

Holiday Success Guide 2019

How to plan, perform and partner
your way to success





Table of Contents

Click on a chapter title to view it.

	Introduction	3
	Time things right	4
	Give shoppers what they want	5
	Promote smartly and strategically	8
	Prime your back-end operations	11
	Partner with Canada Post for a superior customer experience	14

Introduction

You'll be busier than you've been all year. Demand will soar, competition will be fierce, and challenges will come out of nowhere. You'll be fuelled by coffee and adrenaline. You'll skip lunches (but try not to!). The holiday season is *far* from easy – but it *is* retail's most exciting opportunity. Nail it, and you'll grow your sales and your brand.

But how do you nail it? Make our *2019 Holiday Success Guide* your game plan. As an integral part of e-commerce in this country, Canada Post knows what shoppers want in their end-to-end shopping experience – and knows how online retailers can deliver it. We share our experience and advice here.

Five strategies for holiday success



Time things right



Give shoppers what they want



Promote smartly and strategically

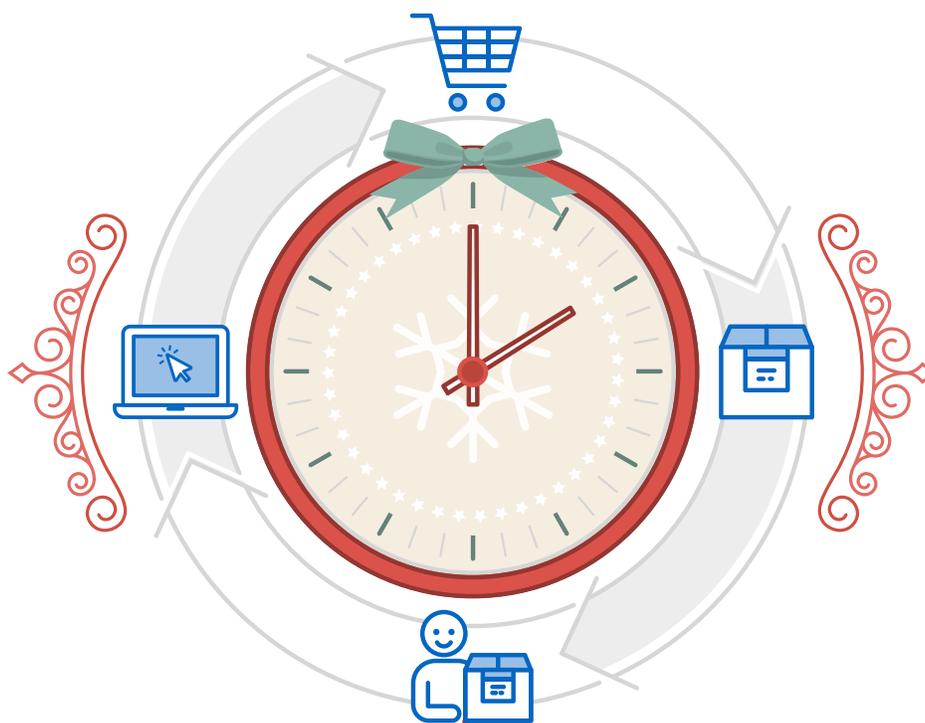


Prime your back-end operations



Partner with Canada Post for your best holiday season yet





Time things right

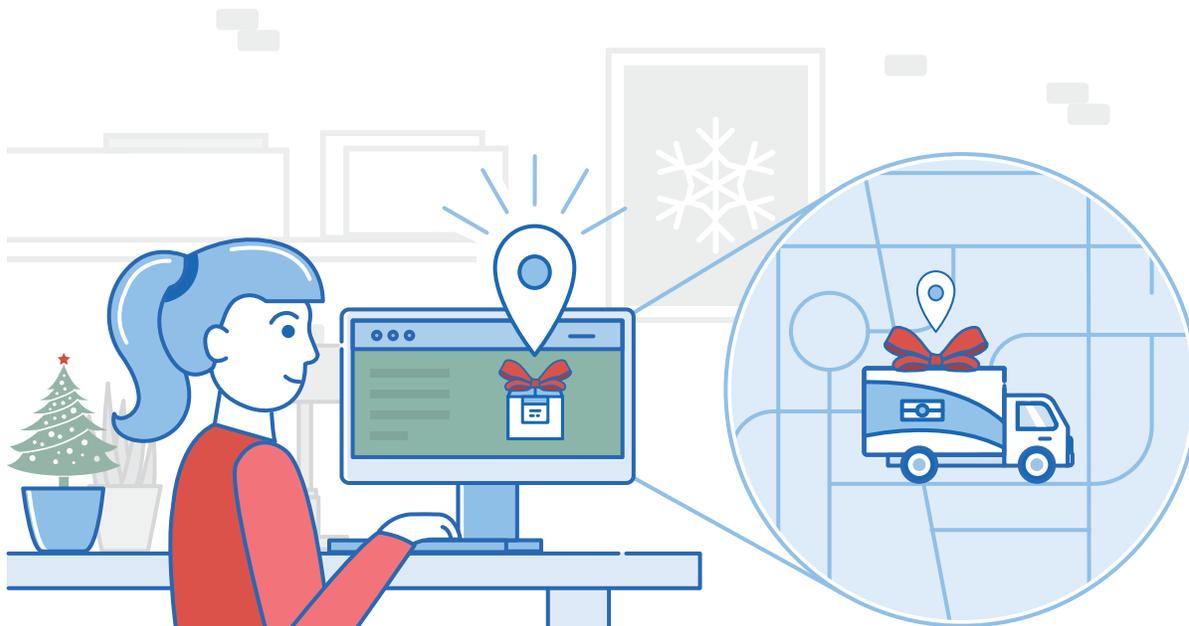
For online retail, the holiday season starts earlier and ends later each year. Promotions now occur from mid-November (even before Black Friday) to mid-January, when customers are still shopping and returning items. In between, Cyber Monday and Boxing Day each anchor an intense week of activity. In recent years, major Canadian retailers' pre-Cyber Week promotions began at least two weeks before Black Friday, and pre-Boxing week promotions started two to three weeks before Boxing Day.¹

While our planning is nearly year-round, we've defined this year's peak season as November 11, 2019 to January 12, 2020.



Nearly 75% of Canada's online merchants offered pre-Black Friday sales, so prepare your promotion strategy, operations and inventory to compete in the early rush.¹

¹2017 Canada Post Holiday Monitoring Study



2

Give shoppers what they want

Shoppers' expectations peak during the holidays. They're time-crunched, shopping for themselves and for those perfect gifts, and they visit online stores they normally wouldn't. They want information at a glance. Meet their expectations and you can win them over and delight them. Here's what shoppers want (and some think!), what you need to know and what you need to do.



Here's what shoppers want, what you need to know and what you need to do:

