Harmonized Tariff Schedule System
External User Guide
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Introduction

This section provides an introduction to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule (HTS) External User Guide. See Appendix A of this document for a detailed description of the HTS.

Background

In May, 2013, the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) contracted with NCI, Inc. (formerly Computech, Inc.) to build a software system to produce and maintain the HTS with enhanced consistency, audit capability, and ease in updating document entries. Previously the official HTS was maintained and reviewed manually using word processing files. Updates were made in secondary electronic repositories which supported search and reporting features. The USITC was urged by the Inspector General to modernize the HTS processes to meet certain audit and data integrity standards and to manage all HTS data in a centralized, electronic repository.

This new HTS System was formulated as a software solution to those recommendations. It is designed as a web based system intended to allow designated internal users the ability to update, search, and publish new editions of the HTS with emphasis on security, data accuracy, and action traceability.

The new external HTS system provides the user with the ability to search the HTS database, print entire (or sections of) HTS releases, view change records for each HTS release, and export the HTS data in various consumable formats.
1. External User Capabilities

The external HTS system provides the user with the ability to:
1. Search the HTS database
2. View entire (or sections of) HTS releases
3. Export the HTS data in various consumable formats

1.1. Search HTS

The HTS Search functionality allows users to query the database to find information specific to certain goods or items found in the officially published HTS document.

To perform a search using this module, the user begins by selecting [Search] from the menu bar. Next, the user enters a search term, which is a text string of a word(s) or a numeric value matching an HTS heading or subheading number. To initiate the search, the user presses Enter on the keyboard or clicks on the Search button to the right of the search bar.

1.1.1. Search Terms

The user may search for an individual word, a phrase, or an HTS Heading or Subheading number. Different search terms will produce different behaviors for finding search results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search term</th>
<th>Search Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single word</td>
<td>Returns tariff records containing the word, or a related version of the word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase surrounded by double-quotes</td>
<td>Returns tariff records containing the exact phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase with no quotes</td>
<td>Returns tariff records containing AT LEAST ONE word from the search term, or a related version of the word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase with each word surrounded by double-quotes</td>
<td>Returns tariff records containing EVERY word from the search term; every word must be exact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### HTS Heading/Subheading
- **Returns the specified HTS Heading/Subheading as well as all nested Subheadings**
- **Prefixing a word with a hyphen sign (-)** Negates the word so that any tariffs containing that word will be excluded from the search results.

**Note:** The HTS search will ignore common words that are listed in Appendix B.

**Note:** When searching without quotes, the HTS search will return results which have the same root word as the search term (i.e., stemming). For example, the same results are returned when the user searches for any of these words: sensitized, sensitizing, sensitivity.

The HTS Search feature does not support:
- Wildcards or regular expressions to search partial words or phrases
- Searching chapter or section notes
- Searching data being updated for future releases; the search module queries only data that has reached its effective date

### 1.1.2. Search Results
The search results will appear in two panes:
1) The left window pane shows all the HTS Subheading numbers and Article Descriptions (see Appendix A for more information) with the search results count displayed at the top. Results are displayed in order of the HTS Number, lowest to highest. Clicking upon an HTS Number updates the contents of the right window pane.

![Search Results: 53](image)

2) The right window pane shows the tariff rates for the relevant chapter, scrolled such that the chosen search result appears at the top of the screen. Initially, the first search result is shown. The search term is highlighted in green within the Article Description section.

The Search Results Rates tab is selected by default and displays the following information:
- Heading/Subheading, which is the HTS Number (4, 6, and 8 digits)
- Stat Suffix, which combined with the Heading/Subheading is the 10 digit HTS Number
- Article description
- Unit of Quantity
- Tariff Rates
  - General Rate of Duty
  - Special Rate of Duty
  - Column 2 Rate of Duty

The Stat Suffix column contains a link to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Customs Rulings Online Search System (CROSS) for information on classification rulings regarding that item.

**Hint:** Scroll to the top of the chapter to view the column headings.

Additionally, users can select the following tabs to view respective data.
- Chapter notes
- Section notes
The Download Chapter allows users to download the PDF version of the chapter, which they may save electronically or print.

