

UNDERSTANDING AUTO TERMS

A Plain-English Guide for McCollister's Auto Customers

This glossary explains common auto transport and logistics terms you may see when shipping a vehicle. Definitions are written to be clear, practical, and easy to understand—no industry background required.

A

Accessorial Charges

Additional fees for special services beyond standard transport, such as winching an inoperable vehicle, residential delivery, or vehicle storage.

Assigned Carrier

The trucking company that has officially been booked to transport your vehicle.

Auto Hauler

A truck or trailer specifically designed to transport vehicles.

Auto Transport

The process of moving a vehicle from one location to another using a truck or trailer.

B

Bill of Lading (BOL)

A required legal document that serves as a receipt, contract, and condition report. It records your vehicle's condition at pickup and delivery and is essential if you need to file a damage claim.

Broker

A company that arranges your vehicle shipment by matching you with a carrier. Brokers coordinate logistics but usually do not own trucks or move vehicles themselves.

C

Cancellation Fee

A charge that may apply if you cancel your shipment after a carrier has already been assigned.

Carrier

The trucking company—and driver—that physically transports your vehicle.

Claim

A formal request for compensation if your vehicle is damaged during transport.

COD (Cash on Delivery)

Payment made at delivery, typically paid directly to the driver.

Condition Report

Documentation of your vehicle's visible condition at pickup and delivery, usually included on the Bill of Lading.

Consignee

The person or business receiving the vehicle at delivery.

D

Deadhead

Miles a truck travels without carrying a vehicle. This can affect pricing in some situations.

Deductible

The amount you may be responsible for paying out of pocket before insurance coverage applies.

Delivery Location

The address or location where your vehicle is dropped off.

Deposit

An upfront payment—often paid to the broker—to secure your shipment.

Door-to-Door Transport

Pickup and delivery as close to your specified addresses as legally and safely possible.

Double-Decker Trailer

A multi-level trailer used to transport multiple vehicles at the same time.

E

Enclosed Transport

Shipping your vehicle inside a covered trailer for maximum protection. Commonly used for classic, luxury, or exotic vehicles.

ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival)

The projected date and/or time your vehicle is expected to be delivered.

Expedited Shipping

Priority service designed for faster pickup or delivery, usually at a higher cost.

F

FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration)

The U.S. government agency that regulates interstate trucking and auto transport companies.

Fuel Surcharge

An additional fee that may be applied to account for changes in fuel prices.

G

Gate-to-Gate

Pickup and delivery at terminals or facilities rather than residential addresses.

H

Hot Shot

A smaller truck used for quicker vehicle transport with limited capacity, often for shorter distances.

I

Inoperable / In-Op / Non-Running Vehicle

A vehicle that cannot start, move, or drive under its own power and requires special equipment to load and unload.

Inspection

A visual review of the vehicle's condition performed at both pickup and delivery.

Insurance Coverage

Protection provided by the carrier to cover damage that may occur during transport.

L**Lead Time**

The time between booking your shipment and when the vehicle is picked up.

Liftgate

A hydraulic platform used to load non-drivable vehicles. Rare in auto transport but occasionally required.

M**MC Number**

A license number issued by the FMCSA that proves a broker or carrier is legally authorized to transport vehicles.

O**Open Transport**

Shipping your vehicle on an open trailer, exposed to weather and road conditions. This is the most common and cost-effective transport option.

Order Confirmation

A document confirming shipment details, pricing, and service terms.

Oversized Vehicle

A vehicle larger than standard size (such as lifted trucks or dually pickups) that may cost more to transport.

P**Partial Load**

A shipment where your vehicle shares trailer space with others to reduce cost.

Pickup Location

The address or location where your vehicle is collected.

Pickup Window

A range of days when the carrier is expected to pick up your vehicle. This is not a guaranteed pickup date.

Pre-Transport Inspection

The initial inspection and documentation of your vehicle's condition before it is loaded onto the truck.

R**Residential Pickup/Delivery**

Pickup or delivery at a home address. This may include additional fees depending on access and location.

Route

The planned path the carrier follows to complete deliveries.

S

Shipper

The person or business sending the vehicle.

Spot Market

Pricing that fluctuates based on current supply and demand for carriers and routes.

Staging Area

A temporary holding location for vehicles before or after transport.

T

Terminal

A facility where vehicles may be stored or transferred during transport.

Terminal-to-Terminal Transport

You drop off and pick up your vehicle at designated terminals instead of residential addresses.

Transit Time

The amount of time your vehicle spends on the truck from pickup to delivery.

W

Winching

Using a cable system to load an inoperable vehicle onto a trailer.
