

# US Postal Laws & Regulations

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Outgoing mail



# Table Of Contents

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	<u>Pages</u>
<a href="#">Accounting forms</a> (9 pages)	504-512
<a href="#">Accounts, postmaster</a> (10 pages)	107-116
<a href="#">Advertised</a> (3 pages)	244-245, 250
<a href="#">Annual reports</a> (4 pages)	62-65
<a href="#">Audits</a> (7 pages)	116-122
<a href="#">Backstamping</a> (1 page)	232
<a href="#">Bad order</a> (1 page)	223
<a href="#">Blanks</a> (3 pages)	204-206
<a href="#">Boxes</a> (2 pages)	213-214
<a href="#">Canada</a> (1 page)	171
<a href="#">Cards</a> (7 pages)	29, 86-88, 246-248
<a href="#">Carriers</a> (15 pages)	104-105, 259-271
<a href="#">Clerks</a> (4 pages)	216-219
<a href="#">Commercial papers</a> (2 pages)	167-168
<a href="#">Contracts</a> (3 pages)	58-60
<a href="#">Corner cards</a> (7 pages)	29, 86-88, 246-248
<a href="#">Crimes, postal</a> (16 pages)	487-502
<a href="#">Dead letter office</a> (15 pages)	27-28, 81, 182-186, 226, 242-243, 248-251
<a href="#">Delivery of mail</a> (16 pages)	236-241, 387-396
<a href="#">Difficiency in address supplied</a> (1 page)	251
<a href="#">Domestic mail matter</a> (27 pages)	135-161
<a href="#">Drop letters</a> (3 pages)	136-138
<a href="#">Exchange offices</a> (-8 pages)	254-245
<a href="#">Expenditures</a> (9 pages)	99-107
<a href="#">Fictitious</a> (2 pages)	241, 250
<a href="#">Finances</a> (32 pages)	44-75
<a href="#">First-class mail matter</a> (5 pages)	135-138, 219
<a href="#">Foreign mails</a> (34 pages)	26-27, 161-182, 254-259, 324-327
<a href="#">Forms</a> (3 pages)	204-206
<a href="#">Forwarding</a> (5 pages)	235-236, 281, 390, 405
<a href="#">Fourth-class mail</a> (4 pages)	153-156
<a href="#">Franking privilege</a> (2 pages)	175-176
<a href="#">Fraudulent</a> (3 pages)	159, 396-397
<a href="#">Free matter</a> (9 pages)	174-182
<a href="#">Held for postage</a> (3 pages)	158, 230, 251
<a href="#">Hotel matter</a> (1 page)	250
<a href="#">Incoming mail</a> (22 pages)	231-252
<a href="#">Index</a> (71 pages)	527-597
<a href="#">Inquiries</a> (2 pages)	399-400
<a href="#">Irrelative duties</a> (5 pages)	76-80
<a href="#">Lotteries</a> (3 pages)	158-159, 230
<a href="#">Mail delivery</a> (6 pages)	236-241
<a href="#">Mail in transit</a> (9 pages)	23-31
<a href="#">Mail matter</a> (67 pages)	219-285
<a href="#">Mail messenger service</a> (2 pages)	303-304
<a href="#">Mexico</a> (2 pages)	172-173
<a href="#">Misdirected</a> (3 pages)	158, 224, 230
<a href="#">Missent mail</a> (1 page)	230
<a href="#">Money orders</a> (6 pages)	25-26, 82, 122-124
<a href="#">Money orders, domestic</a> (45 pages)	423-448, 467-485
<a href="#">Money orders, international/foreign</a> (20 pages)	448-467
<a href="#">Newspaper stamps</a> (2 pages)	86, 90
<a href="#">Obscene</a> (4 pages)	158-160, 230

