

The

shipping

automation

playbook

 Starshipit



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Intro

Every fulfilment team knows the feeling: orders piling up, deadlines looming, and yet hours are lost each week to repetitive, low-value tasks. Manually choosing carriers, checking customer addresses, deciding on packaging types, over and over...The work is necessary, but it's not where your team adds the most value.

The cost of leaving these processes untouched is higher than it looks. Every manual step slows down fulfilment, increases the risk of mistakes, and quietly chips away at your margins. Over time, that wasted effort compounds into missed savings, slower deliveries, and unhappy customers.

There's a simpler way.

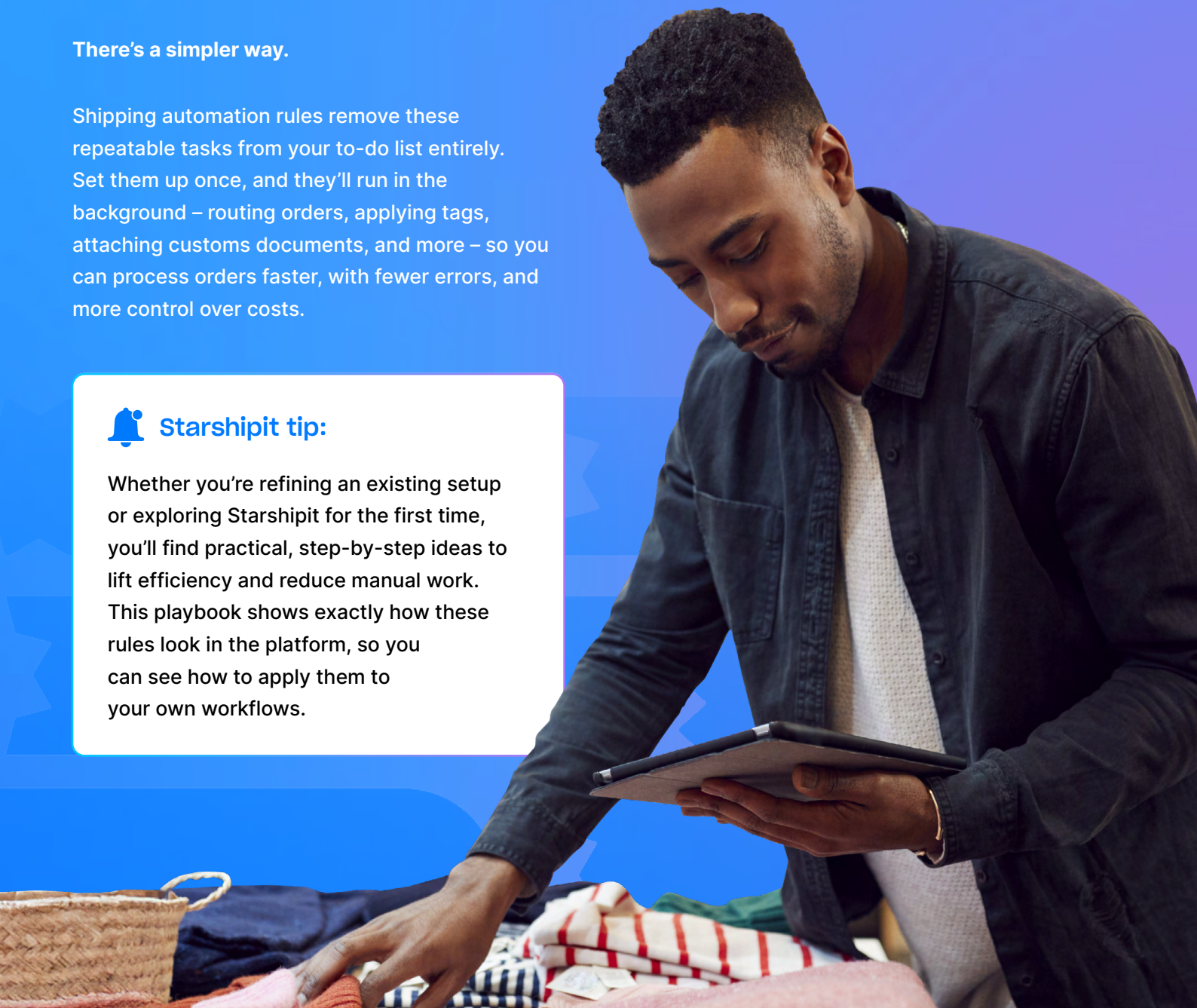
Shipping automation rules remove these repeatable tasks from your to-do list entirely. Set them up once, and they'll run in the background – routing orders, applying tags, attaching customs documents, and more – so you can process orders faster, with fewer errors, and more control over costs.

