

## 10 Questions to Ask A Dropshipping Supplier

Relying on another company to supply products to your customer that you sell through your e-commerce site has significant risks. For many companies, offering dropshipping services is a secondary income stream that can require significant staff time to support it and do it right. Choosing the right dropshipping supplier is as important as choosing the products you want to include on your website.

Asking the following 10 questions to a potential dropshipping supplier may help you avoid significant issues as your e-commerce business grows.

1. ***Do you charge a dropshipping fee/membership fee?*** These costs can vary from a single membership fee to a per order fee, which can be a flat fee or a percentage. Including this in your costs may show that you are not making any money on sales from this supplier.
2. ***Do you have a product file?*** The product file enables you to upload the products to your site. It includes the image, description, price, weight, and other information critical for a product listing. Without access to a product file, you will need to create the items manually.
3. ***Is the product file formatted for my platform?*** If you want to add products to an existing site, the product file needs to be available that matches your platform.
4. ***Do you have an inventory file?*** This is critical to ensuring you do not sell products that are out of stock. The dropshipping supplier can make available to you a file that contains the current stock levels. It is your responsibility to update the counts on your site, whether with an app or manually.
5. ***How often is the inventory file updated and is it accessible?*** It's Murphy's Law that you will sell an item on your website and the dropshipping supplier sold the last one just minutes before. If the file is only available daily, this may be a problem. Conversely, if the file is updated in real time you will need an app to apply the updates in real time.
6. ***How often do you ship dropship orders?*** Because these are small orders for a dropshipping supplier, they may not process them daily. You will want to know this so you can include this in your shipping policy.
7. ***Where do you ship from?*** While you may be in Chicago, a 3 business-day ship to anywhere in the US, your dropshipping supplier may be in Maine, a 6 business-day ship to the west coast. If they are in China it may be 2 weeks and the customer may get a customs bill with the package.
8. ***Can you include my brand in the packing slip?*** The customer bought the item from your website, so you should want it to appear as if it is coming from your business rather than the dropshipping supplier.

9. ***Will you include a flyer promoting my business in each order?*** You made the sale so you may want to include a promotion with the order to extend customer loyalty or a generic thank you note that promotes your business.
  
10. ***How do I pay and place orders?*** Ideally the dropshipping supplier offers a process that allows you to enter and pay for the order online. Once the order is shipped, they then provide you with the tracking number that you can provide to your customer. The more manual this process is (e.g. orders taken by phone or email), the greater chance for error, long resolution times, and unhappy customers.

These are only the minimum questions to which you will want the answers. And naturally, the answers will promote more questions. A good dropshipping supplier will be willing to enter into a dialog about how to make both your and their businesses succeed.