<a href="#">Official matter</a> (-167 pages)	176-8
<a href="#">Organization</a> (36 pages)	9-44
<a href="#">Out of mails</a> (5 pages)	288-292
<a href="#">Outgoing mail</a> (8 pages)	228-230, 376-380
<a href="#">Penalties</a> (9 pages)	125-133
<a href="#">Penalty envelopes</a> (3 pages)	176-178
<a href="#">Periodical stamps</a> (1 page)	90
<a href="#">Post offices</a> (10 pages)	187-188, 210-216, 220
<a href="#">Post roads</a> (3 pages)	293-295
<a href="#">Postage due stamps</a> (2 pages)	91, 234
<a href="#">Postal cards</a> (5 pages)	83-84, 137, 167, 247
<a href="#">Postal notes</a> (9 pages)	477-485
<a href="#">Poste restante</a> (1 page)	404
<a href="#">Postmarking</a> (1 page)	223-223
<a href="#">Postmasters</a> (25 pages)	188-212
<a href="#">Printed matter</a> (2 pages)	167-168
<a href="#">Printing</a> (3 pages)	67-69
<a href="#">Railway mail service</a> (46 pages)	21-22, 105-107, 295-303, 343-371, 419-421
<a href="#">Rates, fees</a> (10 pages)	136-137, 150-151, 156, 170-173, 374
<a href="#">Receiving offices</a> (22 pages)	231-252
<a href="#">Refused mail</a> (3 pages)	247, 398-399
<a href="#">Registration, domestic mail</a> (44 pages)	29, 373-401, 408-421
<a href="#">Registration, foreign mail</a> (8 pages)	401-408
<a href="#">Request matter</a> (3 pages)	246-248
<a href="#">Return receipt</a> (3 pages)	377-378, 403
<a href="#">Returned for better direction</a> (1 page)	230
<a href="#">Returned mail</a> (2 pages)	397-398
<a href="#">Revenues POD</a> (19 pages)	81-99
<a href="#">Safety of the mails</a> (10 pages)	333-342
<a href="#">Sailers' letters</a> (2 pages)	136-137
<a href="#">Samples of merchandise</a> (2 pages)	167, 169
<a href="#">Second-class mail</a> (16 pages)	138-150, 242, 247-248
<a href="#">Ship letters</a> (3 pages)	327-329
<a href="#">Soldiers' letters</a> (2 pages)	136-137
<a href="#">Special delivery service</a> (12 pages)	271-282
<a href="#">Special delivery stamps</a> (2 pages)	29, 91
<a href="#">Special request envelopes</a> (3 pages)	86-88
<a href="#">Stamped envelopes</a> (7 pages)	83-89
<a href="#">Stamps</a> (14 pages)	82-92, 122-124
<a href="#">Star routes</a> (4 pages)	220-221, 305-306
<a href="#">Statutes, index to</a> (-489 pages)	515-25
<a href="#">Steamboat</a> (-923 pages)	305-6, 317-8, 327-9
<a href="#">Table of contents</a> (2 pages)	7, 8
<a href="#">Third-class mail</a> (4 pages)	150-153
<a href="#">Transit mail</a> (2 pages)	230-231
<a href="#">Transportation of the mails</a> (56 pages)	287-342
<a href="#">Unclaimed mail</a> (4 pages)	246-247, 249-250
<a href="#">Underpaid mail</a> (5 pages)	232-235, 391
<a href="#">Universal Postal Union</a> (4 pages)	162-165
<a href="#">Unmailable matter</a> (12 pages)	158-161, 170-172, 224-226, 243-244
<a href="#">Unpaid mail</a> (4 pages)	224, 233-234, 391
<a href="#">Weather reports</a> (1 page)	221
<a href="#">Withdrawal of mail</a> (4 pages)	226-228, 297
<a href="#">Women</a> (1 page)	33

me or by my authority, and which I do not desire delivered to the addressee for the following reasons: \_\_\_\_\_.

It is hereby agreed that if the letter is returned to me, I will protect you from any and all claims made against you for such return, and will fully indemnify you for any loss you may sustain by reason of such action, and I herewith deposit \$— to cover all expenses incurred, and will deliver you the envelope of the letter returned.

[Name.] \_\_\_\_\_.

[Address.] \_\_\_\_\_.

[Receipt.] Received \_\_\_\_\_, 188—, of the postmaster, the above described piece of mail matter for account of the sender.

[Name.] \_\_\_\_\_.

Witness [Name.] \_\_\_\_\_, [Address.] \_\_\_\_\_.

