

Welcome to the Basic Design Elements presentation for Letters and Cards.

Agenda

- ➡ Determining Mailability
 - ❑ Processing Categories - Letters
 - ❑ Machinable/Automation Letters
 - ❑ Barcode Readability Basics
 - ❑ Postcards

The Agenda for this presentation will cover the following:

- Determining Mailability
- Processing Categories - Letters
- Machinable/Automation Letters
- Barcode Readability Basics
- Postcards (Cards mailed claiming First-Class Card pricing)

We will begin with an overview of how to determine mailability.

Determining Mailability

All mailpieces that are 1/4" thick or less must be:

- Rectangular in shape
- At least 3 1/2" high
- At least 5" long
- At least .007" thick



Put the
Address
IN!

Exceptions: Customized MarketMail, keys and identification devices

To determine if a piece is mailable, begin with pieces that are one quarter inch thick or less. These pieces must be rectangular, at least 3 1/2 inches high, at least 5 inches long and at least .007 inches thick.

The location of the delivery address is used to determine the length and height of the mailpiece for determining mailability.

The exceptions to this rule are Customized MarketMail, keys, and identification devices.

Determining Mailability – Rectangular Shape

- ❑ Rectangular in shape does prohibit some creative designs for letters and cards
- ❑ Letter-size mailpieces made of cardstock may have finished corners that do not exceed a radius of 0.125"
- ❑ Rectangular in shape means that the opposite sides of a mailpiece must be equal in length and meet at right angles
- ❑ Square mailpieces are mailable

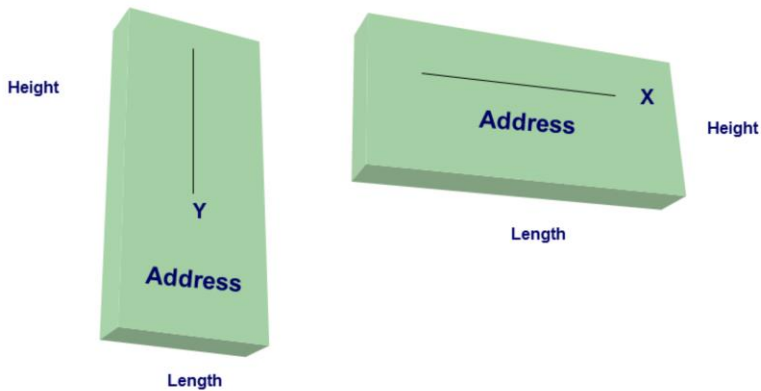
The requirement that some pieces be rectangular in shape does prohibit some creative designs for letters and cards. We allow Letter-size mailpieces made of cardstock to have finished corners that do not exceed a radius of 0.125".

Rectangular in shape means that the opposite sides of a mailpiece must be equal in length and meet at right angles. Square mailpieces meet this requirement and are mailable.

Determining Mailability

Orientation of the address on the mailpiece determines height and length

The length is the dimension parallel to the address



The orientation of the address, as read on the mailpiece, establishes which dimensions are its height and length.

The length is the dimension that is parallel to the address as read; the height is perpendicular to the length.

Determining Mailability

- ❑ Nonmailable means that the piece, as designed, is prohibited from the mailstream
- ❑ No fee, surcharge, or additional postage may make a nonmailable item mailable



When a mailpiece is determined to be nonmailable, it is prohibited from the mailstream. No fee, surcharge, or additional postage may make a nonmailable item mailable.


Determining Mailability – Is This Mailable?



Take a look at this mailpiece. The address is parallel to the 4 inch dimension. Based on the requirement that a piece must be at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches high and 5 inches long and at least .007 inches thick, would this piece be mailable?

No, since the address is parallel to the 4 inch side, the length of the mailpiece 4 inches. This does not meet the 5 inch minimum requirement and this piece as addressed is nonmailable.

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Now that we have discussed mailability, let's review how to determine if a design falls within the letter processing category.

Processing Categories - Letters

There are five mail processing categories:

- ☒ Letter
- ☐ Flat
- ☐ Machinable Parcel
- ☐ Irregular Parcel
- ☐ Outside Parcel


There are five mail processing categories:

- Letters
- Flats
- Machinable Parcels
- Irregular Parcels, and
- Outside Parcels.