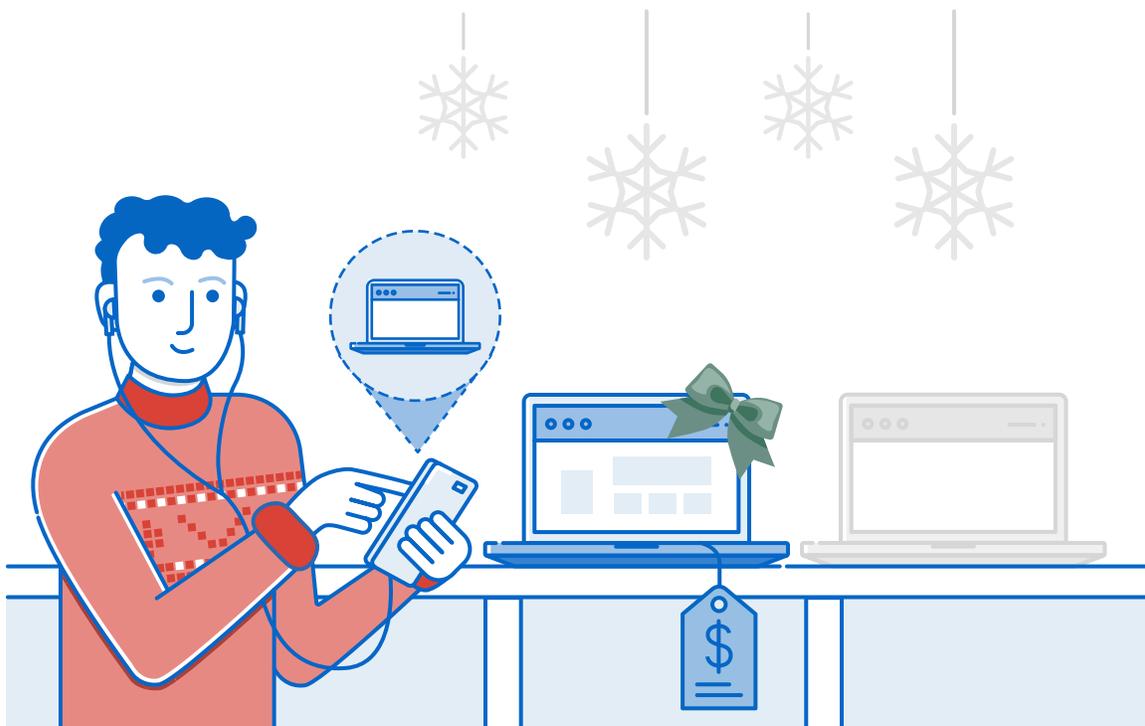
What shoppers want (and what some think)	What you need to know	What you need to do
<p>Certainty around product availability.</p> <p>Some shoppers think... "I need to know <i>right now</i> that this item is in stock – I can't wait for a back-order message to come later."</p>	<p>The more certainty you can offer, the more likely you are to convert a browser into a buyer.</p> <p>Big and best-in-class online retailers display real-time product availability – raising shoppers' expectations around certainty.</p>	<p>Display clear, current information about product availability. If you have a physical location, look at displaying in-store product availability displayed on your website to encourage in-store traffic. If it's too late to do it for this holiday season, do it for next year.</p> <p>For more information, check out Mastering your e-commerce operations: How to optimize every stage of your workflow – and satisfy customers.</p>
<p>A clear, easy-to-find answer to this question: Will my order arrive in time?</p> <p>Some shoppers think... "This gift <i>just has</i> to get there! Will it if I order it today?"</p>	<p>You can work with your delivery partner to determine holiday deadlines, then display them clearly and prominently.</p> <p>As we get into November and December and close to December 25, some retailers reposition shipping information more prominently – with clarity that can trigger action. For example, "Order by Dec. xx for it to arrive by Christmas Day!"</p>	<p>Factor in realistic holiday-season fulfillment times.</p> <p>Add a shipping deadline calculator or display shipping deadlines in key locations on your website. Use certainty around delivery dates to help your customers commit to their shopping cart.</p> <p>Be clear. Does the expected shipping time include the time to process and fulfill their order?</p> <p>Ask your delivery partner about regional differences and rural vs. urban factors. Shipping times often refer to the time it takes to get the item from one major urban centre to another. Tell customers that rural or remote destinations take longer.</p>



What shoppers want (and what some think)	What you need to know	What you need to do
<p>Shipping options to suit their needs and budgets.</p> <p>Some shoppers think... "How can I save some money?" while others think, "It has to get there, so I'll pay a premium."</p>	<p>Delivery partners can offer a range of services at different price points.</p>	<p>Since 36% of Canadian online shoppers paid for shipping with their most recent purchase, look at offering a range of shipping speeds to suit different needs and budgets.¹ It could be what differentiates you from a competitor – and lands you a customer.</p> <p>Find out more about Canada Post's delivery speeds.</p>
<p>Reassurance around returns – they want to know key details from the start.</p> <p>Some shoppers think... "Returns are the hassle of the holidays! <i>Puh-lease</i> make it easy for me – or the person I'm giving to!"</p>	<p>79% of online shoppers will stop shopping with a merchant after a bad returns experience.¹</p> <p>Making your returns process hassle-free for your customers may entice them back during the rest of the period.</p>	<p>Display a clear, concise, convenient returns policy prominently.</p> <p>Consider highlighting it in your banner.</p> <p>Extend your returns period over the holidays. We've seen major retailers offer an extended returns period into mid-January. After all, sometimes the <i>perfect</i> gift...wasn't.</p> <p>Find out more about how Canada Post can help you maximize your returns with our best-in-class and flexible returns solutions.</p>



¹2019 Canadian Online Shopper Study, CPC 19-201, April 2019



3

Promote smartly and strategically

More than ever, promotions are the key to engaging customers – especially during the holiday season, when so many customers are looking to buy.

