



Getting ready to trade: your ultimate guide



You've turned a great idea into a business, what next?

Accelerated by the pandemic, entrepreneurs and business owners have learnt how to adapt and found ways to thrive. By using digital channels, changing product offerings, or flipping business's on their heads, entrepreneurs have truly lived up to the ethos of wearing many hats.

As a result, we have seen our membership double in the last two years. 90 per cent of new members are SMEs needing barcodes to help them sell their products digitally and physically.

To help you lay solid foundations for success, we have created this simple guide to getting ready to trade, finding additional support and harnessing the power of GS1 barcodes far beyond the supermarket checkout.



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Getting ready to trade:

Get to grips with Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs), the all-important number behind the barcode that has powered trade around the world since 1974. This includes how to assign them, their benefits and how to correctly apply to your packaging.



Optimising for eCommerce:

There are many ways GS1 standards can optimise your online listings and improve visibility online. We'll show you how.



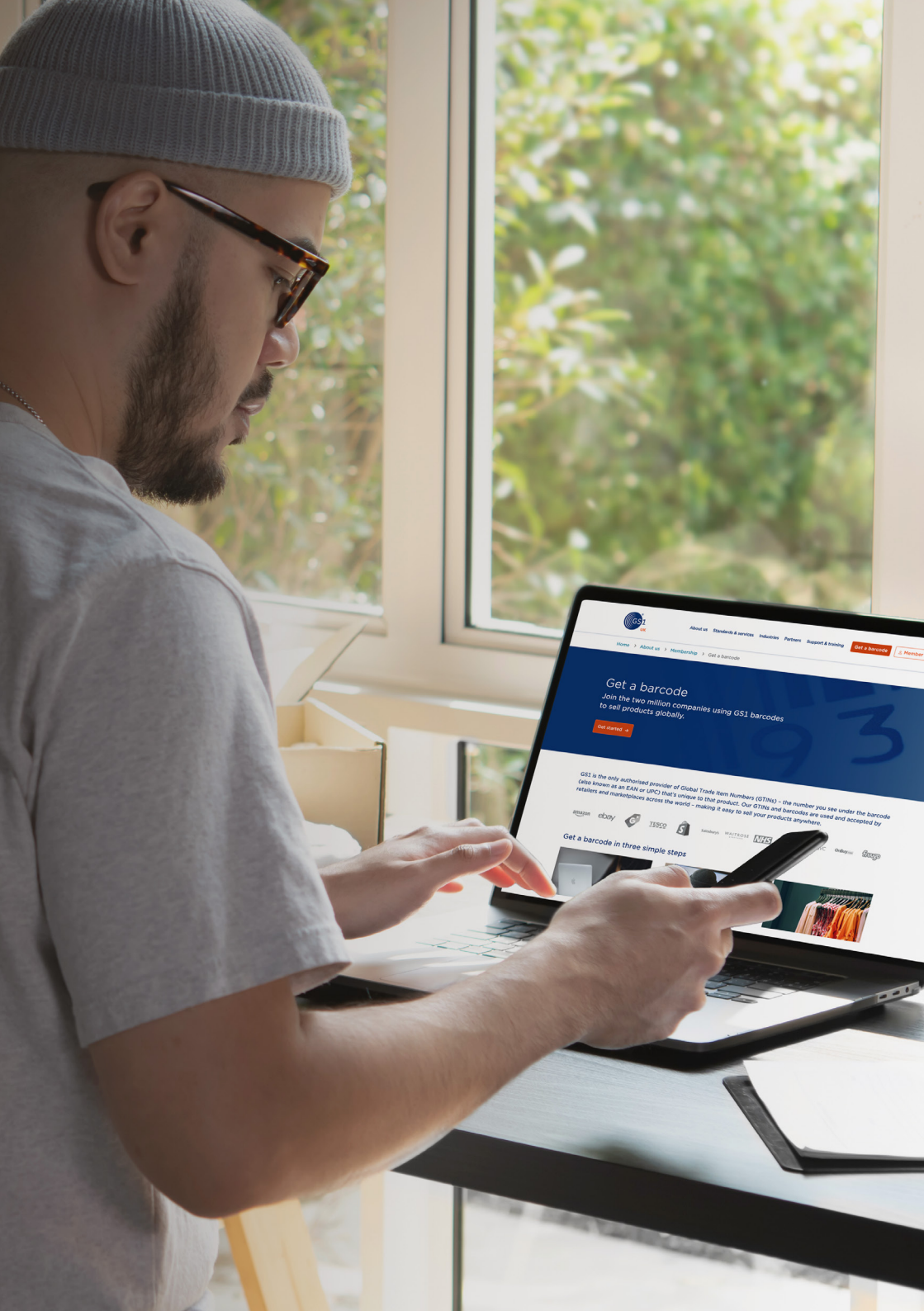
Preparing for retail:

Want to get your products in front of the UK's leading retailers? See our killer pitch checklist to find out what retailers are looking and how to give it to them.



Getting the most from your GS1 UK membership:

The benefits of becoming a GS1 UK member extend far beyond the barcode. We offer a wide variety of support and services to help your business grow.





Getting ready to trade

Before you start trading, you will need barcodes for your products. They are as important to your business as a website domain or bank account.

More importantly to make that barcode correctly, you need a number – the Global Trade Item Number (GTIN).

GTINs are the product identifiers that sit under the barcode or against the online listing for almost every product across the world.

They are based on a numbering system developed by GS1 more than 50 years ago and can be linked back to your company from wherever you trade.





Who requires GTINs?

GS1 is the only authorised provider of unique GTINs and they are essential for successfully listing, selling, barcoding, managing stock, building supply chains, ensuring visibility on search engines and much more.

This small but incredibly powerful number is the key to guaranteeing seamless sales and efficient processes for your business.

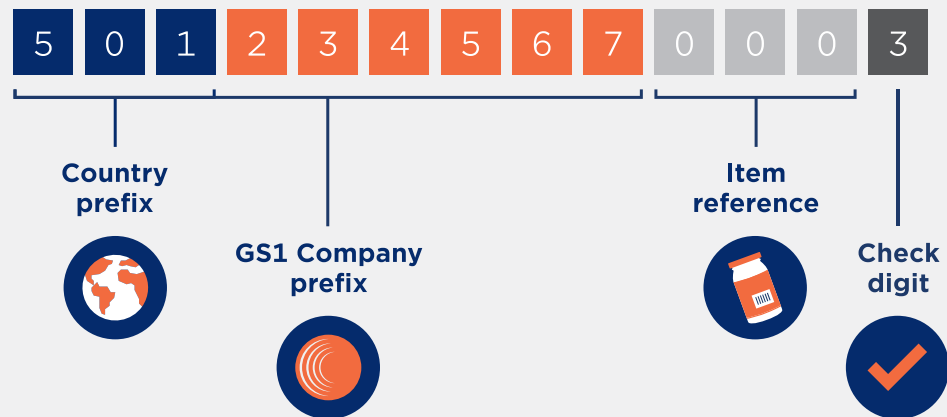
From Amazon, Google and TikTok Shop to Tesco, Sainsbury's, Waitrose and more, GTINs are now required by many major retailers and online marketplaces around the globe in order to ensure efficient supply chain processing and to act as the key to trusted product data.



What is a GTIN?

A GTIN is just the numerical representation of a barcode, and sits beneath it on your packaging. It is sometimes referred to as an EAN or UPC.

This diagram decodes the meaning behind the numbers that give your product life in the global supply chain.



GS1 Prefix

The first three digits code for the product's country of origin. In this example, 500-509 means the product has been licensed by GS1's UK arm.



GS1 Company Prefix (GCP)

Beginning with the GS1 Prefix, this number is the unique identifier for your company.



Item reference

This number is added to your GCP to identify different product types. Usually this is three digits in length.