1.1.3. No Results Found

The user may enter a word(s) that will not return a search result. In the case where the user enters a string of characters that cannot be matched in HTS, the user shall see the message, “No matching results found for ‘xxxxx’”.

The user must modify the search criteria in order to find the correct data in HTS.
1.2. View HTS

The HTS View module provides users with the ability to view PDF versions of the Cover, Change Record, Preface, General Notes, Notice to Exporters, Chapters 1-99, Chemical Appendix, Pharmaceutical Appendix, Chemicals for Dyes Appendix, Statistical Annexes, and the Alphabetical Index for any HTS Release published through the HTS system.

To access this module, the user clicks on [View] from the top menu bar. The current HTS version is displayed as an outline of the HTS document with hyperlinks to each section of the overall HTS document. By clicking on a hyperlink, a user can access a PDF for the corresponding portion of the current HTS version.

A list of previous releases can be accessed via the “Go To Archive” link in the upper-right corner of the screen.
1.2.1. HTS Archive

The Archive page displays a hyperlink to each available release published through the HTS system.

With the exception of the last link, “HTS Archives (2015 and older),” which takes the user to the archive of the previous HTS system, clicking on any HTS version will open a page outlining the selected HTS version.

The selected HTS version is displayed as an outline of the HTS document with hyperlinks to each section of the overall HTS document. By clicking on a hyperlink, a user can access a PDF corresponding to the effective period in which the HTS version was published.

Note: This list only shows officially published versions of the HTS.
1.3. Export HTS Data

The Export tool allows users to download HTS tariff data in a number of consumable data formats. It allows the user to select the format in which to receive the data and the range of HTS numbers to be included in the result. A user can access this module by selecting the [Export] tab from the main menu bar at the top of the screen.

The Export HTS Data page displays the following information:

- **Export Format** - This is the format in which the data will get exported. The options are:
  - CSV: Comma-separated value
  - Excel: Similar to CSV, but formatted for immediate access to Microsoft Excel
  - JSON: Javascript Object Notation. This is a standard format used for data object notation on the web (also mandated by data.gov)

- **HTS Number** - There are two boxes to indicate the range of HTS Article numbers to include in the export. The export will include the two article numbers at the start and the end of the range.

- **Include styles** – If checked, all style and formatting information (e.g. bold, italics, underline, superscript, subscript) is included in the exported data

The output of the export include all the columns included as part of the main HTS Tariff Schedule, including HTS Number, Article Description, Unit of Quantity, General Rate of Duty, Special Rate of Duty, Column 2 Rate of Duty.
1.4. **RESTful API**

To support Open Government initiatives, the HTS system provides an interface to extract search and export results. HTS uses a Representational State Transfer (RESTful) web service API to provide this data.

The base URL for all calls to the HTS REST API (HRA) is: [http://hts.usitc.gov/api](http://hts.usitc.gov/api)

### 1.4.1. Search

GET: [http://hts.usitc.gov/api/search](http://hts.usitc.gov/api/search)

DESCRIPTION: Search for tariff articles containing a given word/phrase as specified by the parameter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARAMETER</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>REQUIRED</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>query</td>
<td>String</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Search phrase. For a detailed explanation on search terms please see the section “Search Terms” of this document.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


RESULT: List of up to the first 100 tariff articles in JSON format matching the query

### 1.4.2. Export

GET: [http://hts.usitc.gov/api/export](http://hts.usitc.gov/api/export)

DESCRIPTION: Export a given range of tariff articles as specified by the parameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARAMETER</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>REQUIRED</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>format</td>
<td>String</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Export format type - Supported format values are json, csv or excel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from</td>
<td>String</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>HTS Number denoting the start of the range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td>String</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>HTS Number denoting the end of the range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>styles</td>
<td>String</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>If value is “false” then all styling information such as underline, bold, italics, subscript, superscript is removed from the output</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXAMPLE: [http://hts.usitc.gov/api/export?format=csv&from=0100&to=0200&styles=false](http://hts.usitc.gov/api/export?format=csv&from=0100&to=0200&styles=false)

RESULT: List of tariff articles within the specified range and in the specified format

### 1.4.3. Error Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Internal Server side error</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A: Description of the HTS

Introduction to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule

The Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States, Annotated for Statistical Reporting Purposes (HTS), is published by the U.S. International Trade Commission (Commission) as directed by Congress. The HTS contains both legal (enacted or proclaimed) and nonlegal (statistical or reference) provisions specifically designated. All goods imported into the United States are subject to the provisions of the HTS, as well as to regulations of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (Customs) and laws that Customs enforces.

