2 Creating a Mailpiece

If presorted Standard Mail is for you, it's important that you decide on the size of your mailpiece early. The size will affect the rate you pay as well as the piece's overall look and the way it enhances your message.

How Size Affects Rate

The size of your mailpiece will determine the rates available to you. There are several processing categories (sizes) of Standard Mail: letters (which includes postcards), **flats**, and parcels.

All the pieces in your mailing must be in the same processing category—that is, all letters or all flats or all parcels. Each processing category has its own minimum and maximum size limits. Pieces that measure less than the minimum for letters are not mailable. Pieces larger than the letter-size maximum are considered to be flats and mailing them means paying nonletter rates. Pieces larger than the flat-size maximum are considered to be parcels and mailing them means paying a surcharge for each piece, in addition to the applicable postage.

flats (FLTS): Large mailpieces, sorted without bending so that they remain flat. Flat-size mail exceeds at least one of the letter-size maximums (see the next page). A flat may be unwrapped, wrapped, or enveloped.

When measuring your mailpiece, you might want to use the Postal Service's Notice 3-A, *Letter-Size Mail Dimensional Standards Template.* Your local post office or business mail entry unit can provide one for you.

How Weight Affects Rate

Unlike First-Class Mail, Standard Mail doesn't use weight to determine postage for pieces that weigh less than 3.3 ounces. All such pieces of presorted Standard Mail can be mailed at the same per-piece postage rate as applicable.

If the pieces weigh more than 3.3 ounces, they are charged a per-piece rate plus a per-pound rate. Keep this weight limit in mind when you're designing your mailpiece.

Category Characteristics

The two processing categories discussed in this publication are letters (which includes cards) and nonletters (or flat). There is no separate postage rate for card-size pieces.

The size and weight ranges for letters and flats are shown here. Other size and weight standards may apply, depending on what you are mailing. Contact your local business mail entry unit for more specific information.
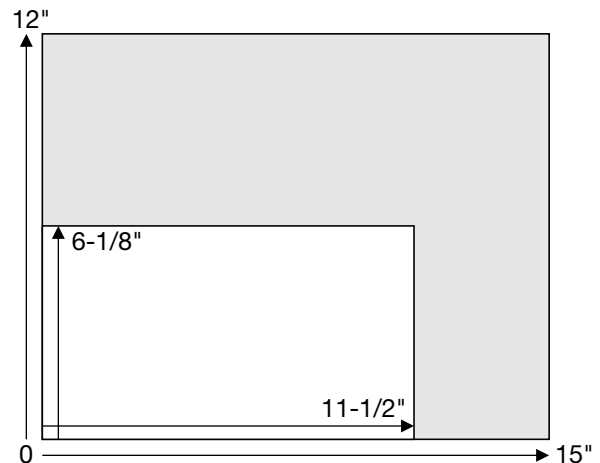
Letter Size

Length: 5 to 11-1/2 inches
Height: 3-1/2 to 6-1/8 inches
Thickness: .007 to .25 inch
Weight: if upgradable, up to 2.5 ounces
               if automation rate, up to 3.3 ounces
               (some restrictions apply)

6-1/8"

3-1/2"

5"

0   11-1/2"
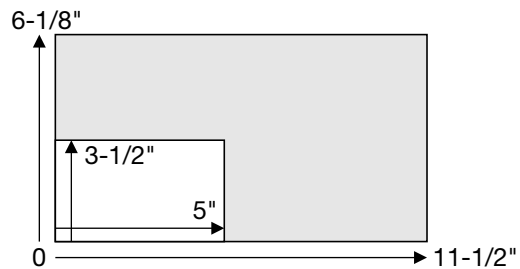
Flat Size*

Length: 11-1/2 to 15 inches
Height: 6-1/8 to 12 inches
Thickness: .25 to .75 inch
Weight: less than 16 ounces

** One dimension must exceed at least
one of the letter-size maximums*

12"

6-1/8"

11-1/2"

0   15"

Parcels

Pieces that are not letter-size or flat-size are parcels, and are subject to a residual shape surcharge ($0.18 per piece) in addition to the applicable postage. Pieces that are subject to the residual shape surcharge can qualify for a barcode discount ($0.03) per piece and can add certain special services such as insurance or return receipt for merchandise.