We will focus on the letter processing category.

Processing Categories - Letters

The processing category is based strictly on the physical dimensions and characteristics of the mailpiece



Address is
OUT!

When establishing the applicable processing category for a design, the location of the address does not determine length and height. The appropriate processing category is based solely on the dimensions and characteristics of the mailpiece.

A good tool to determine processing category is the Notice 3-A.

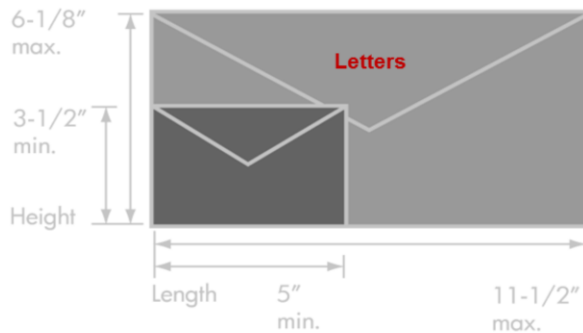
Processing Categories – Letters Template Notice 3-A



Position the mailpiece on the template. If the mailpiece fits within the crops marks regardless of address orientation and fits through the 1/4" slot, the piece is considered letter-size. Address orientation will then determine if the piece is mailable, non-machinable or machinable.


Processing Categories - Letters

	Minimum	Maximum
Height	3½"	6 1/8"
Length	5"	11½"
Thickness	.007"	.25" (1/4)



To qualify as a letter, pieces must meet a minimum size of 3 ½ inches high by 5 inches long and .007" inch thick, and may not exceed a maximum size of 6-1/8 high inches by 11 ½ inches long, and ¼ inch thick.

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Next, lets discuss current Postal physical standards for machinable/automation letters.

Machinable/Automation Letters- Definitions

- ❑ Machinable: Mail that meets standards for successful processing on the Postal Service's high-speed mail processing equipment
- ❑ Automation: Mail that is machinable and that is 100% barcoded using an Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) encoded with the correct delivery point routing code
 - ❑ All machinable letters have the same physical characteristics required of automation letters except for the barcode and maximum allowable weight

Machinable letters are pieces that meet standards for successful processing on the Postal Service's high-speed mail processing equipment.

Automation letters are not only machinable, but also they are 100% barcoded using an Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb). This IMb is encoded with the correct delivery point routing code. Automation mailpieces must have a complete delivery address and may not weigh more than 3.5 ounces for either First-Class Mail or Standard Mail machinable letter prices.

Other than the IMb and maximum allowable weight, machinable and automation letters share the same physical characteristics.

Machinable/Automation Letters – Physical Standards

Dimensions:

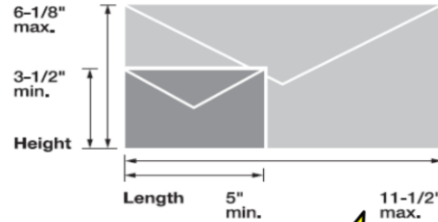
	Minimum	Maximum
Height	3 1/2"	6 1/8"
Length	5"	11 1/2"
Thickness*	.007"	1/4"

*Minimum Thickness is .009" inch for letters that are more than 4-1/4 inches high or 6 inches long, or both.

Maximum weight:

Machinable letters is 3.3 ounces

Automation letters is 3.5 ounces



NOTE
Dimensions &
weight for FSM &
Booklets are
different

The general dimensions for machinable/automation letters are as follows:

Height: Minimum: 3-1/2" inches; Maximum: 6-1/8" inches

Length: Minimum: 5" inches; Maximum: 11-1/2" inches

Thickness*: Minimum .007" inches; Maximum: 1/4" inch

*The minimum thickness increases to .009" inch for letters that are more than 4-1/4" inches high or 6 inches long, or both.

