

## 233 Prices and Eligibility

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### 1.0 Prices and Fees for First-Class Mail

#### 1.1 Price Application

Postage is based on the price that applies to the weight of each addressed piece.

#### 1.2 Price Computation for First-Class Mail Letters and Flats

##### 1.2.1 Letters

Commercial First-Class Mail Presorted letters are charged at one price for the first 2 ounces, with separate prices for pieces over 2 ounces up to 3 ounces and for pieces over 3 ounces up to 3.5 ounces. Any fraction of an ounce is considered a whole ounce. The pricing per ounce is similar for automation First-Class Mail letters, with pricing per sortation level. Single-piece price letters that are residual pieces from either a Presorted or automation mailing are charged the residual single-piece price for letters up to 2 ounces, when the mailing contains both 1-ounce and 2-ounce pieces and the pieces are presented together, and the applicable Metered Mail prices (see [234.1.0](#)) for all other residual pieces.

##### 1.2.2 Flats

First-Class Mail flat prices are charged per ounce or fraction thereof; any fraction of an ounce is considered a whole ounce. For example, if a piece weighs 1.2 ounces, the weight (postage) increment is 2 ounces.

#### 1.3 Presorted and Automation Prices for Cards and Letters

For prices, see [Notice 123–Price List](#).

#### 1.4 Nonmachinable Surcharge

Surcharge per Presorted price piece, see [Notice 123–Price List](#) and [201.2.1](#)).

#### 1.5 Presort Mailing Fee

A First-Class Mail presort mailing fee must be paid once each 12-month period at each office of mailing by any person or organization entering mailings at automation or Presorted First-Class Mail prices. Payment of this fee is waived for full-service automation mailings (under [705.23.0](#)). Payment of one fee allows a mailer to enter mail at all those prices. Persons or organizations paying this fee may enter mail of their clients as well as their own mail. The fee may be paid in advance only for the next 12 months and only during the last 60 days of the current service period. The fee charged is that which is in effect on the date of payment.



233.1.6

### **1.6 Computing Postage for First-Class Mail**

Determine single-piece weight and weight (postage) increment for each addressed piece as prescribed in 1.7 and 1.2. For First-Class Mail, affix postage to each piece under 234.2.2, or, for permit imprint mailings, multiply the number of addressed pieces at each price increment (and in each price category, if applicable) by the corresponding postage price, add the *unrounded* products, and round off the total postage to the nearest whole cent.

### **1.7 Determining Single-Piece Weight**

To determine single-piece weight in any mailing of nonidentical-weight pieces, weigh each piece individually. To determine single-piece weight in a mailing of identical-weight pieces, weigh a sample group of at least 10 randomly selected pieces and divide the total sample weight by the number of pieces in the sample. Express all single-piece weights in decimal pounds rounded off to four decimal places.

## **2.0 Content Standards for First-Class Mail**

### **2.1 General**

With the exception of restricted material as described in 601.8.0, any mailable item may be mailed as First-Class Mail.

### **2.2 Bills and Statements of Account**

Bills and statements of account must be mailed as First-Class Mail, Priority Mail or Priority Mail Express and are defined as follows:

- a. Bills and statements of account assert a debt in a definite amount owed by the addressee to the sender or a third party. In addition, bills include a demand for payment; statements of account do not include a demand for payment. The debt does not have to be due immediately but may become due at a later time or on demand. The debt asserted need not be legally collectible or owed.
- b. Bills and statements of account do not need to state the precise amount due if they contain information that would enable the debtor to determine that amount.

### **2.3 Personal Information**

Mail containing personal information must be mailed as First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, or Priority Mail Express. Personal information is any information specific to the addressee.

### **2.4 Handwritten and Typewritten Material**

Mail containing handwritten or typewritten material must be mailed as First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, or Priority Mail Express.

### **2.5 Matter Marked Postcard or Double Postcard**

Any matter marked "Postcard" or "Double Postcard" must be mailed as First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, or Priority Mail Express.

**2.6 Matter Not Required to be Mailed as First-Class Mail**

Matter eligible for Standard Mail or Package Services prices or authorized as Periodicals is not required to be mailed as First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, or Priority Mail Express.

