

IT'S TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

TOP 10 EXPERT TIPS FOR FLAWLESS HOLIDAY MAILING

Wrapping and gifting done — or at least almost! Be sure to help your readers avoid the last-minute mailing and shipping rush to keep the season merry. Take note of these common tips sure to keep the season bright — and Santa busy!

1. Print addresses clearly and in all CAPS and be sure to include all address elements — apartment numbers, suite numbers, directional information for streets. For example: 123 S Main St. or 12456 Elm St. N.
2. Include both “to” and “from” information on packages — and only on one side. Mark packages, “Fragile,” in large print on the outside of the box when shipping breakable materials.
3. Never guess a ZIP Code. Visit usps.com to find all ZIP Codes.
4. Select a box that is strong enough to protect the contents. Leave space for cushioning inside. Do not reuse mailing boxes — they weaken in the shipping process. Customers can purchase ReadyPost boxes at a local Post Office. Express Mail and Priority Mail boxes, envelopes and tubes are free. With Priority Mail Flat Rate Boxes, if it fits, it ships.
5. Cushion contents with shredded or rolled newspaper, bubble wrap or foam peanuts. Plain air-popped popcorn also is good for cushioning — it's inexpensive and environmentally friendly. Pack contents tightly to avoid shifting during transit.
6. Always use tape that is designed for shipping, such as pressure-sensitive tape, nylon-reinforced craft paper tape or glass-reinforced pressure-sensitive tape. Do not use wrapping paper, string, masking tape or cellophane tape.
7. Place an extra label or notice with the delivery and return address inside the package. This ensures the safe return of an item that could not be delivered should the outside label become damaged or fall off.
8. Remove batteries from toys. Wrap and place them next to the toys in the mailing box. Customers should include the new batteries in the manufacturer's packaging.
9. Stuff glass and fragile, hollow items, like vases, with newspaper or packing material to avoid damage. When mailing framed photographs, take the glass out of the frame and wrap it separately.
10. Customers preparing international packages can complete customs forms, pay postage, print a shipping label and receive a discount, too, online at usps.com/clicknship.

And don't forget — Express Mail delivery occurs on Christmas Day in many metropolitan areas. **Dec. 22 is the mailing deadline** to most locations.