Maximum weight:

Machinable letter is 3.3 ounces

Automation letter is 3.5 ounces

Please note that the dimensions and weight requirements for a machinable/automation letter-size Folded Self-Mailer (FSM) and Booklet-Type design are different and will be addressed in Module 3 titled: *Folded Self-Mailers, Booklets & Discs*

Machinable/Automation Letters – Physical Standards

Heavy Letter Mail:

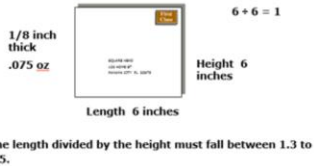
- ❑ Weight – 3 ounces up to 3.5 ounces
- ❑ Prepared in Sealed Envelopes
- ❑ Address Block Barcode
- ❑ No Stiff Enclosures



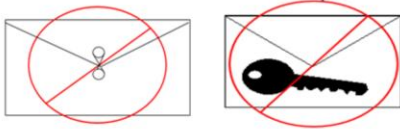
Heavy letter mail (letter-size pieces over 3 ounces) must be prepared in a sealed envelope, may not contain stiff enclosures, and must have an 11-digit delivery point Intelligent Mail barcode with a routing code in the address block.

Machinable/Automation Letters – Physical Standards

Meet the Aspect Ratio Requirement



Not have clasps, strings, or buttons or contain loose items (keys, coins, etc.)



Not be Polybagged, Polywrapped, or enclosed in any plastic material. Staples or saddle stitching may be used only on the bound edge (spine) of booklet style pieces



Bend easily when subjected to a transport belt tension of 40 pounds around an 11-inch diameter turn

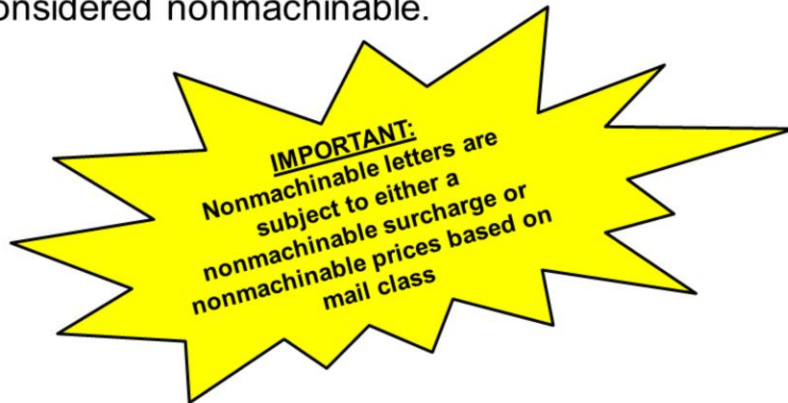


Machinable/Automation letters must meet the following physical standards:

- **Aspect Ratio:** The aspect ratio (length of the mailpiece divided by height) must be between 1.3 and 2.5, inclusive
- **Wraps and Closures:** May not be polywrapped, polybagged, or shrinkwrapped; have clasps, strings, buttons, or similar closure devices; or have protrusions that might impede or damage the mail or mail processing equipment
- **Staples and Saddle Stitching:** Staples or saddle stitching may be used only on booklet-type mailpieces to join the bound edge (spine)
- **Rigid and Odd-Shaped Items:** rigid items (e.g., pens, pencils, keys, bottle caps) are prohibited. Odd-shaped items (e.g., coins and tokens) are permitted if firmly affixed to and wrapped within the contents of the mailpiece and envelope to streamline the shape of the mailpiece for automated processing.
- **Machinability:** A mailpiece and its contents must bend easily when subjected to a transport belt tension of 40 pounds around an 11-inch-diameter drum.

Machinable/Automation Letters – Nonmachinable

Letter-size designs that do not meet our machinable/automation physical standards are considered nonmachinable.



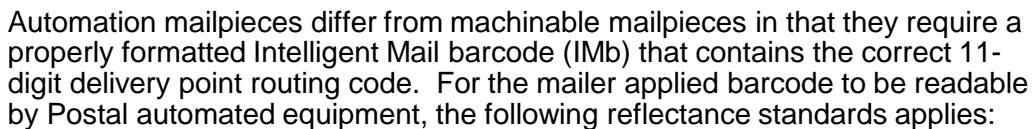
Letter-size designs that do not meet our machinable/automation physical standards are considered nonmachinable.

