

# Reducing Postage and Mailing Costs

## A Guide for Agencies

Done right, direct mail can be a very cost effective way to reach targeted prospects and customers. Return on investment typically exceeds most other forms of advertising. However, inefficient list targeting and poor mail piece design can cost you money. The following information can help you maximize your return on investment in your direct marketing.



## List Targeting:

1. Mail to the right people by targeting your lists to reach only those people most likely to be interested in your product or service. Many tools are available to profile your mailing lists utilizing the amazing amount of information accessible today on households and businesses.

- Data Enhancement: Profile your best customers.
- Data Acquisition: Find prospects that most closely resemble those customers.

Ask us about enhancing your data to target the right audience. You can mail fewer pieces and get better results.

**2. Clean In-House lists.** Reduce undeliverable mail by updating your lists at least every three months. There are many data hygiene resources available to keep your list up-to-date.

- Delivery Point Validation to eliminate invalid or incomplete addresses.
- National Change of Address (NCOA) to get updated addresses for people who move.
- “Do not mail” purging to eliminate those who prefer not to receive mail.
- Deceased recipient purging.
- Apartment number appending to increase deliverability.

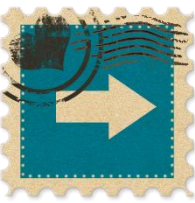
### **Benefits of Data Hygiene:**

- Control mailing waste and save on postage and printing.
- Reduced lost sales by continuing to reach customers who have moved.
- Increase customer loyalty.



### Mail Piece Design:

Postage is like airline tickets. Some people pay more than others. The United States Postal Service (USPS) offers significant postage discounts to mail pieces that are designed and addressed properly for processing on automated equipment. The following tips will help you safely navigate the complex postal regulations to insure your mail qualifies for the lowest postage rates.

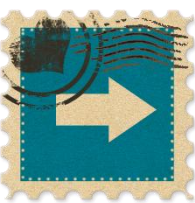


**1. Size matters.** For lower postage rates, keep your mail piece at letter size.

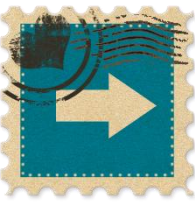
Minimum 3 ½" high by 5" long.

Maximum 6" high by 10½" long

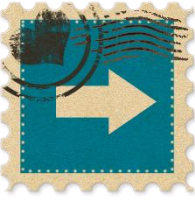
Mail pieces larger than that fall into the flats category and have a significantly higher postage rate. The maximum allowed is 12" high by 15" long. Flats can cost more than twice as much per piece as letters.



**2. Watch your Aspect Ratio.** Letter size automation mail must be rectangular. The aspect ratio (length divided by height) has to be from 1.3 to 2.5. Mail pieces that fall outside those ratios could cost twice as much.

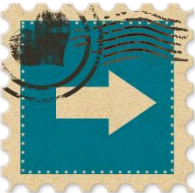


**3. Location, location, location.** Make sure the address and barcode block on letter size mail fits into the USPS OCR read area. If it doesn't fit, you pay for it with additional postage. We can provide you with a template to guide you.




**4. Stay centered.** Tri-folded self mailers must be addressed on the center panel to qualify for discounted automation postage.






**5. Fold it right.** On all folded self mailers the final fold must be either below or to the right of the mailing address. Any other fold configuration will result in additional postage.



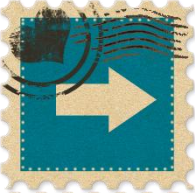
**6. Watch your weight.** Whenever possible keep the weight of a folded self mailer under 1 ounce. You can use minimum 70# text paper and 1 inch tab closures. When your mailer is over 1 ounce you must use minimum 80# text paper and larger tabs. Mailers over 3 ounces must go in an envelope.



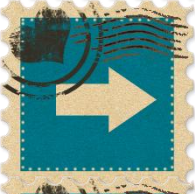
**7. Thin is not in.** Mail pieces that are too thin will cost more postage.

Keep your piece at least 0.009" thick and you can save 25 cents or more per piece.

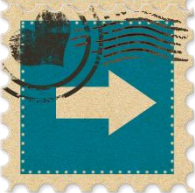
Maximum thickness for letter size mail is ¼" and for flat size is ¾".



**8. Stay horizontal.** The delivery address on letter size mail must be parallel to the longer dimension of the mail piece or, you guessed it, more postage.

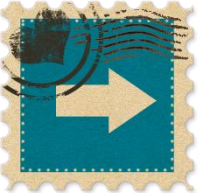


**9. Extra room.** Allow a large enough open area for the address and barcode. We recommend a 4" x 2" clear area.

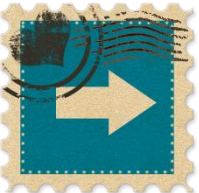


**10. No coats please.** Avoid heavy ink, varnish or UV coating on the address area. The inks used for addressing do not adhere well to these surfaces. Coated stock or satin aqueous coatings are OK.

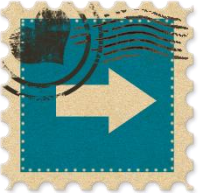




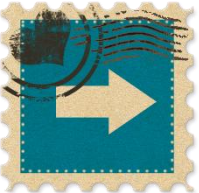
**11. Image is everything.** Avoid dark paper stock or printed images in the address area. Make sure they are light enough to meet USPS reflectance standards. Postal address reader machines must be able to discern the barcode against the background or you pay more postage.



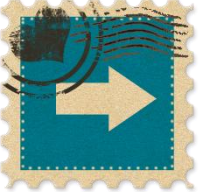
**12. Don't be rough.** Avoid using heavily textured stock. The surface can affect barcode readability. If the Post Office can't properly read the barcode, you pay more.



**13. Watch the tabs.** Folded letter size self-mailers require tab or glue closures to get the lowest postage. Design the mail piece to use the smallest and least number of tabs or glue lines. Closure requirements are outlined in USPS regulation 201.3. We can provide you with a copy of this document or [you can view it here.](#)



**14. Don't wrap it.** Letter size mail enclosed in polywrap, polybag, shrinkwrap or any plastic material will get a surcharge. Most wraps are OK for flats, but must be USPS approved.



**15. Smooth out the bumps.** Automation compatible mail must be regular in shape and thickness. Avoid protrusions or enclosures such as pens, pencils, or loose keys or coins that cause the thickness of the mail piece to be uneven. Clasps, strings, staples, buttons, or similar closing devices are also prohibited.



**16. Keep it consistent.** All mail pieces within a single mailing must be uniform in size and weight.

Use the same paper stock for all pieces in a mailing to avoid postal weight verification problems. The Post Office weighs a sample batch from each mailing to verify the number of pieces in the mailing. If their sample batch weighs more, they will charge you for more pieces. That means additional postage.

**17. Don't forget the postage.** Postage can be affixed in three ways.

- Permit imprint (indicia) printed on the mail piece.
- Postage meter imprinted when the mail is processed.
- Stamp.

If you are going to print an indicia onto the mail piece, make sure it is positioned correctly and is worded right. Leave enough room in the upper right corner if you want a postage meter or stamp.

**18. An ounce of prevention.** Send a mock-up or pdf file to WordTech, before your mail piece is printed. We will gladly assess it for automation compatibility, or, if necessary, send it to the Postal Service for a ruling. There is no charge for this service and it can save you lots of money and avoid costly delays.

**Whenever you are planning a direct marketing project, call us. We'll be glad to help you avoid the pitfalls that can cost you money. And we have lots of ideas that can help you make money.**



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Us A Question



Questions? We Can Help

