Fast, efficient, and effective communications are critical for the success of most businesses. Whether you communicate with coworkers and customers around the corner or around the world by mail, telephone, fax, e-mail, or other electronic means, your ability to handle communications effectively is a valuable skill. You will build your communication skills as you study Part 4, Mail and Telecommunication Systems.
Workers frequently send written messages to coworkers as well as to people outside the company. Mail must be processed efficiently so that these messages are not delayed. The size of a company and the type of equipment available affect the procedures used for processing incoming and outgoing mail. In a small company, one worker may handle incoming and outgoing mail. In a large company, a full-time mailroom staff often uses specialized equipment to process mail. Even in large companies, workers outside the mailroom may have certain mail-handling duties.

In this chapter, you will learn procedures for processing incoming and outgoing mail in both small and large companies. You also will learn about the equipment available to process mail.
Office workers often need to act promptly in response to items received in the mail. They may need to deposit checks, fill orders, or pay invoices. They may read literature, review reports, and answer correspondence. Mail must be accurately sorted and promptly distributed to the appropriate people. This prompt delivery is necessary so actions can be taken without delay. In this chapter, you will learn how to handle incoming mail from outside the company, as well as interoffice mail.

You may be responsible for sorting and distributing incoming mail for the entire company or just for handling your own mail. You may help your coworkers process their mail after another worker has distributed it. Your role in processing incoming mail will depend on the size of the company, the volume of incoming mail, and your job duties.

**Sorting and Distributing Mail**

Mail for various people and departments is delivered to a company. Most companies want all mail sorted quickly and delivered promptly. Express mail, registered mail, and insured mail may be delivered immediately on receipt. The delivery of such letters usually takes priority over the processing of other mail. The method used for sorting mail will vary depending on the size of the company and how it is organized.

**In Small Companies**

In a small company, you can easily sort the mail at your workstation. Making a stack of mail for each employee or department makes delivery quicker. In a small company, one person may process incoming mail as well as perform other office tasks.

To distribute the mail, you hand deliver each stack of mail to the appropriate person or department. If you have several stacks or bundles of mail to deliver, you may need to carry them in a pouch, alphabetized expanding folder, lightweight mail basket, or mail cart as you make your rounds through the office. You should arrange the bundles according to the route you will take.
In Large Companies

Many large companies have mailrooms. A mailroom is an area where large volumes of incoming mail are processed. Mailrooms are easily accessible to postal workers who deliver the mail to the company. You are likely to find specialized equipment to aid mailroom workers in handling the mail.

Opening Envelopes and Packages

In some companies, mailroom workers open all the mail (except envelopes marked \textit{Personal} or \textit{Confidential}) before delivering it. An electric envelope opener often is used for opening envelopes. An electric envelope opener trims a narrow strip off one edge of each envelope. The amount trimmed off is very small so that there is little risk that the contents of the envelope will be damaged. To reduce the chances of cutting the contents, tap each envelope on the table before placing it in the opener, so the contents will fall away from the edge that you are trimming. Take care when opening packages and boxes not to damage the contents.
Safety Precautions

Office workers should take care to protect themselves against dangerous substances that might be present in envelopes or packages received via mail. Wearing gloves and a face mask can provide some protection from airborne substances that might be dangerous. When handling mail, avoid touching your face and mouth to help prevent the transfer of germs. Wash your hands with disinfectant soap after handling mail. The United States Postal Service recommends that you do not handle a piece of mail that you suspect is dangerous.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Characteristics of suspicious packages and letters include inappropriate or unusual labeling, strange return address or no return address, postmarks from a city or state different from the return address, excessive packaging material, and others. If a package appears suspicious, it should not be opened. The package should be handled as little as possible. The room should be vacated and secured promptly and appropriate security or law enforcement agencies promptly notified.”1 For more information, access the CDC Web site. A link is provided to the site on The Office web site.

Sorting Mail

A wide variety of sorting units are used to sort the mail. Each compartment is labeled with the name of an individual or department within the organization. To sort the mail, you place each piece of mail in the appropriate compartment.

Companies with a huge amount of incoming mail have found that they can save time and effort by using a rotary sorting unit. The unit turns easily, and the worker can remain in one place as he or she sorts the mail.

Distributing Mail

Once the mail has been sorted, it is ready for distribution. Procedures for delivering mail within the organization vary from company to company. For example:

- A worker from each department comes to the mailroom to pick up the department’s mail.
- A mailroom employee carries the mail in a basket or cart from the mailroom to the departments.
- An automated delivery system transports mail to the various departments. This robot-like cart follows a chemical path on the floor and is programmed to stop at certain locations throughout the building. Employees can then pick up incoming mail and deposit outgoing mail.

Handling Incoming Mail

Some office workers are asked to process the mail before giving it to their coworkers. Some workers may simply separate and open the mail. Other workers may be expected to annotate, route, or prioritize correspondence.

In handling your own mail or mail for others, you may have access to confidential information. This information may be related to business plans or products, employee records, or customer profiles. You will be expected to take steps to protect this confidential information. You may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.
Opening Mail

If the mail is not opened when it reaches you, use a letter opener to open all envelopes. (See Safety Precautions on page 434.) When you are opening mail for coworkers, do not open envelopes marked *Personal* or *Confidential.* If you mistakenly open such an envelope, write on it, “Sorry, opened by mistake,” and add your initials. Check the outside of each envelope carefully before you open it to avoid making that error.

As you remove the contents from the envelopes, be sure to verify that all enclosures referred to in the letter are actually enclosed. If an enclosure is missing, you should note in the margin of the letter that it is missing. Notify the sender of the missing enclosure right away, especially if it is a check, money order, cash, or stamps.

Check each letter for the signature and the address of the sender before you discard the envelope. If either is missing on the letter, attach the envelope to the back of the letter. The envelope usually has a return address on it. Sometimes the envelope is stapled to a document because the mailing date may be important.

Record the current date on each item received. In some cases, recording the time the item was received may also be helpful. This can be done with a pen or pencil, a rubber stamp, or a time-stamp machine.