Nonmachinable letters are subject to either a nonmachinable surcharge or nonmachinable prices based on mail class.

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Now, lets discuss current Postal barcode readability basics.



A background reflectance of at least 50% in the red portion and 45% in the green portion of the optical spectrum must be produced in the following locations when measured with a USPS or USPS-licensed envelope reflectance meter:

- ## Print Reflectance Difference

Opacity

20

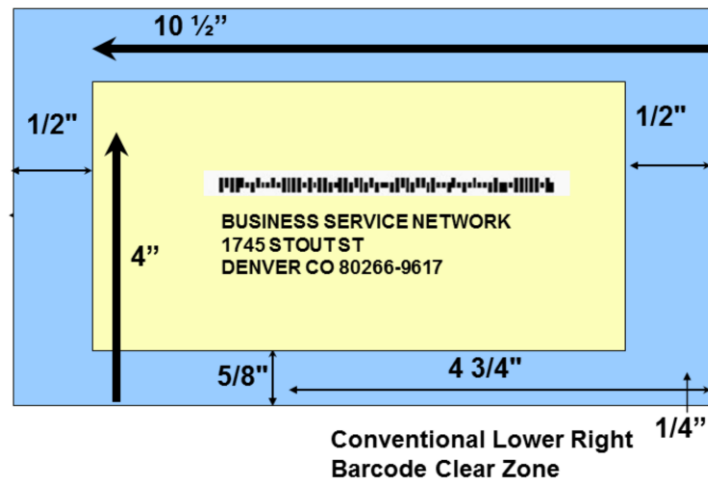
prevent printing from “showing through” to the extent that it interferes with postal equipment that reads the barcode. The print contrast ratio (PCR) of print (other than the barcode) that shows through the barcode clear zone or the barcode area in the address block must not exceed 15% when measured in the red and green portions of the optical spectrum.

Dark Fibers and Background Patterns

Dark fibers or background patterns that produce a print contrast ratio of more than 15% when measured in the red and green portions of the optical spectrum are prohibited in these locations:

- a. The area of the address block or the barcode clear zone where the barcode appears on a card-size or a letter-size piece mailed at automation prices or at Enhanced Carrier Route saturation or high density prices.
- b. The area of the address block or the area of the mailpiece where the barcode appears on a flat-size piece in an automation mailing or on a First-Class Mail parcel or a First-Class Package Service parcel.

Barcode Readability – Placement



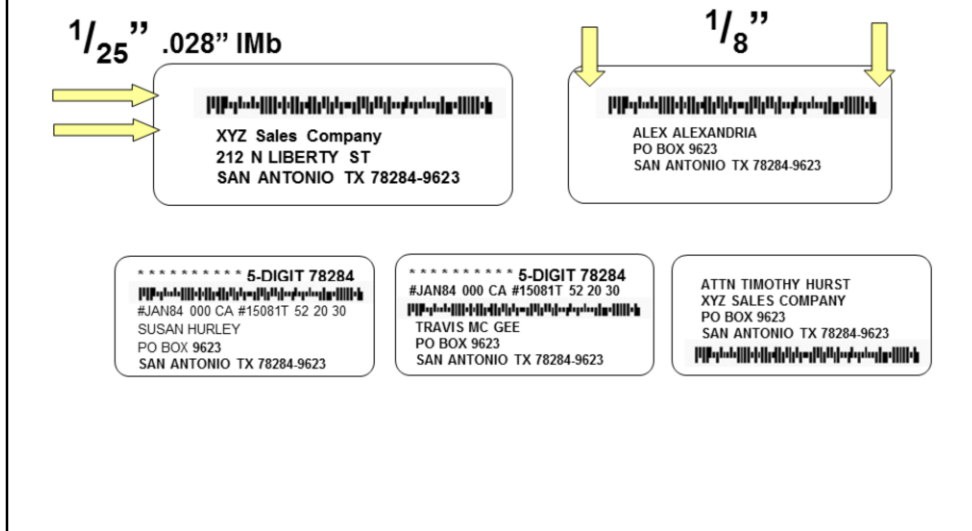
In addition to reflectance, another important element in Postal automated equipment being able to successfully read the mailer applied barcode is proper placement.