Starshipit tip:

Whether you're refining an existing setup or exploring Starshipit for the first time, you'll find practical, step-by-step ideas to lift efficiency and reduce manual work. This playbook shows exactly how these rules look in the platform, so you can see how to apply them to your own workflows.

This playbook draws on the experience of more than **30,000 retailers who use Starshipit** every day, so you'll see the most effective rules already proven in real-world fulfilment. Inside, we'll walk you through:

- What shipping automation rules are and how they work
- The 10 most popular rules used by leading retailers
- A complete glossary of common rules, so you can explore further.



What are shipping rules?

Shipping automation rules are exactly what they sound like – instructions you set up once, and your shipping platform follows them every time. They work on simple logic: *If [condition] is met, then take [action]*. Conditions could be anything from order value to postcode or product type. Actions might include assigning a carrier, attaching documents required for international shipping, or tagging an order for special handling.

The point is, once the rule exists, the decision-making is done for you (and your team). Every order that meets the criteria is processed the same way, without someone needing to manually step in and make a decision.

These rules remove repetitive steps from your team's plate, and the benefits go beyond just saving time:

- **Accelerated fulfilment:** Orders move through faster, freeing your team from constant juggling and manual decisions.
- **Higher accuracy:** Fewer routing mistakes, better compliance, and fewer missed tags or paperwork.
- **Lower costs:** Rules can automatically choose the most economical shipping option and packaging.
- **Scalable simplicity:** As your volume grows, automation scales with you, without increasing complexity.

In fact, a recent [Meteor Space report](#) found that **nearly 80% of warehouses using advanced automation reported a decrease in operational costs**, attributing most of the savings to reduced labour requirements. That's the kind of efficiency shipping automation rules make possible.

And this isn't just theory.

The following examples are drawn from real workflows used by over 30,000 leading retailers on Starshipit. So, you can see exactly how automation is driving faster fulfilment, fewer errors, and healthier margins in the real world. **Let's take a closer look!**



Rule 1

Always choose the cheapest carrier for cost-effective fulfilment

Carrier rates can swing dramatically for the same shipment, depending on service or even time of day. Without automated rules, teams either burn time comparing quotes or play it safe by sticking to one carrier – both options eat into margins. What looks like a small difference per order quickly compounds into thousands in unnecessary costs.

The rule: Condition = all orders,
action = select cheapest carrier/service

Condition **all orders**

action **select cheapest carrier/service**

The rule in action: Your PetPA also relies on this rule to keep shipping affordable. By automatically assigning free-shipping orders to the most economical carrier, they lowered their fulfilment spend while maintaining a strong delivery experience. This gave them the confidence to roll out free shipping as a competitive offer – knowing they would always find the lowest-cost option available for every order.



Rule 2

Match orders to the right carrier based on shipping method

Without automation, matching a customer's chosen shipping method (e.g., Standard, Express) to the right carrier service can be a daily headache. Teams either have to check each order manually or risk sending it on the wrong service, leading to missed delivery promises and potentially higher costs. Many retailers pair this rule with live rates at checkout to ensure complete alignment between what customers see and what gets fulfilled.

The rule: If shipping method = [X],
then set carrier & product code = [Y].

If shipping method **X**

then set carrier & product code **Y**

The rule in action: Lifestyle brand Arms of Eve simplified their carrier mix by mapping shipping methods directly to the right service. Express orders to the U.S. are automatically assigned to UPS for speedy delivery, while Standard orders are routed through Australia Post for a more cost-effective local option. This balance ensures customers get the delivery experience they've paid for, while Arms of Eve controls costs across regions.



