

# W 17

Once a young man who wanted to become a great writer, asked to define "great," said, "I want to write stuff that will make the whole world scream, cry, howl in pain and anger!"

*He now works for Microsoft, writing error messages.*

Wednesday  
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## 5 tips on qualifying for maximum USPS postage discounts

Producing direct-mail pieces that qualify for the biggest postal discounts is a lot harder job than most advertisers realize. Knowing and respecting U.S. Postal Service requirements can cut a mailing's postage costs by thousands of dollars—or by as much as 15%.

### ■ Barcodes and FIMS

Barcodes should be printed only if the piece's designer has the proper templates. It is possible to create a usable barcode using standard design programs such as CorelDraw or Adobe Illustrator. However, it is easier—and safer—to use one of several available programs that automatically create barcodes with the proper thickness, height and spacing.

Barcodes must be placed in one of four locations: below the city, state, and ZIP addressing line... above the address line containing the recipient's name...above or below the keyline information... or above or below the optional endorsement line.

Postal regulations also require at least 1/25" of clearance between the barcode and any information line above or below it, as well as 1/8" of space between the left and right edges of the barcode and any adjacent printing.

### ■ Clear Zones

USPS regulations on clear zones on business reply cards and envelopes dictate that the top of the barcode clear zone must be a minimum of 5/8" from the bottom edge. Also, the FIM clear zone must extend 5/8"

from the top edge. The bottom edge of the barcode must be at least 1/4", and the top edge no more than 7/16", from the bottom edge of the piece.

### ■ Background color

Dark paper colors are no-nos. White works best.

### ■ Indicias

Using the wrong indicia can cause your piece to be charged a postage rate several times higher than need be.

Often, an indicia from a clip-art file is placed on the piece to indicate its placement, not its actual postage. That just invites costly trouble. Placing the proper indicia in the design phase eliminates a potentially costly mistake.

### ■ The Tap Test

The tap test is a quick way to be sure that any printed information that can be read through the envelope's window always shows through that window. At least 1/8" of clear space should exist around all sides of the address area. Use a stuffed full-size mailing dummy. Tap it on all four sides to check movement of the text within the window. If part of it disappears at any angle, it may not make its way through the postal system.

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