Separating and Annotating Mail

As you inspect the mail, put the letters that you will answer or handle yourself in one stack and those that will be handled by a supervisor or coworkers in another stack. You may be able to handle communications that could be answered by a form letter, circular, or advertisement. Requests for catalogs or price lists can also be handled this way. However, your supervisor may wish to see all inquiries that are received.

To help with answering mail, you may want to underline or annotate the correspondence. Using good judgment is necessary here, however, because too many marks on a letter can be distracting.

First, underline the key words and phrases in the correspondence that will aid in understanding the content quickly. Note the key phrases underlined in Figure 11-1.1 on page 438. Then determine the answers to questions in...
Confidential information is data that is private or secret. Release of such data could cause harm to the business or its employees, clients, or customers. Businesses may have several types of confidential data. Inside information is data about the company that has not yet been released to the public. Examples are plans to open a new plant or merge with another company. Proprietary information is data about the company’s products or services. An example is the formula or design for a product. Private information about employees and customers, such as salaries or credit card numbers, is often stored in company files. Usually, only those employees who need the data to do their jobs are allowed to see confidential information.

As an office worker, you may come in contact with confidential information as you process the mail, prepare documents, or handle records. The following guidelines will help you keep business information confidential:

- **Know your supervisor’s preferences.** Know what information you should and should not give to visitors or callers. When your supervisor is not in the office, know who is to be allowed in your supervisor’s office or who can use your supervisor’s computer.

- **Follow your company’s mail procedures.** Place confidential mail in a folder or in a secure location where it will be seen only by the intended recipient. Do not send confidential information by fax or e-mail. Use overnight mail services if speed is a consideration.

- **Secure your workstation.** Take precautions to keep others from reading confidential information from your computer screen. Turn over confidential mail or papers or place them in a drawer when you leave your desk—even for a few moments. At the end of the day, secure papers in a locked desk or file cabinet. Shred confidential documents rather than placing them in your wastebasket.

- **Protect written documents.** Use a folder or an envelope to conceal documents if you carry documents to another office. If you transport confidential documents outside the office, lock them in a briefcase or in the trunk of your car. If you use a briefcase, always keep it in your possession.

- **Reduce electronic information loss.** Use password sign-on and sign-off procedures and change your password frequently. Be alert to remove printouts from the printer when you finish the print job, particularly if the printer is shared with others. Make backup copies of confidential files and place them in a secure location.

the message. Where appropriate, make related comments on the document. Write the clearly worded answers and/or comments in legible handwriting in the margin, on a note (paper or electronic) placed on the correspondence, or on a photocopy of the correspondence. Note the annotations on the letter shown in Figure 11-1.1.
Russell White and Brothers Lumber Company
3000 Winchester Avenue
Ashland, KY 41101-0077

December 5, 20--

Ms. Michele R. Carrel
Ashland Computerland, Inc.
405 Laurel Avenue
Ashland, KY 41101-0800

Dear Ms. Carrel

Copy sent to Mr. Ortiz.

Our new computer system was installed on November 26, and we were impressed with the efficiency of your installation team. The hardware and software are installed and working well. Feedback from the end-users has been positive.

Ed Ortiz, your installation team director, advises that we need to add one more workstation to maximize the use of the computer network. Please add another PC2-2020 workstation to our order. Prepared Inv. 22892 on 12/9.

Mr. Ortiz also reminded us to make plans for our unit director, Mary Ann Park, to attend your end-user workshop on January 6-10. Ms. Park is eager to attend, and we know that this additional education will allow her to help us use our network more effectively. Please send Ms. Park a registration form for the workshop. Registration form sent.

Sincerely

Harold G. White
Harold G. White, Manager

dc

Figure 11-1.1
The date-time stamp, underlined words and phrases, and annotations make a quick response easier.
Copies of previous correspondence, reports, and other related documents might help in responding to the mail. For example, you may attach the file copy of a letter written to Ms. Park to the reply you receive from her. Or you might retrieve a folder related to an inquiry from the files and place it with the incoming letter.

**Documenting Receipt of Mail**

You should keep a record of items you expect to receive under separate cover (in another envelope or package) to be sure that you receive them. You might create a spreadsheet or database table to record the current date, the item expected, the date you expect to receive the item, and the person or company who will send the item. A field or column might be included to record the date the item is received. If you handle mail for several people, you would include the name of the person expecting the item. Check the table at least twice a week to see which items have not been received. Then take follow-up action on delayed mail. If you handle mail only for yourself, you might simply enter a reminder in your desktop utility software, such as *Microsoft Outlook*, to alert you on the date the mail is expected. Figure 11-1.2 shows such an entry.

![Figure 11-1.2](image1.png)

Keep a reminder of incoming mail you expect to receive.

Whether you process incoming mail in a small company or in the mailroom of a large company, you should keep track of the receipt of mail sent by special postal services or private mail services. For example, you should record the receipt of certified, insured, registered, or express mail. You might use a printed form or record information in a database table as shown in Figure 11-1.3.

![Figure 11-1.3](image2.png)

Use a mail register to document the receipt of special mail.
**Referring or Routing Mail**

You or your supervisor may decide to refer certain items to an assistant or associate to handle. To help with this process, a referral slip is attached to the item. The referral slip shown in Figure 11-1.4 lists a series of instructions from which to choose. A check mark is used to indicate the specific instruction to be followed.

![Referral Slip](image)

When action is requested of another individual, you should keep a record of the referral. You should note the date the item was referred, the name of the person to whom it was referred, the subject, the action to be taken, and a follow-up date if one is necessary.

Often more than one person in the company should read items, such as correspondence and important magazine articles. You may be asked to make a copy for each person who should read the item, or you may be asked to route the item through the office. To do so, attach a routing slip, which is similar to a referral slip, to the item. Indicate with check marks the individuals who should read the item.