Once you've locked down the holiday season dates that matter to your business, and you've adjusted to give shoppers what they want, focus on the promotions to feature on your website and in a select mix of marketing channels. Go big – you'll want to stand out. Let's look at your options over the next few pages.

Types of promotions

	Product	Shipping
Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% off site-wide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free shipping on all products • Free shipping with a minimum purchase, ex., down from \$75 to \$50
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quick way to move inventory • An easy way to sell out-of-season or high-inventory products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drives the most impact, since 85% of Canadian online shoppers choose to shop more often with retailers who provide free shipping¹ • 67% will abandon a cart or avoid a retailer because the retailer did not offer a free shipping option¹ • Removes purchase barriers
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces profits per piece • Shipping fees still a barrier to purchase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retailer absorbs shipping costs



Tip

70% of shoppers received free shipping on their most recent purchase.¹ To stand out from your competitors and to have more impact during this exceptional time of year, consider offering free shipping.

How long a promotion could last

	1 day	1+ days
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drives urgency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can encourage increased spending over longer periods
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can increase customers' expectations for discounts and place a strain on your operations



Tip

Make sure all your operations (inventory, staff, tech, etc.) can support sales volumes. Making good on the entire end-to-end shopping and delivery experience is the way to satisfy customers.

¹2019 Canadian Online Shopper Study, CPC 19-201, April 2019



Play to your audience.

Investing in a big promotion or holiday event for your brand? Adding direct mail to your marketing mix will help amplify your message. At a time of year when inboxes can be overwhelming, physical media is a great way to stand out. Research shows that integrated campaigns elicit 39% more attention (time spent) than digital campaigns alone – and 40% higher brand recall when a piece of direct mail follows an email.¹

Direct mail is one of the most effective ways you can acquire and retain customers before, during and after the holiday season. It reaches audiences at home, where critical decisions are made. With access to over 16 million addresses in Canada, including exclusive access to apartments and condos, Canada Post can help you reach your desired audience by hitting the right targets at the right time.

For greater impact this holiday season, consider combining your digital campaigns with Canada Post Smartmail Marketing™ solutions.



Start the season earlier. Get into market before Black Friday and test some messaging to see what will work best. [To find out more watch our holiday webinar.](#)

¹Canada Post, Connecting for Action, September 2016



4

Prime your back-end operations

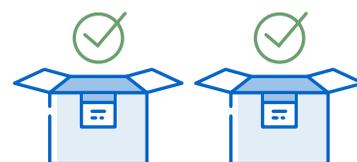
The holiday season is about delivering on your brand promise amid the challenges of high volumes. We've distilled successful retailers' practices into this quick-reference guide to optimizing your holiday operations.

Top tips

Stock up on products

Check key products' performance for 2018 (year-round and holiday season) to help you forecast holiday 2019 demand, then stock up.

Forecasting your volumes will help Canada Post plan pickup frequency, forecast equipment, and send a vehicle that's the right size.

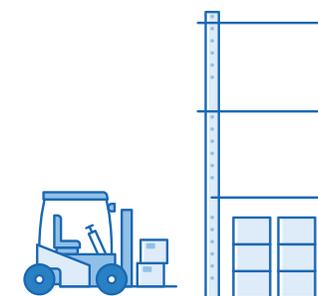


Optimize your fulfillment space

Create enough room to fulfill holiday volumes efficiently, quickly and safely.

Research temporary fulfillment locations.

Find out everything you need to know about fulfillment spaces in this compact, [quick-reference primer](#).



