

Peak Playbook

Plan ahead to stay ahead during
eCommerce peak season



Australia Post

Your partner for peak

Are you looking to stay ahead of the game in the ever-evolving world of eCommerce? The retail environment continues to pose challenges for businesses as we approach the peak sales period, but there's plenty of positive news to focus on.

While online sales have softened slightly in 2023, household participation in online shopping continues to grow steadily and strategic shopping – where shoppers target sales and other deals – looks set to be a feature of this year's peak.

To help your business navigate these challenges and respond to evolving consumer behaviours and expectations, we're investing in the tools to help you plan, stay ahead of the curve and surprise and delight your customers in new and unexpected ways.

Inside this toolkit you'll find resources to support you every step of the way, from preparing labels and parcel lodgement, to offering tracking, notifications and estimated delivery dates with greater accuracy than ever before. You'll also find a calendar of key eCommerce events and new and improved forecasting and industry insights.

With these tools and more, we're committed to working with you to achieve the best possible results and deliver for your customers, for a successful eCommerce peak season.

Gary Starr
Executive General Manager,
Parcel, Post & eCommerce Services



Must-have bookmarks for a smooth peak season

Website: [Managing Peak Demand](#)

Website: [Last sending dates](#)

Website: [Domestic and International service updates](#)

How-to videos: [Best practice freight preparation](#)

Download our [eCommerce Sales Calendar](#)
and [2023 Online Shopping Report](#)

Access our [data and insights](#) including Quarterly eCommerce updates

Be sure to subscribe to our [newsletter](#) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) for
the latest network updates and eCommerce insights



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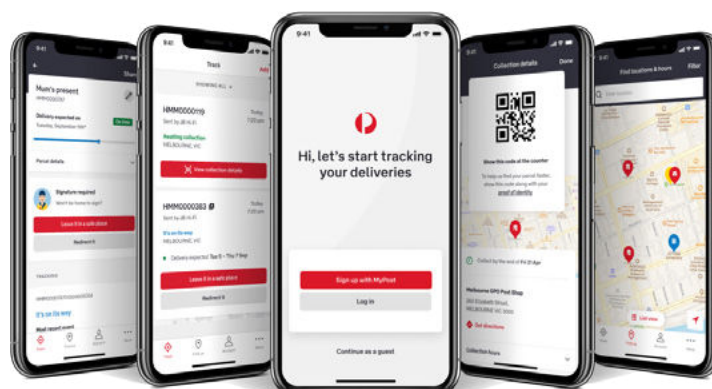
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Key eCommerce dates

The second half of the calendar year boasts some of the biggest annual eCommerce sale events – and they're only growing in popularity.

- Sep** Vogue Online Shopping Night, Father's Day
- Oct** Click Frenzy, Halloween, Green Friday
- Nov** Singles Day, Click Frenzy, Black Friday, Cyber Monday
- Dec** Free Shipping Day, Super Saturday, Boxing Day sales



[Click here to access our full eCommerce Sales Calendar](#)

66%

of people say they shopped during the major sales of 2022, including Black Friday and Cyber Monday. This rises to 83.5% of 18-44 year olds*

Supporting you and your customers this peak season

Got a query you need help with? Save time using our range of self-service tools during this busy time of year.

MyPost Business customers

Chat with a member of our team using the 'Support' tab in the [MyPost Business portal](#).^{*} You can also create an enquiry online or get phone support if you prefer to speak with someone.