Current Postal standards allow for the placement of barcodes in either of two possible locations on the face of a letter-size mailpiece. The barcode must appear either in the lower right corner of the mailpiece in the barcode clear zone, or if printed as part of the address, in the address block barcode read area.

A barcode within the address block must be within these dimensions:

- Rightmost bar—at least 1/2 inch from right edge of the mailpiece.
- Leftmost bar—less than 10-1/2 inches from right edge, and at least 1/2 inch from the left edge.
- Top of each bar—less than 4 inches from bottom edge of mailpiece.
- Bottom line in address block including barcode—at least 5/8 inch from bottom edge of the mailpiece.

Barcode Readability – Placement



Additionally if printed as part of the address, the barcode may appear:

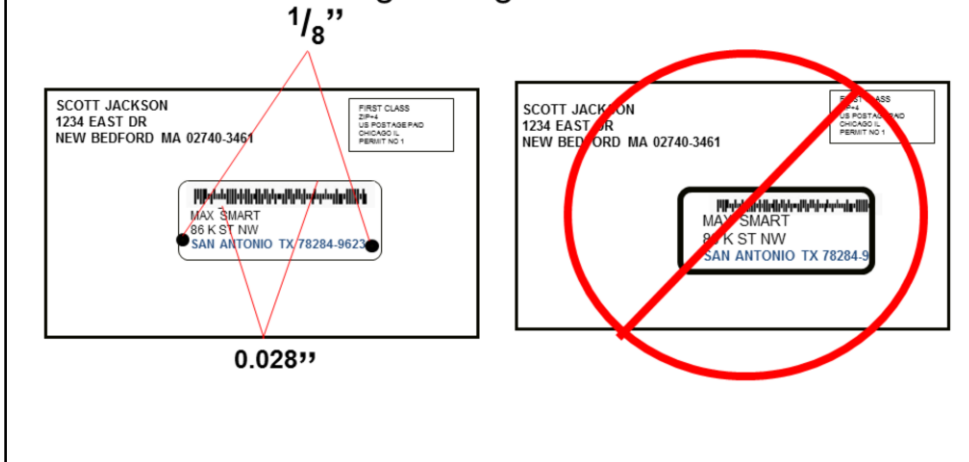
- Above the address line
- Below the city, state, and ZIP Code
- Above or below the Keyline
- Above or below optional endorsement line

There must be a minimum clear space on both sides of the barcode of $\frac{1}{8}''$ and a clear space of $\frac{1}{25}''$ above and below a POSTNET (which are still allowed on BRM and CRM) and $.028''$ for Intelligent Mail barcodes (which is required for QBRM).

The barcode can be positioned above or below the address block, key lines or optional endorsement lines, as long as it is within $\frac{5}{8}''$ of the delivery address block. It must never be within the delivery lines of the address.

Barcode Readability – Window Envelopes

Barcode may appear on the piece or on an insert showing through a barcode window

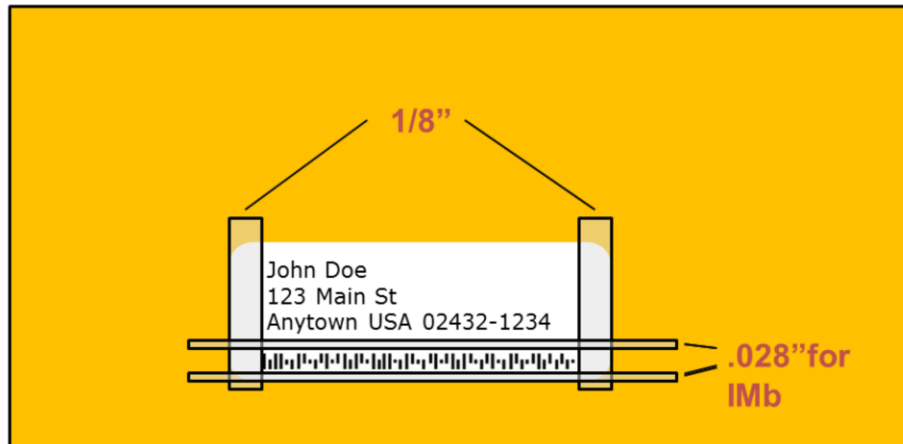


The address window must be located so that the barcode, as visible through the window, will meet the positioning requirements for address block barcoding.