Check digit

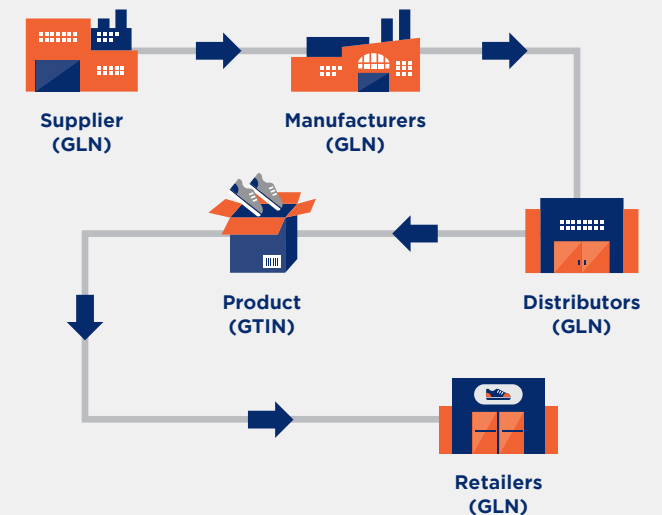
The last digit of a GTIN is a check digit which ensures that the number is correctly composed. It is calculated by a simple mathematical principle - the Modulo 10 algorithm.

When do you need a GTIN?

Your business needs to be barcode-ready before you can start trading successfully.

The GTIN is essentially a passport for your product that:

- Uses the same number throughout the supply chain, from manufacturer all the way through to the point of sale
- Powers sales, both online and in store
- Globally recognised and accepted by all retailers and marketplaces



The benefits

Trust: Each number is unique to you, providing brand protection, confidence when trading, and better experiences for your customers

Traceability: Linked back to your company and registered in a global database, allowing your products to be identified, tracked and traced throughout the supply chain

Global: One system used in over 150 countries, both in-store and online. GS1 is the only authorised source worldwide

Visibility: Search engines and online marketplaces recognise and represent your products correctly

How do I assign a GTIN to my products?

As you grow your business you will require more GTINs to account for future products.

First of all, you need to know how many GTINs you will require for your product range. This will depend on how many products you have including all variations such as size, quantity, colour, flavour.



Types of GTINs

There are different types of GTINs you can use to identify your products. The most commonly used is the GTIN-13 and the one you see on barcoded products.



GTIN-8

Used for small products scanned at point-of-sale



GTIN-12

Typically assigned to products sold in the US



GTIN-13

The most common GTIN type



GTIN-14

Groupings of trade items not intended for point-of-sale scanning

Types of barcodes

The barcode is a visual representation of your GTIN in a machine-readable form.



EAN-13/UPC

The most commonly used barcode for point of sale all over the world.



ITF-14

Used on traded cases/units, where no extra information is needed.



GS1-128

For cases and pallets to encode variable information such as expiry dates and batch numbers.

Great for short shelf-life products.



QR code

The next generation of barcode that stores more information and can connect to information online.

Future-proof your business with QR codes powered by GS1

More and more brands are now using QR codes to bring their brand experience to life and connect with customers through their products.

By using a GS1 powered QR code you can connect your product's unique identity to multiple sources of digital content. This means that by using your GTIN it can now act as a gateway to dynamic digital content that can boost sales, strengthen brand loyalty, improve supply chain traceability information, drive sustainability agendas, and will one day be scanned at the till.



Scan to find out more



How to apply barcodes correctly to your packaging

When adding barcodes to your product packaging, you will need to ensure they are easily readable by a scanner.

We recommend you:

Correct barcode

Choose the correct barcode based on your needs, most commonly this will be the EAN barcode containing a GTIN-13

Sensible location

Select a sensible location. Try to avoid the bottom of the product's packaging

Correct orientation

Use the correct orientation. Horizontal or for cylindrical items print vertically like a ladder

Flat surface

Print on the flattest possible surface

Good contrast

Ensure a good contrast. While barcodes don't need to be black and white, you do need a clear contrast between the space and bars

Correct tones

Never use red/orange tones as all scanners use red lasers

Perfect proportions

Find the perfect proportions. The standard point-of-sale barcode size is 22.85mm x 37.29mm

Minimum magnification

Never go below 80 per cent magnification. 100 per cent magnification is the industry standard. On traded units or cases the bar height should be at least 32mm

Quiet zones

Reserve sufficient quiet zones, these are the spaces to the left and right of the furthest bars. Keeps these spaces clear and avoid going too close to the products edge



When do you need to assign a new GTIN?