**Prioritizing Mail**

Incoming mail should be prioritized for further processing. As a general rule, mail is categorized in the order of its importance. The following arrangement is usually satisfactory, moving from the top to the bottom of the stack:

1. Urgent messages, such as documents received by fax or overnight delivery, that require prompt attention
2. Personal and confidential letters
3. Business letters, memos, or other correspondence of special importance
4. Letters containing checks or money orders

**CHAPTER 11: PROCESSING MAIL**
5. Other business letters
6. Letters containing orders
7. Letters containing bills, invoices, or other requests for payment
8. Advertisements
9. Newspapers and magazines
10. Packages

**WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS**

Roberta Diaz is the receptionist in a small real estate agency. Her duties include sorting and prioritizing mail for several coworkers. Roberta noticed that 25 to 50 percent of the mail received by the agency each day was advertisements and “junk” mail. She decided to write to the Direct Marketing Association, a trade group of telephone and mail marketers. She requested that the company’s name be removed from national mailing lists. Now Roberta has many fewer ads to handle and can sort the mail more quickly each day.
Handling Mail While Away from the Office

Technology makes it possible to receive and forward important mail and messages for immediate action while away from the office. In this way, business matters are not delayed, and deadlines are not missed. You will need to decide which mail should be forwarded and which mail should be held for action after returning to the office. The following guidelines may be helpful in keeping track of incoming mail for your supervisors or coworkers who are away from the office:

- Maintain a mail register as described on page 439.
- Communicate with the traveler immediately if important, unexpected action seems required.
- Refer routine mail to others who can respond.
- Answer mail yourself if it is within your area of responsibility.
- Send a synopsis of received mail (or a copy of the mail log) if the traveler is on an extended business trip.
- After the mail has been prioritized, store it in an appropriate place.

Effective processing of the incoming mail helps keep the office running smoothly while the traveler is away and saves time for the traveler upon returning to the office.
REVIEWING THE TOPIC

1. What is interoffice mail?
2. What three factors affect your role in processing incoming mail?
3. Describe safety precautions office workers can take to protect themselves against dangerous substances that might be present in envelopes or packages received via mail.
4. What equipment is used in mailrooms to process incoming mail?
5. What should you do if you open a confidential letter by mistake?
6. When you remove the contents from an envelope, what should you verify?
7. How might your annotating a letter save your supervisor time?
8. What is the purpose of keeping a record of expected mail?
9. Give an example of when a routing slip might be used.
10. What is the generally accepted order for prioritizing incoming mail?

INTERACTING WITH OTHERS

You work as an administrative assistant at Halbrook, Inc. One of your duties is to sort, open, and annotate mail for three executives. Letters that are not marked Confidential are normally opened by the staff in the central mail room. Ms. Santiago, one of the executives you assist, often receives correspondence that contains confidential information regarding acquiring and developing new products. She has requested that her letters not be opened in the mail room. You have discussed this issue with the mailroom supervisor on two occasions. However, her letters continue to arrive at your department opened. You suspect that some of the letters have been removed from the envelopes and replaced in them.

1. What can you say to the mailroom supervisor to indicate the seriousness of this issue?
2. What are some possible reasons why your request has not been honored?
3. What steps should you take if talking with the mailroom supervisor again does not result in the letters arriving unopened?
1. Based on records kept by the mailroom supervisor, about 3,000 pieces of incoming mail are sorted and distributed each month in your company. Additionally, the volume of mail is expected to increase by 6 percent next year. How many pieces of mail will be processed this year? How many more pieces of mail will be processed next year than will be processed this year?

2. An envelope has been prepared for each address on a mailing list of 18,000 names. The mailing machine can feed, seal, meter stamp, count, and stack 200 envelopes a minute. Of the 18,000 envelopes being processed, 20 percent are being sent to Minnesota, 30 percent to Wyoming, 15 percent to Wisconsin, and 35 percent to Nebraska. How long it will take to process all the envelopes using the mailing machine? How many envelopes will be sent to each state?

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**Sort Incoming Mail**

You work in the general office of Sperling Enterprises. Because your supervisor receives a large amount of mail of different types, she has asked you to prioritize it prior to delivering it to her.

1. Key the list of the mail items shown below.
2. Arrange the list of mail items in order of priority. (Begin the list with the most important and continue to the least important.)
   - Personal letter from Michelle Jackson
   - Overnight package from Hancock Associates
   - Letter containing an order from Jackie Yung
   - Advertisement for office furniture
   - Newspaper
   - Interoffice memo from coworker Paula Flores
   - Fax from Karl Shelton, at Shelton Brothers
   - Business letter of special importance from Norman Steel of Steel, Inc.
   - *PC Magazine*
   - Letter containing a bill from Office Depot
   - Letter containing a check from Howard Supply Company
   - Fax from David Foster of Foster Insurance
   - Business letter from Maria Lopez of Quality Leasing
You work for Shred-Rite Shredder Company, a retailer for office and personal paper shredders. Your supervisor, Ms. Wanda Albertson, is the customer service manager. You often annotate mail and compose replies for her signature.

1. Open and print the PDF file **CH11 Shred-Rite Letter** from the data files. This file contains a letter from a customer. Read the letter and underline the important points.

2. Open and print the PDF file **CH11 Shred-Rite Invoice** from the data files. This file contains a copy of the customer invoice. Review the invoice and then annotate the customer’s letter with appropriate comments.

3. Compose a reply to the customer for your supervisor’s signature. Assume the letter will be printed on company letterhead. Tell the customer how the problem will be corrected and express regret for the customer’s inconvenience. Examine your letter for the five Cs of effective writing.

4. Submit the customer’s letter with your annotations, the invoice, and your reply to your supervisor (instructor).
A company may send several types of mail to those outside the company. For example, you may be asked to send purchase orders to customers. Letters may be sent to businesses. Advertisements may be sent to potential customers. Preparing outgoing mail properly is important for prompt delivery.

You probably have prepared letters and envelopes for mailing. You may have calculated and affixed proper postage. Companies have developed specific procedures for completing these tasks in order to handle outgoing mail efficiently.

