

Becoming a Customs Broker

What is a Customs broker?

Customs brokers are **private individuals, partnerships, associations or corporations** licensed, regulated and empowered by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to assist importers and exporters in meeting Federal requirements governing imports and exports. Brokers submit necessary information and appropriate payments to CBP on behalf of their clients and charge them a fee for this service.

Brokers must have expertise in the entry procedures, admissibility requirements, classification, valuation, and the rates of duty and applicable taxes and fees for imported merchandise.

There are approximately 11,000 active licensed Customs brokers in the United States.

What about Customs brokerages?

Corporations, partnerships and associations must have a broker license to transact Customs business. Each of these businesses must have at least one individually licensed officer, partner or associate to qualify the company's license. Failure to have a qualifying officer or member (of a partnership) for more than 120 days will result in the revocation of the broker license.

Who is eligible to become qualified as a Customs broker?

To be eligible, you must:

- be a United States citizen at least 21 years old.
- not be a current Federal Government employee.
- possess good moral character.

Assuming I am eligible, how do I become a Customs broker?

1. First, you must pass the Customs Broker License Examination.
2. Second, you must submit a broker license application with appropriate fees.
3. Third, your application must be approved by CBP.

The Customs Broker License Examination

Q: What is the Customs Broker License Examination?

A: The Customs Broker License Examination is an open book/open test with 80 multiple-choice questions based on designated editions of:

- The Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTSUS)
- Title 19, Code of Federal Regulations

- Specified Customs Directives
- Customs and Trade Automated Interface Requirements document (CATAIR)

Q: How long is the Customs Broker License Examination?

A: You have four and one half hours to complete the examination.

Q: Where and when is the Customs Broker Examination given?

A: This examination is normally given at [CBP service ports](#), the first Monday in April and the first Monday in October. If that Monday is a religious holiday, the examination will be given the following Tuesday. The appropriate CBP port director must receive the examination application and \$200 fee at least 30 days in advance of the examination.

Q: What must applicants take to the Customs Broker Examination site?

A: Each applicant is responsible for bringing proof of registration, a picture identification, and the recommended reference materials to the examination.

Q: Must I be a U.S. citizen to take this examination?

A: Yes, you must be a citizen on the date of the examination.

Q: What is a passing score?

A: A passing score is 75 percent or better.

Q: What if I fail the examination?

A: You may retake the examination until you pass. You are also entitled to submit an appeal of your examination score to CBP in accordance with 19 CFR 111.13(f)

Applying for a Customs Broker License

Q: When may I apply?

A: Assuming you are eligible, you may apply after you pass the Customs Broker License Examination.

Q: How long after passing the examination can I wait to apply for a broker license?

A: You must apply to a CBP port director within three years of the date of the letter notifying you that you passed the Customs Broker License Examination.

Q: What are the fees for a broker license application?

A: There is a \$200 application fee (plus a fingerprint check and processing fee).

Q: Where do I apply?

A: Apply to the port where you want to transact Customs business as a broker.

Broker License Application Review

Q: Who reviews broker license applications?

A: There are three levels of review. First is a multi-agency background investigation. Second, the CBP port director reviews the background investigation and any other pertinent information, and forwards a recommendation to CBP Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Finally, CBP will carefully evaluate each application, and the Assistant Commissioner, Office of International Trade, will advise the applicant whether his or her application is approved.

Q: What does the background investigation include?

A: Each broker license applicant must undergo a background investigation that includes a fingerprint analysis and a review of character references, credit reports, and any arrest record. Arrests or convictions do not necessarily preclude the issuance of a license.

Q: How long does the license application process take?

A: The length of time it takes to complete the license application process can vary depending on multiple factors. Some of the factors include but are not limited to the amount of different locations the applicant has lived in, the workload of the agent conducting the background investigation and the national security threat level. An application can take from 8 to 12 months to process.

Q: Is there an appeal if a broker license application is denied by CBP?

A: Yes. Appeal procedures are outlined in 19 CFR 111.17.

Contact Information

Please send written correspondence to:

*U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Trade Facilitation and Administration*

*Broker Compliance Branch
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Attn: 1400 L Street
Washington D.C. 20229*