

# US Postal Laws & Regulations

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Drop letters



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**Sec. 322. First-Class Postage.**—That on mailable matter of the first class, except postal cards and drop letters, postage shall be prepaid at the rate of three cents for each half ounce or fraction thereof; postal cards shall be transmitted through the mails at a postage charge of one cent each, including the cost of manufacture; and drop letters shall be mailed at the rate of two cents per half ounce or fraction thereof, including delivery at letter-carrier offices, and one cent for each half ounce or fraction thereof where free delivery by carrier is not established. The Postmaster-General may, however, provide, by regulation, for transmitting unpaid and duly certified letters of soldiers, sailors, and marines in the service of the United States to their destination, to be paid on delivery. (Act of March 3, 1879, § 9, 20 Stats., 358.)

And upon all matter of the first class, as defined by chapter one hundred and eighty of the laws of Congress approved March third, eighteen hundred and seventy-nine, entitled "An act making appropriations for the service of the Post-Office Department for the fiscal year ending June thirtieth, eighteen hundred and eighty, and for other purposes," and by that act declared subject to postage at the rate of three cents for each half ounce or fraction thereof, postage shall be charged, on and after the first day of October, A. D. eighteen hundred and eighty-three, at the rate of two cents for each half ounce or fraction thereof; and all acts, so far as they fix a different rate of postage than herein provided upon such first-class matter, are, to that extent, hereby repealed. (Act of March 3, 1883, 22 Stats., 455.)

That upon all matter of the first class, as defined by chapter one hundred and eighty of the laws of Congress approved March third, eighteen hundred and seventy-nine, entitled, "An act making appropriations for the service of the Post-Office Department for the fiscal year ending June thirtieth, eighteen hundred and eighty, and for other purposes," and by that act declared subject to postage at the rate of three cents for each half ounce or fraction thereof and reduced by the act of March third, eighteen hundred and eighty-three, to two cents for each half ounce or fraction thereof, postage shall be charged, on and after the first day of July, eighteen hundred and eighty-five, at the rate of two cents for each ounce or fraction thereof; and drop letters shall be mailed at the rate of two cents per ounce or fraction thereof, including delivery at letter-carrier offices, and one cent for each ounce or fraction thereof where free delivery by carrier is not established. (Act of March 3, 1885, 23 Stats., 386.)

**Sec. 323. Soldiers', Sailors', and Marines' Letters.**—Letters written by officers, commissioned or non-commissioned, and privates in the military, naval, or marine service of the United States, to be transmitted unpaid

must be plainly marked "Soldier's Letter," "Sailor's Letter," or Marine's Letter," as the case may be, and signed thereunder with his name and official designation by a field or staff officer, post or detachment commander to whose command the soldier belongs, or by a surgeon or chaplain at a hospital where he may be; and in the navy and marine service, by the officer in command of the vessel, or surgeon on board, or officer commanding a naval hospital or detachment on shore. Letters so certified will be forwarded charged with postage due at single rates only, to be collected on delivery.

**Sec. 324. Postal Cards** cannot be issued by private parties. Cards, other than those issued by the Department, containing any writing, are subject to letter postage; but if they contain only printed matter, so as to constitute a circular, but one cent is required on each.

No printing or writing other than the address is allowable upon the address side, nor may anything except an address label be pasted or attached to any postal card. The words "to be called for," or any proper description of the person or place addressed, may be written thereon as part of the address. Any other writing, mark, or seal placed on the address side, or the splitting of the card and writing on the inside, renders it unmailable, except at letter rates. A postal card once delivered cannot be remailed as such.

Postal cards are first-class matter, and may be forwarded on request, and they should be returned to the writer from the office of address when unclaimed; but no request for such return should be placed on the address side.

Postmasters must treat postal cards as sealed letters, and refrain from reading the messages written thereon, except in order to return the cards to the writer when unclaimed, and except that their contents may be read if they appear to be unmailable because they contain obscene matter or relate to lotteries. (See sections 379 and 380.)

**Sec. 325. Addresses, how made.**—And addresses upon postal cards and unsealed circulars may be either written, printed, or affixed thereto at the option of the sender. (Act of July 12, 1876, from § 15, 19 Stats., 82.)

**Sec. 326. Drop Letters.**— \* \* \* But in large cities and adjacent districts of dense population, having two or more post-offices within a distance of three miles of each other, any letter mailed at one of such offices and addressed to a locality within the delivery of another of such offices, which shall have been inadvertently prepaid at the drop or local-letter rate of postage only, may be forwarded to its destination through the proper office, charged with the amount of the deficient postage, to be collected on delivery. (R. S., § 3937, second sentence.)

A "drop letter" is one addressed for delivery to a person within the



delivery of the office at which it is posted. Such a letter is first-class matter and should be returned to the writer, if unclaimed, the same as any other. It cannot be forwarded on request, unless one full rate, two cents, be paid thereon, except within the distance of three miles as above provided. (See, however, section 322, last part.)

#### SECOND-CLASS MATTER.

Sec. 327. *General Definition.*—Mailable matter of the second class shall embrace all newspapers and other periodical publications which are issued at stated intervals, and as frequently as four times a year, and are within the conditions named in sections twelve and fourteen. (Act of March 3, 1879, § 10, 20 Stats., 359.)

The sections referred to are 343 and 328.

Second-class matter above described is of two kinds :

1. That sent by publishers or news agents.
2. That sent by others than publishers or news agents. (Section 351.)

Sec. 328. *Statutory Characteristics.*—That the conditions upon which a publication shall be admitted to the second class are as follows:

First. It must regularly be issued at stated intervals, as frequently as four times a year, and bear a date of issue, and be numbered consecutively.

Second. It must be issued from a known office of publication.

Third. It must be formed of printed paper sheets, without board, cloth, leather, or other substantial binding, such as distinguish printed books for preservation from periodical publications.

Fourth. It must be originated and published for the dissemination of information of a public character, or devoted to literature, the sciences, arts, or some special industry, and having a legitimate list of subscribers; *Provided, however,* That nothing herein contained shall be so construed as to admit to the second-class rate regular publications designed primarily for advertising purposes, or for free circulation, or for circulation at nominal rates. (Act of March 3, 1879, § 14, 20 Stats., 359.)

Sec. 329. *Regularity of Issue.*—The regular periods of issue must be shown by the publication itself and be within the statute. Annuals and semi-annuals are third-class matter. And it is only matter mailed at or about the time of its regular publication which is entitled to second-class rates. Old copies of newspapers or periodicals published at prior times must pay the rate prescribed in section three hundred and fifty-one, except that back numbers may be sent to regular subscribers at the pound rate.

An admissible publication may change the periods of issue, as from monthly to weekly, weekly to daily, or *vice versa*, but on such change