Section 1204(c) of the Trade Act states that the legal provisions contained in the Commission’s publications of the HTS, as updated, are statutory in nature. Other resources provided by the Commission, such as the online trade Data Web or the HTS search tool, can assist in classifying goods in trade, but importers should rely primarily on the legally authoritative HTS itself in preparing Customs documents. The classification of imported goods is first the responsibility of importers, while the interpretation of the HTS with regard to such goods is the responsibility of Customs. Except for goods listed in the Notice to Exporters, goods being exported from the United States can also be reported under the HTS provisions covering them; the goods listed in that Notice must instead be reported under provisions of Schedule B, administered by the United States Census Bureau (Census).

Goods are described in terms of the structured nomenclature commonly known as the Harmonized System (HS), whose numbered provisions appear in the HTS as 4-digit headings and 6-digit subheadings, together with legal rules and notes. Subordinate U.S. categories may appear as 8-digit subheadings with their rates of duty; in some cases, U.S. duty rates are in fact added to HS product categories. The 4- and 6-digit HS provisions contained in HTS chapters 1 through 97 are administered by the World Customs Organization (WCO), and their wording, numbering, and coverage are internationally agreed, subject to periodic changes (usually implemented every five years). These changes are proclaimed in the HTS by the President under section 1206 of the Trade Act, following a USITC investigation under section 1205 of that Act and the required Congressional lay-over under section 1206. In general, requests for changes in the HS notes or nomenclature must be submitted first to the Commission for appropriate review and potential submission to the WCO, while changes in HTS legal provisions or rates of duty must be enacted.

The HS General Rules of Interpretation (GRIs) and the Additional U.S. Rules of Interpretation are applied to the nomenclature in chapters 1 through 97 to determine how goods should be classified in the headings and subheadings of the HTS. Although classification is
largely uniform among countries using the HS, national differences may exist due to judicial or customs rulings or national legislation, and may also exist with regard to newly developed types of goods. Because the HTS is a hierarchical system of product description, it is not possible to classify all goods in trade by doing an electronic search, and HTS provisions must be reviewed to locate the one that most specifically describes each shipment. Thus, the potentially applicable headings should first be compared; once a heading is chosen, its subordinate provisions at the same indentation level in the nomenclature structure should be compared. Goods are classified in the provisions of chapters 1 through 97, although many shipments may be eligible for different duty treatment under U.S. chapters 98 or 99.

The nonlegal statistical elements that appear in the HTS are formulated by an interagency committee authorized under section 484(f) of the Tariff Act of 1930 (19 U.S.C. 1484(f)) or by the Commission. Information about the operation of this Committee and procedures for requesting statistical changes in the HTS or in the export schedule, Schedule B, are set forth later in this preface. Other statistical elements are included for the convenience of the user. For example, footnotes (which may elaborate on a provision or refer to another HTS provision) are merely informational, their presence or absence has no legal effect, and the language contained in footnotes has no effect on the legal text or its interpretation. A list of legal instruments and nonlegal actions affecting an HTS edition is set forth in the preface and, together with the change record and chapters 98 and 99, should be consulted to locate any actions that may apply to specific goods. (See changes pertaining to the current edition, below.)

Note that this edition of the HTS does not contain complete updates to the rules of origin used to determine product eligibility under U.S. free trade agreements. Updates to existing rules are negotiated to take into account the changes made in the HS, which are reflected in the HTS and the national schedules of partner countries. A Compiler’s Note set forth below the Additional U.S. Rules of Interpretation provides updated information on the status of each agreement’s rules. Customs officials should be consulted when the rules of origin and updated headings/subheadings do not align.