#### AT MAILING OFFICES—DISTRIBUTION AND DISPATCH OF MAILS.

**Sec. 534. General Directions.**—At offices where a superintendent of mails is not employed, postmasters will be governed in the distribution and dispatch of mails—except foreign mails outward from exchange offices, which are under the control of the Superintendent of Foreign Mails—by the orders received from the General Superintendent of Railway Mail Service, or from the division superintendent acting under him in whose jurisdiction the post-office may be. In the absence of other instructions, every postmaster whose post-office is situated upon a railroad, will mail all matter direct to the cars, unless it be addressed to post-offices directly connected with his own by star or steamboat routes. Postmasters at other post-offices will mail to the nearest post-office upon a railroad all matter which cannot be sent direct to its destination by star or steamboat route.

**Sec. 535. Distribution of Mails by Schemes.**—Postmasters will carefully distribute and make up mails by the official schemes which may be furnished them, and will conform to any changes that may be made in the same by the superintendent of the division, and will make up and exchange only such pouches as he may order. But the division superintendent may except any post-office from this requirement.

No change in distribution or dispatch must be made without first obtaining authority from the proper division superintendent of Railway Mail Service, except in cases of emergency; and in all such cases an immediate report, giving the reasons for such change, must be made to the division superintendent.

**Sec. 536. Distribution of Mail by States, &c.**—A distribution or separation should be made only of such mail for States or portions of States as can be advanced thereby. All mail for States of which no distribution is made must be made up “by States,” and facing slips used in accordance with section five hundred and forty-three; that is, letter and circular mail for each State must be made up in packages, and

newspaper mail in canvas sacks, by itself, and the name of the State marked on the slip covering the package or tag attached to the sack.

All other mail, not local, sent to or by way of railroad or steamboat lines, should be made up by States, if sufficient to do so; and if not, then it may be put all in one package, addressed with the name of the railway (or steamboat) office in whose pouch it is dispatched, adding "State of ——," to indicate that it contains other than local mail.

**Sec. 537. Local Mail for Railroad and Steamboat Lines.**—Mail to be dispatched to local post-offices on railroad or steamboat lines should be made up in packages addressed to the proper railway or steamboat offices, and containing only the local mail supplied by that line, as given in the official schemes. Post-offices on railroad lines in making up local mail for such lines, will make for each line two packages, one for the train going each way, and address the packages thus: "—— R. P. O. EAST" (WEST, NORTH, or SOUTH, as the case may be).

**Sec. 538. Letters for Delivery and Distribution in Separate Packages.**—Letter and circular mail for delivery and mail for distribution at a post-office must always be made up in separate packages.

**Sec. 539. Direct Packages.**—Making a direct package is placing all letters for one post-office in a package by themselves, all faced one way, with a plainly-addressed letter on the outside, and a facing slip, bearing the postmark of the office and the name or number of the person making up the package, on the back of the same, faced out. This applies as well to offices using printed slips as to those that do not.

**Sec. 540. Direct Packages for Horse Routes.**—In making up mail to be dispatched by a horse or stage route, a direct package should be tied out for each post-office, including the last one, on such route, so as to facilitate the handling at intermediate offices. Mail to be dispatched from an office on such route on and beyond the last post-office thereon should, as far as possible, be made up "by States," or, if not sufficient to do so, then in one package, marking the name of the last post-office on the slip covering the same, and adding the abbreviation, "Dis.," to indicate that the package is for distribution.

**Sec. 541. No Mail to be Put in Pouch Loose or Under Straps.**—Letter and circular mail must always be properly "faced up" and tied in packages, and never placed in the pouch loose.

After pouches are closed and dispatched from a post-office, letters must not be placed under the strap or attached to the outside of the pouch. If this is done at the station, the postmaster should inform the mail-messenger and have the practice discontinued. (See section 545.)

**Sec. 542. No Through Pouches by Mail Trains.**—Postmasters will make

no through pouches to be dispatched by mail trains unless specially instructed to do so.

**Sec. 543. Facing Slips to be Used.**—Facing slips, bearing postmark with date and time of close or dispatch, and name of person making up the same, must be placed upon each package of letters or circulars, and in each pouch or canvas sack of newspapers, or on the label holder, if any, attached thereto. For form of facing slip, see section 994.