**2.7 Prohibited Air Transportation**

All First-Class Mail is subject to limitations for air transportation. Generally, all mailable matter may be transported by aircraft, unless restricted in [601.9.0](#).

**2.8 Round-Trip Mailings with One Optical Disc**

When a letter-size mailpiece weighing no more than 1 ounce in round-trip mailings includes one standard optical disc no larger than 12 centimeters in diameter per mailpiece, the disc will not be considered to be rigid and a nonmachinable surcharge will not be charged on either the outgoing piece or the returned BRM or PRM piece as long as the disc is not put in a rigid container and the envelope itself is not rigid. When a flat-size mailpiece weighing no more than 2 ounces in round-trip mailings includes one standard optical disc no larger than 12 centimeters in diameter, the mailpiece will be subject to the applicable price for a 1-ounce First-Class Mail letter if the disc is not in a rigid container and the envelope itself is not rigid and all other standards in [2.8](#) are met. The disc is not considered to be rigid for purposes of the flexibility test in [201.4.3](#). BRM or PRM pieces that meet the standards will be charged the applicable 1-ounce First-Class Mail letter price for pieces that weigh no more than 2 ounces. For the purpose of this standard, round-trip mailings are mailings entered under these conditions:

- a. The mailing is presented at a BMEU or other acceptance facility as a:
  1. presort mailing at presort machinable or automation First-Class Mail letter prices, or
  2. single-piece mailing using a permit imprint or as a presort mailing at presort or automation First-Class Mail flats prices.
- b. The outbound mailpieces are addressed to subscribers and include either a BRM (under [505.1.0](#)) or PRM (under [505.2.0](#)) envelope designed for return of the disc to the permit holder.
- c. A sample of the return envelope is provided to the acceptance employee at the time of mailing for verification that the mailing is designed for round-trip purposes.
- d. Returned BRM or PRM pieces must be picked up by the mailer at designated postal facilities, upon payment of all applicable postage and fees.

**3.0 Basic Eligibility Standards for First-Class Mail****3.1 Description of Service****3.1.1 Service Objectives**

First-Class Mail receives expeditious handling and transportation. Service objectives for delivery are 1 to 3 days; however, delivery time is not guaranteed.



#### **3.1.2 Price Options**

First-Class Mail offers shape-based commercial prices in [1.0](#) for presorted mailings of 500 or more pieces that weigh 3.5 ounces or less for letters or 13 ounces or less for flats.

### **3.2 Defining Characteristics**

#### **3.2.1 Inspection of Contents**

First-Class Mail is closed against postal inspection.

#### **3.2.2 Forwarding Service and Return Service**

The price of First-Class Mail includes forwarding service to a new address for up to 12 months and return service if the mailpiece is undeliverable.

#### **3.2.3 Extra Services**

Extra services are available for First-Class Mail as provided in [503](#).

### **3.3 Additional Basic Standards for First-Class Mail**

All presorted First-Class Mail letters must:

- a. Meet the basic content standards for First-Class Mail in [2.0](#).
- b. Weigh 3.5 ounces or less.
- c. Meet the applicable standards in [234](#), and [1.0](#).
- d. Be part of a single mailing of at least 500 pieces of Presorted First-Class Mail.
- e. Meet the applicable physical standards in [201](#).
- f. Bear a delivery address that includes the correct ZIP Code or ZIP+4 code and that meets these address quality standards:
  1. The Move Update standard in [3.4](#).
  2. The ZIP Code accuracy standard in [3.5](#).
  3. If an alternative addressing format is used, the additional standards in [602.3.0](#).

### **3.4 Move Update Standard**

The Move Update standard requires the periodic matching of a mailer's address records with customer-filed change-of-address orders maintained by the USPS. See [602.5.0](#) for Move Update standards.

### **3.5 ZIP Code Accuracy**

The ZIP Code accuracy standard is a means of ensuring that the 5-digit ZIP Code in the delivery address correctly matches the delivery address information. For the purposes of this standard, *address* means a specific address associated with a specific 5-digit ZIP Code. Each address in a mailing at commercial First-Class Mail letter prices must meet the ZIP Code accuracy requirements in [602.6.0](#).