If a window envelope is used, the clearance between the leftmost and rightmost bars and any printing or window edge must be at least 0.125 ($\frac{1}{8}$) inch. The clearance between the Intelligent Mail barcode and the top and bottom window edges must be at least 0.028 inch. These clearances must be maintained during the insert's range of movement in the envelope. The Postal Service prefers window coverings, but does not require them except for heavy letter mail.

Window coverings, if used, must be sufficiently transparent to allow the barcode and its background to meet the reflectance requirements for barcodes. The Postal Service makes this determination by measuring the barcode reflectance through the window material using a USPS Envelope Reflectance Meter.

Barcode Readability – Tap Test Clearances



A tap test must be performed on letter-sized and flat-sized pieces that have barcodes appearing through windows when an automation price is claimed. A clear space must be maintained between the barcode and any other printing or window edges. If this clear space around the barcode is not maintained, the mailer does not qualify for automation prices.

There must be a minimum clear space on both sides of the barcode and window edges of at least one eighth of an Inch. A clear space of .028 inches above and below the Intelligent Mail barcode and any printing or window edge.

Samples of the mailing are 'tapped' to see if the barcode maintains these clearances throughout the insert's full range of motion.

Barcode Readability – Tap Test Vertical Shift

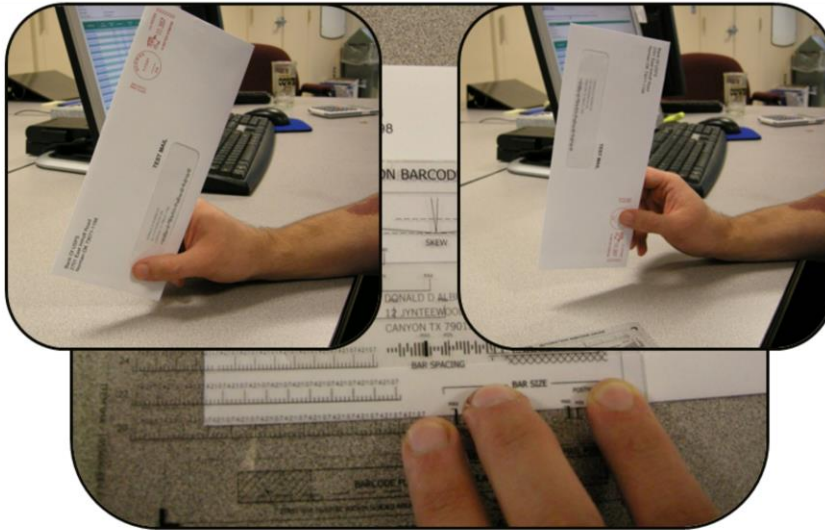


To perform the tap test, randomly select 10 window envelopes from the mailing.

First check for Vertical Shift. Tap each individual mailpiece twice on a flat horizontal surface on its bottom edge. Ensure that a clear space of at least .028" for the Intelligent Mail barcode appears between the top edges of the barcode and the top edge of the window of each piece without tapping/shaking the mailpiece upside down (unless the mailer is using OneCode ACS).

Next, ensure that a clear space of at least .028" for the Intelligent Mail barcode appears between the bottom edges of the barcode and the bottom of the window. If there is an information line above or below the barcode, there must also be a minimum of .028" for the Intelligent Mail barcode clearance between the barcode and the information line text.

Barcode Readability – Tap Test Horizontal Shift




Check for Horizontal Shift. Tap each mailpiece separately on its left and then the right edges to jog the insert as far left and/or right as possible. Two taps are sufficient. Check to ensure that at least a 1/8 inch clear space appears between the left and right edges of the barcode and the window's edge, respectively.

