

Postal Regulations

as per the U.S. Postal Service

Preparing your mail pieces according to Postal Service standards allows your mail pieces to be processed more efficiently.

In addition to weight and shape, the Postal Service classifies mail pieces by the way they are prepared. These classifications are based on how efficiently your mail pieces can be processed on Postal Service equipment. The Postal Service classifies all mail pieces into one of three categories:

Machinable If you prepare your mail piece so that it has an accurate address and can be processed on Postal Service equipment, your mail piece is “machinable” and eligible for “presort” prices.

Nonmachinable If your mail piece does not meet the machinable standards, you may have to pay a higher postage price. Additionally, nonmachinable letters require extra steps when you sort your mail.

Automation If your letter-size or flat-size mail piece is machinable and displays the correct barcode, you can qualify for lower, “automation” prices.

MACHINABLE MAIL

A mail piece is machinable if it can be sorted on Postal Service processing equipment. Sorting machinable pieces is more efficient than sorting nonmachinable pieces. Machinable mail pieces must meet specific standards, including size, shape, and weight. Machinable parcels with barcodes are eligible for a barcode discount.

Postcards Dimensions			
		minimum	maximum
	length	5 inches	6 inches
	height	3-1/2 inches	4-1/4 inches
	thickness	0.007 inch	0.016 inch

Letters** Dimensions			
		minimum	maximum
	length	5 inches	11-1/2 inches
	height	3-1/2 inches	6-1/8 inches
	thickness	0.007 inch*	1/4 inch

* Letters over 4-1/4 inches high and/or 6 inches long must be at least 0.009 inch thick.

Postal Regulations

Flats** Dimensions			
		minimum***	maximum
	length	11-1/2 inches	15 inches
	height	6-1/8 inches	12 inches
	thickness	1/4 inch	3/4 inch

** The content, design, weight, or shape of a mail piece may cause it to become nonmachinable. These elements are listed on the previous page under "Nonmachinable Mail."

NONMACHINABLE MAIL

A mail piece is nonmachinable if it cannot be sorted by Postal Service equipment. Higher postage prices may apply to mail pieces that do not meet machinable standards. Additionally, nonmachinable letters require extra steps when you sort your mail. Examples of a nonmachinable mail piece include a:

First-Class Mail letter weighing 3.5 ounces or less, or Standard Mail letter weighing 3.3 ounces or less if the mail piece:

- *has an aspect ratio (length divided by height) of less than 1.3 or more than 2.5 (a square envelope has an aspect ratio of 1, making it nonmachinable).
- *is over 4-1/4 inches high and/or 6 inches long and is less than 0.009 inch thick.
- *is polybagged, polywrapped, or enclosed in any plastic material.
- *has clasps, strings, or buttons.
- *is too thin or too rigid.
- *has a delivery address parallel to the shorter side of the mail piece.
- *contains items such as pens, pencils, or keys that create an uneven thickness.

Flat-size mail if the piece is not:

- *rectangular
- *flexible
- *uniformly thick

AUTOMATION MAIL

Your cards, letters, and flats can receive significant postage incentives if they are prepared according to automation standards. Your mail piece meets automation standards and qualifies for automation prices if it meets the specific addressing, barcoding, and design standards established for your mailing service and your level of sortation. There are no automation prices for parcels, but barcoded and machinable parcels may be eligible for lower prices. For more information about automation standards, refer to the [Quick Service Guides](#), which provide a summary of the standards for automation cards, letters, and flats.

Postal Regulations

Barcodes for Cards, Letters, and Flats

To receive the automation prices for cards and letters, all of the pieces in your mailing must have a delivery point barcode, or an Intelligent Mail barcode. Automation flats must have a delivery point barcode or a ZIP+4 barcode. All barcodes must meet placement, size, and legibility standards. Software is available for printing barcodes from your address list.



Letters

The aspect ratio (length divided by height) must be between 1.3 and 2.5, inclusive.

Flats

To receive automation prices, your mail piece must meet the standards for automation flats and:

- *First-Class Mail cannot weigh more than 13 ounces.
- *Periodicals cannot weigh more than 20 ounces.
- *Standard Mail must weigh less than 16 ounces.
- *Bound Printed Matter cannot weigh more than 20 ounces.
- *Have uniform thickness.

