

# Make your mail machinable and readable...

Optical character readers (OCRs) and barcodes sorters (BCSs) increase the speed, efficiency, and accuracy of processing your mail while keeping postal operating costs down. These computerized mail processing machines are located in post offices across the nation and are programmed to “read” and sort up to 36,000 pieces of mail per hour. That’s 10 pieces every second. But if your mail isn’t technically compatible, you’ll miss the related benefits.

So what type of mail is considered technically compatible? “Machinable” mail is the right size and shape to speed with ease through the equipment. “Readable” mail is quickly and accurately read, coded, and sorted by the equipment.

## Processing Equipment

### The OCR

Each piece of mail passes by the computer’s scanner for a quick read of the delivery address. Then the OCR’s printer sprays on a delivery point barcode for that address. Next, the mailpiece zooms on to one of the OCR’s sorting channels reserved for the proper delivery area. From there, the barcoded mail is fed to BCSs for fast final separations — right down to the letter carriers who deliver it.

The OCR is easily confused by sloppy handwriting, highly stylized characters, extraneous printing, and incorrectly placed address information.

### The Barcode Sorter

As the barcode on your mailpiece shoots past the scanner, it is quickly read and sent to the appropriate channel for delivery.

## Automation Requirements

### Size

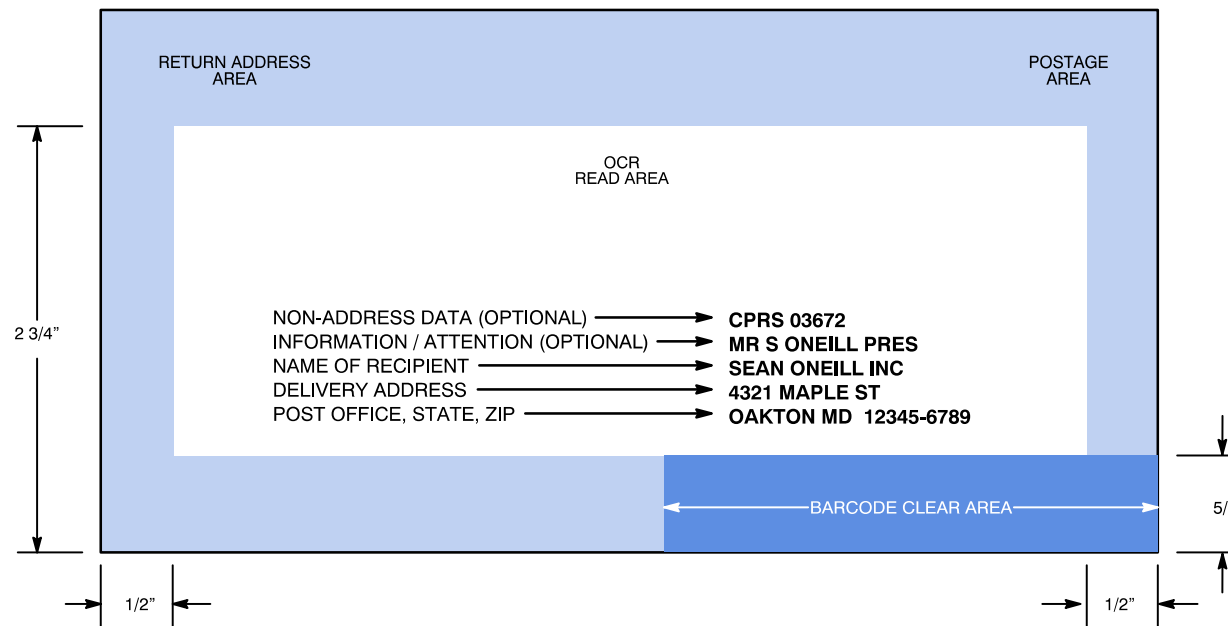
Make sure that your letter mail is the proper size. Mailpieces smaller than the dimensions below are not mailable. Letter mail larger than the dimensions is mailable but must bypass the OCR and be processed through slower and less efficient manual methods.

Dimensions	Minimum	Maximum
Height	3 1/2"	6 1/8"
Length	5"	11 1/2"
Thickness	.007"	1/4" *

\* Card stock thickness should not exceed .0095".

### Address Location

The OCR looks for the address within a rectangular space on each mailpiece, called the **OCR read area**. All lines of the address should fall within the OCR read area for the best results. No portion of the return address should appear in the OCR read area.



### Address Lines

Keep address lines in the same order as shown in the illustration below. Make sure the address is as complete as possible, including all apartment or suite numbers and proper delivery designations such as RD, ST, NW, and S.

### Address Characters

Capitalize everything, using plain block letters or a sans serif typeface such as Helvetica. Omit all punctuation, except the hyphen in the ZIP+4 code. Use abbreviations whenever possible.

### Spacing

The OCR must see a clear vertical space between each character and each word or it won’t know where one ends and the next begins. It also needs a clear horizontal space between each line of the address. Clear spaces between words should be at least equal to the width of one full-size character, like a capital “M.”

### Barcode Clear Area

The barcode clear area must remain free of all printing, markings, or colored borders and allow for a clean display of the barcode.

### Non-Address Information

Extraneous printing such as advertising copy or company logos should be positioned above the delivery address line. The space below and on either side of the delivery address line should be clear of all printing and markings not actually part of the address.

