



- P000 Basic Information
- P020 Postage Stamps and Stationery

## P022 Postage Stamps

**Summary** P022 describes the purchase and use of postage stamps. Also included are the guidelines on the validity of stamps, stamp reproduction, and imitation stamps and official markings.

### 1.0 PURCHASE AND USE

**Forms of Payment** Payment for postage may be made in U.S. currency. Foreign or mutilated money is not acceptable. The USPS may require payment of the exact amount of the purchase. Checks are acceptable subject to USPS check-acceptance policy and the assessment of charges to the customer for an uncollectible check returned by the bank. The customer must use a money order or certified check if the amount due is sent by mail.

1.1

**Postage Due** Postage due must be paid in cash.

1.2

**Position** Stamps must be affixed firmly in the upper right corner of the address side of the mail cover. Any stamp partly concealed by an overlapping stamp may not be counted as postage.

1.3

**Reuse** Reuse of stamps with intent to cause loss to the government or the USPS is punishable by fine and imprisonment.

1.4

**Perforating** Postage stamps may be marked with perforation holes. The mark may not cover more than 1/4 square inch (1/2 inch by 1/2 inch) of the stamp, and the diameter of the holes may not exceed 1/32 inch.

1.5

**Semipostal Stamps** [10-8-03] Semipostal stamps are subject to the following special conditions:

1.6

- a. Semipostal stamps are stamps sold for a price that exceeds the postage value of the stamp. The difference between the price and postage value (also known as the "differential") less an offset for reasonable USPS costs, as determined by the USPS, is contributed to a specific cause. Semipostal stamps are offered for sale for a limited time as provided by law or by the USPS.
- b. The following semipostal stamps are available:
  - (1) The Breast Cancer Research semipostal stamp. The difference between the purchase price and the First-Class Mail nonautomation single-piece first-ounce letter rate in effect at the time of purchase constitutes a contribution to breast cancer research and cannot be used to pay postage. Funds (net of reasonable USPS costs) raised in connection with the Breast Cancer Research semipostal stamp are transferred to the Department of Defense and the National Institutes of Health.
  - (2) The Heroes of 2001 semipostal stamp. The difference between the purchase price and the First-Class Mail nonautomation single-piece first-ounce letter rate in effect at the time of purchase is a contribution to provide assistance to the families of emergency relief personnel killed or permanently disabled in connection with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and cannot be used to pay postage. Funds (net of reasonable USPS costs) raised in connection with the Heroes of

2001 semipostal stamp are transferred to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

- (3) The Stop Family Violence semipostal stamp. The difference between the purchase price and the First-Class Mail nonautomation single-piece first-ounce letter rate in effect at the time of purchase constitutes a contribution to domestic violence programs and cannot be used to pay postage. Funds (net of reasonable USPS costs) raised in connection with the Stop Family Violence semipostal stamp are transferred to the Department of Health and Human Services.

- c. **[10-8-03]** The postage value of each semipostal stamp is the First-Class Mail nonautomation single-piece first-ounce letter rate in [R100.1.2](#) that is in effect at the time of purchase. Additional postage must be affixed to pieces weighing in excess of 1 ounce, pieces subject to the nonmachinable surcharge, or pieces for which special services have been elected. The postage value of semipostal stamps purchased before any subsequent change in the First-Class Mail nonautomation single-piece first-ounce letter rate is unaffected by any subsequent change in that rate. The purchase price of each semipostal stamp is listed in [R000.4.0](#).

## 2.0 VALIDITY OF STAMPS

**Valid**  
2.1 All postage stamps issued by the United States since 1860, unless listed in [2.2](#), are valid for postage from any point in the United States or from any other place where U.S. Mail service operates. Precanceled stamps may be used to pay regular postage and fees for special services if the mailpiece is endorsed under the standards for the class of mail and service requested. Precanceled postage may be used only by permit holders authorized under [P023](#). Unless excepted by standard, the total postage affixed must equal at least the postage charge for the class of the mail and, if applicable, the fee for the special service requested. All nondenominated postage and makeup rate stamps, including official mail stamps, are valid at the original rates of issue. Except for precanceled stamps that bear rate markings (e.g., First-Class Presort, Presorted, or Nonprofit Organization), nondenominated postage stamps may be affixed to international mail. See IMM 152.2d.

**Invalid**  
2.2 The following are not valid to pay postage for U.S. domestic or U.S.-originated international mail:

- a. Postage due, special delivery, special handling, and certified mail stamps.
- b. Stamps of other countries.
- c. United Nations stamps, unless on mail deposited at the United Nations, NY.
- d. U.S. stamps that are mutilated or defaced; cut from stamped envelopes, aerogrammes, or stamped cards; covered or coated in such a manner that canceling or defacing marks cannot be printed onto the stamps; or overprinted with an unauthorized design, message, or other marking.
- e. Nonpostage stamps, such as migratory-bird hunting and conservation stamps, U.S. saving and thrift stamps.

## 3.0 STAMP REPRODUCTION

Postmasters may not advise the public about the reproduction of foreign or domestic postage stamps. Such information is available from [Stamp Development, USPS Headquarters](#) (see [G043](#) for address).

**4.0 IMITATION STAMPS AND OFFICIAL MARKINGS****Imitations of Stamps**

4.1 Matter bearing imitations of postage stamps, in adhesive or printed form, or private seals or stickers resembling a postage stamp in form and design, is not acceptable for mailing.

**Imitations of Markings**

4.2 Matter bearing decorative markings and designs, in adhesive or printed form, resembling the markings and designs of official postal services, is not accepted for mailing (see [Exhibit 4.2](#)).

**Prohibited Imitations**

Exhibit 4.2

**Others**

4.3 The nonaddress side of mail may have seals or stickers, if they do not imitate postage stamps and do not have words, numerals, or other markings indicating a value.

