

MAXIMIZE YOUR TRAILER SPACE

# A Guide to **Smarter** Truckload Planning



# How to Think About Truckload Capacity

If you have ever felt like you are paying for air in a trailer, you probably are. The gap usually comes from packaging limits, not product volume. When loads require extra securement, stacks can only go so high, or units shift in transit, capacity gets capped long before the trailer is truly full.

The most efficient freight setups are stable, repeatable, and easy to handle at the dock. That is why rigid, reusable containers often [outperform Gaylords](#). They stack more consistently, reduce the need for added stabilization steps, and help protect product from crushing and shifting. Nesting also matters, because sending empties back should not create a loose, sliding mess that slows unloading and adds labor.

This guide gives you a clear baseline using a standard 53' dry van with swing doors. From there, you will see why container design decisions (lids, nesting, stacking, and stability) shape [freight efficiency](#) across nearly every industry.



**Why a 53' dry van:** It's the most common trailer used for general freight and gives the cleanest baseline for comparing loading capacity. Different trailer styles change usable interior space and can reduce total counts.



# How Many Containers Fit In One Load?

In a standard 53' dry van, [reusable plastic containers](#) can deliver more than double the loaded units per trailer compared to Gaylords. These baseline counts show how nesting and stacking change capacity, and why rigid containers often outperform loaded Gaylords on a standard run.

## Collapsed Container Load Capacity



**208**

**Containers  
with Lids**



**234**

**Containers  
without Lids**

*Counts shown for the common 48x45 footprint container family (48x45x34 and 48x45x25).*

## Open/Loaded Capacity, Containers vs Gaylords



**84**

**Containers  
with/without Lids**



**36**

**Gaylords  
with/without Lids**

*Counts shown for the common 48x45 footprint container family (48x45x34 and 48x45x25).*

## WHAT THIS MEANS PER LOAD

**133%**

**MORE LOADED  
UNITS PER TRAILER\***

**2.33x**

**MORE CAPACITY  
PER LOAD\***

*\*when compared to a load of full Gaylord boxes*



## REAL-WORLD VARIABLES

# What Steals Trailer Space

Those baseline numbers are a great starting point, but real loads are not always “standard.” Trailer configuration, door style, and freight-handling practices can reduce usable space or limit the safe stack height. The biggest capacity swings usually come from trailer type and packaging stability.

## What Variables Most Affect Freight Efficiency?



### Roll-Up Door Trailers

Can reduce usable depth at the door, which may lower total counts.



### Gaylord Loads

Lower stack stability can lead to shifting, bowing, and crushed freight.



### Reefer Trailers

Refrigeration components reduce usable interior length, often by several feet.

## Common Mistakes When Estimating Truck Capacity

Capacity estimates break down when stability, securement, and unload conditions are treated as afterthoughts. Gaylords can bow, crush, or shift, often requiring additional securement and more cautious stacking, reducing usable space and increasing freight risk. The most common mistakes include:

- Planning for floor space only instead of stack height and stability
- Not accounting for the wasted cube from conservative stacking
- Ignoring return-trip realities for empty packaging
- Assuming wrap will keep flattened Gaylords contained
- Underestimating dock time and labor at the destination
- Missing pallet-related risks like nails, splinters, and damage





## Built for Better Loads

**Extera** containers are designed for the reality of freight. When your packaging stacks predictably and holds its shape, you get more usable space in the trailer, fewer securement headaches, and a smoother unload at the destination. That's why many teams switch from temporary packaging to rigid, reusable containers, because capacity is only valuable when it is repeatable load after load.

Reusable, stackable containers help you:

- Increase stackability and usable cube per trailer
- Reduce the need for load bars and extra stabilization steps
- Lower the chance of product spillage and crushed freight
- Improve unloading efficiency with stable, consistent loads

If your operation uses a different trailer type, door style, or container size, your totals will change. That's where Extera's team helps most. We can calculate capacity for your exact container and trailer combination, including [custom sizes and container modifications](#), so you can plan confidently rather than guess.



STOP PAYING FOR EMPTY SPACE

# Start Shipping With Control

Trailer space is too valuable to leave to guesswork. When your packaging stacks predictably, your team moves faster, freight stays cleaner, and planning gets easier. If you are ready for loads that run smoother from shipping to receiving, Extera is ready to help.

