# What we ask before we fix, and why

Black Foot Logistics · Independent Tanker Brokerage

**Ten questions.** Each one exists because leaving it unasked has cost somebody a laycan, a berth, or a claim. If you already know the answers, we'll move quickly. If you don't, that's what we're for.

We're a broker. We don't own the vessels and we don't own the cargo, which means the only thing we're selling is a fixture that holds together.

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**1 · What happens if this cargo doesn't move on schedule?**

Not "when do you need it" — what breaks. Storage overrun, refinery feedstock gap, contract penalty, demurrage exposure.

*Why:* it's the only question that tells us what we're actually protecting. A cargo with a $40,000-a-day consequence behind it should be worked differently from one with a flexible window.

**2 · Which terminal — not which port?**

Houston is not a berth.

*Why:* restrictions live at the berth. Draft, LOA, manifold height, hose size and berth availability are terminal-level facts, and tonnage that suits the port can be refused at the jetty.

**3 · Does the terminal restrict vessel size — max DWT or draft?**

If there's a limit, we need the number.

*Why:* this is the constraint most likely to invalidate an otherwise perfect nomination, and it is far cheaper to establish at enquiry than after a vessel has been offered and accepted.

**4 · Laycan — earliest and latest, and how firm are they?**

Both dates, plus an honest answer about which one has give in it.

*Why:* a narrow laycan is priced differently from a wide one. Charterers who overstate firmness pay for flexibility they never needed; charterers who understate it lose the ship.

**5 · Are there prior cargo restrictions — and how many back?**

Last one, last two, last three. And which cargoes are unacceptable.

*Why:* on clean products this eliminates tonnage faster than any other single criterion.

**6 · Coated tanks, heating, segregation, inert gas — what does the cargo require?**

And if heating: to what temperature, maintained over what period.

*Why:* these are physical attributes of a ship, not negotiable terms. They narrow the list to vessels that can actually lift the cargo, rather than vessels that are simply available.

**7 · Whose vetting applies — and which approvals do you need current?**

SIRE/OCIMF inspection currency, named major oil company approvals, or your own vetting regime.

*Why:* a vessel approved by one major is not automatically approved by another, and approval status changes.

**8 · Quantity and tolerance — and whose option?**

Min/max, owner's option or charterer's option, and the percentage.

*Why:* tolerance is a commercial term with a real price attached. Leaving it undefined at enquiry means renegotiating it at the worst possible moment.

**9 · Have you moved this cargo before — direct, through a broker, or not at all?**

*Why:* it tells us what you already know and what you don't. An established programme needs a competitive alternative and a fast answer. A first-time route needs the constraints explained before anything is quoted. Treating those two the same serves neither.

**10 · Freight basis, laytime and demurrage — what are you working to?**

Worldscale, lumpsum or $/MT; laytime allowed; demurrage rate and terms.

*Why:* a rate is meaningless without the terms attached. A keen freight number with tight laytime and a low demurrage rate can cost more than a higher number with realistic terms.

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**What we deliberately don't ask at enquiry**

War risk premiums, bunker adjustment and detailed sanctions jurisdictions don't appear on our enquiry sheet. Not because they don't matter — they matter a great deal — but because they're first-meeting conversations, not form fields.

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