

## Physical Standards for Commercial Letters and Postcards

### Overview

#### Card Dimensions

	Length	Minimum 5 inches	Maximum 9 inches
	Height	3-1/2 inches	6 inches
	Thickness	0.007 inch	0.016 inch

#### Letter Dimensions

	Length	Minimum 5 inches	Maximum 11-1/2 inches
	Height	3-1/2 inches	6-1/8 inches
	Thickness	0.007 inch	1/4 inch

Mailpieces are classified by shape and by the way they are prepared. These classifications are based on how efficiently mailpieces can be processed on Postal Service equipment. The Postal Service classifies letters and cards into one of three categories: machinable, nonmachinable, and automation. For the purposes of determining mailability or machinability the length is the dimension parallel to the address as read ([601.1.1.2](#)).

#### Machinable Letters and Cards ([201.1.0](#))

To be “machinable” and eligible for “presort” prices, letters and cards must have an accurate address and be able to be processed on Postal Service equipment. Machinable mailpieces must meet specific standards, including size, shape, and weight.

Maximum weight: First-Class Mail, machinable letters and USPS Marketing Mail machinable letters: 3.5 ounces. Periodicals letters: 3.5 ounces.

Machinable letters must not meet any of the nonmachinable characteristics ([201.2.0](#)).

Dimensions:

- Minimum: 5 inches long, 3-1/2 inches high, and 0.007 inch thick. For letter and card pieces 0.009 inch thick, more than 4-1/4 inches high or 6 inches long, or both.
- Maximum for First-Class Mail card prices: 9 inches long, 6 inches high, and 0.016 inch thick.
- Maximum for letters and other cards: 11-1/2 inches long, 6-1/8 inches high, and 1/4 inch thick.
- Rectangular, with four square corners and parallel opposite sides. Letter-size, card-type mailpieces made of cardstock may have finished corners that do not exceed a radius of 1/8 inch.

#### Nonmachinable Letters ([201.2.0](#))

Maximum weight: First-Class Mail and Periodicals nonmachinable letters, 3.5 ounces; USPS Marketing Mail nonmachinable letters, less than 16 ounces.

- Presorted First-Class Mail letters are subject to a nonmachinable surcharge if they meet any of the characteristics in [201.2.1](#). Larger postcards must meet the required aspect ratio.
- USPS Marketing Mail letters that have one or more of the nonmachinable characteristics in [201.2.1](#) are subject to the nonmachinable letter prices in [243.1.3](#).

Examples of a nonmachinable letter include:

- It has an aspect ratio (length divided by height) of less than 1.3 or more than 2.5 (a square envelope has an aspect ratio of 1, making it nonmachinable).
- It is more than 4-1/4 inches high or more than 6 inches long and is less than 0.009 inch thick.
- It has clasps, strings, buttons, or similar closure devices.
- It is too rigid.
- It has a delivery address parallel to the shorter side of the mailpiece.
- It contains items such as pens, pencils, or keys that create an uneven thickness.
- Letters with nonpaper surfaces, other than envelope windows or attachments that are allowed under eligibility standards by class of mail.

### Automation Letters and Cards (201.3.0)

Letter-size mailpieces that are machinable and display the correct delivery point barcode or Intelligent Mail barcode may qualify for lower “automation” prices. A letter or card meets automation standards and qualifies for automation prices if it meets the specific addressing, barcoding, and design standards.

For additional information, see:

- [Quick Service Guide 201a](#), Designing Letters and Cards for Automated Processing.
- [Quick Service Guide 201b](#), Using Tabs, Wafer Seals, and Glue Strips.

Maximum weight:

- First-Class Mail automation letters: 3.5 ounces.
- Periodicals automation letters: 3.5 ounces.
- USPS Marketing Mail automation letters and carrier route letters: 3.5 ounces.
- See [201.3.6](#) for heavy letter mail weighing over 3 ounces.

Shape: rectangular. Aspect ratio (length divided by height): 1.3 to 2.5 ([201.3.7](#)).

Dimensions:

- Minimum: 5 inches long, 3-1/2 inches high, and 0.007 inch thick. For letter-size and postcard pieces 0.009 inch thick, more than 4-1/4 inches high or 6 inches long, or both.
- Maximum for First-Class Mail card prices: 6 inches high, 9 inches long, and 0.016 inch thick.
- Maximum for letters and other cards: 6-1/8 inches high, 11-1/2 inches long, and 1/4 inch thick.

Length is the dimension parallel to the address as read ([601.1.1.2](#)).

All letter-size reply cards and envelopes (Business Reply Mail, Courtesy Reply Mail, and meter reply mail) provided as enclosures must meet the physical standards for automation letters and cards in [201.3.17](#).

### Quick Service Guides

#### First-Class Mail

See Quick Service Guides:

- [230a Nonmachinable Letters](#)
- [230b Machinable Letters and Cards](#)
- [230c Automation Letters and Cards](#)

#### USPS Marketing Mail

See Quick Service Guides:

- [240a Nonmachinable Letters](#)
- [240b Machinable Letters](#)
- [240c Automation Letters](#)
- [240d Carrier Route Letters](#)

#### Periodicals

See Quick Service Guides:

- [207c Nonbarcoded Letters](#)
- [207e Barcoded \(Automation\) Letters](#)