronically fillable here: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/bp3z8g9rysu4vww/CBP Form 7501.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/bp3z8g9rysu4vww/CBP%20Form%207501.pdf?dl=0)

This handbook explains how to complete this

form: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/r3va7hbvtow00z4/CBP%20Form%207501 Instructions.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/r3va7hbvtow00z4/CBP%20Form%207501%20Instructions.pdf?dl=0)

You will see that the example I've provided is already populated with values that were used during the import of my Suzuki Carry truck. You most likely won't need to change fields 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 16, 17, and 18.

Note: When filing an informal entry you will not have a customs entry number.

Field 13 (manufacturer/exporter ID): The manufacturer's ID/exporter ID is derived from the exporter. To generate the ID, follow these directions: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/sk0t1f56a7zeket/Deriving%20mfg%20shipper%20ID.doc?dl=0>

For example, JapanCarDirect's information is:

Japan Car Direct
2-10-19 Tendai Inage Ku Chiba Chiba Japan 263-0016

Therefore their manufacturing ID would be JPJAPCAR2101CHI.

Fields 6, 19, 20 (port codes): To determine the port codes consult this document: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/o3hb1ifw24g2oji/schedule%20K%20foreign%20port%20codes.txt?dl=0>

Field 21, (BLOCK 21) LOCATION OF GOODS/General Order (GO) Number: the storage location of the vehicle after the vehicle is unloaded from the ship at port. This location will be provided to you by the shipping line. If the location has a customs FIRMS code you must use the code. You can find the code

here: <http://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/FIRMS30.txt>

FIRM	NAME	STREET	CITY	ST	ZIP
----	----	-----	----	--	---
A011	A L GRIFFIN INC	21 CUSTOM HOUSE WHARF	PORTLAND	ME	04101
C556	ABF FREIGHT	460 RIVERSIDE INDUSTRIAL PKWY	PORTLAND	ME	04103
C608	AIRBORNE EXPRESS	9 JOHNSON RD	PORTLAND	ME	04102
C664	AIRBORNE EXPRESS	53 DARLING AVE	SOUTH PORTLAND	ME	04106
A038	AMERICOLD CORPORATION	165 READ STREET	PORTLAND	ME	04103
A035	APA/SANBORN	PLEASANT HILL RD	SCARBOROUGH	ME	04074
A032	BATH IRON WORKS	700 WASHINGTON ST	BATH	ME	04530
A010	BROWN SHIP CHANDLERY INC	76 COMMERCIAL ST	PORTLAND	ME	04101
A031	BRUNSWICK NAVAL AIR STATION	BATH RD	BRUNSWICK	ME	04011
B764	BSP TRANSPORT	THOMPSONS POINT	PORTLAND	ME	04102
A030	CENTRAL MAINE POWER CO	COUSINS ISLAND	YARMOUTH	ME	04096
A022	CENTRAL TRANSPORT, INC.	1 OLD BRUNSWICK RD	GARDINER	ME	04345
A020	COLES EXPRESS	192 PRESUMPCOT ST	PORTLAND	ME	04103
C848	CON-WAY FREIGHT INC	7 GINN RD	SCARBOROUGH	ME	04074
C942	CONSOLIDATED FREIGHTWAYS	9 GINN RD	SCARBOROUGH	ME	04074
B762	DELTA AIRFREIGHT	PORTLAND INT'L JETPORT	PORTLAND	ME	04101
A319	EIMSKIP LOGISTICS, INC	468 COMMERCIAL ST	PORTLAND	ME	04101
C965	EMERY WORLDWIDE	139 FLIGHT LINE AVE	PORTSMOUTH	NH	03801

Fields 22 and 23: Your importer number will be your social security number or IRS tax ID.

