

HOW TO MAIL THINGS PROFESSIONALLY

When you need to stir up interest and sales for your business, the mail is a proven way to reach new people and remind customers of your presence.

It's a great way to get your brand, promos, incentives, and new offers straight into people's hands – *literally*.

But knowing how to plan, design, print, prep, and send the right kind of mail campaign that is cost-effective and will get the desired results for your business can feel like a full-time job of its own.

Learn the basics of mailing professionally with this guide so you can successfully market your business, save time and money doing it, and start using the USPS's resources to your advantage!

“...knowing how to plan, design, print, prep, and send a mail campaign can feel like a full-time job of its own.”



BULK MAIL = BUSINESS MAIL

To send a letter via USPS, you put a First class stamp on it – but what if you want to send 1,000 letters? Do you need to pay \$580.00 for First class stamps?

Thankfully, the US Postal Service recognizes the need to have smart options to mail for marketing and business purposes. These options – *known collectively as 'bulk mail'* – make it possible to send mail at higher quantities with lower postage rates.

In this guide, we'll cover the different classes of bulk mail, how to qualify for them, and the key decision making points that will help you determine which type of mailing is right for your situation.

CLASSES OF BULK MAIL

Commercial, business, or advertising mail are all synonymously referred to as “*bulk mail*” – this includes both Presorted First Class and Marketing Mail (*previously known as Standard Mail*).



Pre-sorted First Class

Marketing Mail (*formerly known as Standard Mail*)

EDDM®
(Every Door Direct Mail)

Carrier Route Mail

These types of mailings are streamlined for USPS automated processing which saves time and effort, making it possible for them to offer lower postage rates per piece.

You can use bulk mail classes to send a Direct Mail campaign to your own list of contacts or you can purchase a mail list. Purchased mail lists can include geographic areas, or targeted prospects identified by traits such as age range, income level, home-owner, renter, parental status, pet owner, recreational activities, and much more. **This is known as a Targeted Direct Mail campaign, as you are targeting specific groups of people.**

Whether you have your own list or intend to purchase one, you will need to ensure your mailing meets all of the requirements for the class of bulk mail you want to qualify for.

Catalogs, brochures, service booklets, and more can all be sent affordably through the mail for less cost than a First Class stamp when you know how to qualify for the right mail class.



QUALIFICATIONS

There are a few requirements that all bulk mailings must meet to qualify for lower postage rates.

Bulk mail pieces all must...

- Include the correct names and addresses of recipients on all pieces
- Include a postage stamp or printed postal indicia on all pieces
- Be sent using a business mailing permit
- Meet USPS mail piece design requirements and feature all required mail markings
- Have a size aspect ratio (length divided by height) between 1.3 – 2.5 for machinability



Direct mail marketing materials by OMSI, produced by AnchorPointe Graphics

THE MAILING PERMIT

All bulk mailings require the use of a Business Mailing Permit. **You do not need to have your own mailing permit.** You can use a mailing provider's permit to mail under and qualify for bulk rates.

This is the best option for people new to the mailing process or for businesses that only send bulk mailings a few times each year. You still get discounted postage rates but do not need to pay for the annual cost of your own mailing permit.