The way outgoing mail is processed will depend on the size of your company and the procedures adopted by the company. If you work in a small office, you probably will be responsible for all the details involved with processing outgoing mail. If you work in the mailroom of a large company, however, you may weigh and seal mail, apply postage, and mail envelopes that have been prepared by workers in other departments.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) processes millions of pieces of mail each day. Businesses all across the country use the varied services of the USPS. Letters, financial reports, invoices, manuscripts, newsletters, and merchandise are examples of items delivered by the USPS. In some cases, the items are destined for delivery in the same city. In other cases, the items are delivered to an individual in a city halfway around the world.

Local, national, and worldwide private mail delivery companies, sometimes called courier services, also deliver envelopes and packages. Most delivery services guarantee their delivery times. You also may send mail through an interoffice mail system. As an office worker, you need to know the mailing options available to you. This topic will help you learn about procedures for processing outgoing mail.

Processing Outgoing Mail

In a small company, an office worker may process all the outgoing mail, as well as handle other office tasks. In a large company, however, mail tasks may be divided between mailroom workers and workers in other areas. In a large company, the extent of mail-handling duties will be determined by company policy and the worker’s specific job.
The USPS picks up and delivers mail to some organizations twice a day. In other organizations, a postal carrier may come to the office in the morning, and an office worker may take outgoing mail to a post office or a USPS mailbox in the afternoon. You need to know the scheduled times for pickup so you can have the mail ready on time. The USPS recommends mailing as early in the day as possible for the fastest service.

Selena is the receptionist in a small real estate office. On her workstation is an out basket where all the workers place their outgoing mail. A postal carrier usually picks up and delivers the mail at about 10:30 a.m. At 10:00 a.m., Selena prepares an envelope for each item in the out basket. Then she stuffs the envelopes, seals them, weighs them, and applies the postage. By 10:30 a.m., the mail is ready to be picked up by the postal carrier.

Brenner Industries is a large corporation with many departments. Office workers in each department address the envelopes and insert letters into the envelopes. Each department has a central location for collecting outgoing mail. A mailroom worker picks up the mail and takes it to the company mailroom. The mailroom workers then seal, weigh, and place postage on the mail in time for scheduled pickups from the post office.

The USPS picks up and delivers mail to some organizations twice a day. In other organizations, a postal carrier may come to the office in the morning, and an office worker may take outgoing mail to a post office or a USPS mailbox in the afternoon. You need to know the scheduled times for pickup so you can have the mail ready on time. The USPS recommends mailing as early in the day as possible for the fastest service.
**Folding and Inserting Mail**

Once a document is ready to mail, it is a good idea to give it a final check before inserting it in the envelope. Be sure that:

- Copies have been made, if necessary.
- Letters have been signed.
- Your initials appear below the signature on any letter you have signed for a supervisor or coworker.
- All enclosures noted at the bottom of a letter are actually enclosed in the envelope.
- The address on the envelope agrees with the address on the letter.
- The nine-digit ZIP code appears on the last line of both the envelope address and the return address.

You usually will insert documents into standard or window envelopes. Folding business documents correctly to fit into envelopes is a simple but important task. You should take care that the creases are straight and neat. A document should be inserted in an envelope so that it will be in a normal reading position when it is removed from the envelope and unfolded.

**Standard Envelopes**

The size for a standard envelope used for business letters is 9½” × 4½” (No. 10). Figure 11-2.1 shows how to fold a letter and insert it into a No. 10 envelope. The enclosures that accompany a document should be folded with the document and inserted so that they will come out of the envelope when the document is removed.
Window Envelopes

A window envelope has a see-through panel on the front of the envelope. A window envelope eliminates the need to address an envelope because the address on the letter or form is visible through the window. The address on the letter or form must be positioned so that it can be seen through the window after the letter is folded and inserted into the envelope. Figure 11-2.2 shows how to fold a letter and insert it into a No. 10 window envelope.

![Figure 11-2.2](image)

Follow these steps to fold an 8½” × 11” sheet to insert into a No. 10 window envelope.

Business forms are available in a variety of custom sizes. Special size envelopes are used to match the forms. When using special size forms and envelopes, make sure the mailing address shows properly in the envelope window.

Sealing and Weighing Envelopes

Envelopes must be sealed before they are mailed. When you need to seal more than one or two envelopes, you probably will want to use a moist sponge or moistener. Mail processing equipment that can insert letters into envelopes and seal the envelopes is available. If your office processes large mailings frequently, this equipment can save valuable time.

Workplace Connections

Alberto prepares several letters for mailing each morning. To quickly seal many envelopes at once, he spreads about ten envelopes on a table or desk. He places the letters address-side down, flap open, one on top of the other, with the gummed edges showing. Next, Alberto brushes over the gummed edges with a sponge or moistener. Starting with the top envelope, he quickly folds the flaps down one at a time until all the envelopes are sealed.
Each piece of outgoing mail must be weighed accurately so you can apply the proper amount of postage. Electronic scales are available that automatically calculate the correct amount of postage for each piece of mail. You simply place the item to be mailed on the scale and indicate which postal class you wish to use. The amount of the postage is displayed on a small screen. When postal rates change, you update the scale with the new rates.

**Stamping Mail**

Postage must be paid for all mail before it is delivered by the USPS. You may purchase postage stamps in sheet, booklet, or rolled form. Rolled stamps often are used in business because they can be placed quickly on envelopes and packages and they are less likely than individual stamps to be lost or damaged.

The post office sells envelopes and stamped cards (postcard size) that already have the correct postage printed on them. You can buy them one at a time or in quantity. Stamped cards may be purchased in single or double form. The double form is used when a reply is requested on the attached card.

**Printing Postage for Mail**

A **postage meter** is a machine that prints postage in the amount needed. The meter prints the postage either directly onto the envelope or onto a label that you apply to the envelope or package. You can use the numeric keys on the postage meter to set it to print postage for a letter weighing one ounce and easily reset it to print postage for a letter weighing three ounces. The postage meter prints the date as well as the postage amount. Always be sure the correct date is set on the meter. Some meters also print a business slogan or advertisement next to the postmark. Because metered mail is already dated and postmarked, it can be processed faster than stamped mail.
For some postage meters, you take the meter with you to the post office to buy postage. A postal worker will reset the meter for the amount of postage purchased. As you use the postage meter, the meter setting decreases, showing you how much postage remains. Do not let the postage get too low before buying more. The meter locks when the postage runs out.