Fields 27 – 30 (Commodity details): Enter your vehicle specifics in fields 27 – 30. First, determine the proper HTS code. There are free resources on the web that can help in determining the code, such as: <https://www.simplyduty.com/import-calculator/> (this site will allow you to lookup 3 codes for free). The HTS code starts with a 4 digit heading followed by pairs of numbers separated by decimals such as 8703.33.0045. Each pair of numbers after a decimal denotes a more specific classification. The heading for passenger motor vehicles is 8703 and for motor vehicles for the transportation of goods it is 8704. Details you will need to determine the proper HTS code are engine type (spark ignition combustion (gasoline) or compression combustion (diesel), engine displacement in CC's, engine cylinders, gross vehicle weight (GVW) in metric tons, interior volume/cargo capacity in cubic meters, cargo capacity in metric tons. Sometimes whether to classify a motor vehicle as mainly for transporting passengers or goods isn't as simple as it seems. For example, a stock Mazda MPV van is classified as a motor vehicle for transporting passengers but if the rear seats are removed it is classified as being designed for the transportation of goods. A stock Toyota 4Runner, which I would have assumed would be classified under the 8703 heading is actually classified under 8704 since the rear seats can fold down flat and it has a large cargo capacity. If a customs ruling exists on the particular vehicle you're importing the correct HTS code will be stated in the ruling. Customs Rulings can be searched using CBP'S CROSS

system: <http://rulings.cbp.gov/home>

Under the HTS code make sure you include your vehicle's VIN number, year, make and model. While only the VIN is required on the form, stating the other information as well may assist you in the registration of the vehicle when you get your plates.

32A (Entered value): The vehicle's purchase price not including freight and insurance.

32B (CHGS): To determine 32B, add up the cost of all freight, port, and insurance charges incurred in importing your vehicle. Proceed the value with the letter C.

33A (duty rate): Calculate 34 by multiplying 32A by 33A.

27.	28. Description of Merchandise			32.	33.	34.
Line No.	29.	30.	31.	A. Entered Value B. CHGS C. Relationship	A. HTSUS Rate B. ADA/CVD Rate C. IRC Rate D. Visa No.	Duty and I.R. Tax
	A. HTSUS No. B. ADA/CVD No.	A. Grossweight B. Manifest Qty.	Net Quantity in HTSUS Units			Dollars Cents
001	8704310020	740.000 KGS	1 NO	700.00 C1240.00 Not Related	25% 323298489234562	\$175.00
002	Motor vehicles for the transport of goods: Other, with spark-ignition internal combustion piston engine: G.V.W. not exceeding 5 metric tons: Other, with spark-ignition internal combustion piston engine: G.V.W. not exceeding 2.5 metric tons 1990 Suzuki Carry w/dump VIN DB71T-310716 RLNG 082797					

39 (Other Fee Summary): Use code 501 to identify the harbor maintenance fee and 311 for Informal merchandise processing fee. I add the descriptions as well but it's not required. If you're not using a broker and are presenting the forms directly to CBP when filing entry you should use the \$6 value for the MPF.

Other Fee Summary for Block 39		35. Total Entered Value
501 HMF: \$8.75		\$ 700.00
311 Informal MPF: \$6.00		Total Other Fees
		\$ 14.75

Everything else is self-explanatory. Consult the handbook if you are unsure.

Congratulations, you have completed CBP form 7501!


-=STEP 4=-

Complete the Department of Transportation HS-7 Short form.

Here is an electronically fillable version:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ycvImc6touqx0pz/hs799short.pdf?dl=0>

This form is amazingly simple and self-explanatory. Make sure the vehicle eligibility code = 1.

		— DECLARATION — Importation of Motor Vehicles and Motor Vehicle Equipment Subject to Federal Motor Vehicle Safety, Bumper and Theft Prevention Standards		OMB No. 2127-0002 Public Law 100—562, 49 USC Chap. 301	
PORT OF ENTRY Tacoma	CUSTOMS PORT CODE 3002	CUSTOMS ENTRY NO N/A		ENTRY DATE 2-12-2015	
MAKE OF VEHICLE Suzuki	MODEL Carry M-DB51TKAI	YEAR 1990	VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (VIN) D B 5 1 T - 5 5 5 5 5 5		
REGISTERED IMPORTER NAME AND NHTSA REGISTRATION NUMBER (Required when Box 3 is checked) N/A					VEHICLE ELIGIBILITY NO. (Box 3) 1
DESCRIPTION OF MERCHANDISE IF MOTOR VEHICLE EQUIPMENT .35 Ton 4WD dump truck					

☒ 1. The vehicle is 25 or more years old or the equipment item was manufactured on a date when no applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard or Theft Prevention Standard was in effect.