Rule 3

Simplify international expansion with automation

Going global means dealing with new carriers, new regulations, and more paperwork. Without rules, teams waste hours manually deciding how to ship into each market, filling in customs forms, and tracking compliance requirements. That slows down growth and increases risk of errors that can lead to delays, frustrated customers, or even fines. There are a few rules that not only speed up fulfilment, but also keep you compliant when shipping overseas. **The rules:**

Route orders by destination country

The rule: If destination country is [X], then assign [carrier/service]

If destination country is

then assign

Assign HS Codes by SKU

The rule: If SKU is [X], then assign HS code [Y]

If SKU is

then assign HS code

Attach required international documents

The rule: If product SKU is [X], then attach [additional customs document]

If product SKU is

then attach

Manage duties with DDP/ DDU rules

The rule: If destination country is [X], sender pays duty = true/false

If destination country is

sender pays duty



The rule in action: Global fashion brand MESHKI ships to over 150 countries. As they expanded internationally, they needed to deliver consistent experiences without overwhelming their fulfilment team. They use automation rules to route orders by country, assign HS Codes to SKUs, attach the right customs documents, and apply DDP rules so duties are either paid by the sender or the customer, depending on the country. Together, these automations underpin their international growth, saving 1000s of hours and dollars in fulfilment every year while ensuring customers never face surprise fees at the door.

“Duties and taxes can make or break the customer experience. By automating DDP/DDU settings, retailers avoid costly mistakes and create clarity for international buyers.”



Georgia Kirkham,
Account Executive
at Starshipit

Rule 4

Use Authority to Leave rules to control deliveries

If a carrier can't complete a drop because no one's home, you risk paying for redelivery or even return-to-sender charges. On the flip side, leaving certain parcels unattended can create security risks, leading to theft or disputes. Manually deciding which orders should (or shouldn't) be left unattended is time-consuming and inconsistent.

The rules:

If order contains [non-signature item], then set Authority to Leave = True

If order contains **non-signature item**

then set Authority to Leave **True**

If order contains [high-value or sensitive product], then set Authority to Leave = False.

If order contains **high-value or sensitive product**

then set Authority to Leave **False**

The rule in action: Pet supplies retailer Your PetPA uses this rule to make sure certain deliveries are never left unattended. By automatically setting Authority to Leave = False, they ensure those parcels always require a signature, protecting both the customer experience and their own bottom line. Combined with other automation rules, this approach has helped them scale confidently while maintaining trust with pet owners.

Rule 5

Allocate orders to the right fulfilment location

When every online order defaults to a central warehouse, retailers with multiple locations or store networks miss out on faster, cheaper ways to ship. Store inventory sits idle, customers wait longer, and costs creep up as parcels travel further than they need to. By automatically allocating orders to the right fulfilment point, you can keep stock moving and speed up delivery.

The rule: If postcode is [XXXX], then allocate order to [store/fulfilment location]

If postcode is **XXXX**

then allocate order to **store/fulfilment location**

The rule in action: Fashion brand RUBY streamlined their ship-from-store process by automating order allocation. Each order gets routed to the nearest physical store for fulfilment, rather than the central warehouse. This simple shift shortens delivery times, cuts freight costs, improves stock turnover, and gives customers better shipping options, including same-day or even on-demand. By pairing this with carrier selection rules, RUBY has built a faster, more flexible fulfilment model that supports both growth and the customer experience.



Rule 6

Prioritise high-value orders with automated tags

Not all orders are created equal. High-value or VIP customers expect a premium experience – but manually flagging those orders in your system is easy to miss when volumes surge. One slip and a \$300 package gets treated the same as a \$20 one, and you miss the opportunity to give your most valuable orders the extra care they deserve.

“Tags aren’t just for VIPs, they’re a versatile tool. Use them to segment orders however you need: high-value, pre-orders, sale items, even fragile goods. It’s automation that makes fulfilment more controlled and predictable.”



David Renwick,
Product Marketing Lead
at Starshipit

The rule: If order value is greater than [\$ threshold], then assign [VIP tag].

If order value is greater than \$ threshold
then assign VIP tag

The rule in action: Think of an electronics retailer shipping everything from phone chargers to gaming consoles. By setting a rule to tag any order over \$500 as “High Value,” they can automatically prioritise those shipments for express services or additional packaging checks. Beyond high-value orders, this retailer can also tag pre-orders for the latest games or devices, so they’re held until stock arrives.