Several companies offer postage meters that allow you to purchase postage online. The user connects the meter, which contains a modem, to a standard phone line. Using a keypad, the user indicates the amount of postage to be purchased. The meter is updated, and the user is billed for the cost of the postage.

The USPS has authorized several companies to sell postage on the Internet. Users can access the Web site for one of these companies and subscribe to a postage service plan. The user receives computer software and, with some plans, a postage scale. The software allows the user to print a postmark and the appropriate amount of postage on an envelope or label using any computer printer. A graphic, such as the company logo, or text can be also be printed on the envelope or label.

Handling Volume Mailings

A volume mailing involves sending the same items to many people at the same time. For example, a marketing research company may send a questionnaire to all residents in a city asking about products, such as televisions or breakfast cereals. Companies doing volume mailings may qualify for reduced postage rates. To qualify for reduced postage rates, mailings must be prepared according to current USPS mailing regulations and standards.

Address labels may be used for volume mail items or the items may be addressed individually. Many companies use computer-generated mailing lists. Mailing lists for volume mail may contain addresses for customers, subscribers, or those who live in certain geographic areas. Mailing lists should always be current. Delete, correct, and add addresses as soon as you learn about changes.
The post office recommends having the words \textit{FORWARDING AND ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED} printed on all envelopes. Then the post office will forward mail with an old address to the new address. For a small fee, the post office will send you a card giving the new address. Some of the advantages of using computer-generated mailing lists include the ability to:

- Quickly retrieve, change, or delete addresses
- Easily avoid duplicate addresses
- Select addresses from a master list to create a smaller list for a special mailing
- Print letter addresses and salutations on form letters as well as address labels

\begin{center}
\textbf{WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS}
\end{center}

William Flag works in the Human Resources Department of a small company. He prepares volume mailings to employees, such as salespeople, who are not located at the company’s home office. Benefits information, policy changes, and new procedures must be sent to these employees. Until recently, William keyed the address and printed an envelope for each employee each time a mailing was prepared. He soon realized that he was repeating work needlessly.

William decided to create a database to include the name, address, and other relevant data for each employee. He also created an envelope document and a mailing label document. He can merge data from the database with these documents. Now when William needs to prepare a mailing, he simply enters any updates in the database and completes the merge. Envelopes and labels are printed quickly and correctly.

Specialized mailing equipment is available to totally automate the process of preparing volume mailings. Some machines can print personalized letters and matching envelopes. The machines also fold the letters, insert the letters and any enclosures in the envelopes, and seal the envelopes. Postage can also be applied by machine.
Address Requirements for Automated Handling

The USPS uses high-speed electronic mail-handling equipment in many of its postal centers. This equipment includes optical character readers and bar code sorters. An **optical character reader (OCR)** is electronic equipment that quickly scans or “reads” the address on an envelope. A bar code that relates to the scanned address is printed at the bottom of the envelope.

During the sorting process, the bar codes are “read” by a bar code sorter, and the mail is quickly routed to its proper destination. Not all postal centers are equipped with OCR equipment and bar code sorters; therefore, not all mail you receive will have a printed bar code on the envelope.

If the optical character reader is unable to read an address, the envelope is routed to a manual letter-sorting machine. This, of course, increases the processing time. Some of the reasons why an OCR may be unable to read an address are listed below. Use care when preparing mail to avoid these problems that may slow delivery of the mail.

- The address is handwritten.
- The address is not printed in the proper format.
- The envelope is too small or too large for the OCR equipment to handle. (To avoid this problem, use rectangular envelopes no smaller than $3\frac{1}{2}'' \times 5''$ and no larger than $6\frac{1}{8}'' \times 11\frac{1}{2}''$.)
- The address is not within the OCR read area.
- The complete address is not visible through the panel of a window envelope.
ZIP Codes

To ensure prompt delivery of your mail, always use the nine-digit ZIP code, if known, to help with mail delivery. The first three digits of the ZIP code indicate a major geographic area or post office. The next two digits designate a local post office. A hyphen and the four digits that follow help the post office sort the mail more specifically. The first two digits after the hyphen indicate a delivery sector. A sector is several blocks within a city, a group of streets, several office buildings, or another small geographic area. The last two digits represent a delivery segment, which can indicate one side of a street, one floor in an office building, or specific departments in a firm.

ZIP code directories for both the five-digit and nine-digit codes can be purchased from the post office. If a directory is not available in the office where you work, you can call the post office to obtain a particular ZIP code. You can search for ZIP codes on the USPS Web site.

Address Format

The address should be printed clearly on the envelope or label for each item that is mailed. The characters should be dark, even, and clear. The address should be printed according to the following guidelines:

- Block the left margin of the address.
- Use all capital letters and omit all marks of punctuation (except the hyphen in a nine-digit ZIP code).
- Use the standard two-letter abbreviation for the state for domestic mail.
- Add the delivery point ZIP + 4 bar code on the envelope for domestic mail, if your software has this capability.
- For international addresses, place the foreign postal code, if known, on the same line as the city or town name. Place the city or town name and the province or state name on the next line after the street address information. Place the name of the foreign country in capital letters on the last line of the address. (On mail to Canada, the location of the country name and postal code are interchangeable.)