Date of manufacture: 02/1990 [591.5(i)]

☐ 7. The vehicle or equipment does not conform to all applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety and Bumper Standards, but is being imported solely for the purpose of research, investigations, demonstrations or training, or competitive racing events, and I state that I will comply with the applicable restrictions on importers of such merchandise as specified in 49 CFR 591.7 and I will provide the Administrator with documentary proof of export or destruction not later than 30 days

-STEP 5-

Fill out EPA form 3520 which you can obtain here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/vxsz381vbt61ir/3520-1.pdf?dl=0>

Again, simple and self-explanatory. Make sure the EPA exemption number = E.

to \$32,500 per vehicle or engine (42 USC 7524), and may be subject to forfeiture of the entire importation bond, if applicable (40 CFR 85.1513), and the U.S. Customs Service may seize the vehicle or engine (19 CFR 162.21).			
Description and Declaration of Motor Vehicle or Motor Vehicle Engine (Note: Heavy-duty Engines must use form 3520-21)			
1. Port code: 3002	2. Entry date: (mm/dd/yyyy) 02/12/2015	3. Customs entry number: N/A	4. Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), or engine serial number: DB51T-555555
5. Manufacture date (mm/yyyy): 02/1990	6. Manufacture (make): Suzuki	7. Model: Carry M-DB51TKAI	
8. ICI imports only, codes A, C, J, Z: N/A			9. EPA Exemption Number, required for codes L, G, I, K, O: E
Names, Addresses, and Telephone Numbers of Relevant Parties			
Certification: I certify that I have read and understand the purpose of this form, the penalties for falsely declaring information, or for providing misleading information, or for concealing a material fact. The information I have provided is correct, and all required attachments are appended to this form. I authorize EPA Enforcement Officers to conduct inspections or testing permitted by the Clean Air Act. I am the owner, importer, or agent for the owner or importer.			
10. Importer (code B: must be certificate holder or their agent for shipments of new vehicles prior to introduction into commerce; codes A, C, J, Z: must be ICI): Joseph Smith 555 55th Ct S, SEATTLE, WA 98104 555-555-5555	11. Owner: Joseph Smith 555 55th Ct S, SEATTLE, WA 98104 555-555-5555	12. Storage contact: Port of Tacoma East Blair 1 253-383-9429	13. Signature: 14. Date: 15. Name, company and phone (type or print): Joseph Smith 555-555-5555

-STEP 6-

Importers have 15 days to retrieve their shipment before the cargo is sent to a General Order Warehouse where storage charges will add up quickly. Before that happens, contact the Customs and Border Protection Office located at the inbound port and give them the documents you filled out as well as a copy of the BOL and the commercial invoice. Pay the

duty either with cash or a check (make sure you have your driver's license if paying by check). They will stamp two copies of your BOL and CBP form 7501 and clear your vehicle in the system.

-=STEP 7=-

Unless the shipper has a private terminal at the inbound port, the port will most likely act as the agent for discharging your vehicle. Your notice of arrival/freight invoice from the shipping line will specify the place your vehicle will be unloaded. Google the facility and speak with the import specialist there. The import specialist can tell you the status of your cargo and whether a customs hold has been placed on it. If there is no hold and the shipping line has notified them that you have paid the collect charge and sent the original BOL they will discharge the vehicle for you. Give them a set of the stamped BOL and form 6501. They will print off some release papers and direct you to the pickup area. The pickup area may be a secure access area. If so, you will either need to hire an escort with TWIC credentials to escort you to your vehicle (the port's website should provide a list of escorts for a nominal fee, usually \$50) or if you have a U.S. military CAC card or a US Federal Government PIV card you can get through without an escort. Go through the gate and find the import supervisor and give him your discharge document. He'll direct you to your vehicle which will likely be parked among other very cool vehicles. Spend some time appreciating them. Climb into your vehicle. Your keys will be in the ignition. Your vehicle's fuel tank will most likely be near empty. Prepare to tow your vehicle home if you don't have insurance and a trip permit.

-=STEP 8=-

Proceed to your Department of Licensing office and give them your remaining stamped form 7501, the Japan export certificate and the commercial invoice. The value of the vehicle (not including freight) from the commercial invoice will be used to calculate your state taxes. Some states like Texas require the vehicle to pass a safety and emissions inspection. As long as the vehicle's original safety and emissions equipment are intact (braking system, indicator lights, horn, headlights, muffler, etc.) the vehicle should pass.

Get your new plates. You'll notice that the screw holes on the plates won't match up with Japanese plate mounts. Whip out your drill and drill new holes in the plates (don't drill the plate mounts on the car!!). Mount your plates and enjoy your vehicle.