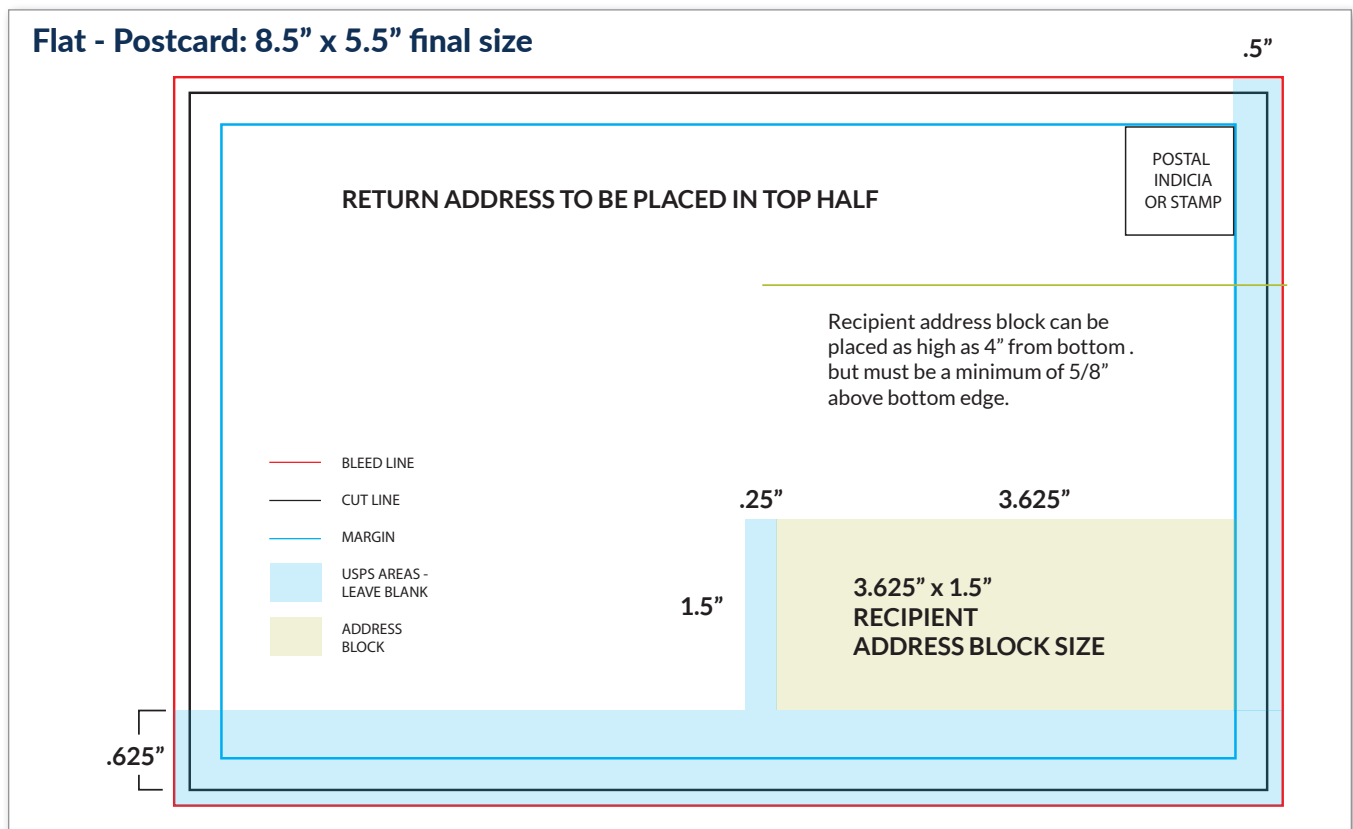
DESIGN REQUIREMENTS and MAIL MARKINGS

All bulk mail must meet USPS design requirements for the type of mail piece you are creating. This ensures your pieces meet automation standards to qualify for lower rates. This includes making sure your pieces feature the correct mail markings – such as postage, endorsements, and barcodes.

You'll need to know the areas on the mailing panel that are reserved for the address block, barcode and return address, and therefore cannot have anything printed in that space. The size and placement of these areas change depending on the size of your mail piece.

Failing to meet the design requirements could mean your mail doesn't qualify for bulk postage rates. Worst case scenario, it could prevent your pieces from going through the mail at all.

We've put together a few helpful templates of the most common sizes of direct mail postcards, letters, and flats that feature the size and placements of all required information – check them out at the end of this resource!



For extra assurance, consult a Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA). An MDA is a specially trained designer who can tell you if the finished piece will be mailable and suggest ways to make it eligible for the lowest possible postage rates.

Ask your printer or mail vendor if they have a qualified mailpiece analyst on staff – like AnchorPointe does! We'll help you verify your mail piece design, or create one for you, that is USPS-optimized so everything goes smoothly after printing.

WHAT CAN I SEND?

Types of mail pieces and what the USPS calls them.

The USPS has specific terms for each kind of mail piece, each of which fits into a larger category. The size, thickness, and weight of your mail piece will determine what the Post Office considers it, and what the best rates for it are.

The main categories of mail pieces are Postcards, Flats, Letters, and Parcels.

POSTCARDS

To be considered a “Postcard” your pieces must be a single sheet of paper, printed 1 or 2 sides, cut in a rectangular shape of at least 3.5” x 5”, but no larger than 4.25” x 6” with a max thickness of .016”.