Plan your staffing

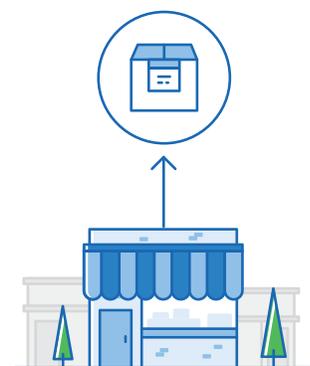
The more orders you get, the more efficient your operations must be. Staff up for expected peaks. You may need some extra hands from November through January, not just in December.



Enable convenient receiving options

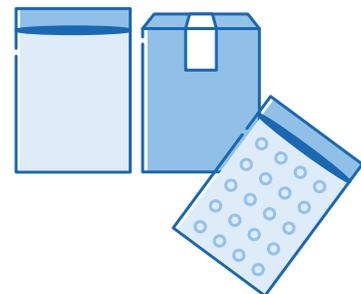
If you have a physical store, consider using it as a pickup location for your online customers. It can reduce bottlenecks, and nearby shoppers will love the convenience. Just don't lose sight of how important a convenient delivery and returns experience is for most of your customers (who aren't near your physical store).

If you're not ready this year for customers to experience your brand through all channels, add this to your to-do list for the 2020 holiday season.



Stock up on supplies

During the holiday season, you may be shipping a wider range of products. Align your inventory of supplies with your forecast of hot sellers so you'll have right-sized packaging and fillers on hand.



To find out more about packaging best practices, download [Mastering your e-commerce operations: your guide to packaging.](#)

Go the extra mile

To truly stand out, treat your customers to a handwritten thank you note, a branded box, samples or offers. These personal touches can leave a lasting impression – but decide whether it's worth it, because these add time and costs to fulfillment.



Mastering your e-commerce operations, your [guide to packaging](#) describes how to go the extra mile and what it can mean to your business.

Master convenient returns

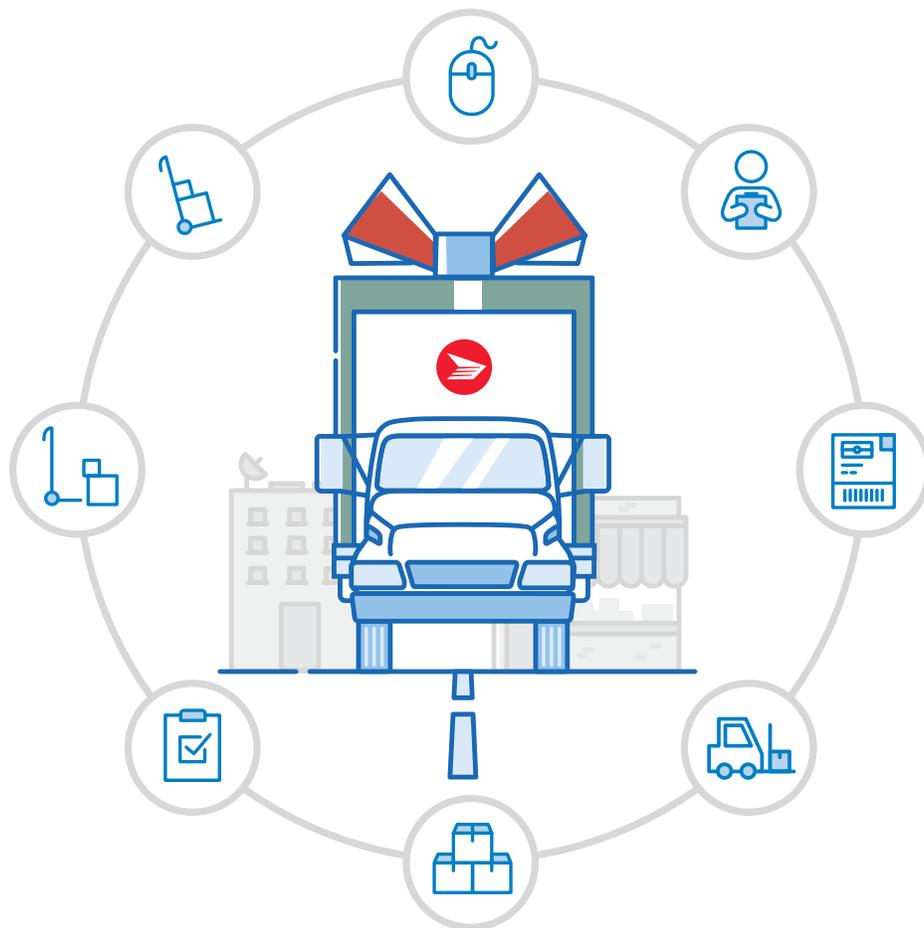
With 69% of Canadian online shoppers checking a returns policy when they shop with a merchant for the first time, you have to do it right.¹