**Sec. 544. No Hooks on Mail Bags.**—The use of hooks in handling mail bags is forbidden.

**Sec. 545. Delivery of Mail Matter on Mail Cars by Postmasters.**—Postmasters are required to dispatch mail to railway post-offices in the lock pouches provided for that purpose, except in the case of a few late letters or postal cards, which they may deliver in person or by a sworn assistant after the postmark of the mailing office has been impressed thereon and the stamps canceled. Such postmarked and canceled letters and postal cards must not be received by the postal clerk from a mail-messenger nor from the public, as after the mail is once deposited in a post-office it cannot again come into the hands of the public until its final delivery. (See sections 532 and 979.)

#### AT OFFICES IN TRANSIT.

**Sec. 546. Missent or Unmailable Matter Inadvertently Sent and Misdirected Matter.**—Misdirected, destructive, or manifestly obscene matter, which should not have been, but through inadvertence may have been, dispatched from the post-office of mailing, should be detained and withdrawn from the mails by any postmaster into whose hands the same may come in transit. But other matter which should have been detained at the office of mailing as "held for postage," "excess of weight or size," "coin," or "lottery" (see section 379), must not be stopped in transit.

Misdirected matter of the first class, if it bear the card or request of the sender, should be withdrawn and returned to him with the words written or stamped thereon, "RETURNED FOR BETTER DIRECTION." (See section 526.)

Missent matter, or that which is plainly addressed, but sent in the wrong direction, should, when discovered, be placed in the first mail going in the proper direction.

**Sec. 547. Mail Stopping Over Night.**—When the mail stops over night where there is a post-office, it must be kept in the post-office, except at points where transfer clerks are on duty during the night in charge of such mail, or where otherwise ordered by the Department.

For time allowed in opening mail, see section 510.

**Sec. 1051. Blanks, &c., to be Used.**—The following blanks and envelopes are also to be used by every postmaster for registration business:

1. Registry Bill, Registry Return Receipt, Registered Package Receipt, Registry Notice, Circular of Inquiry, Registry Quarterly Report, Requisition for Registered-Package Envelopes, Registry Deficiency Report, Registry Tracer. They may be obtained on requisition from the First Assistant Postmaster-General (Division of Supplies). (See section 473.)

2. Registered-package envelopes and registered-package tag envelopes. Supplies of these may be had by applying to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General.

3. At free-delivery offices a book, called Carrier's Delivery Book, is used for the delivery of registered matter by letter carriers.

Postmasters must not allow their supply of registered-package and tag envelopes or any of the blanks or books required in the registry business to become exhausted, but should keep themselves supplied by timely requisitions.

All fourth-class postmasters will write in ink the name of their respective post-offices on each registered-package envelope received by them on their requisitions, such writing to be completed without delay on receipt of fresh supplies. The name of post-office and the State in which located should be written on the back of each registered-package envelope immediately above the space provided for the postmark of mailing office. The writing of the name of post-office on each envelope in advance of the date of mailing will in nowise relieve fourth-class postmasters from legibly postmarking registered package envelopes on the date when actually mailed.

**Sec. 1052. Use of Other than Standard Registration Forms at Large Post-Offices.**—Postmasters at several of the more important post-offices are permitted the use of special registration forms in connection with a system of checks and balances prescribed at such offices.\* Such forms must never be used or changed without special authority from the Third Assistant Postmaster-General.

#### PREPARATION AND DISPATCH OF REGISTERED MATTER.

**Sec. 1053. Matter, how to be Presented for Registration.**—Postmasters, before receiving matter for registration, must require the sender to have it fully, legibly and correctly addressed, the name and address of the sender indorsed upon it, and, if letters, all the contents placed in a firmly sealed envelope, and to have affixed the necessary stamps to pay postage and fee. Postmasters and their employés are forbidden to address the matter, place its contents in the envelope, seal it, or affix the

stamps. Third and fourth-class matter for registration must also be marked "THIRD-CLASS" or "FOURTH-CLASS," as the case may be, and be so wrapped as to safely bear transportation, and easily admit of examination, which the postmaster should make before registering.