This category is unique, because they mail with a special First Class Postcard rate of \$0.40 each, no permit or pre-sorting needed. Anything outside the set size or thickness limits and the USPS considers it a “Letter” and it will be charged the First Class letter rate of \$0.58.



FLATS

The Post Office uses the term “Flats” to refer to large envelopes (greater than 6.125” high or 11.5” long), newsletters, catalogs, and magazines that mail unfolded. The maximum size for Flats is 12” x 15” with a maximum thickness of .75”.



LETTERS

“Letters” include all sizes of envelopes, as well as self-mailers folded to a Letter size and tabbed closed, and postcards that are considered Letter-sized. Parameters are a minimum height x length of 3.5” x 5” and a maximum height x length of 6.125”x11.5” with a max thickness of .25”.

PARCELS

If your mailpiece doesn't fit into the categories above, then it's likely a “Parcel.” This includes mailable boxes and envelopes thicker than .75”. If you are sending a book, promotional items, clothing, welcome / appreciation gifts, or pre-event kits through the mail, it will be considered a Parcel. Minimum size for parcels is 3x6x.25” – maximum is 17x27x27” and must weigh no more than 25 pounds.



MAIL CLASSES

Now that we've looked at the options for bulk mail pieces, as well as the types of pieces you can send, let's look at the classes of mail you can choose from for commercial mailings.

FEELING OVERWHELMED?
Give us a call at
503.619.3000
for assistance!

PRE-SORTED FIRST-CLASS MAIL

Provides the same speed and level of service (*including returns and forwarding*) as First-Class Mail, with postage savings when mailing 500 or more pieces that have been 'pre-sorted' to USPS standards.

QUICK-HITS

- Mail 500 or more mail pieces for a lower postage rate than a first class stamp
- Postage discounts are on a sliding scale; the more you mail, the less cost per piece
- USPS gives First Class mail priority, including Pre-sorted, so it arrives quicker and with greater assurance of delivery

WHAT IS NEEDED:

- Clean and pre-sort your mailing list with NCOA and CASS certification
- Provide postal paperwork to USPS prior to mailing
- Sort and bundle mail pieces into mail trays
- Deliver mail trays to the USPS Business Mail Entry Unit

Presorted First class mail, or “First class presort” is the fastest option for sending bulk mail. You must mail **at least 500 individual pieces at the same time**, which makes it a great fit for mail that needs to arrive quickly, or is the type of document that needs greater assurances that it will be delivered to the recipient, as USPS gives first class mail priority over other classes of mail. This makes Presorted First Class a good choice for business communication such as bank statements, invoicing and billing, or official documents.

To have your mail considered “presorted” requires sorting the mailing list and providing postal paperwork to the USPS prior to mailing. If you don't have experience in doing this, you'll want to use the professional mailing services of a company (like AnchorPointe) to presort your mailing list.

Presorting your mailing list includes steps like processing your mail list through the NCOA (National Change of Address) database and the CASS (Coding Accuracy Support System) certification, which groups your mailing by ZIP code.

The final step is to sort and bundle your mail pieces into mail trays before delivering them to the USPS Bulk Mail Unit – a special location reserved for presorted mail processing.

Completing the presort process makes processing your First-Class mail more efficient for the post office, and in exchange you receive a lower postage rate.



USPS MARKETING MAIL® (FORMERLY PRE-SORTED STANDARD MAIL)

A class of presorted mail branded for business use – the USPS defines Marketing Mail® as “printed matter, flyers, circulars, advertising, newsletters, bulletins, catalogs and small parcels” that do not need to be mailed First-Class.

QUICK-HITS

- Allows you to mail 200 or more pieces
- Pieces must weigh less than 16 oz. each
- Must mail a minimum of 50 lbs of mail total
- Postage rates determined by weight of individual pieces
- Estimated local delivery within 1-5 days; Nationally within 1-14 days
- Average time to deliver in Portland Metro Area is 2-3 business days

WHAT IS NEEDED:

- Mail a minimum of 200 pieces, with a total minimum weight of 50 lbs
- Clean and pre-sort your mailing list with NCOA and CASS certification
- Provide postal paperwork to USPS prior to mailing
- Sort and bundle mail pieces into mail trays
- Deliver mail trays to the USPS Business Mail Entry Unit

USPS Marketing Mail® (previously referred to as Standard mail) is an affordable, effective class of mailing. It does not deliver as quickly as First class but is highly cost-effective, especially at larger quantities.