## 4.0 Additional Eligibility Standards for Nonautomation First-Class Mail

### 4.1 Additional Standards for Machinable First-Class Mail

In addition to the standards in [3.0](#), all pieces in a First-Class Mail Presorted price mailing must be marked, sorted, and documented as specified in [235.5.0](#) and [235.8.0](#).

### 4.2 Barcodes

Any Intelligent Mail barcode on a mailpiece in nonautomation First-Class Mail mailings must be correct for the delivery address and meet the standards in [202.5.0](#), [708.3.0](#), and [233.4.0](#).

### 4.3 Nonmachinable Surcharge for Letter-Size Pieces

The nonmachinable surcharge in [1.4](#) applies to letter-rate pieces (except card-price pieces) that meet one or more of the nonmachinable characteristics in [201.2.1](#).

### 4.4 Nonmachinable Flat-Size Pieces

Flat-size pieces that do not meet the machinability standards in [201.4.3](#) through [201.4.4](#) must be prepared as parcels and pay the applicable parcel-size prices.

## 5.0 Additional Eligibility Standards for Automation First-Class Mail

### 5.1 Basic Standards for Automation First-Class Mail

All pieces in a First-Class Mail automation mailing must:

- a. Meet the basic standards for First-Class Mail in [3.0](#).
- b. Be part of a single mailing of at least 500 pieces of automation price First-Class Mail.
- c. Meet the physical standards in [201.3.0](#) or [201.6.0](#).
- d. Bear a delivery address that includes the correct ZIP Code, ZIP+4 code, or numeric equivalent to the delivery point barcode (DPBC) and that meets the address matching and coding standards in [5.7](#), and [708.3.0](#). If an alternative addressing format is used, the additional standards in [602.3.0](#).
- e. Bear an accurate unique Intelligent Mail barcode encoded with the correct delivery point routing code, matching the delivery address and meeting the standards in [202.5.0](#) and [708.4.0](#).
- f. Be marked, sorted, and documented as specified in [235.6.0](#), for letters and cards, or [235.8.0](#) or [705.9.0](#) for flats.

### 5.2 Additional Eligibility Standards for Full-Service Automation First-Class Mail

All pieces entered under the full-service Intelligent Mail automation option must:

- a. Bear a unique Intelligent Mail barcode.
- b. Be part of a mailing that meets the standards in [705.23.0](#).



### 5.3 **Maximum Weight for Automation Letters**

Maximum weight for First-Class Mail automation letters is 3.5 ounces (0.2188 pound) (see [201.3.6](#), for pieces heavier than 3 ounces).

### 5.4 **Price Application—Automation Cards and Letters**

Automation prices apply to each piece that is sorted under [235.6.0](#) into the corresponding qualifying groups:

- a. Groups of 150 or more pieces in 5-digit/scheme trays qualify for the 5-digit price. Preparation to qualify for the 5-digit price is optional. Pieces placed in full 3-digit/scheme trays in lieu of 5-digit/scheme overflow trays under [235.6.5](#) are eligible for the 5-digit prices.
- b. Groups of 150 or more pieces in 3-digit/scheme trays qualify for the 3-digit price. Pieces placed in full AADC trays in lieu of 3-digit/scheme overflow trays under [235.6.5](#) are eligible for the 3-digit prices.
- c. Groups of fewer than 150 pieces in origin 3-digit/scheme trays and pieces in AADC trays qualify for the AADC price. Pieces placed in mixed AADC trays in lieu of AADC overflow trays under [235.6.5](#) are eligible for the AADC prices.
- d. Pieces in mixed AADC trays qualify for the mixed AADC price, except for pieces prepared under [5.4c](#).

### 5.5 **Price Application—Bundle-Based Flats**

Automation prices apply to each piece that is sorted under [235.8.0](#) or [705](#):

- a. Pieces in 5-digit bundles of 10 or more pieces qualify for the 5-digit price. Preparation to qualify for the 5-digit price is optional and need not be done for all 5-digit destinations.
- b. Pieces in 3-digit bundles of 10 or more pieces qualify for the 3-digit price.
- c. Pieces in ADC bundles of 10 or more pieces qualify for the ADC price.
- d. Pieces in mixed ADC bundles qualify for the mixed ADC price.