Make sure your policy is clear, simple, flexible and convenient for your customers. Whether it's a return label in a box or a label on demand, our solutions can address your needs.

Because holiday returns will increase, you have to be ready for them. From quick set-ups to customizable options, we have a range of solutions to meet your operational needs and satisfy your customers. Find out more at canadapost.ca/returns.



¹2019 Canadian Online Shopper Study, CPC 19-201, April 2019



5

Partner with Canada Post for your best holiday season yet

Even Santa needs helpers! For a smoother holiday season, line up your partners, optimize your work with them and draw upon their expertise. Canada Post can help you meet your goals for great holiday shipping. Let's show you how.



Extra support for Canada Post customers

More staff, more wheels on the road, more planes in the sky

We hire more than 4,000 seasonal workers and double our transportation capacity across the country to help meet expectations during the holiday season.

Customer service is open late

Until 9 pm from mid-November through December every day of the week – including weekends.

Weekend deliveries

From mid-November through December, we deliver parcels on weekends in select urban markets.

Package redirection

This new, self-serve and easy-to-use commercial service gives you flexibility to redirect a package in transit. It can help you better manage fraud and operational errors over the holidays.

Expanded network

We add temporary pickup locations, extend select post office hours and use technology to reduce post office wait times.

Round-the-clock weather updates, service alerts and order updates

Throughout the holiday season, we release daily weather and service alerts (if, for example, a ferry is cancelled or a highway is closed in severe weather, we let customers know). Your customers can also get order updates on our website and mobile app, or opt for email notifications. Our detailed scans let you keep your customers informed about their order's delivery status.

Convenient and reliable network

Whatever your needs – to induct or drop off parcels efficiently, to have us pick them up from your business or store, or to have your customers pick up or return their items easily at a post office – we have an unrivalled network. With our 21 processing plants, 480 depots and more than 6,100 post offices across Canada, we're close – to your business and to your customers.

Best-in-class delivery experience

We offer the delivery experience Canadians prefer most, with several options that offer them convenience and control around delivery. They can:



Tell us their **delivery preferences** (where to safe drop an item at their address)



Receive **tracking information** on the status of their packages via the Canada Post mobile app or by email notifications



Have the item shipped to **any post office** they choose (great for surprise gifts!) by registering (for free) for our FlexDelivery™ service



A checklist for the best handoff to your delivery partner

From our vast experience helping retailers across Canada manage higher parcel volumes, we created a checklist to help you hand over all those items your customers are eagerly expecting. Using it will help us keep your delivery promise to your customer, avoid delays and help to keep our employees safe.



Label it properly to save time

Our automated parcel sorting systems scan shipping labels to route the package. To avoid issues or delays, make sure the label is flat and wrinkle-free and on the largest side of the parcel. Don't fold the label over the edge or place it on a seam of a box.



Use shipping equipment safely

How packages enter the Canada Post stream is also important. If you are shipping more than 20 items at a time, you can use containers and pallets. Safety comes first at Canada Post. To keep shipments secure and employees safe:

- Maximize the space, but don't overfill shipping containers.
- Avoid stacking heavy or large items at the top of a shipping container – they can make it unstable.
- Wrap groups of loose-loaded packages to provide stability and prevent damage.
- Ensure that pallets are stacked no higher than 178 cm (70 in).
- To make sure your packages are in great shape for shipping, consult our [guidelines for depositing your items at Canada Post](#) (Section 6:8).