Parcel Contract customers

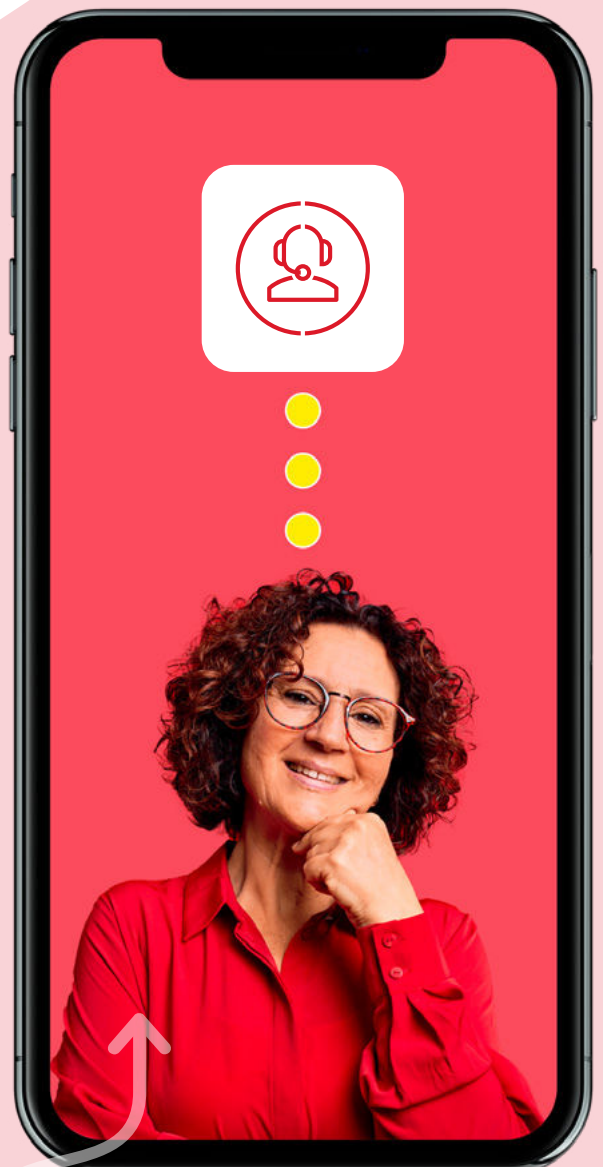
The Business Support Portal (BSP) is the fastest way to log an enquiry on behalf of your customers. It can also help you quickly and easily manage queries such as tracking and parcel redirection. Access it via the [Merchant Portal](#).

StarTrack customers

[myStarTrack Online](#) allows you to manage all your parcels and freight, pick-up bookings and [Track & Trace](#). For all other enquiries, call StarTrack on 13 23 45.

*Australia Post consumer segmentation, Feb 23

^{*}Live chat is available Monday to Friday, 8am-6pm AEST.





Step 1:

Peak season planning



Forecasting peak season volumes

A smooth and successful peak all comes down to good planning. Here are some of the top things to consider:

- ✓ **Forecast accurately** – based on your peak season volumes and considering the increasing uptake of online shopping across Australia.
- ✓ **Strengthen your supply chain** – review all suppliers and consider having alternatives available in case of disruption.
- ✓ **Share your marketing plans with supply chain partners** – including planning ahead for additional pickups and weekend time slots, if available. If you ship internationally, share your projections, which allows Australia Post to procure additional airline capacity in advance.
- ✓ **Factor in last sending dates** – once the Australia Post and StarTrack recommended lodgement dates for pre-Christmas deliveries are confirmed.

82%

of households shopped online in Australia last year*

Time to pick & pack

Once orders are coming in quickly, it's time for fulfilment to support getting products out your warehouse door. To ensure things run smoothly, keep in mind:

- ✓ **Real-time visibility of inventory levels** – this is critical if you want to reduce the risk of disappointing order cancellations.
- ✓ **Optimising processes** – can your warehouse management systems, facilities and equipment cope with spikes in demand?
- ✓ **Addressing storage issues** – if your current capacity is limited, consider 3PL warehousing.
- ✓ **Omnichannel fulfilment** – Bricks & Clicks retailers can fulfil from both physical stores and a central DC, to get stock to customers faster. Alternatively, a 3PL in each state might help to reduce the cost and time associated with interstate deliveries.
- ✓ **Stock up on supplies** – satchels, boxes, padding and labels. You don't want to run out during the busiest week of the year!



No business wants to deal with supply chain disruptions during peak. We share expert advice on [how to strengthen yours here](#).



Use our new **packaging finder** to choose the right packaging for your business.

Manage customer expectations

Setting clear expectations up front with your customers will help instil confidence and reduce their need to contact you about a parcel's estimated delivery.