AUTOMATION MAIL DIMENSIONS

Postcards Dimensions			
		minimum	maximum
	length	5 inches	6 inches
	height	3-1/2 inches	4-1/4 inches
	thickness	0.007 inch	0.016 inch

Postal Regulations

Letters Dimensions			
		minimum	maximum
	length	5 inches	11-1/2 inches
	height	3-1/2 inches	6-1/8 inches
	thickness	0.007 inch*	1/4 inch

* 0.009 inch if greater than 6 inches long or 4-1/4 inches high

Flats Dimensions			
		minimum	maximum
	length	6 inches	15 inches
	height	5 inches	12 inches
	thickness	0.009 inch	3/4 inch

ADDRESSING AND ENDORSEMENTS

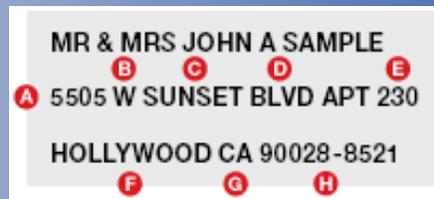
Accurate addressing and the proper use of endorsements helps us deliver your mail.

Addressing for Commercial Mail

Address quality is the key to automation compatibility, barcode accuracy, sorting accuracy, and carrier route coding, as well as the timely processing and delivery of your mail. Minimum standards for address quality for commercial mailing services include using accurate, updated ZIP Codes.

Postal Regulations

Basic Address Quality Standards



- A. Delivery address information, including apartment number, placed on the same line
- B. Predirectional in delivery address line
- C. Correct spelling of street name
- D. Correct suffix for delivery address
- E. Secondary address information
- F. Correct spelling of city name
- G. Standard state abbreviation
- H. Correct ZIP Code

Automation Address Quality Standards



- A. POSTNET or Intelligent Mail barcode (for automation discounts)
- B. Attention Line (Optional)
- C. Group, Department, Division Name (Optional)
- D. Business / Firm Name (Required)
- E. Delivery Address (Required)
- F. City, State, ZIP Code (Required)

Postal Regulations

Endorsements

Ancillary Service Endorsements tell the Postal Service how to handle a mail piece if it cannot be delivered as addressed. Reasons for nondelivery can include instances when the recipient has moved or the address is missing information, such as an apartment number. Based on the endorsement, the mail piece will be forwarded to the addressee's new location, returned to you, or discarded. If you use these services, you must pay any additional charges for forwarding the mail piece, returning the mail piece to you, or notifying you of the new address, depending on the mailing service you choose. First-Class Mail is forwarded or returned at no additional charge.



The endorsement must be placed in one of these four positions:

1. Directly below the return address.
2. Directly above the delivery address area (which includes the delivery address block and any related nonaddress elements such as a barcode, keyline, or optional endorsement line).
3. Directly to the left of the postage area and below or to the left of any price marking.
4. Directly below the postage area and below any price marking.

What Do the Endorsements Do?

-Change Service Requested tells the Postal Service to dispose of the undeliverable mail piece and to inform you of your addressee's new location or why the mail piece can't be delivered. This service helps you eliminate inaccurate addresses from your address list.

-Forwarding Service Requested tells the Postal Service to forward the mail piece to the addressee's new location or to return the mail piece to you if the recipient has not filed a change of address order in the last 12 months.

-Return Service Requested tells the Postal Service to return the mail piece to you with the addressee's new location or the reason why it can't be delivered. This service is beneficial when you are sending valuable or personal items.

-Address Service Requested tells the Postal Service to forward the mail piece to the addressee's new location or to return the mail piece to you if the recipient has not filed a change of address order in the last 12 months. Additionally, you will receive a notice of the addressee's new location or why the mail piece cannot be delivered. This service is helpful when you want to get a mail piece to the addressee and you want to keep your address list updated.

How Do the Services Work?

Simply place the name of the service you want to use directly below the return address or in another Postal Service-approved place on the mail piece.

For more information, see [Quick Service Guide 507d](#).