

Household Goods Import Checklist – Non-Diplomats (South Africa) – Sterdts

About this checklist

This checklist is for individuals importing **used household goods and personal effects** into South Africa with Sterdts (non-diplomatic consignments). Tick off items as you complete them. This is a **planning tool**, not a legal document, and does **not** replace our [Standard Trading Conditions \(STCs\)](#) or [customs regulations](#). Requirements can change; Sterdts will always confirm the latest rules for your specific move.

1. Confirm this checklist applies to you

This checklist is meant for:

- Private individuals importing **used household goods/personal effects**
- Shipments **not cleared under diplomatic privileges**
- Moves where goods are for **personal/family use**, not for resale

This checklist is **not** for:

- Foreign diplomats importing under diplomatic arrangements (use the [Diplomats HHG Import Checklist](#) instead)
- Commercial imports for trading/stock
- Large volumes of new goods bought for business

If you are unsure which category you fall into, simply tell your Sterdts consultant about your **status** (citizen, returning resident, work visa holder, etc.).

2. Understand the key customs principles

Tick once you've read and understood:

- Used household goods may qualify for **relief or concessions** if conditions are met (ownership/use period, status, etc.)
- New or nearly new goods** can be treated differently and may attract full duties and taxes
- Customs expects **honest, complete and accurate** information about you and your shipment
- Proof of where you lived and your **immigration/residence status** is often required
- Customs decisions (on concessions, inspections, duties/taxes) are **final**; Sterdts can assist but cannot override SARS

3. Documents you must prepare (before goods arrive)

Your exact list may vary; Sterdts will confirm which items apply in your situation. Use this as a base checklist.

Identity & immigration

- Valid **passport** of the person in whose name the shipment will be cleared
- South African ID book/card (if citizen or permanent resident)
- Valid **visa / work permit / residence permit**, if applicable

- Any official letter confirming your immigration status, if relevant

Proof of residence and stay abroad

If you are a **returning resident** or have lived abroad:

- Lease agreements / property deeds showing where you lived abroad
 Utility bills (water, electricity, etc.) for your overseas address
 Employer housing or assignment letters
 Other proof of where and how long you stayed overseas

If you are **moving into South Africa**:

- Proof of new South African address (lease, deed, employer letter, where available)

Employment / assignment / study (if applicable)

- Employer letter confirming employment/assignment in South Africa
 End-of-assignment letter (if you are returning from a foreign posting)
 School/university acceptance letter if you are moving for study

Shipment details

- Copy of your **Sterdts quotation**
 Sterdts booking / acceptance confirmation
 Draft or final **packing list / inventory** (Sterdts will help you structure this)
 List of **high-value items** for insurance/customs focus (art, antiques, collections, etc.)

Vehicles & special items (if included)

If you plan to import a vehicle or similar:

- Vehicle registration documents
 Proof of ownership period and, where relevant, use abroad
 Any permits/approvals that may be required (Sterdts will advise if this applies)

Storage tip: Keep **digital scans** and **original hard copies** of all key documents in one place

4. What Sterdts will help with

Sterdts as your appointed clearing agent will:

- Prepare the **formal customs declaration** for your shipment
 Advise which **customs forms** are required in your case
 Submit your documents and declarations to SARS and other authorities
 Coordinate with port/terminal operators and carriers

To make this possible, you should:

- Provide all requested documents **promptly and completely**
- Answer follow-up questions **honestly and clearly**
- Inform Sterdts immediately if your **status, address or shipment contents** change

5. Check your shipment for items that may attract duties, taxes or controls

Even if most of your goods may qualify for concessions, some items can be treated differently. Tick where relevant and discuss with Sterdts:

New or nearly new goods

- Recently purchased items, especially still in original packaging
- Multiple identical new items that look like stock rather than personal effects

Alcohol, tobacco & food

- Wine, spirits, beer and other alcohol
- Cigarettes, cigars, tobacco
- Non-perishable foods / speciality foods

Vehicles & related items

- Cars, motorbikes, trailers, boats or jet skis in the shipment
- Vehicle parts and accessories

Restricted / controlled goods

- Firearms, ammunition, paintball/air weapons
- Certain medicines, chemicals or hazardous materials
- Goods made from certain animals/plants, or particular woods, that may be restricted

High-value items

- Fine art, antiques and collections
- High-value electronics or equipment beyond normal household use
- If you are unsure:
- I have asked Sterdts to check any **unusual or high-risk items** before packing

6. Timing, inspections and possible extra charges

Before shipment leaves origin

- I have started gathering required documents **before** the shipment leaves origin
- I understand that missing documents can delay customs clearance

When the shipment arrives in South Africa

- I understand the shipment will go via a **port or terminal** where storage time may be limited
- I know that customs may:
 - Release the shipment on documentation only; or
 - Select it for **inspection**, which can add time and cost

Storage & demurrage

- I understand that if clearance is delayed (documents, inspections, etc.), I may incur:
 - Storage charges** at the terminal or depot
 - Demurrage charges** from the shipping line

- Sterdts will warn me where possible, but these charges are driven by third-party tariffs and customs processes

Duties, taxes and local fees

- I accept that even if concessions apply, some goods may still attract duties/taxes
- I understand there will be **clearing/administration fees**, port charges and other local costs
- Sterdts can provide indicative estimates, but final amounts are set by customs and third parties

7. Practical steps to avoid customs delays

You can reduce risks and delays by:

Being open and accurate

- I will not hide or misdescribe items in the hope of avoiding duties or inspections
- I will provide full, honest information about my goods and status

Preparing documents early

- I started gathering documents as soon as I knew I was moving
- I keep both **digital** and **paper** copies together

Keeping Sterdts informed

- I will tell Sterdts if my **travel dates, immigration status, address or shipment contents** change
- I will respond quickly to any document or information requests

Keeping the shipment "clean"

- I have avoided including obvious commercial stock in the shipment
- I have followed Sterdts' guidance on restricted/hazardous items
- I understand that some items simply **cannot** travel in a household goods container
- Allowing for some flexibility**
- I have allowed some buffer time for possible inspections or delays beyond anyone's control

This checklist is for guidance and planning only. It does **not** replace our formal [Standard Trading Conditions \(STCs\)](#), carrier conditions, SARS rules or customs regulations. Where there is any uncertainty or something unusual in your circumstances, please contact Sterdts so we can advise you specifically.

Contact details

If you are planning to import household goods into South Africa, or already have a shipment on the way, contact Sterdts early so we can confirm your exact requirements:

Information Officer:

Gert Mostert

Contact details:

Tel: +27 87 057 2777

Email: info@sterdts.co.za

Postal/physical address:

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South Africa