Here's what you can do to manage customer expectations and provide an optimal experience:

- ✓ **Provide customers a choice of speed** – regular or express shipping, for customers who want their orders faster. Don't forget International Express for overseas deliveries.
- ✓ **Keep your website and FAQs up to date** – with accurate delivery information. Don't promise same-day fulfilment if you can't guarantee fast turnaround when volumes increase.
- ✓ **Communicate 'order by' dates clearly** – so customers understand your cutoff for Christmas deliveries.
- ✓ **Validate addresses** – to make sure address data is accurate, which will reduce delays or wastage.
- ✓ **Capture all the details at checkout** – including email and mobile number, to ensure customers receive automated tracking and delivery notifications.
- ✓ **Allow Safe Drop** – for suitable parcels, to increase first time delivery.
- ✓ **Offer collection points at checkout** – such as Post Offices, PO Boxes and free 24/7 Parcel Lockers. With over 4,700 locations available, integrating collection points allows customers to collect their parcels where and when it suits them.
- ✓ **Let customers know you ship with Australia Post** – giving them certainty a trusted provider will deliver their package.

49%

of shoppers want to see more collection points offered by retailers[#]



4,000+

Post Offices including PO Box locations



700+

24/7 Parcel Lockers

Encourage your customers to use the AusPost app to reduce your customer query volumes during peak.

They can track a parcel, add a Parcel Locker and manage deliveries all in one place.

Keep your website FAQs and confirmation emails up to date using our messaging templates. It contains all the delivery and tracking information customers want to know about.



Step 2:

Freight presentation



How-to: packaging and labelling

Preparing your freight correctly is one of the best things you can do to ensure parcels move efficiently through our network; ultimately landing in your customers' hands sooner.



Watch our [helpful video](#) on best practice packaging and labelling

Our top packaging tips:

- ✓ Packaging should be sturdy and correctly sized to fit and protect the items inside.
- ✓ The flat surfaces of boxes make labelling and scanning easy, however satchels have a smaller footprint – particularly important for international deliveries where plane cargo space is limited.
- ✓ Opt for matte packaging with bright or light colours and avoid glossy packaging, which can slip off conveyor belts more easily.
- ✓ If your items require additional protection while in transit, try a 'box in box' method. Wrap individual items with a cushioning material and use a filler or padding material between boxes.
- ✓ If re-using packaging, ensure old labels and barcodes are removed.

Print labels clearly

- ✓ Print labels on matte white paper with black ink.
- ✓ Make sure the barcode and address are clear and visible.
- ✓ Include a Smart Barcode with a Delivery Point Identifier or DPID (optional for Australia Post parcels only).
- ✓ Avoid shiny plastic, such as plastic sleeves or letter windows – reflective materials make it harder for labels to be scanned.



✓ Correct



✗ Lined



✗ Torn



✗ Faded

Place labels on items correctly

- ✓ Apply labels to the largest, flattest surface of the parcel.
- ✓ Make sure they're clearly visible and aren't wrapped around corners, creased or obstructed by strapping or tape.



✓ Correct



✗ Label covered by strapping



✗ Label covered by tape



✗ Wraps corner

How-to: parcel sorting and manifesting

To help parcels get to their destinations as quickly as possible and minimise delays, please sort your items by:



Speed

i.e. Express Post from Parcel Post



Size

i.e. small parcels from large parcels

It's important that the right sized parcels are sent to the right facility, first time. If not, parcels will be re-routed.

Using a Small Parcel Streaming Gauge is a simple way to double-check the correct size for each parcel.

Manifesting your parcels too early or too late can derail a great customer experience.

If you've booked a parcel pickup, make sure you submit your manifest when the driver collects your items. That way, customers will know exactly when their items are collected.

Send the data too early and you risk an increase in customer enquiries, send it too late and we'll need to enter data manually, causing delays.

Accurately manifesting also helps:

- ✓ Avoid extra charges due to size/weight changes.
- ✓ Customers' ability to track parcels throughout their whole journey.



We are rolling out **Australia Post Metro**, a new, next business day delivery service to select metro areas, available to some contract customers.

Contact your Account Manager to learn more.