Click [here](#) to proceed to the end

#Formal_Entry

HOW TO FILE A FORMAL ENTRY FOR VEHICLES VALUED AT \$2500 AND OVER

So you're looking at one of the more desirable foreign vehicles like a Nissan Skyline, Autozam AZ-1 or a vintage Toyota Landcruiser. Unless it's in horrible shape it's going to cost over \$2499 so a formal entry is required for the importation. It's a bit more involved but fear not, you can do it.

Additional Key Definitions:

1. CBP Filer Code – A unique 3 digit code assigned to entities that conduct Customs business
2. Customs Entry Number – a unique identifier for an import into the U.S. The first 3 digits of the entry number is comprised of the importer's filer code.

Filing a formal entry is similar to filing an informal entry with several notable differences:

- The CBP 7501 form must provide an entry number.
- To obtain an entry number you need a CBP filer code.
- An ISF 10+2 filing must be done within 24 hours of the ship's arrival at the port [10/17/17 – Correction, an ISF filing must be done for informal entries too]. The bill of lading reported in the ISF must match the BOL number used by the shipping carrier. The BOL number reported must be the lowest-level BOL, i.e. a house bill-of-lading. For an in-depth explanation, see <http://www.expeditors.com/news-media/featured-information/2010/the-bill-of-lading.asp>
- An entry bond must be purchased to cover duty, fees and penalties in the amount of 3X the value of the vehicle (3X the value due to DOT bond requirements).
- An ISF bond must be purchased.
- The Merchandise Processing Fee is higher.

Since you don't have a filer code you either have to apply for one so you can derive an entry number or go to the CBP office at the port you're importing into to get a CBP form 7501 with a CBP assigned entry number though that means you can't use the electronic fillable PDF version.

The easiest way is to simply use a customs broker to file the entry so you don't have to deal with these issues. Wait a second, isn't the point of this guide so that you don't have to hire a broker? True, however, there is a customs broker willing to give my readers a great price on entry filing as long as the customers fill out the majority of the paperwork. The price is so low that's it's not worth doing a self-filing. I'll provide the details later in this guide.

THE PROCESS STEP-BY-STEP

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Typically when registering a vehicle at your local Department of Licensing they will require a vehicle title. In some countries such as Japan, the vehicle title is turned over to the government in order to get approval for export. This approval is in the form of an export certificate. The exporter will provide you with the original export certificate and hopefully an English translated copy. Make sure that the translation features a stamp or seal certifying that the translation is accurate to avoid issues with the DOL when you go to register your vehicle.

-=STEP 2=-

Pay for the vehicle. This is almost always done via bank transfer. If an exporter asks for payment by Western Union or MoneyGram, run! They are most likely a scam. Assuming you went CIF, after the exporter receives payment they will airmail you an original Bill of Lading (BOL) from the shipping line as well as a commercial invoice and a certificate of insurance. The exporter will offer dates of arrival. Make sure the date of arrival you choose is at least 25 years past the vehicle's date of manufacture if you intend to file DOT and EPA exemptions. The shipping line will then contact you and provide you a notice of arrival/freight invoice with specifics like the arrival date, the commodity being transported and instructions on how to provide payment for the collect charge. The collect charge covers fees the port charges against the shipping line. For my import, the collect charge amounted to \$123. You will also need to mail the original BOL that you received from the exporter to the shipping line. Pay the collect charge and mail the BOL so that the shipping line receives them at least two days before the ship makes port if you intend to take receipt of the vehicle ASAP (assuming there isn't a customs hold).

-=STEP 3=-

Download CBP form 7501. I have created a version that is electronically fillable here: https://www.dropbox.com/s/2d95knvpg4w36o9/CBP_Form_7501_Formal.pdf?dl=0

This handbook explains how to complete this

form: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/r3va7hbvtow00z4/CBP%20Form%207501 Instructions.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/r3va7hbvtow00z4/CBP%20Form%207501%20Instructions.pdf?dl=0)

You will see that the example I've provided is already populated with values. You most likely won't need to change fields 2, 5, 9, 16, 17, and 18.