All USPS Marketing Mail® rates are bulk prices, **but postage will vary because it's based on the weight of each mail piece.** It is the best option for those looking to target a larger audience with a piece that does not need added assurances of delivery.

Most pieces mailed as Marketing Mail[®] will arrive, on average, within about five business days locally and within ten days nationally, according to the USPS.

Note: The average mailing time is *currently 2-3 business days in the Portland Metro Area.

*Currently at the time of this writing, April 2022



An 8.5 x 5.5" sized postcard mailed via Marketing Mail[®]

To mail under the Marketing Mail[®] class, **you must mail at least 200 pieces that are less than 16 ounces each, or at least 50 pounds of mail.** In addition, your pieces must be sorted and packaged for the USPS in the same manner as First Class Presorted mail, and delivered to the USPS Bulk Mail Entry Unit.

LIMITATIONS TO USPS MARKETING MAIL:

Some types of bulk mail do not qualify for Presorted Marketing Mail and must be sent via Presorted First-Class Mail, including:

- Bills and statements of account
- Communication regarding personal information (such as financial, medical, or other sensitive information) specific to the addressee

How do you know if your mail piece contains barring personal information?

Some marketing pieces can contain information specific to the addressee, as long as the information relates directly to the purpose of marketing.

Examples include utilizing Personalization of their name, city, or purchasing habits and behaviors.



This marketing piece is Personalized with first names and organization names to create more interest.

WHAT ABOUT 'EDDM?'

While searching for Direct Mail options, you've likely come across the term EDDM®, or Every Door Direct Mail®.

EDDM® (Every Door Direct Mail) is the name of a self-service mailing option offered by USPS. It allows you to mail standard flats to selected Zip codes around a starting point, without a mail list, with pieces addressed simply to "Postal Customer" or "Residential Customer."

QUICK HITS:

- Send a minimum of 200 and a maximum of 5,000 pieces, per Zip code per day (*no limit with bulk mailing permit*)
- Must send a standard Flat – a single sheet, printed 1 or 2 sides, mailing unfolded
- Pieces must weigh 3.3 ounces or less
- Each mailpiece must display the Every Door Direct Mail® indicia
- Mail pieces must be bundled in groups of 50-100 and include a facing slip with the piece-count per bundle
- Must submit bundled mail to the Post Office serving area of distribution
- No permit needed for EDDM® Retail

You do not need a mailing list with this option, as you are selecting by Zip code, but targeting options are very limited and EDDM® does not allow for Personalization.

EDDM® allows you to narrow an audience within a chosen Zip code by median age, household size, and income. However, since there is no mailing list to verify with the NCOA or CASS certifications, you will likely end up mailing to people outside the target limits.

There is also no way to exclude vacant houses, or people who have requested not to receive marketing mail, so you may end up paying to print and send mail to empty homes or people who will disregard it.

To qualify for EDDM® Retail, which does not require a permit, **you must mail between 200 – 5,000 pieces**. The maximum limit is per zip code, which means if you wanted to, you could deliver up to 5,000 pieces to multiple post office locations per day.

The USPS limits mail pieces for EDDM® mailings to large Flats. The smallest sizes of Flat you can mail with EDDM® is a 10.55" long x 3.5" high rectangle or a 6.25 x 6.25" square. The largest size possible is a 15" long x 12" high rectangle.

Lastly, pieces must be bundled in sets of 50 - 100 and labeled with a facing sheet that shows the piece-count per bundle. For an EDDM® Retail mailing, you would drop off your pieces at the local Post Office of the area you've selected.

If you just need to get the word out locally and aren't too picky about the size of your postcard, EDDM® offers the overall lowest postage rates for mailing, making it a cost effective way to indiscriminately market to an area.

It's a good option for businesses that want to reach everyone in their local area, regardless of who they are. For example, a new general dental office might want to send out a blanket "Now Open" announcement to everyone in a 5-mile radius of their location.