### 5.6 **Price Application—Tray-Based Flats**

Automation prices apply to each piece that is sorted under [235.8.6](#), into the corresponding qualifying groups:

- a. Groups of 90 or more pieces in 5-digit trays qualify for the 5-digit price. Preparation to qualify for the 5-digit price is optional and need not be done for all 5-digit destinations.
- b. Groups of 90 or more pieces in 3-digit trays qualify for the 3-digit price.
- c. Groups of fewer than 90 pieces in origin 3-digit trays and all pieces in ADC trays qualify for the ADC price.
- d. All pieces in mixed ADC trays qualify for the mixed ADC price.

## 5.7 Address Standards for Barcoded Pieces

### 5.7.1 Basic Address Standards for Barcodes

To qualify for automation prices, addresses must be sufficiently complete to enable matching to the current USPS ZIP+4 Product when used with current CASS-certified address matching software. Standardized address elements are not required. Any barcode that appears on a mailpiece claimed at an automation price must be the correct barcode for the corresponding delivery address on the piece.

### 5.7.2 Numeric ZIP+4

A numeric ZIP+4 code must consist of five digits, a hyphen, and four digits.

### 5.7.3 Numeric Delivery Point Barcode (DPBC)

The numeric equivalent to the delivery point routing code is formed by adding two digits directly after the ZIP+4 code.

### 5.7.4 Address Elements

Addresses must include the correct street number, predirectional, street name, suffix, and postdirectional that are input to obtain a match with the current USPS ZIP+4 Product.

### 5.7.5 Firm Name

An address must include a firm name when necessary to obtain a match with the finest level of ZIP+4 in the USPS ZIP+4 Product. If an address contains a firm name assigned a unique ZIP+4 code in the USPS ZIP+4 Product, the unique ZIP+4 must be used. If the firm name is not one assigned a unique ZIP+4 in the USPS ZIP+4 Product and the apartment/suite number is included in the address, the ZIP+4 for the range in which the apartment/suite number appears must be used in that address. If the firm name does not correspond to a firm name that has a unique ZIP+4 assigned in the USPS ZIP+4 Product and the apartment/suite number is not included in the address, the ZIP+4 for the building must be used.

### 5.7.6 Secondary Designator

If a secondary address designator (e.g., an apartment number) is shown in the address, the mailpiece must show the appropriate ZIP+4 representing the range for that secondary address as contained in the current USPS ZIP+4 Product. If a secondary address designator is required to obtain an exact match with the finest level of ZIP+4 in the USPS ZIP+4 Product but the information is not available, the alternative ZIP+4 code or ZIP+4 or delivery point barcode for the building must be used.

### 5.7.7 Rural and Highway Contract Routes

If a rural route or highway contract route box number is included in the address, the mailpiece must show the appropriate ZIP+4 representing the range for that box number as contained in the current USPS ZIP+4 Product. If a rural route or highway contract route box number is required to obtain a match with the finest level of ZIP+4 but is not available, the alternative ZIP+4 or ZIP+4 or delivery point barcode for the rural route or highway contract route must be used. If used, the rural route or highway contract route box number must be placed on the line immediately above the city/state/ZIP Code line.



233.5.7.8

### **5.7.8 P.O. Box**

A Post Office box address must contain a Post Office box number that can be exactly matched with the USPS ZIP+4 Product in effect.

## **6.0 Eligibility Standards for Card Price First-Class Mail**

### **6.1 Card Price**

A card may be a single or double (reply) stamped card or a single or double postcard. Stamped cards are available from USPS with postage imprinted on them. Postcards are commercially available or privately printed mailing cards. To be eligible for a card price, a card and each half of a double card must meet the physical standards in [201.1.2](#) and the applicable eligibility and preparation standards for the price claimed. Ineligible cards are subject to letter-size prices. Cards may be prepared and mailed at the First-Class Mail single-piece card price, Presorted card price, or automation card prices.

### **6.2 Cards and Letters**

Pieces claimed at First-Class Mail card prices and pieces claimed at First-Class Mail letter prices are each subject to a separate minimum volume criteria whether prepared as separate or combined mailings. Either way, card-size and letter-size pieces may be presented at the same time and reported on the same postage statement.