Check your parcel sizes and weights

From November 1 2023, Australia Post will not accept parcels over maximum limits. The maximum parcel length is 105cm and weight is 22kg*.

Australia Post Domestic size and weight guidelines*

Max. weight*

22kg

Max. length, longest side*

105cm

Max. cubic volume

0.25m³

*Australia Post may refuse to carry any parcel that falls outside these size and weight limits. Where the parcel is intercepted at the lodgement facility, an Administrative Fee and the Return to Sender Fee will be charged. For any parcel over the maximum limits consigned to us that does make it into our network, an Over Maximum Limits fee of \$100 (incl. GST) will be charged by Australia Post (acting reasonably having regard to the size and/or weight of the parcel), in addition to the normal delivery charge for that parcel.



Watch our [helpful videos](#) on best practice parcel sorting and manifesting.

International freight

eCommerce opens your business up to the entire world. If you're shipping to customers around the globe, here are some tips to help your parcels arrive at their destination as soon as possible.

- ✓ International sales promotions should be held earlier than domestic ones, if you're aiming for pre-Christmas deliveries.
- ✓ Lodge your items using either a digital lodgement platform or submit parcel information using the [Customs Declaration form](#) – this can save time and ensure a smooth delivery process.
- ✓ Make sure your item descriptions and [HS tariff codes](#) on your [customs forms](#) are in line with the [Australia Post requirements](#).
- ✓ To avoid items being sent back, submit your manifest on or before lodgement.

6%

of international shoppers bought from Australia in 2022* – so there's plenty of market to tap into!

Considering a global expansion?

[Read our checklist](#) for taking your eCommerce business international.

Australia Post International size and weight guidelines

Max. (Dead) weight

20kg

Max. length, longest side

105cm

Max. girth (Height + Width) x 2

140cm



Compact packaging means more of your items can fit on planes. This improves the end-to-end delivery speed – meaning more happy customers.

Your must-have international tools and guides

[International export tools](#) help you classify your goods easily and accurately, and understand taxes and duties that may be charged at destination Customs.*

[International postal guide](#). Check the rules and guidelines for sending to a particular destination so your item can get there without delay.

*Inside Australian Online Shopping, Australia Post, 2023

*Only available to parcel services customers using an enabled 3rd party platform or direct API.

Large businesses: ULD and Pallet presentation

ULDs

ULDs are the main way Australia Post moves parcels and freight for large businesses. When your ULDs are prepared correctly, they can move through the sorting and delivery process smoothly – and help your customers receive deliveries on time.

Top tips:

- ✓ Make sure you've ordered your ULDs through the Lodgement Quality System (LQS).
- ✓ Sort items by speed and then size. If you're already sorting by state please continue doing this.
- ✓ Check each ULD doesn't exceed 600kg in gross weight and isn't overfilled.
- ✓ Ensure you have a good supply of Australia Post-provided labels and apply them to two sides of every ULD you send to ensure it is routed correctly.



Check out our [ULD Checklist](#) for more information.

Pallets

If ULDs aren't available, you may be asked to use pallets for parcel preparation. Please ensure your pallets are in a serviceable condition – safety is Australia Post's number one priority.

Top tips:

- ✓ Check the pallet doesn't exceed 1.6m in height and 1,000kg gross weight (incl. the pallet itself).
- ✓ Secure the pallet with shrink-wrapping (a minimum of three times, connected to the pallet's base).
- ✓ Ensure parcels don't extend beyond the perimeter of the pallet.



Check out our [Pallet Checklist](#) for more information.

Important:

ULDs or pallets that don't meet Australia Post or StarTrack size, weight, and safety requirements will not be collected for transport. This may cause delivery delays for your customers.



Sending with StarTrack

Time to prepare your freight for consignment.

Pallets and freight must be properly presented and not exceed maximum weights and dimensions for us to carry your items.

StarTrack Road Express[®]

Max. (Dead) weight

20kg

Max. Length

117cm

Max. Width/
Max. Height

60cm

StarTrack Premium[®]

Max. (Dead) weight

22kg

Max. Length

100cm

Max. Width/
Max. Height

60cm



Please visit the [website](#) to stay up to date with StarTrack sending dates.