To find more information about EDDM®, visit www.usps.com/everydoordirectmail.

CARRIER ROUTE MAILINGS

Another solution you may want to consider is a **Carrier Route mailing**. Best done with the help of a professional mail service, this option is a balance between a targeted mailing and an EDDM® mailing. They give greater flexibility on the type and size of your mail pieces and offer postage discounts that are comparable to EDDM® rates.

A Carrier Route mailing does require the use of a mailing permit, as well as a mailing list, which allows for more targeting options. And you must mail to the overwhelming majority of addresses within a carrier route to qualify. **Because these mailings are pre-sorted and bundled by carrier route and delivered ready to distribute, the USPS offers greater discounts on postage rates.**



QUICK HITS:

- Must mail at least 200 pieces, or 50 pounds of mail
- Pieces must weight less than 16 ounces each
- Can mail Marketing Mail® Letters and Flats
- Must include a complete delivery address with the correct Zip code
- Must pre-sort mail pieces to individual carrier routes by 5-digit Zip code
- Must meet all basic requirements of USPS Marketing Mail® (including pre-sorting of list)

To qualify for Carrier Route pricing, you will need to select at least 90% of the residential addresses, or at least 75% of the total addresses, within a carrier route. This can include houses, condos, apartments, P.O. boxes and businesses.

You will need a list of recipients for Carrier Route mailings, allowing some flexibility to target broad groups you hope to reach. You can target people by age, income, marital status, and more – so long as the number of addresses is higher than 90% of residential or 75% of the total route.

With this type of mailing, you can send mail pieces that meet physical requirements for Marketing Mail® flats and letters, which includes postcards. This offers more options for how you want your mail piece to look and can help you improve engagement by using an envelope.

Carrier Route mailings allow you to put the recipient's name and address onto the mail piece **which is shown to increase open rates and engagement.** But because they are pre-sorted by carrier route and bundled for distribution, as well as going to a majority of addresses along the route, you still get lower postage rates.

Another benefit to Carrier Route mailings – **you don't have to be the one to take it to the Post Office.** The APG mailing team can take care of that step for you!

FEELING OVERWHELMED?
Give us a call at
503.619.3000 to get
straight to the point!

KEY DECISION MAKING POINTS

After learning about the options for bulk mail and saturated mailings, you can start to determine which kind of mailing will work best for your specific needs.

Here are a few key decision making points to consider in the first stages of planning a mailing to ensure you start out on the right path.

1. FIRST CLASS VS. PRE-SORTED FIRST CLASS:

How do you know when your mailing is big enough to make the jump from paying for First Class postage to going through the pre-sorting process to qualify for discounted rates?

It's natural to assume the option with discounted postage rates will be more cost-effective. But when you add in the cost to pre-sort a mailing list, bundle and tray your mail pieces, and deliver them to the Bulk Mail Entry Unit, you could end up paying more to go with the presorted option.

In our experience, when you mail less than 500 pieces at once, it is often more cost-effective to put a First Class stamp on your pieces and drop them at your nearest post office.

Here are two formulas to help demonstrate the costs for each option:

The cost to design and print your mail pieces

+

The number of pieces
X \$0.58 per First Class stamp

Total First Class Mailing Cost

You can see how the costs for a Pre-sorted First Class mailing can sometimes be higher than simply paying for First Class postage.

If you're not sure which will be more beneficial, consult with your mailing service provider. We'll help you estimate the cost of all your options so you can make an informed decision.

The cost to design and print your mail pieces

+

The cost to pre-sort your mailing list for NCOA and CASS certification

+

The cost to sort, tie, and bundle your mail pieces in mail trays

+

The cost to deliver the mail to the Bulk Unit at the USPS

+

The number of pieces X the discounted postage rate determined by weight/size

Total Pre-Sorted First Class Mailing Cost

2. PRE-SORTED FIRST CLASS VS. MARKETING MAIL®

If you're planning a direct mail campaign of 500 or more pieces, you might be wondering which of these two bulk mail classes would be the best way to go.

The essential difference between Pre-sorted First Class and Marketing Mail® is the level of service you receive from the Post Office.

With any level of First Class mail, including Pre-sorted, the Post Office does all they can to ensure your mail pieces are delivered to the intended recipients in a timely manner. This includes delivery within 1-5 business days, forwarding to a new address, and returning mail that cannot be delivered (which can be useful information to factor into your response rate).



