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## Producing Your Mailpiece

### Print quality mailpieces.

Print your mailpieces according to the manufacturer's procedures for your printing platform. Contact your inkjet manufacturer for best practices based on specific experiences from internal testing and customer feedback with the MERLIN™ program.

Follow these tips to print quality mailpieces that meet [Domestic Mail Manual \(DMM®\)](#) standards:

- Note the quality measures needed to produce barcodes of consistently high quality when using older technology (such as impact printers).
- Use a 22 bar-per-inch POSTNET barcode when printing with an inkjet printer. If another font is required, be cautious and consider MERLIN testing prior to actual production.
- In general, don't push the limits on specifications. Use settings that are in the middle of allowed limits, and exercise caution if you must approach the limits.
- Conduct MERLIN testing in advance. The results can determine if you are approaching any of the barcode limitations.

Machine operators, mechanics, and set-up personnel should keep a verification checklist of these procedures before initiating production:

- Ensure clearance around the barcode (clearance applies to edges of Cheshire or PSL labels, window envelopes, other printing, and knockout areas).
- Pull samples frequently during production to ensure that mail is run as intended during setup. Use the eyepiece reticle to examine the barcode specifications. Use letter template (Notice 67) for automation letter review and form template (Notice 124) for automation flats. Templates are available at your local [Business Mail Entry Unit](#). Use Postal Service™ templates for:
  - Accurate address and barcode placement
  - Specifications for barcode characteristics
- Make sure the POSTNET barcode has the correct number of bars. Missing start or end bars or missing digits in barcode generation within software can cause barcode errors.
- Do not "jog" mailpieces scheduled for production. Jogging causes the piece to shift temporarily and hinders encoder operation. There is a high likelihood of print variation on jogged pieces.

### Related Services & Links

[Domestic Mail Manual](#)

[Mailpiece Design Introduction](#)

[Mailpiece Design Analyst Introduction](#)

[Mailpiece Design Analyst Lookup](#)





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## Reviewing Your Mailpiece

**Review your mailpieces before they are presented for acceptance.**

Examine all mailpiece designs before presenting for acceptance to confirm they meet [Domestic Mail Manual \(DMM®\) standards](#).

Contact your local [Mailpiece Design Analyst \(MDA\)](#) for an appointment to have your sample mailpieces tested. The sample should be between 25-50 pieces for each design. The MDA will test the samples and provide a feedback report.

Develop a complete test plan, and analyze high-risk pieces first. The test plan will vary depending on the size and type of your business. Use the reports to update your high-risk pieces.

These factors should be considered when developing a test plan:

- Mailpiece types
- Paper stock and coatings
- Addressing/barcoding platforms
- Barcode fonts available
- Location of address/barcode printers, transport bases, inserters, web press, bindery equipment, etc.

Keep a record of all test results, and use a grid to identify and investigate trends. Make sure you are able to interpret the MERLIN™ program diagnostic reports.

### Related Services & Links

[Domestic Mail Manual](#)[Mailpiece Design Introduction](#)[Mailpiece Design Analyst Introduction](#)[Mailpiece Design Analyst Lookup](#)[Site Map](#)[Customer Service](#)[Forms](#)[Gov't Services](#)[Careers](#)[Privacy Policy](#)[Terms of Use](#)[Business Customer Gateway](#)

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## Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee

### Issue Identification Form

<b>Issue Number</b>	70
<b>Status</b>	Completed
<b>Issue Category</b>	Communications
<b>Date Submitted</b>	4/25/2002
<b>Date Accepted</b>	
<b>Target Completion Date</b>	9/20/2002
<b>Initial Closure Date</b>	9/15/2002
<b>Final Closure Date</b>	11/06/2002

**Issue Title** Mailer Barcode Quality Ind. Best Practices

**Issue Originator** Michele Denny

**Originator Association** United States Postal Service

**USPS Sponsor** Michele Denny

**Leadership Committee Sponsor** Robert O'Brien

**Issue Statement** With the assistance of USPS management and involved industry mailers, prepare and provide recommendations for best practices for mailer barcode quality as determined through the Merlin verification process. These guidelines to include: industry best practices to improve barcode quality for letters and flats; value added reports for diagnostics of barcode quality; suggestions on a Merlin users guide/brochure for customers; and a communications plan for dissemination of the guidelines.

**Impact on Other Issues or Procedures** None.

**Desired Results** To enhance mailers' ability to produce quality barcodes.

**Industry Work Group Leaders** Wanda Senne      **Association** National Association of Advertising Distributors I

**USPS Work Group Leaders** Scott Hamel      **Association** United States Postal Service

**Latest Work Group News**

**Resolution** As of November 5-- The workgroup included USPS, mailer, ink jet vendor and Bell & Howell (MERLIN mfg) personnel. The workgroup last met in Rosslyn on November 5 to review answers to a number of outstanding questions from the industry. Some answers remain forthcoming and they will be provided to the industry. The September issue of Mailers Companion and the USPS web site contain the group's finished work products. These products fully satisfied the group's mission and the group accordingly was sunsetted at the November MTAC meeting after a briefing by the 2 work group leaders -- Wanda Senne and Scott Hamel.

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## Ensuring Quality Mail Preparation

### Prepare your mail for automation rates.

In addition to helping you to qualify for reduced postage rates, quality mail preparation benefits mailers in several ways:

- Prevents delays in processing
- Saves costs of reworking mailings
- Lowers USPS® transportation and processing costs
- Increases delivery rates

Establish a [Mail Preparation Total Quality Management](#) (MPTQM) operation to ensure your mail meets standard quality levels. The best practices in the following sections can be incorporated within that program:

- Training - Get course and registration information for MERLIN™ program customer training
- Designing Your Mailpiece – Learn how to design quality mailpieces.
- Reviewing Your Mailpiece – Review your mailpieces before the MERLIN verification process.
- Producing Your Mailpiece – Understand how to print quality mailpieces.
- Maintaining Your Printer Hardware – Keep your hardware prepared to print your mailpieces.
- Reviewing and Tracking Reports – Examine the results of all reports to identify maintenance or equipment issues.

#### Related Services & Links

[Domestic Mail Manual](#)
[Mailpiece Design Analyst Locator](#)


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## Designing Your Mailpiece

### Create a practical but effective mailpiece.

Ensure that adequate margins for manufacturing tolerances are built into the design. Of particular concern are mailpieces designed such that addressing and barcode placement must be exact in order to meet the [Domestic Mail Manual \(DMM®\)](#); or final piece size is exactly on the dividing line between rate categories (letter to flat, flat to parcel). Pieces designed to these specifications may produce a wide variety of results when run on MERLIN™ program. Consider the variations that are introduced during the multiple production phases involved in producing a mailpiece:

The variations that occur during production include:

- Offset printing registration
- Trim, bindery, and finishing tolerances
- Image placement variations
- MERLIN image processing variations

#### Related Services & Links

[Domestic Mail Manual](#)[Quick Service Guide – Designing Letters and Cards for Automated Processing](#)[Quick Service Guide – Tabs and Wafer Seals](#)[Quick Service Guide – Designing Flats for Automated Processing](#)[Designing Letter & Reply Mail](#)[Mailpiece Design Analyst Lookup](#)