Field 1 (Filer Code/Customs Entry Number): Get this from your customs broker

Field 13 (manufacturer/exporter ID): The manufacturer's ID/exporter ID is derived from the exporter. To generate the ID, follow these

directions: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/sk0t1f56a7zeket/Deriving%20mfg%20shipper%20ID.doc?dl=0>

For example, JapanCarDirect's information is:

Japan Car Direct

2-10-19 Tendai Inage Ku Chiba Chiba Japan 263-0016

Therefore their manufacturing ID would be JPJAPCAR2101CHI.

Fields 6, 19, 20 (port codes): To determine the port codes consult this

document: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/o3hb1ifw24g2oji/schedule%20K%20foreign%20port%20codes.txt?dl=0>

Fields 22 and 23: Your importer number will be your social security number or IRS tax ID.

Field 21, (BLOCK 21) LOCATION OF GOODS/General Order (GO) Number: the storage location of the vehicle after the vehicle is unloaded from the ship at port. This location will be provided to you by the shipping line. If the location has a customs FIRMS code you must use the code. You can find the code

here: <http://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/FIRMS30.txt>

FIRM	NAME	STREET	CITY	ST	ZIP
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A011	A L GRIFFIN INC	21 CUSTOM HOUSE WHARF	PORTLAND	ME	04101
C556	ABF FREIGHT	460 RIVERSIDE INDUSTRIAL PKWY	PORTLAND	ME	04103
C608	AIRBORNE EXPRESS	9 JOHNSON RD	PORTLAND	ME	04102
C664	AIRBORNE EXPRESS	53 DARLING AVE	SOUTH PORTLAND	ME	04106
A038	AMERICOLD CORPORATION	165 READ STREET	PORTLAND	ME	04103
A035	APA/SANBORN	PLEASANT HILL RD	SCARBOROUGH	ME	04074
A032	BATH IRON WORKS	700 WASHINGTON ST	BATH	ME	04530
A010	BROWN SHIP CHANDLERY INC	76 COMMERCIAL ST	PORTLAND	ME	04101
A031	BRUNSWICK NAVAL AIR STATION	BATH RD	BRUNSWICK	ME	04011
B764	BSP TRANSPORT	THOMPSONS POINT	PORTLAND	ME	04102
A030	CENTRAL MAINE POWER CO	COUSINS ISLAND	YARMOUTH	ME	04096
A022	CENTRAL TRANSPORT, INC.	1 OLD BRUNSWICK RD	GARDINER	ME	04345
A020	COLES EXPRESS	192 PRESUMPSCOT ST	PORTLAND	ME	04103
C848	CON-WAY FREIGHT INC	7 GINN RD	SCARBOROUGH	ME	04074
C942	CONSOLIDATED FREIGHTWAYS	9 GINN RD	SCARBOROUGH	ME	04074
B762	DELTA AIRFREIGHT	PORTLAND INT'L JETPORT	PORTLAND	ME	04101
A319	EIMSKIP LOGISTICS, INC	468 COMMERCIAL ST	PORTLAND	ME	04101
C965	EMERY WORLDWIDE	139 FLIGHT LINE AVE	PORTSMOUTH	NH	03801

Field 22 (Consignee Number): Unless you file CBP form 5106 to get a consignee number you must use your social security number or IRS EIN number.

Field 23 (Importer Number): If using a customs broker you can use their importer number. Otherwise use "same" since it will be the same as the consignee number in field 22.

Fields 27 – 30 (Commodity details): Enter your vehicle specifics in fields 27 – 30. First, determine the proper HTS code. There are free resources on the web that can help in determining the code, such as: <https://www.simplyduty.com/import-calculator/> (this site will allow you to lookup 3 codes for free).

The HTS code starts with a 4 digit heading followed by pairs of numbers separated by decimals such as 8703.33.0045. Each pair of numbers after a decimal denotes a more specific classification. The heading for passenger motor vehicles is 8703 and for motor vehicles for the transportation of goods it is 8704. Details you will need to determine the proper HTS code are engine type (spark ignition combustion (gasoline) or compression combustion (diesel), engine displacement in CC's, engine cylinders, gross vehicle weight (GVW) in metric tons, interior volume/cargo capacity in cubic meters, cargo capacity in metric tons. Sometimes whether to classify a motor vehicle as mainly for transporting passengers or goods isn't as simple as it seems.

For example, a stock Mazda MPV van is classified as a motor vehicle for transporting passengers but if the rear seats are removed it is classified as being designed for the transportation of goods. A stock Toyota 4Runner, which I would have assumed would be classified under the 8703 heading is actually classified under 8704 since the rear seats can fold down flat and it has a large cargo capacity. If a customs ruling exists on the particular vehicle you're importing the correct HTS code will be stated in the ruling.