Sometimes you will need to make a change to your product or brand, which can mean you need to assign a new GTIN.

There are three guiding principles to help you identify when to change a GTIN.



Product change

Is a consumer and/or trading partner expected to distinguish the changed product from previous/current products?

Example: a change in brand name, material, recipe etc.



Regulatory change

Is there a regulatory/liability disclosure requirement to the consumer and/or trading partner?

Example: a change in weight, certification mark etc.



Supply chain impact

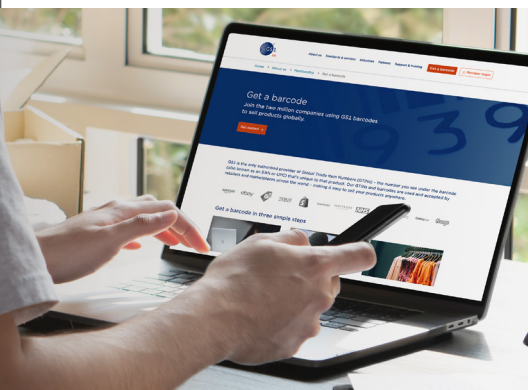
Is there a substantial impact to the supply chain (e.g., how the product is shipped, stored, received)?

Example: a change in packaging, size etc.

Where should you get your GTINs?

The only way to get authentic GTINs that are unique to your company is by becoming a member of GS1 UK or one of the 116 GS1 offices worldwide.

You've more than likely seen other websites offering barcodes and GTINs at a cheap one-off rate.



The problems with these barcodes are:

- They've been previously owned by others and are still associated with them and not your brand
- It's unlikely you'll be able to sell your products where you want to. Amazon and major retailers will not accept them
- The number may be made up entirely and not fit to be used
- When your product is scanned it could show product information that is not your own
- If you have used them on your products and online listings, you risk having to redo all your packaging and online listing which will lead to further costs, loss of time and previous product reviews

Make sure your GTINs are yours

If you have purchased GTINs already and not sure if they are from GS1, you can check them via our central database of barcodes.



Scan the QR code or enter the URL to check your barcodes

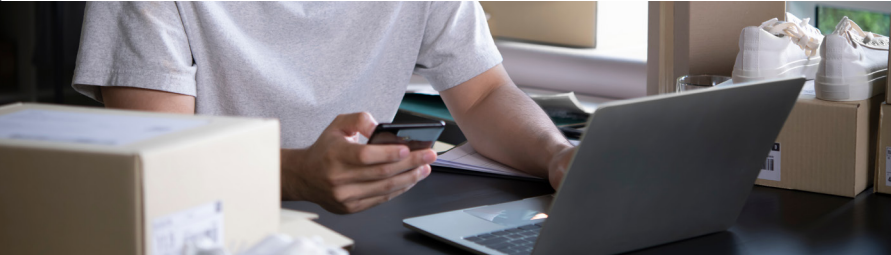
www.gs1.org/services/verified-by-gs1



How do I get my GTINs?

It's easy you can join in a matter of minutes. All you need to do is become a member of GS1 UK and join our community of more than 58,000 businesses. Your annual membership will give you access to the GTINs you need for your products and a host of other benefits to support your business growth.

Dependent on how many GTINs you need for your product range determines which membership plan you need. Whether you are starting out with one product or managing many, we have a membership plan for you.



Scan here to get started

If you have any questions we're here to help and guide you.

Please contact our support team:



020 7092 3501



support@gs1uk.org

About your GS1 UK membership

Joining us is an excellent way to lay solid foundations for your business, and the benefits extend far beyond barcodes. We offer a range of services to set up for success, from supporting you on your exporting journey, building safe, sustainable and efficient supply chains and harnessing the power of trusted data, to help with funding, networking, futureproofing and more.