A “basic edition” of the HTS is printed and posted for each year in which staged duty reductions or major legal changes must be reflected. Online electronic revisions to the printed HTS are posted to the Commission’s web site (www.usitc.gov) periodically when the HTS is changed, along with links to the public laws, Presidential proclamations or Federal Register notices that make such changes. Large-scale changes affecting many chapters may also be issued as printed supplements; however, in some years no printed supplements are issued and all changes are reflected in online revisions. The entire HTS is posted for each revision, even if changes are not made in all chapters, but the change records for revisions are not cumulative of all changes since the basic edition or printed supplement. The change record for each revision relates to that revision’s preface list of documents making legal or statistical changes. The
The HTS is a U.S. nomenclature system used to classify traded goods based on their material composition, product name, and/or intended function. The HTS is designed so that each article falls into only one category. It is divided into chapters, each of which has a 2-digit number. Each product category within the various chapters is designated by 4, 6, 8, or 10 digits. The 4-digit categories are called "headings." The 6-, 8- and 10-digit classifications are called "subheadings."

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) uses this system and its rules to classify imported goods. Nearly every good that is imported into the United States is classified in an 8-digit category. For example, the 8-digit classification for "cotton sewing thread put up for retail sale" imported into the United States is HTS subheading 5204.20.00, and the 8-digit classification for copper cathodes is subheading 7403.11.00. There are over 10,000 of these 8-digit subheadings covering goods in the HTS.

One function of the HTS is to enable CBP to determine the rate of duty applied to an imported good. Using the examples above, the general rate of duty for cotton thread is 4.4%, and for copper cathodes the general duty rate is 1%. “Duty” is often used interchangeably with the word "tariff." Rates of duty vary depending on whether a good originates in a country that benefits from a preference (Canada has completely duty free trade under the North American Free Trade Agreement, (NAFTA)). There are columns in the HTS to denote the general, special and maximum duty rates for each line item.

The HTS contains the nomenclature structure of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, otherwise known as the Harmonized System (HS). The HS is administered by the World Customs Organization (WCO). WCO committees are composed of member country representatives that keep the system up-to-date and make decisions about classification questions submitted by governments. The underlying idea of the Harmonized System is to use a common set of descriptive categories for goods in trade and to allow these categories to be further subdivided in the tariff schedules of WCO member countries for more detailed duty or statistical purposes.

The United States International Trade Commission (USITC) maintains the HTS system so that the public and other agencies calculate the tariff rates for products into the United States. The primary users of the HTS are Customs and Border Protections (CBP) and USTR (United States Trade Research), who use this information for actual application of tariff rates and for data analysis.

The HTS system provides the user with the ability to search the HTS database, print entire (or sections of) HTS releases, view change records for each HTS release, and export the HTS data in various consumable formats.
## Appendix B - Words Ignored by HTS Search

| a       | about  | above   | after  | again  | against | all    | am    | an    | and    | any    | are     | aren't  | as     | at     | be     | because | been   | before | being  | below  | between | both   | but    | by     | can't  | cannot | could  | couldn't | did    | didn't | do     | does   | doesn't | doing  | don't  | down   | during |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|-------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| each    | few    | for     | from   | further| had     | hadn't | has   | hasn't| have   | haven't| having  | he      | he'd   | he'll  | he's   | her     | here   | here's | hers   | herself| him     | himself| his    | how    | how's  | i       | id     | i'll    | i'm    | i've    | if      | she    | she's  | she'll | she'll  | she's  | she's  | she's  | she's  |
| its     | itself | let's   | me     | more   | most    | mustn't | my    | myself| no     | nor    | not     | of      | off    | on     | once   | only    | or      | other  | ought  | our    | ours    | ourselves| out    | out    | over   | own    | own     | same   | shan't | she'd  | she'll | she'll  | we     | we     | we'll  | we're  | we've   | we've  | we've  | we've  | we've  |
| that    | that's | the     | their  | theirs | them    | themselves| there | there's| there's| these  | they    | they'd  | they'll| they're| they've| this    | those  | through| to     | too     | under   | until  | up     | very   | was    | was     | wasn't | we     | we'd   | we'll  | we're  | we've   | we've  | we've  | we've  | we've  |
| where   | where's| which   | while  | who    | who's   | whom   | then  | why   | with   | won't  | would   | wouldn't| you    | you'd  | you'd  | you'll  | you're  | you've  | your   | yours  | yourself| yours  | yours  | yours  | yours  | yours  | yours  | yours  | yours  | yours  | yours  | yours  |

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