



A Container Ship

Sneakers travel from Asia in shipping containers. Each container can carry thousands of pairs of sneakers. This makes them a very efficient way to move goods. These containers can be transferred easily from ships to trains to trucks. By lowering the cost of shipping, containers have become a key factor in globalization.

32.6 Distributing the Global Sneaker

In 1990, a ship carrying sneakers from South Korea to the United States was hit by a big storm. Eighty thousand pairs of shoes spilled into the Pacific Ocean. A year later, the shoes were still washing up on American shores. Normally, though, sneakers have a smoother journey from Asia. Companies use several methods of transportation to get their shoes from the factory to the store.

Across the Globe by Ship Typically, sneakers are sent by container ship from Asia. This is the least expensive way to move goods over such long distances.

The trip to the United States takes about two weeks. The sneakers make this journey in freight containers. These are large, weatherproof steel boxes that are easy to stack on the deck of a ship. Big container ships can carry 8,000 of these boxes.

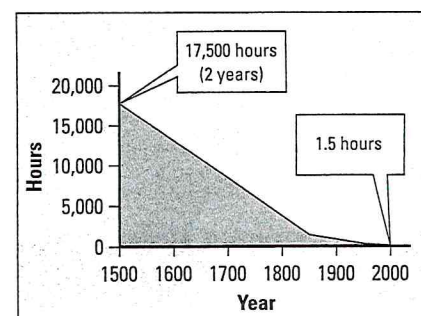
Across the Country by Train and Truck When a ship arrives on the west coast of the United States, the containers are unloaded onto trains or trucks. In some ports, train tracks run right up to the docks to make unloading easier.

Train or truck transport across the United States can take up to a week or longer. Most sneakers end up in Memphis, Tennessee. Memphis is a major distribution center where rail lines and highways meet. Sneakers are kept in warehouses here and sent by truck to stores around the country. A truck leaving Memphis in the morning can reach 75 percent of the nation's population by the next day.

From the Store to Your Home Sneakers are distributed to some 18,000 stores in the United States. You probably shop at some of them. By the time a pair of sneakers makes it from an Asian factory to your home, it may have traveled more than 7,000 miles.

In 2007, Americans bought about 425 million pairs of athletic shoes. That's nearly one and a half pairs for every man, woman, and child in the United States. Athletic shoe sales totaled more than \$17 billion. And that doesn't count the rest of the world. The global sneaker is big business.

Travel Time Around the World, 1500–2000



Our Shrinking World

This graph shows the time it took to travel around the world at different points in history. Around 1500, it took a sailing ship two, and sometimes three, years to circle the globe. Jet planes shrank that time to two days. A space shuttle can do it in less than two hours. As travel time has decreased, our world has seemed to shrink.