The post office has an approved list of abbreviations for states, cities, and other words commonly used in addresses. Always use the two-letter state abbreviations with the ZIP code in domestic addresses. Use other approved abbreviations if the address is too long to fit on a label.
MS EMMA JO BERTMAN
132 CANNON GREEN TOWERS APT 6A
SANTA BARBARA CA 93105-2233

MR ARTURO FUENTES
VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING
ROSSLYN WHOLESALE COMPANY
1815 N LYNN STREET
ARLINGTON VA 22209-6183

MS JOYCE BROWNING
2045 ROYAL ROAD
LONDON WIP 6HQ
ENGLAND

MS HELEN SAUNDERS
1010 CLEAR STREET
OTTAWA ON K1A0B1
CANADA

MR JACQUES MOLIERE
RUE DE CHAMPAIGN
06570 ST PAUL
FRANCE

State and Territory Abbreviations


USPS two-letter state and territory abbreviations

Use the proper address format, abbreviations, and postal codes for addresses.
Classes of Domestic Mail

Domestic mail is distributed by the USPS within the United States and its territories (such as Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam). Domestic mail is divided into various classes. Some of these classes are described in the following paragraphs.

**First-Class**

First-class mail is commonly used for items such as letters, bills, postcards, checks, money orders, and business reply mail. A minimum amount is charged for all first-class mail weighing up to one ounce. An additional charge is made for each additional ounce or fraction of an ounce. If you
are sending material in an oversized envelope that does not bear a preprinted FIRST CLASS notation, print or stamp FIRST CLASS on the envelope. Mail that weighs over 13 ounces must be sent as priority mail to receive handling comparable to first-class mail.

**Priority Mail**

Priority mail offers one- to three-day service to most domestic addresses. The maximum weight for priority mail is 70 pounds. Priority mail items must measure 130 inches or less in combined length and girth. Priority mail envelopes, boxes, and labels are available at no charge at post offices. If other envelopes or boxes are used, mark them **PRIORITY MAIL**. The amount of postage for priority mail envelopes or packages over one pound are based on the weight of the item and its destination. A flat-rate envelope is also available. Any amount of material that fits in the flat-rate priority mail envelope provided by the USPS may be mailed for one price.

**Express Mail**

Express mail is the fastest service offered by the USPS, with one- to two-day delivery to most destinations. No extra fee is charged for Saturday, Sunday, or holiday delivery. All packages should use an **Express Mail** label. The maximum weight for express mail is 70 pounds. Express mail items must measure 130 inches or less in combined length and girth. Express mail envelopes, boxes, and labels are available at no charge at post offices. The amount of postage for express mail is based on weight. A flat-rate envelope is also available. Any amount of material that fits in the flat-rate express mail envelope provided by the USPS may be mailed for one price. Insurance up to $100 is provided at no additional cost. Additional insurance may be purchased.

The United States Postal Service and many private companies offer express mail services.
Periodicals
Approved publishers and registered news agents may mail items such as newspapers and magazines at the periodicals rates of postage. To do so, you need authorization from the USPS, must pay a special fee, and must mail in bulk lots (volume mailings). Other rates, such as first-class or standard mail, must be used when periodicals are mailed by the general public.

Standard Mail
Standard mail is used primarily to advertise products and services. Advertising brochures and catalogs often are sent standard class. Mailings must contain at least 200 pieces or weigh 50 pounds to qualify for standard mail rates. Each item must weigh less than 16 ounces and be marked with a correct ZIP code. Sorting and postage restrictions apply.

Parcel Post
Parcel post may be used for small and large packages, thick envelopes, and tubes. The rates are based on the weight of the item and the distance it must travel to be delivered. Packages may weigh 1 to 70 pounds and measure up to 130 inches in combined length and girth.

Follow these guidelines when preparing packages for mailing.

- Select a box that is strong enough to protect the contents.
- Leave space for cushioning inside the carton. Cushion package contents with shredded or rolled newspaper, bubble wrap, or other packing material. Pack tightly to avoid shifting.
- Always use tape that is designed for shipping, such as pressure-sensitive or reinforced tape. Do not use wrapping paper, string, masking tape, or cellophane tape.
- Put the delivery and return addresses on one side only of the package. Place a return address label inside the package.

Special Postal Services
In addition to the regular delivery services, special postal services also are available. You must pay a fee for each of these special services. As a worker who processes outgoing mail, you need to know the different services that are available so you can choose the one best suited to your company’s mailing needs. Some of the services available are described in this section.

Registered or Insured Mail
Registered mail provides the most secure service offered by the USPS. Mail can be registered to give protection against loss or damage of valuable documents or items. First-class and priority mail may be registered. Insurance is provided for items valued up to a maximum of $25,000. Additional handling charges apply for items valued at more than $25,000. You will be given a receipt showing that the post office has accepted your registered mail for transmittal and delivery. For an additional fee, you may obtain a return receipt to prove that the mail was delivered.
Insured mail provides insurance coverage of up to $5,000 for items lost or damaged in the mail. Insured mail is available for merchandise sent at first-class or priority mail rates and some packages. A receipt is issued to the sender of insured mail. You should keep the receipt on file until you know that the insured mail has arrived in satisfactory condition. If an insured parcel is lost or damaged, the post office will reimburse you for the lesser of the value of the merchandise or the amount for which it was insured.

**Proof of Mailing or Delivery**

An inexpensive way to obtain proof that an item was mailed is to purchase a certificate of mailing. The certificate is not proof of delivery; it serves only as proof that the item was mailed.

If you want proof of mailing and delivery, send the item by certified mail. Certified mail provides a receipt for the sender to use as proof of mailing. A certified mail receipt is shown in Figure 11-2.5. A record of delivery is maintained by USPS. For an additional fee, a return receipt may be requested to provide proof of delivery.

Delivery confirmation services may be purchased at the time of mailing. Customers can learn the delivery status of the item by accessing the USPS Web site or by calling 1-800-222-1811. Other options are available for large, bulk mailings.
COD Mail

A company may send merchandise to a buyer and collect payment for the item when it is delivered. Mail sent in this manner is referred to as COD (collect on delivery). The seller may obtain COD service by paying a fee in addition to the regular postage. Because fees and postage must be paid in advance by the seller, the seller often specifies that the total COD charges to be collected from the buyer include the postage and the collect-on-delivery fee. The maximum amount collectible on one package is $1,000. If the company you work for did not order an item that arrives COD, do not accept the package.

