



A full understanding of direct mail can be daunting, knowing some basic guidelines will help you with the design.

When designing for standard mail or business reply mail, we suggest working closely with your mailing house expert to make sure you are in compliance with all postal regulations.

Standard rate mail regulations

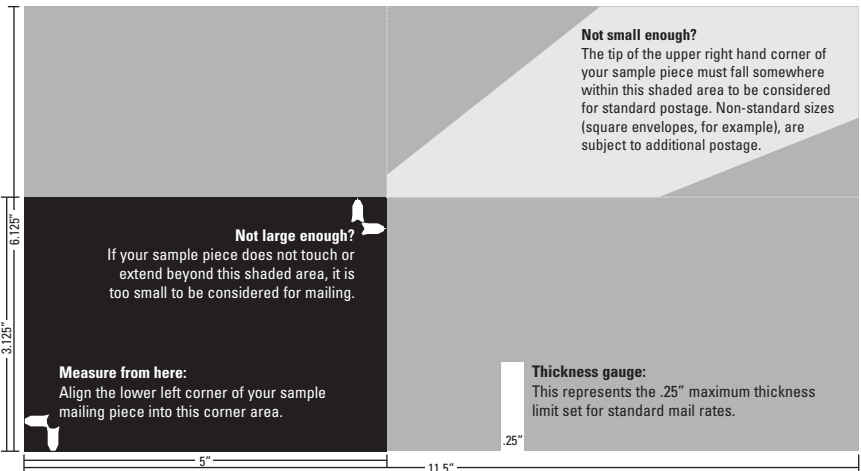
Standard rate mail is applicable any time you have more than 200 pieces to send that are the same in size and content, and for any piece that weighs less than one pound. If the piece weighs more than one pound, it is considered package mail with a separate set of rules. By following USPS rules that assure mail automation, you will save on mailing costs.

The maximum size of a standard mail piece is 108 inches in combined length and girth. In order to qualify for the lowest automated postage rate, the piece must be rectangular and fall within an “aspect ratio” of length divided by the height equaling between 1.3 and 2.5. The address must run across the longest length of the mail piece. A perfectly square envelope is an example of a piece that falls out of aspect ratio and will cost more to mail.

Height-to-length ratio



Our “Height-to-length ratio” template on the companion CD can be used as a gauge for proper ratios on standard direct mail.



There are four types of standard mail, all with distinct regulations.

Cards. To qualify for first-class rate, Business Reply Cards must be at least 3-1/2" x 5", but no larger than 4-1/4" x 6", with a minimum .007" thickness. If larger, a card can still be sent as a BRC, but it will cost more and must be at least .009" thick. The card category for standard mail is only applicable to first-class mail as there is no rate for third-class.

Letters. Letter sized mail is the most economical standard mail category, with a minimum size of 3-1/2" x 5" and a maximum size of 6-1/8" x 11-1/2". The thickness must be at least .007" and no more than .25". Weight maximum is 3.3 ounces.

Flats. Includes any piece exceeding 6-1/8" x 11-1/2" in either width or height. Width of flat mail must fall between 11.5" and 15" and height must fall between 6-1/8" and 12". Thickness measurements must fall between .25" to .75". Weight is anything under 15.9 ounces, or the category changes to a package service.

Irregulars and machine compatible parcels. Any piece that does not fall into a card, letter or flat category will mail as either one or the other, depending on size and weight.

A note about folded panels: If you design a piece with a folded edge, the folded edge should be under the address area with the open edge at the top for acceptance by USPS scanners.

Business reply mail

For an annual permit fee, a business reply mail permit can only be acquired at the main USPS postal facility servicing your city. A BRM permit allows the permit holder to receive first-class and priority mail back from customers by paying postage only on returned mail. BRM piece design camera-ready artwork is also available from your local postal facility. We advise only using USPS artwork for your business reply devices to ensure the lowest postage rate and the best delivery service.

Additional tips about envelopes, size requirements, direct mail and a ZIP + 4 directory can also be found on the U.S. Postal Service website, usps.com, all of which are available for download.



Our "Business reply mail" sample on the companion CD identifies specific features.