We are proud that 95 per cent of GS1 UK members are small and medium-sized businesses, many of whom are reaping the benefits of:



Our support and training



Access to GS1 standards



Access to our partner network



Unique insights on consumer trends, digital solutions, new legislation and more



Our dedicated system for managing barcode numbers and images



Access to advisors and industry experts

To ensure we provide the best possible support to our members in all areas of their business, we are continually building our network of trusted community partners.

Through these partners, our members have gained exclusive access to:

- Free tickets and discounts to industry events, nationwide
- Specialist webinars and talks for a variety of business disciplines
- Free consultations and expert advice on export, trade-marking, digital marketing, ecommerce
- Pitching opportunities to the likes of Boots, Selfridges, Planet Organic, Sainsbury's and many more
- Networking, speaking and brand exposure opportunities across the UK
- Funding opportunities and advice



Getting the most out of your GS1 UK membership

HAPPY
inside

“GS1 UK sponsored me to go to a Bread and Jam event and introduced me to a food community, where I got the opportunity to pitch to Amazon vendors, which I got. For exporting they have done events where I’ve learnt how to get my products to Singapore, which is great. They introduce to you network of different people to really help your business grow.”

Charlie Knockton, Happy Inside



Optimising for eCommerce

GTINs are essential even if you are just selling online and are one of the most important attributes you need.

By using GTINs online they enable search engines, shopping platforms and marketplaces to recognise existing products, distinguish new ones and ensure they get visibility in search results.

“Adding a GTIN to your online listing can increase Google Shopping impressions by 40% and conversions by 20%.”

Google

“We verify the authenticity of product identifiers by checking the GS1 database. EANs/UPCs that do not match the information provided by GS1 will be considered invalid.”

amazon

“GS1 standards and identifiers are incredibly important for OnBuy sellers because we operate a catalogue system. Products are created and listed using barcodes, so sellers can quickly and easily match existing products.”

OnBuy.com

“GTINs and product identifiers are really important for eBay, in order to create great experiences for the buyer.”

ebay

Trading on Amazon

If you want to trade on Amazon GTINs are essential. They help Amazon to structure the information about the products their platform to improve shopper experience, consumer trust and increase sales.

On Amazon be aware they use slightly different terminology and when listing your product make sure you select EAN.

UPC

12 digit numbers

Listing products that have a 12-digit barcode or licensed GTINs from the US

EAN

13 digit numbers

Our standard GTIN number

GTIN

14 digit numbers

A 14-digit barcode typically used for packs of a particular product

Tip: Only get your GTINs from a GS1 organisation directly if you want to sell on Amazon. If you purchase GS1 GTINs from a reseller they won't be registered to your company and you won't be able to list on Amazon.

Killer pitch checklist: preparing you for retail

Preparing to pitch can be a daunting process so we've put this handy checklist together to make sure you cover all bases and nail it on the day. We've also got you covered with tips to prepare your products for retail sale.

Building an attractive brand

- Am I allocating time each week to research the market, including trade press, traditional press, and Instagram?
- Have I identified my competitors and am I keeping up to date by following their activity?
- Does my website represent my brand and am I visible on all social channels?
- Can I demonstrate how my product supports sustainability and if not, what are my plans?

Writing the deck

- Is my founder/brand story brief and compelling enough to keep a busy buyer interested?
- Does my brand align to current trends and where the market is growing?
- Does my category story have a clear narrative towards the gap in the market and can I demonstrate that my brand's USPs make it the best solution to fill the gap?
- Am I positioning and pitching my brand to the retailer's customers as the best solution?
- Do my commercials demonstrate proof of concept in line with the retailer's expectations and how quickly I'm scaling?
- Can I demonstrate I have a growing customer base and a loyal community / engaged followers to bring to the retailer?
- Is every visual clear and relevant to support my proof of concept?
- Have I ruthlessly edited? Is every word of copy necessary? Less is more.

Approaching the buyer

- Do my samples stand out from the crowd?
- Is my email short, engaging and asking for a specific meeting time?
- Have I included the specific actions I've taken to grow the brand, and have I provided supporting evidence?
- Have I got 'new news' to share with the buyer each time I follow up?
- Have I scheduled future follow ups in a timely manner?