Rule 7

Route orders by postcode for faster, cheaper delivery

Manually checking every order’s postcode to choose the right carrier slows down fulfilment, creates room for mistakes, and can cost more if you’re not using the best carrier for that region.

The rule: If postcode is [XXXX], then assign [carrier/service].

If postcode is XXXX
then assign carrier/service

The rule in action: Activewear brand Lorna Jane uses postcode and destination-based rules to keep fulfilment smooth as they ship globally. Domestic orders are automatically assigned to Australia Post, while orders with international postcodes go to DHL Express. With automation in place, Lorna Jane’s team saves hundreds of hours each month and avoids costly carrier mix-ups, ensuring every parcel takes the right path from day one.



Rule 8

Stay on top of dangerous goods compliance

Shipping dangerous goods requires careful consideration to keep your business compliant and your customers safe. From perfumes and nail polish to batteries and aerosols, even everyday items can fall under dangerous goods classifications. Manually spotting and handling these orders slows down fulfilment, and if you send them with an unsupported carrier, you risk failed deliveries, fines, and frustrated customers.

Here are a couple of rules that will help you stay compliant without the hassle.

The rules:**Classify dangerous goods automatically**

If Item SKU = [dangerous goods item], then set dangerous goods type

If Item SKU **dangerous goods item**

then set **dangerous goods type**

Remove unsupported carriers at checkout If Item SKU = [dangerous goods item], then set carriers for checkout = [approved carriers only]

If Item SKU **dangerous goods item**

then set carriers for checkout **approved carriers only**



The rule in action: As an example, take a beauty brand that sells fragrance, nail polish, and cosmetics. Each of these can be classified as dangerous goods, and not every carrier will handle them. Without automated shipping rules, the team would need to manually spot these orders, double-check regulations, and sometimes even cancel and rebook shipments if the wrong service was chosen. With rules in place, as soon as a restricted SKU enters the system, it can be flagged as dangerous goods and instantly allocated to a compliant carrier.

This removes the guesswork, reduces the risk of fines or rejected parcels, and ensures customers still get a smooth delivery experience – even when their order is more complex to ship.

Rule 9

Assign the right packaging every time

Packaging directly affects your carrier rates, delivery speed, and fulfilment efficiency. Manually deciding which satchel, box, or carton to use for every order not only slows teams down – it often leads to wasted space (and wasted money).

The rules:

If order **weight** = less than [X kgs], then set package type = [Y]

If order weight **less than X kgs**

then set package type **Y**

If Item **SKU** = [X], then set package type [Y]

If Item SKU **X**

then set package type **Y**

The rule in action: Retailers often set weight-based packaging rules so smaller orders automatically go into cost-effective satchels, while heavier items are routed into boxes. Others use SKU-based rules to account for products that always need specific packaging (like fragile items requiring extra padding). By taking packaging decisions off your team's plate, you speed up pick & pack while reducing the risk of over-spending by shipping air.

Rule 10

Protect high-value orders with insurance cover

Deciding when to insure a shipment has always been a balancing act. If you add insurance to every order, you'll cut into your margins. Skip it, and you risk paying for loss or damage for valuable shipments. As order volumes rise, relying on manual input to spot and flag high-value shipments means mistakes could creep in.

The rule: If order value is greater than [X], then insurance required = True.

If order value is greater than **X**

then insurance required **True**

The rule in action: Take, for example, a furniture retailer. Their catalogue ranges from inexpensive homewares to premium sofas and dining tables worth thousands. Rather than applying insurance manually or taking a blanket approach, they set a rule to automatically insure any order over \$1,000. Every eligible shipment is covered without delay, while lower-value orders move through the system without the added cost. The result is a smoother balance: customers buying high-ticket items get peace of mind, the business avoids unnecessary premiums, and fulfilment teams stay focused on moving orders, not second-guessing risk.

Glossary

Beyond the most common rules, there are dozens of powerful actions you can automate. Together they remove hidden inefficiencies and smooth out fulfilment workflows.

This glossary gives you a quick reference to the full range of automation actions available in Starshipit – so you can explore new ways to cut clicks, reduce risk, and keep your shipping operation flowing.



