RTO checklist: 4 fixes that bring your parcels home

RTO isn't only the customer's fault. These 4 things decide if a COD parcel gets delivered.

Printable guide. The numbers shown are a worked example; change them on the page: dashowl.co/resources/rto-checklist

The 4 fixes

1 Right courier

Couriers are not all the same for your pin codes. One may deliver well in the metros and badly in small towns, and the other way round.

Do this today: Pull your last 100 COD orders, group them by courier and region, and compare how many were delivered. Send more volume to the courier that wins in each region. I use and recommend Blue Dart Surface.

2 WhatsApp confirm before shipping

Many COD orders are placed on impulse. An automatic WhatsApp asks the customer to Confirm or Cancel before you ship.

Do this today: Set up a message that goes out right after a COD order (template 1 below). Ship only the confirmed ones. A cancel before shipping costs you no RTO charge.

3 A call before dispatch

A short call or WhatsApp saying "your order ships today" makes the customer remember they ordered, and that someone is waiting to deliver it.

Do this today: Call or message every COD order on the day it ships (templates 2 and 3 below). Two minutes per order is cheaper than one RTO.

4 Packaging (most important)

A plain polythene bag with no brand looks like a fraud parcel. Delivery boys sometimes tell customers "Instagram se order kiya hai? Cancel kar do, fraud ho sakta hai." Branded packaging looks genuine, so the customer trusts it and takes it.

Do this today: Put your brand name on the box or bag, add a sticker or printed label, and put a thank-you card inside. Use the packaging checklist (template 5 below).

Ready-to-copy templates

Tap Copy, paste it into your WhatsApp tool or notes, and swap the {placeholders} for the real name, brand, order number and amount.

WHATSAPP MESSAGE

1. COD confirm message

Send right after a COD order is placed. Ship only after the customer replies 1.

```
Hi {name}, thank you for your order {order_id} from {brand}!

Order total: Rs {amount} (Cash on Delivery)

Please confirm your order:
Reply 1 to CONFIRM
Reply 2 to CANCEL

We will ship it as soon as you confirm. If we do not hear from you, we may hold the order.
```

WHATSAPP MESSAGE

2. "Your order ships today" message

Send on the day the parcel is handed to the courier.

```
Hi {name}, good news! Your order {order_id} from {brand} ships today.

Amount to pay on delivery: Rs {amount}

You will get the tracking link soon. Please keep your phone on, the delivery person will call you.

Thank you for shopping with {brand}!
```

CALL SCRIPT (HINGLISH)

3. Pre-dispatch call script

A 30-second call. Keep a friendly tone and write down any change of address.

```
"Namaste {name} ji, main {brand} se bol raha hoon. Aapne {order_id} order kiya tha, Rs {amount} ka, cash on delivery.

Kya aapka address aur phone number sahi hai? Main bas confirm kar raha tha.

Aapka order aaj ship ho raha hai, 3 se 5 din mein aa jayega. Delivery wale bhaiya ka call aayega, please phone uthaiyega aur cash ready rakhiyega.

Koi sawaal ho to is number par WhatsApp kar sakte hain. Dhanyavaad!"

If the customer wants to cancel: "Koi baat nahi, main abhi cancel kar deta hoon." Cancel the order before it ships.
```

WHATSAPP MESSAGE

4. "Out for delivery, keep cash ready" message

Send on the morning the parcel is out for delivery.

```
Hi {name}, your order {order_id} from {brand} is out for delivery today.

Please keep Rs {amount} ready and keep your phone on, the delivery person will call you.

This is a genuine parcel from {brand}. If anything is wrong, message us here and we will sort it right away.
```

CHECKLIST

5. Packaging checklist

Print this and stick it near your packing table.

```
PACKAGING CHECKLIST (every COD parcel)

On the outside of the box or bag:
[ ] Brand name printed or stamped, big and clear
[ ] Brand sticker or printed label on the front
[ ] Your WhatsApp number and website on the label
[ ] Customer name, full address and pin code, easy to read
[ ] "COD: Rs {amount}" and order number {order_id} on the label
[ ] Tape with your brand name, not plain brown tape

Inside:
[ ] Thank-you card with your brand name and a support number
[ ] Invoice or packing slip with the order number
[ ] Product wrapped neatly, not loose

Never ship in plain, unbranded polythene.
```

Track your RTO

Once you start, measure it. These free tools show what RTO costs you and where it comes from.

- **RTO cost calculator** what each returned parcel really costs you
- **State-wise RTO tracker** which states send the most parcels back
- **COD block pin codes** pin codes where COD is too risky
- **COD calculator** is COD still profitable on this order

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