Customs Rulings can be searched using CBP'S CROSS system: <http://rulings.cbp.gov/home>

Under the HTS code make sure you include your vehicle's VIN number, year, make and model. While only the VIN is required on the form, stating the other information as well may assist you in the registration of the vehicle when you get your plates.

32A (Entered value): The vehicle's purchase price not including freight and insurance.

32B (CHGS): To determine 32B, add up the cost of all freight, port, and insurance charges incurred in importing your vehicle. Proceed the value with the letter C.

33A (duty rate): Calculate 34 by multiplying 32A by 33A.

27. Line No.	28. Description of Merchandise			32. A. Entered Value B. CHGS C. Relationship	33. A. HTSUS Rate B. ADA/CVD Rate C. IRC Rate D. Visa No.	34. Duty and I.R. Tax	
	29. A. HTSUS No. B. ADA/CVD No.	30. A. Grossweight B. Manifest Qty.	31. Net Quantity in HTSUS Units			Dollars	Cents
001	8704310020	740.000 KGS	1 NO	3000.00	25%	\$750.00	
	Motor vehicles for the transport of goods: Other, with spark-ignition internal combustion piston engine: G.V.W. not exceeding 5 metric tons: Other, with spark-ignition internal combustion piston engine: G.V.W. not exceeding 2.5 metric tons			C1240.00	323298489234562		
002	1990 Suzuki Carry w/dump VIN DB71T-310716 RLNG 082797			Not Related			

39 (Other Fee Summary): Use code 501 to identify the harbor maintenance fee (if required) and 499 for the merchandise processing fee. I add the descriptions as well but it's not required. To calculate the HMF multiply the value of the vehicle by .0125. To calculate the MPF multiply the value of the vehicle by 0.03464 up to a max of \$485.

Other Fee Summary for Block 39 501 HMF: \$37.50 499 MPF: \$103.92	35. Total Entered Value \$ 3,000.00 Total Other Fees \$ 141.42
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Everything else is self-explanatory. Consult the handbook if you are unsure.

Congratulations, you have completed CBP form 7501!


-=STEP 4=-

Complete the Department of Transportation HS-7 Short form.

Here is an electronically fillable version:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ycvImc6touqx0pz/hs799short.pdf?dl=0>

This form is amazingly simple and self-explanatory. Make sure the vehicle eligibility code = 1.

 — DECLARATION — Importation of Motor Vehicles and Motor Vehicle Equipment Subject to Federal Motor Vehicle Safety, Bumper and Theft Prevention Standards				OMB No. 2127-0002 Public Law 100—562, 49 USC Chap. 301	
PORT OF ENTRY Tacoma	CUSTOMS PORT CODE 3002	CUSTOMS ENTRY NO		ENTRY DATE 2-12-2015	
MAKE OF VEHICLE Suzuki	MODEL Carry M-DB51TKAI	YEAR 1990	VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (VIN) D B 5 1 T - 1 3 7 8 6 4		
REGISTERED IMPORTER NAME AND NHTSA REGISTRATION NUMBER (Required when Box 3 is checked) NA					VEHICLE ELIGIBILITY NO. (Box 3) 1
DESCRIPTION OF MERCHANDISE IF MOTOR VEHICLE EQUIPMENT .35 Ton 4WD dump truck					
<div> <div> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1. The vehicle is 25 or more years old or the equipment item was manufactured on a date when no applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard or Theft Prevention Standard was in effect. Date of manufacture: 02/1990 [591.5(i)] </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 7. The vehicle or equipment does not conform to all applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety and Bumper Standards, but is being imported solely for the purpose of research, investigations, demonstrations or training, or competitive racing events, and I state that I will comply with the applicable restrictions on importers of such merchandise as specified in 49 CFR 591.7 and I will </div> </div>					

-=STEP 5=-

Fill out EPA form 3520 which you can obtain here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/vxs381vbt161ir/3520-1.pdf?dl=0>

Again, simple and self-explanatory. Make sure the EPA exemption number = E.

