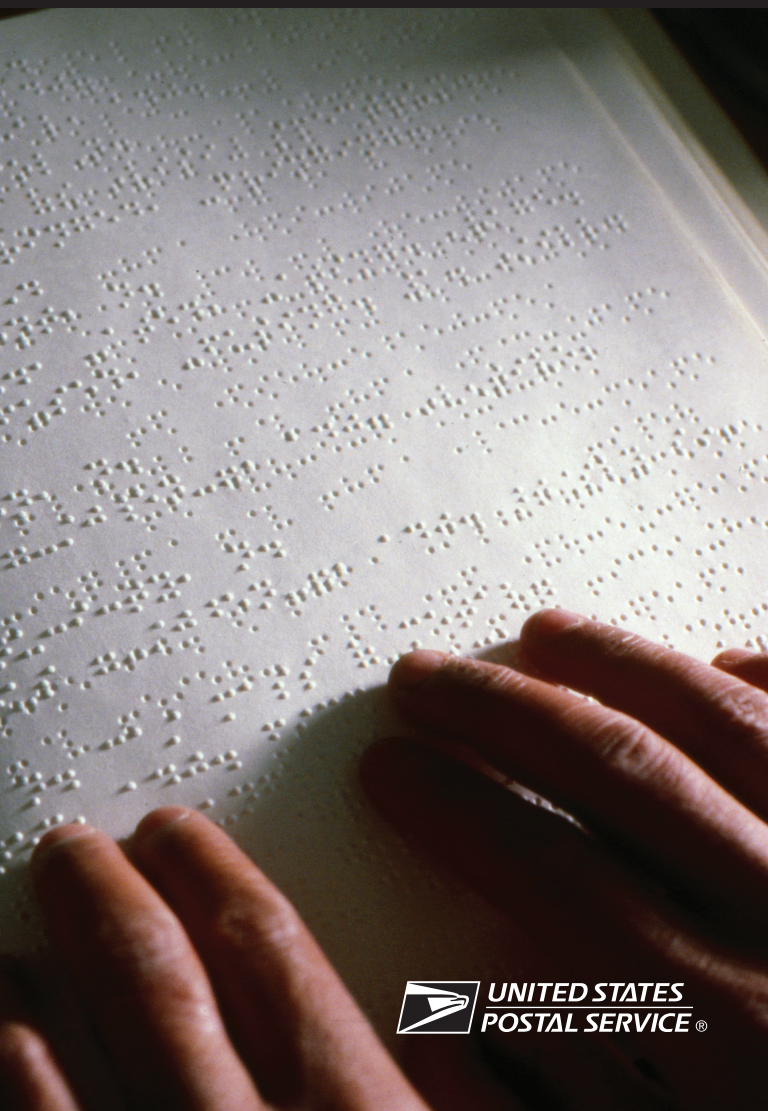


Mailing Free Matter for Persons Who are Blind or Visually Impaired

Questions and Answers

Publication 347
August 2024



**UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE®**

The Consumer Advocate of the U.S. Postal Service® has produced this pamphlet. The pamphlet answers the questions asked most often about mailing free matter domestically for the blind and other eligible persons with impairments. The information in this pamphlet is based on the 39 *United States Code* sections 3403-3405, as implemented by 703.5.0 of the *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, Domestic Mail Manual* (DMM®).

Q: Who is eligible to mail items free of postage due to a physical impairment?

A: Persons who are blind or who cannot read or use conventionally printed matter due to a physical impairment (referred to throughout this brochure as “eligible persons”), as follows:

- a. Certified participants in the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled at the Library of Congress.
- b. Blind persons that fit one of the following criteria:
 - (1) Visual acuity, as determined by competent authority, is 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting lenses, or
 - (2) Widest diameter of visual field subtends angular distance no greater than 20 degrees.
- c. Other persons with physical

impairments certified by a competent authority as meeting one or more of the following conditions:

- (1) Having a visual disability, with correction and regardless of optical measurement, that prevents the reading of standard printed material.
- (2) Being unable to read or to use standard printed material because of physical limitations.
- (3) Having a reading disability resulting from organic dysfunction that is severe enough to prevent their reading printed material in a normal manner.
- (4) Meeting the requirements of eligibility resulting from a degenerative, variable disease that renders them unable to read or

use conventional printed material because of impaired eyesight or other physical factors. These persons are eligible during the time in which they are certified by a competent authority as unable to read or use conventional materials.

d. Persons must be:

- (1) Residents of the United States, including its territories, insular possessions, and the District of Columbia, or
 - (2) American citizens domiciled abroad.
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Q: I fit in one of those categories. What must I do to qualify to mail items free of postage?

A: You may have a competent authority certify in writing that you are unable to read conventional reading matter.

- A competent authority includes doctors of medicine; doctors of osteopathy; ophthalmologists; optometrists; registered nurses; therapists; and professional staff of hospitals, institutions, and public or private welfare agencies (e.g., social workers, caseworkers, counselors, rehabilitation teachers, and superintendents).
- In the absence of any of these, certification may be made by professional librarians or by any person whose competence under specific circumstances is acceptable to the Library of Congress (see 36 CFR 701.10(b)(2)(i)). In the case of a reading disability from organic dysfunction, “competent authority”

is defined as doctors of medicine and doctors of osteopathy.