Key tips for StarTrack freight presentation

When preparing your freight, please ensure:

- ✓ For items over 16kg, place a 'Heavy' sticker on the parcel and ensure that you accurately record the weight in your manifest and consignment label.
- ✓ For items over 32kg, secure it to a pallet or skid for handling by Load Shifting Equipment (LSE).
- ✓ You use suitable packaging that's sturdy and fit for transportation of your goods.
- ✓ Accurate documentation is included with your freight, including Dangerous Goods status and mass.
- ✓ Your freight is ready for collection at the specified collection time.



StarTrack 'Heavy' sticker sample



Pallet presentation

When preparing your pallets, please ensure:

- ✓ Freight is appropriately restrained and confined within the dimensions of the pallet, with pallets wrapped for transport and labelled on all five sides.
- ✓ The correct weight is recorded and is aligned to a manifest. Pallet dead weight must be less than 800kgs.
- ✓ The pallet is in a serviceable condition, suitable for transport with maximum dimensions of L 1.17m x W 1.17m x H 1.8m.
- ✓ For single cartons with dead weight greater than 32kgs, please brick-lay cartons (overlapping) when stacking on the pallet.

[®]A Manual Handling Surcharge will apply to any item that is incompatible with, or which cannot be safely sorted on our automatic sorting machines, and which exceeds the [StarTrack Road Express](#) or [StarTrack Premium](#) size and weight dimensions. Please note that any incompatible packaging items purchased from Australia Post sent via StarTrack will incur a Manual Handling Surcharge. An Oversize Charge will be applied instead of the Manual Handling Surcharge for items falling within the oversize ranges listed in the [StarTrack Oversize](#) guide.

Sending with StarTrack

How to: barcodes and labelling

1. Use high quality barcodes and Test-print your labels.

Barcodes need to be:

- ✓ Crisp
- ✓ Not faded
- ✓ Free from other markings and smudges
- ✓ Aligned to fit on the label

2. Place your labels correctly.

- ✓ Keep labels flat
- ✓ Not applied over corners
- ✓ Not creased

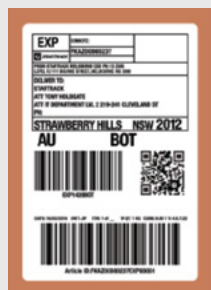
3. Prior to pickup, transfer your data.

This is critical – we need your manifest data so we can:

- ✓ Sort
- ✓ Scan
- ✓ Dispatch
- ✓ And trace your parcels



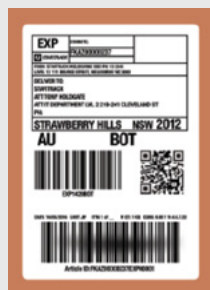
Examples of correct and incorrect labelling



✓ Correct



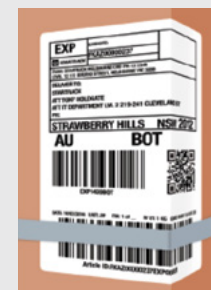
✗ Creased label



✗ Smudged print



✗ Wraps corner



✗ Covered



Step 3:

**The delivery
& returns
experience**



Tracking and notifications

Parcel tracking adds another layer of confidence for shoppers, particularly during busy online shopping periods. Encourage customers to download the [AusPost app](#) and sign up for a [MyPost account](#), so they can:

- ✓ Track all their deliveries from Australia Post in one place.
- ✓ Manage delivery preferences such as Safe Drop or parcel redirection.
- ✓ Raise enquiries directly with Australia Post, reducing your own customer query volumes during busy times.

