Share Mail Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What are the prerequisites to participation?
Mailers who would like to participate will need the following prior to enrollment:
1. An account on the USPS Business Customer Gateway (an account holder can create and access an account at https://gateway.usps.com).
2. A USPS CAPS account
3. A valid Business Reply Mail or Postage Due Permit linked to the CAPS account
4. The ability to print on each mailpiece either a static IMb (a barcode that does not vary by mailpiece) or a unique IMb (a barcode that does vary by mailpiece).

How do I get to the USPS Business Customer Gateway and create an account?
An account can be created online at https://gateway.usps.com.

How do I get a CAPS account?
**Step 1:** You need to open a postage due account at your local post office. There are no fees associated with the postage due account you just have to have an account number in place when you complete the CAPS forms. You can go to the Bulk Mail Entry Unit and ask to open a postage due account.

**Step 2:** After obtaining postage due account number go to https://caps.usps.gov/caps_qa.asp. You will need to complete forms 6001, 6002 and 6003 which can be found at: https://caps.usps.gov/capsform.asp. They are short and ask the same information on each form. Sign and mail the forms back to the CAPS Service Center (the cannot be sent electronically).

Complete the CAPS application forms available on this Web site. Sign and mail (they cannot be sent electronically) the original forms to:

CAPS Service Center
US Postal Service
2700 Campus Drive
San Mateo CA 94497-9442

The CAPS Service Center is available to answer questions and assist with problems Monday through Friday, from 7:00 AM until 4:00 PM Pacific Standard time. Please contact the CAPS Service Center at:

Telephone 650-377-1334
FAX 650-377-5336
E-mail ssmctas@email.usps.gov
Once I have completed the prerequisites, how do I apply for the Share Mail program?
You need to complete the Alternate Postage Program customer application form and submit form to the Program Management Office (PMO) at sharemail@usps.gov.

Creating Mailpieces and Submitting Designs for Review and Approval

What happens after registration?
Once registration is complete, the Postal Service assigns the account holder a nine-digit mailer ID — the account holder may use this ID only on Share Mail letters or postcards. At this point, you can begin designing your mailpiece.

What are the required elements of the mailpiece?
A layout guide is available on RIBBS which details the mailpiece specifications: https://ribbs.usps.gov/index.cfm?page=sharemail

A Share Mail piece must contain each of the following three elements:

1. Intelligent Mail barcode: The Postal Service uses the account holder-generated IMb to track and count Share Mail letters and postcards for payment and reporting purposes as the mailpieces travel through the mailstream.
   - Mailer ID: The account holder can use the MID assigned for Share Mail only on Share Mail letters or postcards. The Postal Service assigns one MID for letters and a different MID for postcards. The account holder is allowed to use the same MID regardless of whether the mailpiece has a static or unique IMb.
   - Service Type Identifiers: Each type of IMb (unique or static) is distinguished by a Service Type Identifier (STID), which the Postal Service uses to identify, differentiate, and properly account for Share Mail pieces. The STIDs for the Share Mail product offering are 733 for mailpieces with unique IMbs, and 734 for mailpieces with static IMbs.

2. Facing Identification Mark: The Postal Services requires a special Facing Identification Mark — FIM E — for Share Mail letters and postcards. The Postal Services uses FIM E to orient the mailer’s Share Mail letter or postcard for processing. The account holder may not use FIM E for any mailings other than Share Mail.

3. Indicia: The indicia must appear in the upper right corner of the address side of the Share Mail letter or postcard.

What if I need additional MIDs?
You can email the program office at sharemail@usps.gov to request additional MIDs.

How do I submit designs for review?
The account holder must email all mailpiece sample designs to the Program Office for review at sharemail@usps.gov. The provided image must be a high-quality electronic image, and the design must appear exactly as it will be printed and must contain either defined outer edges or crop marks. All required elements must be on the design (Indicia, IMb, FIM-E and STID)

**What is the turnaround time for review?**
The entire review and approval process may take up to 7 business days and is done via email. Program participants should not print Share Mail pieces until final approval is obtained.

**If I need assistance in creating the print-quality image, can USPS assist me?**
Companies can create camera-ready artwork at Automate Business Reply Mail website (www.usps.com/abrm). The system provides two options for companies to create artwork with a FIM E, Indicia and static barcode and users who want just a FIM E and Indicia only and create the unique barcode separately.

**How do I get information about creating an Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMb)?**
Information is available on RIBBS at the following link: https://ribbs.usps.gov/index.cfm?page=intellmailmailpieces.

**What if I change my mailpiece design – do I need to resubmit it for review?**
Yes, please submit new designs to the Program Office for review. (Note: changes to preprinted addresses do not require review.)

**GENERAL PRODUCT QUESTIONS**

**What happens if the letter entering the mail exceeds 1 ounce?**
The Share Mail price factors in the possibility that some customers may add photos and other items to the envelope. There is no need to weigh or measure these cards and they will be processed without additional postage.

**What happens if the letter or postcard enters the mail but doesn’t get a scan?**
A portion of the postage is paid to the Postal Service when a letter or postcard is printed or distributed, even if it is never mailed or scanned. Our preproduction tests revealed a very low “no scan” risk, which was factored into the premium price.

**What is the pricing for Share Mail?**
Please visit the Price List, Notice 123: http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/notice123.htm#c096

**Do I need to sign an agreement with the Postal Service to use Share Mail?**
No, once registered, you must comply with the terms and conditions of the program outlined in the Share Mail PUB 600, http://blue.usps.gov/cpim/pubid.htm

Is there a minimum volume to participate in Share Mail?
No, there is no minimum volume to participate in the program.

If there are mailpieces that are scanned after I discontinue producing mailpieces, what price do I pay?
The customer is liable for all the mailpieces outlined in the Share Mail PUB 600 even when the customer no longer produces Share Mail mailpieces. Please note that Share Mail mailpieces are based on prevailing rate found in Price Notice 123.

Is Share Mail available for Flats or First-Class Mail Parcels?
No, Flats and parcels are processed differently from letters and postcards. At this time, we do not have the capabilities to extend Share Mail to flats or parcels.

**USPS MAIL PROCESSING**

If the Share Mail piece is addressed to someone who has moved will it get forwarded like other First-Class Mail?
Yes. The letters and postcards will be forwarded if the U.S. Postal Service has a change-of-address notice on file that has not expired.

Will the Share Mail letters or postcards take longer to be delivered than other First-Class Mail?
No. The letters or postcards are processed and delivered like First-Class Mail items with postage.

Can the Share Mail letter or postcard be sent to international addresses?
No. Share Mail pieces can be mailed only to domestic addresses within the United States to APO/FPO/DPO locations.

**PAYMENTS AND REPORTING**

How are payments made?
Payment is made via a CAPS account. The customer’s account is debited after Share Mail pieces are scanned in the mailstream by mail processing equipment.
How can I track my mailpieces and what kind of reports does USPS provide?

Customers who are using unique IMbs can track their mailpieces through the IMb Tracing service. This is a free service that provides real-time tracking information for your automation-compatible letters or postcards. For more information, please visit https://mailtracking.usps.com.

For more information regarding Share Mail, please contact us at sharemail@usps.gov.