If needed, use Notice 67, *Automation Template*, or Item 04A, *Automation Barcode Gauge*, to confirm the measurements.

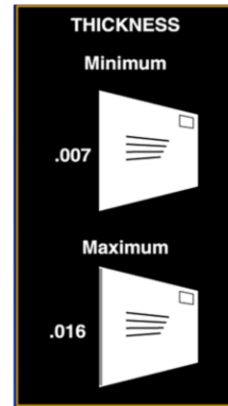
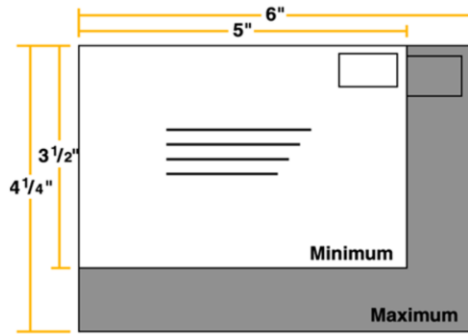
Letter-size pieces with a delivery point barcode in the lower right corner are not subject to this procedure.

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-  □ Postcards

The final section of this training is a brief discussion of postcards (cards mailed claiming First-Class card pricing).

Postcards



Postcards are First-Class Mail letter-sized pieces that meet certain size criteria. They must measure at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, 5 inches long, and .007 inches thick, and no more than $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches high, 6 inches long and .016 inches thick.


Mail Entry & Payment Technology

Postcards – Attachments


Paper label or decal affixed with permanent adhesive

Dear Member


Come by and save today



Back Side of Card



Message Area



Left of the Address Block

Postcards may have a paper label or decal affixed with permanent adhesive in the message on the non-address side of the card, in the message area on the front side of the card, or to the left of the address block on the address side of the card.

Cards claimed at the Presorted or automation card prices that contain a message area on the address side must be divided vertically or horizontally and meet additional standards, as applicable.

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Postcards – Vertically Divided

Address, postage and any Postal Service markings must appear on the right side measuring at least $2\frac{1}{8}$ " wide (measured from the right edge of the card)

There must be $\frac{1}{8}$ " clear space around the delivery address

$2\frac{1}{8}"$

Water Utility Company 60013 Pleasant St. Anytown, NY 12345			
SERVICE PERIOD		METER	
FROM	TO	PREVIOUS	
ACTUAL CU FT USED	/100 CU FT	BASE	REGULATOR
	/100 CU FT	BASE	REGULATOR
DEBIT		PREVIOUS	ACCOUNT NO.
\$	\$		
PREVIOUS	CURRENT	LATE FRT. CHG.	AMOUNT DUE
\$	\$	\$	\$

METER FEES: Schedule number 1 meter reading to be rounded off to nearest 100.

MR. GORDON CAT 1200 RIVER RD ANYTOWN US 98765-4321	Presorted First Class Mail U.S. Postage PND 1 Anytown NY Permit #12345
--	---

ACCOUNT

AMOUNT DUE \$

PLEASE RETURN THIS SLIP WITH PAYMENT

MR. GORDON CAT
1200 RIVER RD
ANYTOWN US 98765-4321

The address side of Vertically divided cards must be divided into a right portion and a left portion, with or without a vertical rule. The left portion is the message area. The delivery address, postage, and any USPS marking or endorsement must appear in the right portion.

The right portion must be at least 2-1/8 inches wide (measured from the right edge of the card, top to bottom inclusive).

For cards claimed at the Presorted price, nondelivery address information may extend into the right portion only above the address block and if the information is shaded or surrounded by a border that has at least 1/8 inch clearance between the delivery address block and the border.

Mailers may choose not to shade or border the nondelivery address information if there is at least 1/8 inch of clear space around the delivery address block.

Postcards – Horizontally Divided

Address, postage and any markings must appear on the portion containing the address and measure at least 1½" high from the top or bottom edge of the card

There must be 1/8" clear space around the delivery address

1 ½"



With or without rule

The address side of a Horizontally divided card must be divided into an upper portion and a lower portion, with or without a horizontal rule. The portion of the address side that does not contain the delivery address is the message area.

