

Guidelines on Writing Technical Descriptions of Merchandise

How the descriptions will be used

The descriptions will be used to classify merchandise for entry into the United States.

- As part of the entry process, goods must be classified (determined where in the Harmonized Tariff Schedules of the U. S. they fall), and their value determined; *and*
- Used to determine whether duty is payable, and whether import restrictions apply such as quotas, restraints, embargoes or other restrictions; *and*
- Used for classification ruling requests submitted to United States Customs Service.

Importers must exercise ‘reasonable care’ to enter, classify, and value merchandise. Some U. S. Customs personnel have a technical background; however many have either little or no technical knowledge of the specific merchandise being imported. Incorrect classification may lead to delays and increased duties and interest in addition to detention or seizure and the imposition of civil or criminal penalties.

What is included in the description

The description should describe the product by name and include the following information:

- General character - Is the merchandise mechanical, electrical, electronic, etc.
- Materials of construction - The materials or components included in the product. Examples: “Active (hybrids, field effect transistors and MOS integrated circuits) and passive components soldered to three layer printed circuit board” or “Machined from titanium alloy.”
- Functionality – Where and how the merchandise is used, and how the product works. This would include inputs and outputs, how the product performs its task and key components or subassemblies that affect how it works. Some of the greatest detail may be in this area.
- Layout or appearance - Describe the size or configuration of the product or its general appearance. Examples: “Laid out on a grid measuring 10cm X 15 cm” or “Installed in an aluminum enclosure.”
- End use - Describe what the product goes into or its function as part of a larger product. Examples: “Installed into the ABC subassembly” or “Used to provide conditioned power to the XYZ module.”

Photos or drawings

A photo or drawing (or other descriptive literature) of the product may be useful in explaining it.

Part numbers

If the product has a unique part number, include it in the description. If the part number varies according to the end use, give an example of the part number that may be used.

Things not to include in the description

- Classified or highly proprietary information.
- If some of the characteristics of the product, such as voltage or frequency, vary according to end use, it may be best to offer them as examples. Example: “This unit is built to receive Radio Frequency signals in the C-band or K-band frequencies, according to customer specifications.”