A postmaster may extend the free matter privilege to you based on his or her personal knowledge of your eligibility. Persons who are not considered to be blind or unable to read or use conventionally printed material who want to use the free matter privilege for mailing must provide evidence of eligibility, or verify by other means, that the intended recipient of the mail matter is eligible to receive free matter.

Q: Where must I submit the evidence of eligibility?

A: You must submit the evidence of eligibility to the Post Office™ where you will make or receive postage-free mailings. Upon verification, you will then be considered eligible to use the free mailing privilege.

Q: What can I, as an eligible person, mail free of postage?

A: An eligible person may mail the following free of postage:

- a. Unsealed letters that contain no advertising. The letters must be printed in raised characters (Braille), in 14-point or larger sight-saving type, or be in the form of sound recordings.
- b. Any of the eligible matter for the use of eligible persons, as described in the next question.

You cannot mail free of postage handwritten, printed, or typed letters that are in a type size smaller than 14-point. These letters are subject to the applicable rate. Other items not eligible for free postage include the following:

- Bills paid by an eligible person, and
- Letters in any form from sighted individuals to eligible persons.

Q: What matter may I, a non-eligible person, send free of postage for the use of eligible persons?

A: Under the conditions specified below, the following matter is eligible:

1. Reading matter in Braille or 14-point or larger sight-saving type, musical scores, and sound reproductions.
2. Paper, records, tapes, and other matter for the production of reading matter, musical scores, or sound reproductions.
3. Equipment and parts for equipment, such as Braille writers, used for writing by eligible persons or for educational purposes.
4. Sound playback equipment, reproducers, and parts for sound reproductions specially designed or adapted for the use of persons with visual impairments.

5. Equipment or parts for equipment specifically designed or adapted for use by persons with visual impairments, such as Braille watches, white canes, and similar equipment.
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Q: Are there restrictions on this matter?

A: The following restrictions apply to this matter:

- May not contain any advertising.
- Must be sent either free of charge or at a charge, rental, subscription, or other fee that does not exceed the item's cost.
- Must be open to inspection by the Postal Service[™] and have a complete return address.
- Must meet all other generally applicable mailing requirements.

Note: Empty shipping materials for mailing eligible matter may not be sent free and must bear the full applicable postage.

Q: Who can mail eligible matter postage-free and to whom can it be mailed?

A: Individuals, libraries, and other noncommercial organizations, which serve eligible persons, may mail eligible matter free of postage to persons or organizations serving such persons who meet the eligibility requirements. Eligible persons may return eligible matter to these mailers free of postage. Eligible persons may exchange eligible matter among themselves free of postage. Libraries and other noncommercial organizations may exchange such matter among themselves free of postage.

Commercial producers of the eligible matter may mail

such matter free of postage to an eligible person on the additional condition that if a charge or fee is required it does not exceed the cost of the matter.

Q: What class of mail is this matter?

A: It is not considered part of any particular class of mail. However, it is treated as First-Class Mail® for purposes of processing, delivery and forwarding, and return if undeliverable. The matter must meet the applicable letter, flat, or parcel mailability standards.

Q: Why is my item not sealed against postal inspection?

A: The Postal Service must be able to inspect the item to ensure that the matter qualifies for postage-free mailing.

Q: Are extra services available with postage-free mail?

A: A mailer may insure a postage-free item by paying only the required insurance fee. Use of extra services, such as Certified Mail® or Registered Mail™, requires payment of applicable fees.

Q: What must be marked on the mail to show that it qualifies for mailing free of postage?

A: You must place the words “FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND OR PRINT DISABLED” in the upper right corner of the address side of the envelope or parcel where the postage would normally be placed. The words may be printed, rubber stamped, or handwritten.

Q: Are special arrangements possible for delivery or pickup of free mail for eligible persons?

A: Eligibility for free mailing for the blind or other visually impaired persons does not encompass such special arrangements. Post Offices may be able to make special arrangements depending on the local circumstances. You should contact your local Post Office to request special arrangements. Such requests will be handled in accordance with postal regulations concerning requests for special arrangements by persons with visual impairments.

Q: Since this brochure is about mailing free matter for the blind domestically, where can I find information about mailing free matter for the blind internationally?

A: You can refer to the IMM Section 270 to learn about eligibility and the conditions for using free international

mailing privileges. You can find the IMM at <http://pe.usps.com/cpim/ftp/manuals/Imm/ImmTOC.pdf>.

Q: Where can I get help if problems occur while using the procedures for mailing free matter for the blind and visually impaired?

A: Most problems can be resolved at your local Post Office. You may make inquiries or express concerns by telephone, letter, or in person. If a problem cannot be resolved satisfactorily at your local Post Office, you may file an inquiry online at usps.com or call our Customer Care Center toll-free number at 1-800-ASK-USPS (1-800-275-8777).