This publication focuses on information about letters and flats. If you are mailing parcels, contact your local post office or buseness mail entry unit.
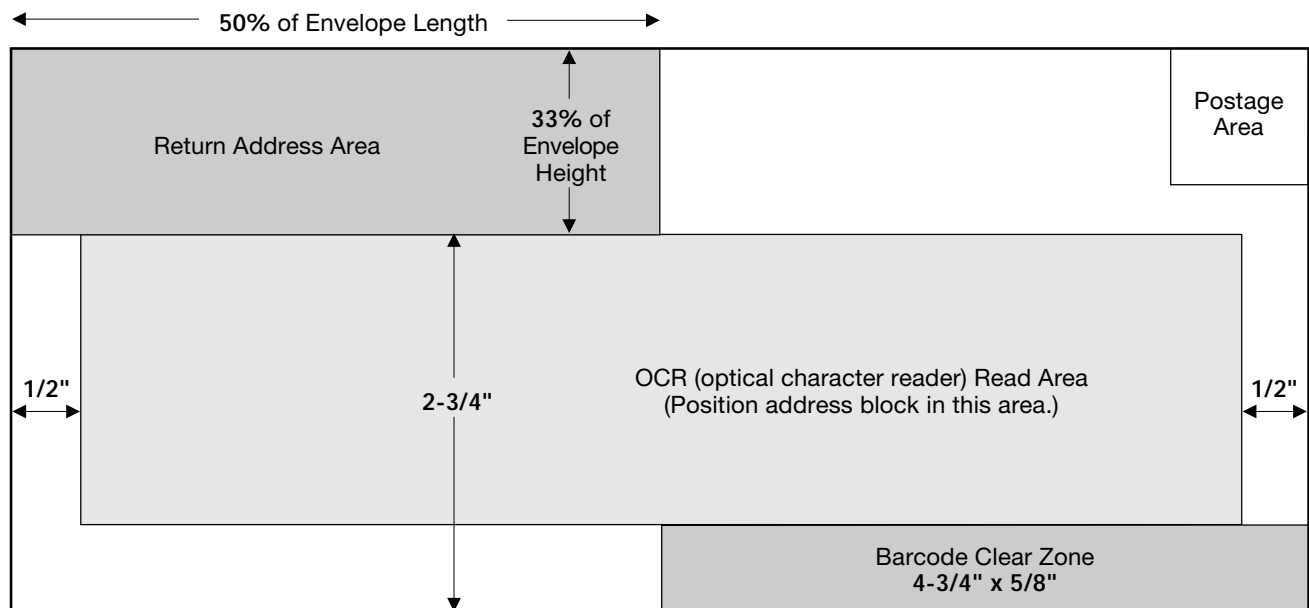
How to Make It Automation-Compatible

Making your mailpiece **automation-compatible** is important. Automated equipment can process mail more efficiently than manual operations, allowing the Postal Service to charge lower rates for these pieces.

Your automation-compatible mailpiece should:

- Use the size and weight standards on the previous page.
- Be made of good quality white or light-colored paper.
- Contain no sharp or bulky items.
- Be sealed securely.
- Be readable by automation equipment.

Besides using clear and simple printing, readability means making sure each kind of information is in the right place on the envelope. The illustration below shows the areas designated for major types of information.

automation-compatible: Mail that meets specified physical criteria so it can be scanned and processed by automated mail processing equipment such as optical character readers.

50% of Envelope Length

Return Address Area

33% of Envelope Height

Postage Area

1/2"

2-3/4"

OCR (optical character reader) Read Area
(Position address block in this area.)

1/2"

Barcode Clear Zone
4-3/4" x 5/8"

(Not Actual Size)

Self-Mailers and Booklets

Mailpieces that are designed to be mailed without envelopes are called self-mailers and booklets. For these pieces to claim letter automation rates, their open edges need to be fastened together. This keeps the piece from getting jammed in the Postal Service high-speed processing equipment.

One of the easiest ways to keep the edges together is to use tabs or wafer seals. Where you need to put the tabs depends on how heavy the piece's paper stock is and which edge has the final fold. The illustration below shows some common acceptable configurations.

Continuous glue or spot glue can keep lengthwise edges together instead of tabs.
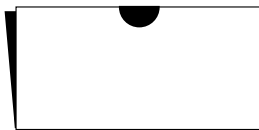
Double Card
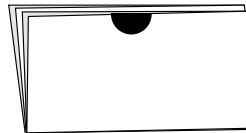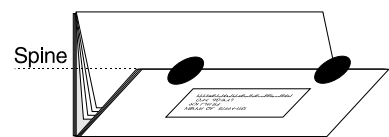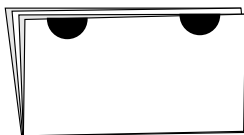
Folded Self-Mailer (Multiple Sheets)

Booklet

Spine

Folded Self-Mailer
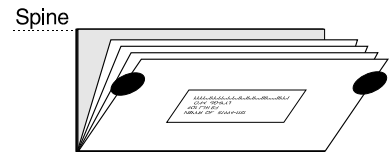
Folded Self-Mailer
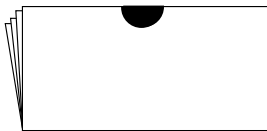
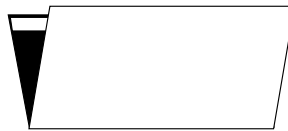**Folded Booklet**

Spine
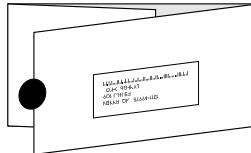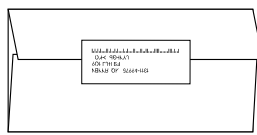
Folded Self-Mailer

Invitation Fold Self-Mailer

Folded Booklet

Spine

Folded Self-Mailer (Single Sheet, Multi-Fold)

Folded Self-Mailer (Continuous Glue Strip)

Booklet

Spine