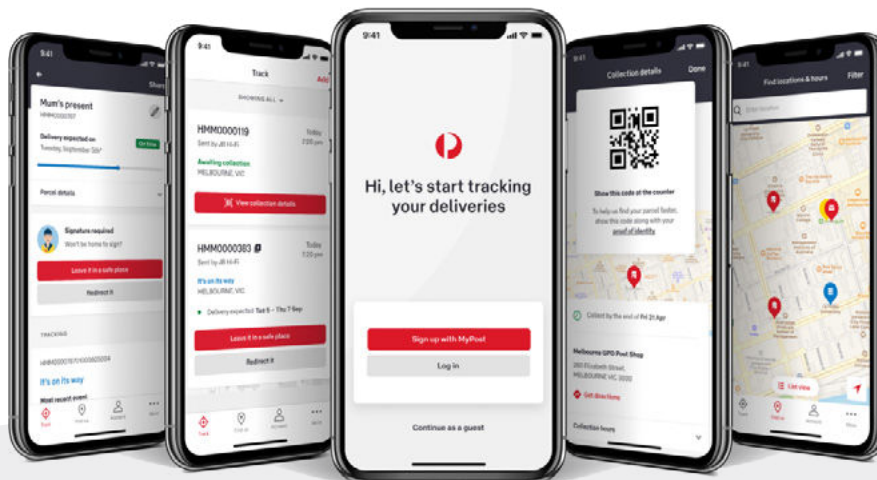


Learn more about how [promoting the app](#) can improve the customer experience.

91% of shoppers say they'll track their parcels*

App users report higher satisfaction than non-app users*

Website trackers are three times more likely to contact the retailer about a delivery issue than app users, who will self serve*



Follow these four steps to tracking success:

1. Include a link to download the AusPost app in your order confirmation emails or FAQ pages.
2. Include customer email and mobile numbers on the manifest to automate email/SMS tracking notifications.
3. Promote notification preferences so customers can choose how they want to be notified.
4. Promote Safe Drop for all eligible parcels, so they can receive their parcel first time.

*Australia Post Consumer Segmentation, March 2023

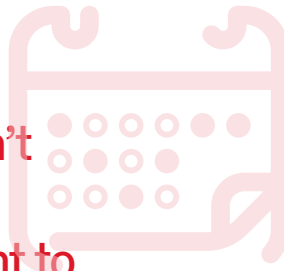
*Australia Post Operational NPS Survey, FY22

Managing returns

A great delivery experience doesn't end when the parcel arrives. Your returns process is just as important to shoppers as the checkout or delivery.

Coming into eCommerce peak season, consider extending your returns policy and be sure to make returns information is easy to find on your website and customer emails.

If you're a Parcel Contract customer, explore our [Easy Returns](#) and set up your own returns portal in just a few days. For [MyPost Business](#), returns are created within the platform.



6 in 10

shoppers say they've bought the same item from a different retailer because of a more favourable returns policy*

75%

of consumers expect free returns* but only 29% of eCommerce retailers offer it*

75%

of businesses wished they had made some change to their policy over Christmas, such as extending the timeframe or better communicating their returns offer#

MyPost Business customer?

Make returns easy with our new [reusable satchels](#). With dual adhesive strips, they're designed to be used a second time by customers returning items to you.

20,000+

returns drop off points, including Post Offices, 24/7 Parcel Lockers and street Posting Boxes

*Consumer Omnibus Jan 2022 and 2023

^SMB Omnibus Jan 2022 and 2023

#SMB Omnibus Jan'23

Australia Post is committed to delivering a better tomorrow that benefits all Australians

Australia's largest electric delivery fleet

4,600+ electric delivery vehicles in our fleet, and counting.

Carbon neutral parcel sending

Postage paid via the Post Office, Online Shop or MyPost Business account is carbon neutral*. Since 2019 we've offset the carbon emissions of over 200 million parcels.

Targeting Net Zero

Our Sustainability Roadmap sets out our target of Net Zero emissions by 2050.

Find out more [here](#).



4,600+

electric delivery vehicles
in our fleet, and counting

About Australia Post

We're making it easier for you to connect with your customers and find new ones both here and overseas. Through our suite of eCommerce driven logistics, supply chain and parcel delivery solutions, we can help you to provide seamless online shopping experiences, from checkout to delivery.

If you have any questions about this toolkit or you would like to know more, please contact your Australia Post Account Manager or phone 13 11 18 and one of our friendly staff will assist you.

This report is provided for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific advice for your business.



Australia Post acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate, live and gather as a team. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

*Carbon offset for international parcel deliveries is to the international hub only.