Pre-sort to save time

If you are dropping off, or have a pickup of more than 20 items, you need to pre-sort or separate packets from parcels according to size. It helps us process them more efficiently. Here's an example:

	Example	Maximum size	Maximum weight
 Parcel	Coffee machine	No one dimension may exceed 78.7 in or 2 m	66 lb 30 kg
 Packet	Shipping a sweater in a polybag or box	15 in x 10.6 in x 0.79 in 38.1 cm x 26.9 cm x 2 cm	3 lb 1.7 kg



Don't forget your shipping lists (manifests)

The manifest is a summary of all your Canada Post packages (either for pickup or drop off). Print and provide this every time – and provide one for every drop off location. You also need to transmit the electronic manifest data file on the same day, before pickup or drop off.



Optimize your drop offs

During the holiday season, you can get on Santa's "nice" list by dropping off packages to our facilities outside of our daily rush.

If you have a lot to drop off, schedule a deposit time to speed things up.
[Your Canada Post representative can help.](#)



Plan and prepare for pickups

Can't bring your items to a Canada Post facility? Don't worry, we can work around your schedule with pre-scheduled and on-demand pickups. During this busy time, pre-scheduled pickups help us better manage expectations and meet your and other customers' needs. Get started at canadapost.ca/pickup



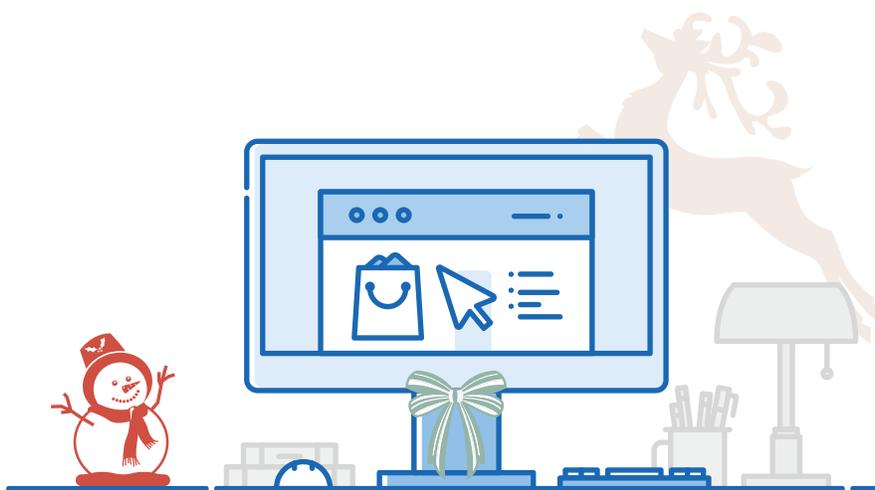
Give your customers more information

Your customers want to know when Santa's gifts will be delivered and how to reach Santa's helpers. Our help takes strain off your customer service team.



Customers can use canadapost.ca/chat to ask questions, and canadapost.ca/track or our app to get the current delivery status of their item.

Include these resources on your website so your customers know how to reach Canada Post.



2019 Key holiday dates – calendar

November

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4		6	7	8	9
10	11		13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21		23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Callouts for November calendar:

- Official peak season start date (Monday, Nov 11)
- Start of weekend delivery (Sunday, Nov 17)
- Black Friday (Friday, Nov 15)

December

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Callouts for December calendar:

- Cyber Monday (Monday, Dec 9)
- Canada Post Priority deadline (Monday, Dec 23)
- Cyber week (Tuesday, Dec 10 to Friday, Dec 13)
- Canada Post Expedited Parcel deadline (Thursday, Dec 12)
- Canada Post Xpresspost deadline (Friday, Dec 20)
- Christmas Day (Wednesday, Dec 25)
- Boxing Day (Thursday, Dec 26)
- Boxing week (Friday, Dec 27 to Sunday, Dec 29)

Weekend delivery begins in major urban centres, depending on volume.

