

TSS User Guides

Goods Description Guide



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HM Revenue
& Customs



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If there are any words or acronyms in this document that are unfamiliar, refer to the [Jargon Buster](#) or use the search tool on the [Northern Ireland Customs & Trade Academy \(NICTA\)](#) website to find a definition.¹

1 Goods Descriptions in the Trader Support Service (TSS)

The **Goods Description** is a mandatory field in TSS movements. It has to be completed using **plain language** and must provide a detailed description of the goods being shipped.

A clear and detailed description gives interested parties the information they need to perform the necessary checks for taxes and duties. It ensures smoother clearance, timely release by the authorities and compliance with regulations. Detailed descriptions can also help with careful physical handling and prevent damage and contamination during transportation and storage.

Using **generic** terms (such as 'goods' or 'gifts') and **inadequate or vague** descriptions of goods can result in **delays before or after movement**.

When entering a **Goods Description** it is useful to consider the following:

- What are your goods?
- What are your goods made of?
- What are your goods used for?
- If your goods are packaged this should be included in the **Goods Description**
- If the package contains any branded items, it is advisable to include the brand and model number with the description of your goods

For example, if you are shipping screwdrivers consider the details of the products prior to shipment. Simply putting 'screwdrivers' into the **Goods Description** field does not provide an accurate enough account of the goods. By applying your knowledge of the product, ask yourself questions such as:

- Are they hex, flathead, torx or Philips screwdrivers?
- Are the handles different colours?
- Are they single screwdrivers or packs?

You can then use the answers to these questions to form an acceptable goods description such as: 'Single Philips screwdriver with white handles in clear plastic case'.

¹ Terms used in this guide refer to the terminology used on the TSS Portal. Please note that these may not match the most recent terms used on [GOV.UK](#), in HMRC's Customs Declaration System or the Northern Ireland Online Tariff on [GOV.UK](#).



The same logic applies to anything you’re shipping, no matter the size or nature of the goods.

For example, where apparel is packaged in sets and separated by size you should enter:

* Goods Description

Women's cotton T-shirts, size 14, packs of 3

The **Goods Description** for excise goods – a full description of the goods including the volume, brand name and container size must always be provided, for example:

* Goods Description

Hand rolling tobacco, Amber Leaf, 500g

Alcohol products must also include the **alcohol strength**, for example:

* Goods Description

Vodka, Absolut 1ltr, ABV 37.5

The **Goods Description when using grouping** – where goods are grouped under a single commodity code, the word **grouping** should be added to the goods description, for example:

* Goods Description

Handmade porcelain ornaments, earthenware pottery statues - grouping

Examples of unacceptable and acceptable goods descriptions are listed below:

Unacceptable Goods Description	Acceptable Goods Description
Clothes	Men’s cotton shirts (knitted) – size XL
Appliances	Fridge-freezer (combined), 249 ltr, BECO, white
Battery	Lithium batteries for household use, size AAA (in packs of 4)
Fruit products	Fresh apricots (for human consumption) in crates (48 ltr)
Vodka	Vodka (insert brand name) 1ltr, ABV 37.5
Auto parts	Automobile Brakes, Windshield Glass for Automobiles



Unacceptable goods descriptions also include **numbers**, **file extensions** and **empty characters**:

Examples of unacceptable characters in Goods Description field	
1004, 1005, etc. (numbers)	Only numbers not accepted
WPX, .wpX (file extension)	File extensions not accepted
XXX, ... (three or more equal symbols or letters)	3 or more equal symbols or letters in isolation not accepted
“.”, “-”, “ ” (empty characters)	Only empty characters not accepted
\$ % ^ & < > : ” / \ ? * (special characters)	Only special characters not accepted
! £ 1 2 (special characters and numbers)	Combinations of only special characters and numbers not accepted

More examples of acceptable and unacceptable goods descriptions are available on the [European Commission](#) website. Although this document is not legally binding, it is an explicit recommendation that is recognised by all customs authorities in Europe.

Further guidance on the Description of Goods can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

2 I need to know more

There are additional guides available on [NICTA](#) to support you with trade into and out of NI:

- [How to identify your commodity codes](#)
- [Guidance on controlled goods and the Online Tariff Tool](#)
- [Data guide: TSS declaration data requirements](#)
- [Entry Summary Declaration: Step-by-step guide](#)
- [How to use the TSS Portal](#)

You can also contact the TSS Contact Centre for support on 0800 060 8888.

3 Changes to Guidance and Policy

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