

OPTIMIZING PRODUCTION

Ensuring the best postage rate hinges on a variety of factors, including aspect ratio, fold placement, orientation of the address and placement of the barcode. The following pages outline where to put what so that you save money and reach the most people.

ASPECT RATIO

When it comes to letter-sized mail, calculating aspect ratio is a very important concept to get to know because your mail piece must be produced in the right size and shape to be processed by machine.

Simply put, aspect ratio is a proportionate relationship between the width and the height of the mailpiece. The formula for calculating aspect ratio of a USPS Letter-sized mailpiece is length divided by height.

If the quotient is between 1.3 and 2.5, then your piece is machinable as long as it meets standard weight, thickness, address placement, and contrast and tabbing/enclosure requirements. This is something to take into consideration when you are ordering mail products and something you'll definitely want to double-check, considering the difference in machinable and non-machinable mailings can completely blow up your budget.

Machinable Aspect Ratio

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{LENGTH} \\ \div \\ \text{HEIGHT} \\ = \\ 1.3-2.5 \end{array}$$

Common Costly Error

47.1%

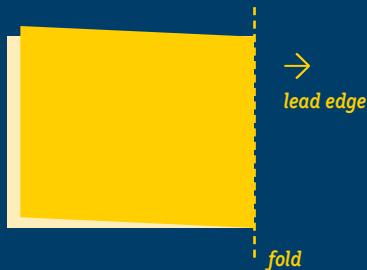
Percentage more you could pay for a mailing that goes from being machinable to non-machinable if aspect ratio requirements are not met.

Length is always the dimension parallel to the delivery address as read.

FOLD PLACEMENT

Mind the folds

VERTICAL



HORIZONTAL



Fold placement can be the difference in spending or saving thousands of dollars on your mailing, and therefore should be considered when designing your layout.

Looking at the mailing panel, the right edge is the lead edge—the edge that leads the piece through the processing machine. If the folds are on the vertical, the lead edge must be closed with a fold. If the fold is on the horizontal, it must be below and parallel to the mailing address and indicia.

Common Costly Error

47.1%

Percentage more you could still pay for a mailing that goes from being machinable to non-machinable if fold placement rules are not followed even though aspect ratio is correct.

← *When an ancillary service endorsement is used, a domestic return address must be placed in the upper left corner of the address side of the mailpiece or the upper left corner of the addressing area.*

ADDRESS PLACEMENT & ADDRESS ORIENTATION

It's hard to overstate the importance of an address to any piece of mail, but the significance of correct address orientation in terms of direct mail marketing is paramount to your success.

This key element of mail formatting determines how you're charged (machinable vs. non-machinable) and ignoring it can lead to squandering money on postage and inaccurate data. To avoid these problems, first check the placement of your address. Depending upon the class of mail, there are different rules and requirements for orientation of the mailing address.

For USPS Letter-size mail, the mailing address must always be parallel to the long dimension of your mailing piece. Place the address in the wrong place and you'll end up shelling out for a surcharge that could have been avoided.

Every Door Direct Mail®: For USPS Flat sizes only, the entire mailing label and indicia must reside on the top half of the mailpiece. Unlike other forms of mail, the orientation of the address (parallel to short or long dimension) does not matter. The top half of the piece will always be measured from the short dimension.

JOHN DOUGH
321 MAIN ST APT 4
ANYTOWN, N.Y.
12345-6789



Common Costly Error

72.2%

Percentage more you could pay for a mailing that goes from being machinable to one that is non-machinable and must mail as a flat due to incorrect address placement.

BARCODE

The placement of the barcode, which is a series of long and short bars that represent ZIP Codes, ZIP+4 codes, and delivery addresses, is a key element of the mailing.

Recently the USPS has condensed multiple barcodes into one code: the Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb), which combines multiple barcodes into one unique 31-digit code for tracking the mail. It can tell you who mailed it, where it is, and when it got there. Through the use of USPS services or tracking software, this code can help you synchronize marketing campaigns, acquire more meaningful data, and achieve specific delivery dates.

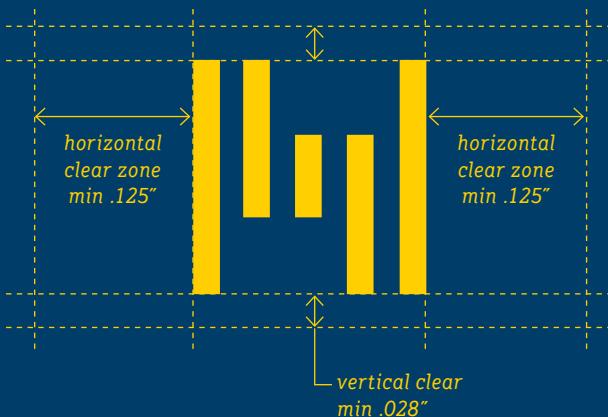
On letters, the IMb can be placed in the address block or in the barcode clear zone. For use on flats, the IMb can be placed anywhere on the address side as long as it is at least 1/8 inch from any edge of the piece. To avoid ambiguity, only one IMb can be placed in the same area.

And remember, though a barcode by itself does not qualify a mailpiece for a lower price, if you do apply a preprinted barcode your mailing can qualify for Automation Letter rates, which are even cheaper than machinable rates.



IMb is the key to intelligent sorting, tracking and address services, all wrapped up into one unassuming little bar graphic.

Barcode Clear Zones



Common Costly Error

3%

Percentage more you'll pay for a mailing that doesn't have an IMb barcode versus one that does (this doesn't include the savings that will come from the program's more accurate delivery, tracking and ROI methods)

How to Plan for Tabs

1

Tabs or glue are required when a mailpiece has open edges that must be sealed to meet machinability requirements.

2

When placed along top or on lead or trail edge, tabs must be placed within 1" of the adjacent edge. Lower lead edge tab must be placed within 1/2" of bottom edge.

3

Tabs (as well as cellophane tape or glue) must not interfere with recognition of the barcode, rate marking, postage identification or required address information.

4

For booklets, tabs must be at least 1.5 inches wide and must not contain perforations.

Common Costly Error

47.1%

Percentage more you could still pay for a mailing that goes from being machinable to non-machinable if tab and glue rules are not followed even though aspect ratio, fold and placement address orientation are correct.

TABS & GLUE

When it comes to self-mailing materials, they must have closed edges to prevent jams and slowdowns in the automated mail-processing machinery or damage en route to the recipient. The most common USPS-approved sealing techniques involve tabs and glue.

To some designers, tabs, which are used to ensure closure on folded mailpieces, are an unsightly blemish on their otherwise pristine mailing. But, when considered early on in the design process, tabs actually don't have to take away from the aesthetics of your campaign. Knowing where they need to be allows you create your design around them. Or since you can print specific designs or messages on them, they can actually be a great addition to a mailing's exterior design. Though the latter can be a pricey option, it's a lot better than not using them, which can mean sending your mailing by a more expensive, non-machinable postage rate.

Glue spots must be placed within 3/4 inch of the open edges and, when using continuous glue lines as a sealing method, the line must be placed along the entire length of the open edge and stop no more than 3/4 inch from the open end. In some cases, glue may affect the ink, or areas that will receive glue cannot be covered with ink or coatings—talk to your printer about the requirements and test if necessary.

Designed to save you time and money, these simple rules take the guesswork out of direct mail. By recognizing the importance of the USPS standards and taking the time to follow them can lead to more effective mailing and, therefore, a higher return on your investment.



For more information on production, view the Direct Mail Manual at pe.usps.gov