Canada Post holiday shipping deadlines are subject to change. As the holidays approach, visit canadapost.ca to view up-to-date deadlines.



Domestic

Delivery standards between most major centres in Canada:

	Expedited Parcel™	Xpresspost™	Priority™
Local zone	December 23	December 23	December 23
Regional zone	December 19-23 ²	December 23 ¹	December 23 ¹
National zone	December 13-20 ²	December 20	December 23 ¹

United States

Xpresspost	Parcels/packets
December 13	December 10

Rest of the world

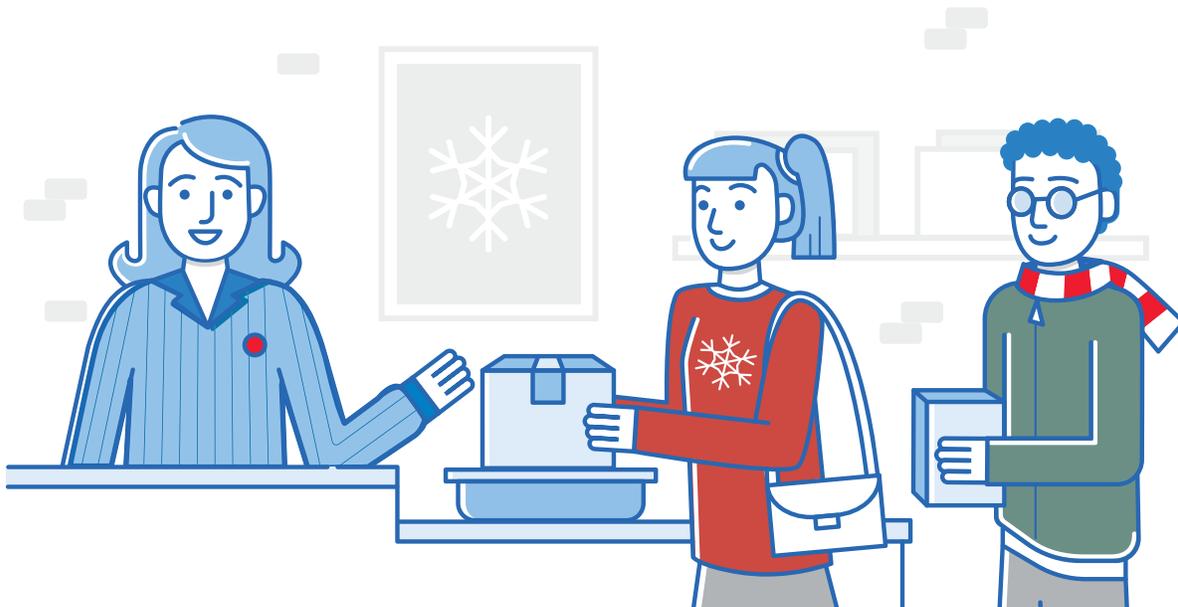
	Xpresspost	Air Parcels/packets
Europe	December 6	December 3
Asia / Australia / New Zealand	December 6	December 3
Central/South America / Caribbean	December 6	December 3
Africa	December 3	November 26
Middle East	December 6	December 3

¹ Exceptions apply in some areas.

² Exact delivery standards exist for every origin-destination combination. Find out the specific delivery standard for your postal code to a Canadian destination at canadapost.ca/deliverytool. Canada Post domestic holiday shipping deadlines are subject to change. As the holidays approach, visit canadapost.ca to view up-to-date deadlines.

³ Canada Post U.S. and international holiday shipping deadlines are subject to change without notice. Dates are between major urban centres and are dependent on origin and destination.

Some restrictions and exceptions apply. Please consult the Canada Postal Guide for details at canadapost.ca/postalguide or your local post office.



About Canada Post

As the leading parcel delivery company in the country, Canada Post works hand-in-glove with merchants, large and small, offering solutions that provide a superb end-to-end customer experience and greater convenience for online shoppers.



Looking for additional support to maximize the holidays?

Contact a Canada Post expert to help you have your best holiday season ever: 1-866-282-7176 or visit us at canadapost.ca/holidaysuccess