International Mail

Many companies send mail to other countries. A company may have branch offices or customers in countries throughout the world. Postage for letters and postal cards mailed to other countries are higher than for domestic mail, and the mail weights are limited. For current rates and weight limitations, contact your local post office or access the USPS Web site.

Global express delivery for letters and packages is available to many countries from specified post offices. Rates vary by weight and destination country. Overseas packages must be packed very carefully to ensure safe delivery.

Customs forms are required when you send letter packages, small packets, and parcels that are subject to taxes to international destinations. The specific customs form is governed by the type of mail, the weight of the item, and the regulations of the country to which the mail is sent. Individual countries may restrict or prohibit certain articles. Specific information about restrictions for individual countries and about the forms required for mailing is listed in the International Mail Manual. This publication is available online at the USPS Web site. A hard copy may be ordered. For customs information, contact the U.S. Customs Service.

Private Courier/Delivery Service

Many companies sometimes use a private courier service rather than the USPS. A private service is often used when a guaranteed delivery time is required. Most cities are served by several private mail delivery companies. Check under Delivery Service in the yellow pages of the telephone directory for a listing of companies in your area. You will want to ask about services and fees to identify the delivery company that best meets your needs.

You must prepare a delivery form to accompany the package that includes information such as:

- Your name, address, and phone number
- The recipient’s name, address, and phone number
- The class of delivery service
- The weight of the package
- The current date
- The payment method or account number
If you use the delivery company often, the company may provide you with forms that are preprinted with your name, address, and account number. Completing the entire delivery form accurately is essential for prompt delivery. Private mail services do not deliver to a post office box. Many delivery companies have Web sites that allow you to track packages that have been sent using the delivery company.

Interoffice Mail

In a small company, processing interoffice mail may involve hand delivering a memo from one worker to another. In a large company, however, interoffice mail is collected from the departments. The mail is sorted in the mailroom and then sent to employees. Interoffice mail envelopes usually differ in color and size from envelopes used for mail going outside the company. That way, interoffice mail will not be sent to the post office accidentally.
Telegrams

A telegram is a message sent using the private mail service Western Union. Telegrams can be sent anywhere in the United States. You can send a telegram by entering data on the Western Union site.

Messages will be delivered by courier service on the next business day if received by Western Union by 6 p.m. EST. Messages received after 6 p.m. EST will be delivered on the second business day. Telegram messages sent to Alaska or Hawaii take two or three business days for delivery. Charges for telegrams can be found on the Western Union Web site.
REVIEWING THE TOPIC

1. How does the procedure for mailing an item in a window envelope differ from that for a standard envelope?

2. Give two examples of items that might be sent in a volume mailing.

3. What is the function of a postage meter? Describe two methods for adding more postage to the meter when it runs low.

4. What is an optical character reader (OCR)? List three reasons why an OCR might not be able to read the address on an envelope.

5. Describe the recommended address format for mail items.

6. Name and briefly describe three of the classes of domestic mail.

7. What kinds of items may be mailed using priority mail? What is the maximum weight allowed for a priority mail package? What is the maximum width and girth for a priority mail package?

8. What are two inexpensive USPS special services that can be used for proof of mailing?

9. Under what circumstances would you use COD mail? What is the maximum amount collectible on one COD package?

10. Why should interoffice mail be placed in envelopes distinctly different from those used to send mail by the postal service?

INTERACTING WITH OTHERS

You work in an office where the mail is picked up by postal workers twice a day, at 10:30 a.m. and 2:45 p.m. Monday afternoon you receive a call from the regional vice president in a branch office. He needs six copies of the company’s annual report by Wednesday. If the reports are in the 2:45 p.m. mail today, they will be delivered on Wednesday. You gather the annual reports, place them in a large envelope, and take them to the mailroom. You explain to Glenna, a mailroom worker, that the envelope must go with the 2:45 p.m. mail pickup. Glenna says she understands.

Later in the day, you call Glenna to verify that the annual reports were sent. Glenna sheepishly replies that she was on break at 2:45. When she returned, she noticed that the postal carrier had overlooked the envelope. The annual reports were not mailed.

1. You are very annoyed that the envelope was not mailed. Should you tell Glenna how you feel? If so, what should you tell her? Should you report this incident to Glenna’s supervisor? How can you and Glenna work together to solve this problem?

2. The reports still need to be sent. How would you suggest that Glenna mail the reports so that they reach the vice president by Wednesday?
Topic Review 11-2 continued

REINFORCING ENGLISH SKILLS

1. Key the text that describes the U.S. Postal Inspection Service shown below.

2. Correct all errors in spelling, grammar, and word usage.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is the law enforcement branch of the U.S. Postal Service. Postal inspectors investigate any crime in which the U.S. Mail is used to further a scheme, whether they originated in the mail, by telephone, or on the Internet. The use of the U.S. Mail is what makes it a mail fraud issue. Some important areas of jurisdiction include:

- Assaults and threats that occur while postal employees are performing official duties
- Distribution of child pornography and other crimes exploiting children through the mail
- Distributing narcotics or other controlled substances through the mail
- Forged, altered, or counterfeited postage stamps or postal money orders
- Delay of delivery or destruction are theft of mail
- Mail that contains threats of kidnapping, physical injury, or injury to the property or reputations of others
- Money laundering—attempts to conceal the proceeds of illegal acts through monetary transactions

INTERNET RESEARCH WORD PROCESSING

Topic 11-2 ACTIVITY 1

Calculate Postage

You work in a small office. You need to determine the correct postage for various items you have been given to mail.

1. Determine the amount of postage needed to mail each item listed below step 2 using the USPS. Use your town as the mailing location in figuring the postage. Consult current USPS rate charts available in print from your local post office or online at the USPS Web site. A link to the USPS Web site is found on The Office Web site.
2. Create a document that lists the items to be mailed and the correct postage for each item.