Rules for customs and compliance:

- **Set country of manufacture** – Ensures customs declarations are auto-filled with correct country of origin.
- **Set HS code** – Automatically applies HS tariff codes by SKU to speed up international clearance.
- **Set shipper tax number** – Applies IOSS or VAT tax numbers automatically for EU/UK orders.
- **Set sender pays duty** – Automates DDP/DDU setup, ensuring either the sender or customer covers duty and taxes.
- **Set invoice declaration text** – Adds item-specific details on commercial invoices.
- **Set GST paid per item** – Automatically applies GST when required.



Rules for delivery experience:

- **Set signature required** – Forces signature for certain orders, reducing fraud and lost parcels.
- **Set Authority to Leave (ATL)** – Allows carriers to leave parcels without signature when safe.
- **Set photo required** – Requires a delivery photo to prove safe delivery.
- **Disable carrier notification** – Stops carrier-branded comms if you want to send your own.



Rules for cost control and efficiency:

- **Select cheapest carrier/service** – Always assigns the lowest-cost option.
- **Select cheapest out of specific carriers** – Chooses cheapest between your preferred carriers.
- **Set insurance required** – Applies insurance only on high-value orders.
- **Set package type** – Ensures orders are assigned to the right satchel/carton automatically.
- **Set order value/Set order currency code** – Adjusts or standardises value/currency for invoices and reporting.



Rules for returns and reverse logistics:

- **Create return for specified carrier** – Generates return labels automatically.
- **Create return for specified carrier & contact** – Routes returns to the correct warehouse or store.
- **Set create return** – Toggle whether return labels are included with outbound shipments.



Rules for multiple accounts or stores:

- **Assign to another account** – Routes orders to child accounts (ideal for franchise/store networks).
- **Split order to another account by SKU** – Directs SKUs to different fulfilment locations.
- **Split packages by item quantity/order weight** – Automatically separates orders into multiple packages by number of items, or once a specified weight limit is reached.



Rules for managing general operations:

- **Do not ship** – Marks orders as fulfilled or prevents import if not to be shipped.
- **Import order** – Decide which orders should (or shouldn't) pull into Starshipit.
- **Set carrier & product code** – Directly map orders to specific services.

Wrap up

Putting your rules into action

Shipping automation rules take the repetitive work out of fulfilment and give you back time, control, and healthier margins. By setting conditions once and letting your platform do the heavy lifting, you free your team to focus on growth – not manual admin.

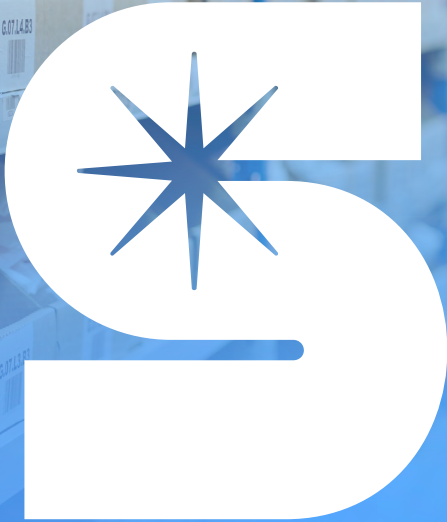
But success with automation doesn't mean switching everything on at once. The retailers who get the best results follow a few simple principles:

- **Test before you scale** – Trial new rules in a safe batch before applying them across all orders.

- **Start with the biggest time sink** – Look at where your team spends the most time (carrier allocation, customs forms, order tagging) and automate there first.
- **Review and refine** – Monitor performance regularly to ensure rules are still working as intended and update them as your business grows.

When you take this approach, automation becomes more than a cost saver – it's the foundation for faster fulfilment, fewer errors, and a shipping operation that grows without adding complexity.





Starshipit

Starshipit is the best practice shipping and fulfilment platform

Every hour you spend on manual tasks erodes margins and stifles growth – don't let workflows hold you back. [Book a demo with a Starshipit expert](#) and we'll help you configure the right rules for your operation, whether you're just getting started or looking to refine a more complex setup.

Book a call →

Have questions already and want to chat to one of our shipping experts? Book a call now and we'll work with you to get your fulfilment set up for success.

	New	Printed	Shipped	Returns	
	Select view		Print	Check addresses	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Order	Customer	Country	Courier	
<input type="checkbox"/>	363	Millar	AU	Australia Post	
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Deliver great shipping experiences