(See sections 359 to 373.)

**Sec. 1054. Receiving Mail Matter for Registration.**—When a letter or parcel is presented for registration the postmaster will first examine it to see that the sender has complied with requirements of the preceding section, and if such be the case, he will enter on the registration book the name and address of the sender, name of addressee, and destination of letter or parcel, registered number and date of mailing, filling out alike stub of the book and registry receipt. He will number the letter or parcel to correspond with number on stub and registry receipt, sign the receipt, separate it from the stub, and give it to the sender.

**NOTE.**—Postmasters will erase the word Letter or Parcel on receipt and stub, so that it will read according to the character of article registered.

**Sec. 1055. Number Registered Matter and Registered Package Envelopes.**—The registration book must be commenced each quarter with No. 1, and continued consecutively through the quarter, and the letters or parcels registered correspondingly numbered. Registered-package envelopes are also to be numbered consecutively, commencing each quarter with No. 1.

**Sec. 1056. When matter becomes Registered.**—After a receipt has been given therefor, and the matter has been numbered as prescribed in the preceding sections, the letter or parcel becomes registered, and must be guarded with the utmost care.

**Sec. 1057. Letter Carriers not to Accept Matter for Registration.**—Letter carriers are forbidden to receive letters or parcels to be afterwards registered at the post-office.

**Sec. 1058. Cancellation of Stamps, Registry Mark, and Postmark.**—All stamps on registered matter must be effectually canceled, and the letter or parcel marked plainly REGISTERED, and plainly postmarked.

**Sec. 1059. Registered Matter to be Kept Secure.**—All registered matter must be kept separate from ordinary matter, and so as to be secure from accident or theft. No unauthorized person should be permitted to have access to the place where registered matter is kept. The postmaster will be held accountable for all registered matter coming into his post-office.

**Sec. 1060. The Registry-Return Receipt.**—A registry-return receipt must be filled out for and accompany every domestic letter or parcel addressed to any post-office in the United States or Territories. On the face of



such receipt must be written the name of the sender, street and number, or post-office box, name of post-office, county, and State. The space for stamp of post-office is reserved for post-office of delivery. On the other side must be entered date of mailing, registry number, mailing post-office and State, and address of the registered letter or parcel.

**Sec. 1061. The Registry Bill.**—A registry bill must be prepared to accompany the registered letter or parcel, and must, on its face, be filled out with the name of the mailing post-office, county, and State (the place for stamp is reserved for post-office of destination); on the other side, in the heading, the date of mailing, mailing post-office, post-office of destination, county and State, number of registered-package envelope in which it is to be inclosed, and in proper columns in body of bill the registry number of letter or parcel, class, whether first, third, or fourth, name of addressee, and signed and postmarked with date of actual mailing. This bill must be inclosed with the letter in the registered-package envelope, and on its arrival at destination, if contents of envelope agree with it, is to be properly signed and returned by first mail to the mailing postmaster. All domestic registered letters or parcels for the same post-office are to be entered on one bill and inclosed in one registered-package envelope when practicable. When this cannot be done, a separate registry bill must be made out for the contents of each registered-package envelope. Special bills in sheet form may be used by large post-offices when necessary. No blanks must be left between entries on the bill, and a diagonal line should be drawn with the pen from the last item across the bill to the place for signature. Postmasters receiving bills with such blank spaces should fill them in by waved lines made with the pen. (See section 1104.)

**Sec. 1062. Registered-Package Envelope.**—In all cases where it is possible, registered matter must be inclosed in registered-package envelopes, which are to be used for no other purpose than to cover registered mail matter in its transmission from the receiving post-office to post-office of delivery. They must securely inclose the registered matter they convey, be plainly addressed, without abbreviation, to post-office of destination, county, and State, be distinctly numbered, and legibly postmarked with the postmark of the mailing post-office and date of mailing. Special care must be used in postmarking and sealing them. Penalty envelopes must never be used as substitutes for registered-package envelopes. Registered-package envelopes should never be sent out of the country. (See sec. 1156.)