- A package weighing 4 3⁄4 pounds to be sent parcel post to Ann Arbor, Michigan
- A letter weighing three ounces to be sent by express mail to Camden, Maine
- A 12-ounce package containing a printed report to be sent by first-class mail to Santa Barbara, California
- A two-ounce letter to be sent by first-class, certified mail to Denver, Colorado
- A ten-ounce letter to be sent to a local bank

Topic 11-2 | ACTIVITY 2

Compare Delivery Services

You have been asked to compare rates for the USPS and two private mail delivery services for mailing several types of items. Work with a classmate to complete this activity.

1. Identify two private mail delivery companies that serve your area.
2. Research the cost of mailing the items listed below step 4 using the USPS and the two private mail delivery services. Create a bar graph that compares the cost of mailing the six-ounce envelope to Tampa, Florida, using next-day delivery for two private mail delivery services. Adjust the scale of the graph, if necessary, to show the data clearly.
3. Create a memo form to include your company’s name, Parnell Products, Inc., and the appropriate headings. Write a short memo report to your supervisor, Jeremy Waters, to report your findings.
   - Recommend the mail service that should be used for routine mailings and the service that should be used for items that must have guaranteed overnight or second-day delivery.
   - Introduce and include the graph you created in your report.
   - Determine whether each service has a system available for customers to track packages that have been mailed. Research mailing time deadlines, any special packaging requirements, and drop-off or pickup locations for each service. Consider these factors when making your decisions.
   - Give reasons to support your recommendations.
4. Attach a table to your report that gives the mailing cost for each item below for each of the three services.

**Items to be mailed:**

- A package weighing 10 pounds to be sent to Chicago, Illinois, which you would like to arrive within about 10 days (Delivery time is not critical.)
- A letter weighing six ounces sent to Tampa, Florida, which must arrive the next business day (Delivery time is critical.)
- A 12-ounce envelope to Santa Barbara, California, which must arrive within two working days (Delivery time is critical.)
- A four-ounce letter to Denver, Colorado, which you would like to arrive with seven working days (Delivery time is not critical.)
- A ten-ounce letter to be sent to a local business, which you would like to arrive within three or four days (Delivery time is not critical.)
Summary

In this chapter, you learned the procedures for processing both incoming and outgoing mail. You should be knowledgeable about the following key points:

- An office worker’s mail-related tasks will depend on the size of the company, the volume of mail handled, and the job duties.
- Electric envelope openers, rotary units for sorting mail, and automated delivery systems help speed mail processing.
- First-class, priority, express, and standard are examples of classes of domestic mail. Special postal services are available such as registered mail, insured mail, and certified mail.
- To speed the processing of outgoing mail, some companies use electronic postage scales, postage meters, and equipment for addressing, labeling, folding, and inserting mail.
- The USPS uses electronic equipment such as optical character readers and bar code sorters to speed mail to its destination. You can help speed the process by following USPS address format guidelines and by using nine-digit ZIP codes.
- Special considerations for address formats, different postage rates, and customs regulations apply to international mail.
- Many companies sometimes use a private mail delivery service rather than the USPS.
- Interoffice mail envelopes usually differ in color and size from envelopes used for mail going outside the company. This difference helps avoid accidentally mixing in-house and outside mail.

Key Terms

annotate    postage meter    routing slip
courier    prioritize    synopsis
customs    referral slip    telegram
optical character reader (OCR)
Mailing List and Flyer

You work as an office assistant at Chaparral Coffee Company. Your supervisor approaches your workstation with this request:

Please create a flyer to send to all our current customers with our next catalog mailing. The flyer will contain an introductory half-price offer for two new products—our Dessert Coffee Assortment gift box and our Classic Delight package. Our new customer referral program is getting off to a good start. We have received 14 referrals thus far. Use this list to create a database for these prospective customers. Print labels from the list and send each person our catalog and the new product flyer.

1. Open the PDF file CH11 Chaparral from the data files. This file contains information about the new products and a list of prospective customers.

2. Use your desktop publishing skills to design a flyer to introduce the two new products. Explain that these two new products will be available at half their regular price for a limited time. Use the current date through two months from the current date as the time for the special offer. Include the company name and address information and appropriate graphics on the flyer.

3. Create a database named CH11 Customers. Create a table named Customers to contain the names and addresses of the prospective customers. Create appropriate fields. Enter data using the all caps, no punctuation format recommended by the USPS and the two-letter state abbreviations in the addresses.

4. Use the Labels Wizard to create mailing labels. Sort the addresses by state. Print the mailing labels. Use plain paper if labels are not available.

ZIP Code Update

Your company sends several volume mailings each quarter using standard mail. Periodically, an automated check for correct ZIP codes is performed. During the last check, the computer identified ten addresses that may have incorrect ZIP codes.

1. Find and record the correct ZIP code for each address on the list on page 469. Use a printed ZIP code directory or access the USPS Web site to find current ZIP code information. A link to the USPS Web site is found on The Office Web site.
2. Key a list of the addresses using the correct ZIP codes for each address.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>ZIP Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800 AUGUSTA CT</td>
<td>40555-2860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEXINGTON KY</td>
<td>40555-2860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8701 TOWN PARK DR</td>
<td>88036-2614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSTON TX</td>
<td>88036-2614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 CENTRAL AVE</td>
<td>17205-4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALBANY NY</td>
<td>17205-4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8500 KELLER DR</td>
<td>72402-2356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITTLE ROCK AR</td>
<td>72402-2356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174 MAIN ST</td>
<td>14401-6401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANGOR ME</td>
<td>14401-6401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1133 N DEARBORN ST</td>
<td>60690-2783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHICAGO IL</td>
<td>60690-2783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11115 N NEBRASKA AVE</td>
<td>36312-5748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAMPA FL</td>
<td>36312-5748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8730 N HIMES AVE</td>
<td>33618-8355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAMPA FL</td>
<td>33618-8355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7203 N FLORIDA AVE</td>
<td>33694-4835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAMPA FL</td>
<td>33694-4835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2730 BRANDY DR</td>
<td>44232-5303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLUMBUS OH</td>
<td>44232-5303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>