The USPS website states that Marketing Mail® delivery times nationwide are 1-14 business days.

However, in the Portland Metro area and across Oregon, we've seen typical Marketing Mail® delivery times throughout 2021 and early 2022 stay consistent at 1-5 business days.

In the end, it comes down to cost – there are not many true direct mail campaigns for marketing purposes that would require the additional level of service of a First Class mailing.

Unless you are sending something required to go First Class, opt for the lower discounted postage rates of Marketing Mail®. You'll get more 'bang for your buck' and with digital integrations (like QR codes) you'll be able to track responses all the way to your website.

3. DIRECT MAIL VS. SATURATION MAIL

How do you know if you should do a "Direct Mail" campaign vs. a Saturation Mailing?

"Direct Mail" refers to sending mail pieces that are sent directly to an intended recipient. This type of mail campaign requires a mailing list, as well as the name and address of the person to be included on each individual mail piece.

"Saturation mailings" are intended to be sent to the majority (or all) of the addresses in a specific geographic area, and do not require a mailing list, or names and addresses to be included on each mail piece.

Both type of campaigns have mailing options for discounted postage rates significantly lower than a First Class stamp.

Direct Mail options with lower postage rates include Presorted First Class and Marketing (Standard) Mail®, while Saturation Mail options include EDDM® and Carrier Route mailings.

The key decision making factor between whether to go with a Direct Mail campaign or a Saturation mailing comes down to how targeted and personalized you want your mailing to be.

Targeted campaigns overall get better response rates and returns than saturation mailings, because you are selectively printing and sending mail to people who you know are more likely to be interested in what you have to offer.



If you have a defined audience or customer profile you're aiming to reach, you will benefit greatly from doing a Direct Mail campaign that allows you to speak directly to a targeted list that supports your campaign goals.

For example, if you're opening a children's toy store in Beaverton, you would want to target households who have young children, as well as older couples that are more likely to have grandchildren. You'll save money by not sending mail pieces to households who don't have children, or that have kids in an older age range.

You'll also be able to focus on appealing to your intended audience, instead of trying to capture everyone's attention, which can water-down your message and make it less effective.

If your message is to the general public and the majority of the population uses your products or services, then a saturation mailing could be a more cost effective way to get your brand in front of more people.

An example of this could be a neighborhood grocer wanting to send a monthly sales flyer to everyone in the area. Everyone needs good food to eat that's nearby and easy to access - and everyone loves a discount!



4. SHOULD YOU DIY OR HIRE A PRO?

One of the big questions you'll probably ask when planning a mailing - *Should I do this myself, or hire someone to help?*

The USPS does offer some support for self-service mailings – specifically around their EDDM® service. But most of their information is found online, available for you to read through.

Consider the size, requirements, and purpose of the mailing you want to execute. Then consider everything that a professional mail service can do for you.

What will a professional mailing service do for you?

- Assistance with planning, estimating, and qualifying for discounted postage rates
- Mail piece evaluation to ensure USPS requirements are met
- Use of a Business Mailing Permit
- Pre-sort the mailing list
- Processing the mail list through NCOA and CASS certification
- Provide address updates of people who have moved, or made address changes, for your records
- Sends postal paperwork to USPS for efficient processing
- Sort and bundle mail into mail trays
- Deliver trays to USPS Business Mail Entry Unit

If you're new to mailing, don't have a business mailing permit, or want to do a more complex campaign that involves multiple pieces and timelines, we strongly recommend working with a professional partner.

Print and mail vendors (like AnchorPointe) will be able to interpret what you want to accomplish and help you figure out the best path forward, without costing you unnecessary time or money.

MAKE MAIL WORK FOR YOU.

Knowing about bulk mail options can help you plan and execute cost-effective marketing campaigns that target the right people and help you meet your business goals.

Working with a partner like AnchorPointe, who can help with all stages of planning and execution, will take a lot of work off your plate so you can focus on other high priority tasks.

After all, you read this guide because you want to use the mail to help your business be more successful – *not to plan mailings full-time!*

Ready to put your new knowledge to work?

[Schedule a consult](#) or give us a call at **503.619.3000** to start planning!