Delivering the pitch

- Have I visited the retailer's stores and reviewed their website to gain insights in my category range?
- Is my pitch short, succinct, and engaging?
- Do I know how to answer difficult questions?
- Have I prepared and rehearsed, so I can show personality and deliver confidently? People buy from people.

Following up

- Have I provided the answers to any questions or further information the buyer requested?
- Is the content to support my proof of concept to the point, relevant, and engaging?
- Have I got more 'new news' to share with the buyer for post-meeting follow up?
- Have I planned out how I will regularly follow up with the buyer in the future, to remain memorable?

Get retail ready

- Check my barcodes are authentic and registered to my company with iGepir
- If I don't have barcodes yet, then contact GS1 UK - the only trusted and authentic source for barcodes
- Does my product and labelling meet compliance standards?
- Have I got sufficient cash flow to fund a large order at short notice?
- Do I have reliable supplier(s) and manufacturer(s) who can meet a reasonable lead time?
- Have I got a robust supply chain set-up to deliver goods and deal with returns?
- What are my current sales channels and ROS (rate of sale)?
- Have I allocated enough budget to offer promotions in-store and online to my retailer's customers?
- How can I attract customers and influence repeat purchases?
- What POS (point of sale) and display equipment can I supply to attract customers to my brand in-store?



Watch the get retail ready webinar series for actionable advice on how to get listed with retailers and what they look for in your brand.



Beyond the barcode

We amplify our members' voices to legislators and regulators to ensure your views are heard.

From rising energy prices to soaring inflation, consumers and industry are grappling with a range of issues impacting on both the cost of living and the cost of doing business.

More than ever, on every front and across every sector we serve, there has been a growing need to address legislative and regulatory change, especially on the topics of sustainability, patient safety, food safety and nutrition.

Sustainability

Our globally recognised standards are used to identify, capture and share data on vast swathes of products, providing us with the capacity to help businesses understand, monitor and share invaluable insights on their supply chains.

We use this data to support businesses in adopting ambitious new commitments on sustainability, and make demonstrable improvements on emissions, energy, heat, transport, waste, water and biodiversity

When it comes to solving the big challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change and inequality, collaboration and trusted data are key.



Download our Powering Sustainability report to find out more



Powering sustainability: the action plan

Here are some of the top actions that SMEs can take early on. If we all follow these actions and support others to do the same, together we can achieve our climate, nature and social goals.

Emissions

- Switch to a credible renewable energy provider
- Measure and reduce Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions
- Collaborate with suppliers to measure and reduce Scope 3 emissions
- Explore and implement ways to reduce methane emissions
- Collaborate to share knowledge and support other companies to act

Employees

- Engage and empower influential stakeholders within your business
- Create an internal 'green team' to empower colleagues to act
- Include climate KPIs in employment contracts
- Inspire and inform employees to reduce their personal carbon emissions
- Facilitate collaboration between departments

Product and packaging

- Build up internal expertise in sustainable materials
- Find a suitable certifications or frameworks for your business to adopt
- Make preparations for regulatory changes, e.g. the introduction of DRS
- Consider the lifecycle of a product and its packaging in all decisions. I.e. examining the carbon footprint from sourcing to disposal rather than assessing packaging in a silo
- Share knowledge and collaborate with other businesses on sourcing and buying

Exporting

Exporting is the one of the best options for businesses that want to increase their reach and revenue, but sometimes taking those first steps on the road towards overseas growth can be daunting.

That is why, to help you on your exporting journey, we've partnered with an array of exporting experts to highlight the key aspects to take

into consideration when starting your exporting journey including funding opportunities.



Get help and support for starting your exporting journey including funding opportunities

calla

“When I started the business I was just in a few countries and now I’m in selling in 60 countries around the world. I needed barcodes for my shoeboxes and when you use GS1 barcodes they are globally recognised. In order to go into the fulfilment centre you needed barcodes, but I was ready and it was great.”

Jennifer Bailey, Calla Shoes



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