

Design Tips to Help You Comply with USPS Regulations

1. **Indicia** -Unless you plan to affix stamps or meter postage, a postal indicia will be needed. Print the indicia when printing or addressing the mail piece. Proof the indicia with a postal expert. This can save costly corrections later.
2. **Card stock** -Postcards and self-mailers have minimum thickness requirements. A 4-1/4 x 6 inch postcard must be printed on 7 point (.007) minimum stock. All oversized cards must be printed on 9 point (.009) minimum stock. Reply cards have the same rules.
3. **Hi-gloss paper stock** -Many inkjet inks used for addressing will not dry on coated stocks. Check with your mailer before choosing a stock.
4. **Aspect ratio** -The USPS wants rectangular letter mail. To qualify, your piece must fit their "aspect ratio." Divide the height of the mail piece into the width. Your answer must be between 1.3 and 2.5 inches.
5. **Barcode clear zone** -A barcoded letter size mail piece should have a 4 inch wide by 1-1/2 inch deep address area. The barcode must have a 1/8 inch clearance from left and right edge and 5/8 inch from the bottom.
6. **Reflectivity** -The background behind an address barcode should be white or light colored. Dark colors will interfere with postal scanning equipment.
7. **Folded mail pieces** -Self-mailers should be folded at the bottom of the address panel. This method requires one tab seal. Mail pieces folded at the top of the address panel, short folded or Z-folded will require additional tabs.
8. **Insert sizes** -Measure all inserts that are to be machine inserted into an envelope. They must be 1/2 inch smaller than the width of envelope and 1/4 inch less in height.
9. **Tap test** -Tap test address cards that are to be inserted into a window envelope. There must be an address clear zone showing through the window even when tapped on the left, right, top and bottom.