### Foreign Addresses

Foreign mailings should have the country name, printed in capital letters, as the only information on the bottom line. The postal zone, if any, should be included with the city. For example:

MR THOMAS CLARK  
117 RUSSELL DRIVE  
LONDON W1P6HQ  
ENGLAND

### Window Envelopes

The entire address must always be visible through window envelopes. If part of the address is hidden, the OCR rejects the envelope and sends it off for manual processing.

### Print Quality and Color

The OCR performs best with black ink on a white background. Although certain color combinations are acceptable, it cannot read the address if there is not enough contrast between the ink and paper. Keep the ink as dark as possible and the background as light as possible.

If you have any questions concerning your mail and our computerized processing equipment, please contact the nearest Postal Business Center. They will be glad to help.

## State/Territory Abbreviations

Alabama	<b>AL</b>	Montana	<b>MT</b>
Alaska	<b>AK</b>	Nebraska	<b>NE</b>
American Samoa	<b>AS</b>	Nevada	<b>NV</b>
Arizona	<b>AZ</b>	New Hampshire	<b>NH</b>
Arkansas	<b>AR</b>	New Jersey	<b>NJ</b>
California	<b>CA</b>	New Mexico	<b>NM</b>
Colorado	<b>CO</b>	New York	<b>NY</b>
Connecticut	<b>CT</b>	North Carolina	<b>NC</b>
Delaware	<b>DE</b>	North Dakota	<b>ND</b>
District of Columbia	<b>DC</b>	Northern Mariana Is.	<b>MP</b>
Florida	<b>FL</b>	Ohio	<b>OH</b>
Georgia	<b>GA</b>	Oklahoma	<b>OK</b>
Guam	<b>GU</b>	Oregon	<b>OR</b>
Hawaii	<b>HI</b>	Palau	<b>PW</b>
Idaho	<b>ID</b>	Pennsylvania	<b>PA</b>
Illinois	<b>IL</b>	Puerto Rico	<b>PR</b>
Indiana	<b>IN</b>	Rhode Island	<b>RI</b>
Iowa	<b>IA</b>	South Carolina	<b>SC</b>
Kansas	<b>KS</b>	South Dakota	<b>SD</b>
Kentucky	<b>KY</b>	Tennessee	<b>TN</b>
Louisiana	<b>LA</b>	Texas	<b>TX</b>
Maine	<b>ME</b>	Utah	<b>UT</b>
Marshall Islands	<b>MH</b>	Vermont	<b>VT</b>
Maryland	<b>MD</b>	Virginia	<b>VA</b>
Massachusetts	<b>MA</b>	Virgin Islands	<b>VI</b>
Michigan	<b>MI</b>	Washington	<b>WA</b>
Minnesota	<b>MN</b>	West Virginia	<b>WV</b>
Mississippi	<b>MS</b>	Wisconsin	<b>WI</b>
Missouri	<b>MO</b>	Wyoming	<b>WY</b>

## Suffix/Descriptor/Directional Abbreviations\*

Avenue	<b>AVE</b>	Lake	<b>LK</b>
Boulevard	<b>BLVD</b>	Lane	<b>LN</b>
Court	<b>CT</b>	Mountain	<b>MTN</b>
Center	<b>CTR</b>	Parkway	<b>PKWY</b>
Drive	<b>DR</b>	Place	<b>PL</b>
Expressway	<b>EXPY</b>	Road	<b>RD</b>
Heights	<b>HTS</b>	Station	<b>STA</b>
Highway	<b>HWY</b>	Street	<b>ST</b>
Island	<b>IS</b>	Turnpike	<b>TPKE</b>
Junction	<b>JCT</b>	Valley	<b>VLY</b>
Apartment	<b>APT</b>	North	<b>N</b>
Building	<b>BLDG</b>	East	<b>E</b>
Floor	<b>FL</b>	South	<b>S</b>
Suite	<b>STE</b>	West	<b>W</b>
Unit	<b>UNIT</b>	Northeast	<b>NE</b>
Room	<b>RM</b>	Southeast	<b>SE</b>
Department	<b>DEPT</b>	Northwest	<b>NW</b>
		Southwest	<b>SW</b>

\*For a complete listing, see Postal Service Publication 28, *Postal Addressing Standards*.

Publication 221, August 1995



## Addressing for Success

# The Right Way...

**MR JAMES JONES  
4417 BROOK ST NE  
WASHINGTON DC 20019-4649**

## Common Addressing Problems...

### Not Enough Contrast

MR JAMES JONES  
4417 BROOK ST NE  
WASHINGTON DC 20019-4649

### Serif Type Font — Not All Capital Letters

Mr James Jones  
4417 Brook St NE  
Washington DC 20019-4649

### Script Type Font Used

*Mr James Jones  
4417 Brook St NE  
Washington DC 20019-4649*

### Characters Touch

MR JAMES JONES  
4417 BROCK ST NE  
WASHINGTON DC 20019-4649

### Address Not Visible Through Window

MR JAMES JONES  
4417 BROOK ST NE  
WASHINGTON DC 20019-4649

### Logo Below Delivery Address Line

MR JAMES JONES  
4417 BROOK ST NE  
WASHINGTON DC 20019-4649



### Address Slants

MR JAMES JONES  
4417 BROOK ST NE  
WASHINGTON DC 20019-4649

### Information Below Delivery Address Line

Mr James Jones  
4417 Brook St NE  
Washington DC 20019-4649  
Attn: R JONES