The delivery address, postage, and any USPS marking or endorsement must appear within the portion containing the delivery address. As an alternative, when the delivery address appears within the lower portion, it is permissible for the postage, return address, and any USPS marking or endorsement to appear in the upper portion. The portion bearing the delivery address must be at least 1-1/2 inches high (measured from the bottom edge of the card but above 5/8" from bottom, as applicable, right edge to left edge inclusive).

Only mailpieces that are prebarcoded should have a return address in the bottom addressing area.

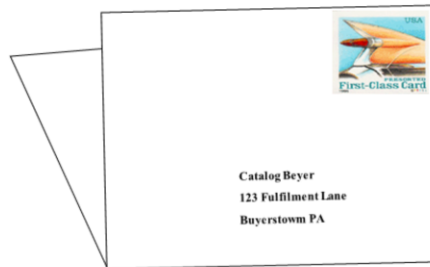
Also cards that are horizontally divided can only have an indicia or precancelled stamps in the bottom addressing area.

If you are using live postage stamps they must be in the upper right hand corner of the card.

For cards claimed at the Presorted price, nondelivery address information may extend into the portion containing the delivery address only if it appears above the address block and if the information is shaded or surrounded by a border that has at least 1/8 inch clearance between the delivery address block and the border. Mailers may choose not to shade or border the nondelivery address information if there is at least 1/8 inch of clear space around the delivery address block.

Postcards – Double Cards

Reply half- must be used for reply and not
convey a message to addressee



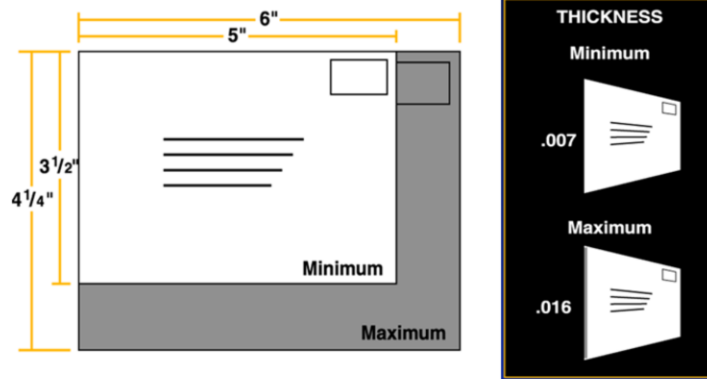
A double card (a double stamped card or double postcard) consists of two attached cards, one of which is designed to be detached by the recipient and returned by mail as a single card.

The reply half of a double card must be used for reply only and may not be used to convey a message to the original addressee or to send statements of account. The reply half may be formatted for response purposes (e.g., contain blocks for completion by the addressee).

A double card must be folded before mailing and prepared so that the address on the reply half is on the inside when the double card is originally mailed. The address side of the reply half may be prepared as business reply mail, courtesy reply mail, meter reply mail, or as a merchandise return service label.

Plain stickers, seals, or a single wire stitch (staple) may be used to fasten the open edge at the top or bottom once the card is folded if affixed so that the inner surfaces of the cards can be readily examined. Fasteners must be affixed according to the applicable preparation requirements for the price claimed. Any sealing on the left and right sides of the cards, no matter the sealing process used, is not permitted. The first half of a double card must be detached when the reply half is mailed for return.

Postcards – Machinable/Automation Cards



Postcards (cards mailed claiming First-Class Card pricing) can also be considered automation or machinable mailpieces.

In addition to the dimensional requirements listed in this slide, machinable/automation cards must also adhere to the same physical standards previously outlined for machinable/automation letters.

MDA SUPPORT CENTER

Contact Information
by phone **855-593-6093**
OR
by email **MDA@USPS.GOV**

**MONDAY – FRIDAY, 7am – 5pm
CST**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Visit our websites at:

www.usps.com

<http://pe.usps.gov/>

Contains the DMM, IMM and various publications.

<https://postalpro.usps.com/>

Contains information on Intelligent Mail, Full Service, eInduction, Seamless Acceptance etc.