**Sec. 1063. Preparing Matter for Dispatch.**—The registered letter or parcel with registry bill and registry-return receipt must be placed together in a registered-package envelope, addressed to the same post-

office as the letter or parcel. The number of the registered-package envelope must then, and not before, be entered on the stubs of the registration book describing such letters and parcels as are inclosed in the envelope. In cases where registered matter is also for special delivery, the words "FOR SPECIAL DELIVERY" must be written by the mailing postmaster conspicuously across the registered-package envelope. The registered-package envelope must then be firmly sealed.

**Sec. 1064. Responsibility for Losses Growing out of Failure to Seal Envelope.**—If a registered-package envelope be dispatched from a post-office unsealed or unaddressed, and a depredation be committed on such unsealed package, which cannot be traced directly to the person committing it, the mailing postmaster may be held responsible for the loss because of his neglect of duty. Postmasters and postal clerks should report every instance of this irregularity.

**Sec. 1065. Matter too Large to go in Registered-Package Envelopes.**—When a registered letter or parcel of first-class matter is too bulky to be securely inclosed and sealed in a registered-package envelope, such matter, together with the registry bill and registry-return receipt, must be wrapped with strong paper, and the wrapper thus made must be provided with broad flaps and thoroughly sealed in every part with mucilage. A registered-package envelope must be split open and securely gummed or sealed on the wrapper, made up as above directed, so as to expose both faces of the envelope for address and for record of transit. The same course is to be pursued for parcels of third and fourth class matter too large for inclosure in registered-package envelopes where the postmaster has suffered his supply of registered-package tag envelopes to become exhausted.

**Sec. 1066. Registered-Package Tag Envelope.**—Where registered parcels of third and fourth class matter are too large for inclosure in registered-package envelopes, postmasters should use registered-package tag envelopes, in which must be placed the registry-return receipt and registry bill. Each parcel should have a separate tag. The tag envelope should be attached to the registered parcel, invariably on the address side, by passing a stout twine around the tag, and then through the eyelet holes, when it should be knotted loosely, and then tied firmly about the parcel, or at the cross fastenings of the parcel. Samples showing the manner of tying are furnished by the Department, one of which should be posted up in every post-office. Postmasters should promptly report to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General all cases where tags are not tied according to the samples furnished.

Registered-package tag envelopes should be addressed, indorsed, and

preserved on file, the same as registered-package envelopes, and should be numbered in the series with them. The tags should never be used on sealed matter or on parcels which can be inclosed in registered-package envelopes.

Postal officers will refasten any tag envelopes torn off or damaged in transit by tying firmly across the tag and reattaching to parcel.

**Sec. 1067. Registered-Package Receipt.**—After a registered package has been made up for dispatch, a registered-package receipt (except in cases where billed in registered pouches or hand-to-hand receipts on books can be taken) must be filled out in the manner described in the following section, and sent in the same pouch with the registered package, but tied on top of the bundle of letters which is first to be handled by the official receiving the same. The pouch must be locked, and the lock tried to ascertain if it has been securely fastened. Registered matter and registered-package receipts must never be inclosed in a newspaper or tie sack.

**Sec. 1068. Making out Registered-Package Receipts.**—Postmasters and postal clerks, in making out and returning registered-package receipts, will be governed by the following directions:

1. The sending official will fill the blanks provided for the return address, and then, on the reverse side of the card, will enter, in the column arranged for the purpose, a description of the packages dispatched, writing the letter "R" for ordinary registered packages, and the letter "S" for packages of stamps, stamped envelopes, or postal cards. The numbers of packages, the name and date of postmark of the mailing office, and the office of address must also be written in, and the receipt must be postmarked at the lower left-hand corner with date of its dispatch.

2. The page of the postmaster's or postal clerk's record may also be entered in the space provided therefor.

3. Transit packages as well as packages of local origin are to be entered on the same receipt.

4. No blanks should be left between the entries where there are two or more items on a receipt; and after the last entry a diagonal line should be drawn with the pen from the left of the card to the lower right-hand corner.

5. If blank lines or spaces should, in violation of these rules, be left on the receipt by the dispatching official, the receiver should fill them with wavy lines made with the pen before returning it. Every such case should be promptly reported to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General.