Description and Declaration of Motor Vehicle or Motor Vehicle Engine (Note: Heavy-duty Engines must use form 3520-21)			
1. Port code: 3002	2. Entry date: (mm/dd/yyyy) 02/12/2015	3. Customs entry number:	4. Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), or engine serial number: DB51T-137864
5. Manufacture date (mm/yyyy): 02/1990		6. Manufacture (make): Suzuki Japan	7. Model: Carry M-DB51TKAI
8. ICI imports only, codes A, C, J, Z:			9. EPA Exemption Number, required for codes L, G, I, K, O: E

-STEP 6-

With the CBP 7501, EPA 3520 and DOT HS-7-Short forms completed you're ready to contact a customs broker to file entry. Before you proceed, let's go over customs bonds. There are two paths you can take. You can purchase a single entry bond (SEB) and a separate ISF bond or you can purchase something called a continuous bond which covers both the entry bond and ISF bond. The continuous bond is good for a year and can be used for multiple entries. However, since you're most likely doing just a single entry an SEB bond is generally much cheaper even factoring the cost of the separate ISF bond.

Many customs brokers don't want to deal with importing a single, relatively low value vehicle and mark their prices up accordingly. I received several estimates of \$5,000 to import a 25 year old exempt vehicle which I find ridiculous. However, there are some brokers who will do piecemeal services. The typical rates for such services are:

- \$200.00 *Customs Entry Fee*
- \$100.00 *One-Time New Customer Set Up Fee*
- \$45.00 *ISF Processing (10+2)*
- \$50.00 *ISF Bond (10+2)*
- \$50.00 *Customs Single entry bond (\$50 min or \$5 per \$1000 of entered value plus duties and fees or 3X value if OGA)*

Feel free to contact brokers to price shop however make sure they are familiar with what you're trying to do and they have the following services:

- ISF 10+2 Filing Fee
- Entry Filing (Clearance) Fee
- ISF 1-+2 single bond
- Single Entry Bond (SEB)

Also be prepared to also pay nominal DOT Processing (because you're importing a vehicle) and Messenger Fees (if you elect to purchase an SEB). They asked me not to publish their prices online but at the time of this guide their pricing met or beat the average industry prices mentioned above.

-STEP 7-

Unless the shipper has a private terminal at the inbound port, the port will most likely act as the agent for discharging your vehicle. Your notice of arrival/freight invoice from the shipping line will specify the place your vehicle will be unloaded. Google the facility at the port and speak with the import specialist there. The import specialist can tell you the status

of your cargo and whether a customs hold has been placed on it. Your customs broker will also provide this information. If there is no hold and the shipping line has notified them that you have paid the collect charge and sent the original BOL they will discharge the vehicle for you. Give them a set of the stamped BOL and form 6501. They will print off some release papers and direct you to the pickup area. The pickup area may be a secure access area. If so, you will either need to hire an escort with TWIC credentials to escort you to your vehicle (the port's website should provide a list of escorts for a nominal fee, usually \$50) or if you have a U.S. military CAC card or a US Federal Government PIV card you can get through without an escort. Go through the gate and find the import supervisor and give him your discharge document. He'll direct you to your vehicle which will likely be parked amongst other very cool vehicles. Spend some time appreciating them. Climb into your vehicle. Your keys will be in the ignition. Your vehicle's fuel tank will most likely be near empty. Prepare to tow your vehicle home if you don't have insurance and a trip permit.

-=STEP 8=-

Proceed to your Department of Licensing office and give them your remaining stamped CBP form 7501, the export certificate and the commercial invoice. The value of the vehicle (not including freight) from the commercial invoice will be used to calculate your state taxes. Some states like Texas require the vehicle to pass a safety and emissions inspection. As long as the vehicle's original safety and emissions equipment are intact (braking system, indicator lights, horn, headlights, muffler, etc.) the vehicle should pass.

Get your new plates. Be prepared to whip out your drill and drill new holes in the plates (don't drill the plate mounts on the car!!) to match the U.S. plate mounting holes. Enjoy your new car and be prepared to be flooded with questions and envious stares by bystanders as you cruise around town.

#End

-=AUTHORS NOTE=-

I spent quite a bit of time consulting with CBP officers, import specialists and port employees to compile all the necessary information on importing a motor vehicle into a single source. I also modified the original forms so that they can be filled out electronically. I provide all this free in a straightforward, ad-free format to help others realize their dream of owning a unique, foreign vehicle. Furthermore, I hope that interest in these unique vehicles will lead to more voices demanding the changing of the ridiculous U.S. 25 year rule.