

Frequently Asked Questions for Folded Self-Mailers (FSM) and Other Unenveloped Mailpieces

Perforations:

Q1. Are perforations allowed on the bottom, leading or trailing edges of a FSM; and if so, can they go all the way to the edge? If they are allowed, are there specific conditions that must be met?

A: Perforations are allowed on the addressed side, non-addressed side, or on the folds of a FSM if they meet all of the following conditions:

- Host piece must be made of card stock or equivalent grade
- The perforations have a cut-to-tie ratio of 1:1
- Any perforation that extends to any edge of the mailpiece must end with a tie where it intersects with the edge
- Any perforation on a fold that extends to any edge of the mailpiece must end with a tie where it intersects with the edge
- If perforations are on the address side of the mailpiece, there must be a clear space, of at least 1" from any address element (e.g., OEL, barcode, barcode clear zone, etc.), and postage area.

Attachments:

Q2. If an attachment is made from the same paper stock as the host piece, and is attached to the inside panel, could the attachment be defined as a panel and counted towards the number of panels?

A: Yes, this design feature is considered a secured panel if the internal insert is the same size as the external panel on three edges, and no more than an inch away from the fourth edge. (Note: Section 201.3.14.3d was updated to clarify this panel option.)

Tri-folds:

Q3. Why does a tri-fold need to be addressed on the middle panel?

A: Proper fold orientation for the tri-fold design requires the final folded panel to be on the non-address side and folded up from bottom for horizontal fold pieces, or from lead to trail for vertical/oblong fold pieces. However, we will allow the addressed panel to be the final folded panel at the machinable/automation letter prices if the lead edge is sealed with an additional 1" tab (1 1/2" preferred) for pieces up to and including 1 oz or 1 1/2" tab if over 1 oz placed 1/2" inch from the bottom of the leading edge, or a 3/8" glue spot or a 1/8" wide glue line placed 1/2" from the bottom and no more than 1/4" from the leading edge. The glue spots or lines must be adhered from the addressed panel to the internal panel when the fold is completed. (Note: Section 201.3.14.4 was updated to clarify this option.)

Sealing:

Q4. Are there any alternate sealing methods for oblong pieces instead of placing three glue spots on the trailing edge?

A: Yes, two glue spots can be placed on trailing edge with the third glue spot centered on the top edge of the non-address panel to seal the mailpiece.

Q5. Can the mailpiece be sealed at different locations than addressed in the standards and the matrix?

A: There may be room for flexibility with locations of glue spots that enable sufficient closure. The FSM graphics provided in the "Folded Self-Mailer" module on the RIBBS website are to demonstrate what is most commonly used by mailers. Variations of glue spots can be presented for USPS review to determine if they would sufficiently meet the characteristics for machinability.

Q6. When tape is used as a closure method, clarify what is meant by placing the saw-toothed edge perpendicular to the edge it seals (DMM 201.3.11).

A: Cellophane tape may also be used as a closure method when the saw-toothed edge is placed parallel to the edge being sealed. When used in replacement of tabs, tape must meet the same size, number, and placement standards as for tabs.

Q7. If using tape as a closure method, does tape need to be the same size, number, placement, and comparable adhesion as the applicable type of tab that is required?

A: When used in replacement of tabs, tape must meet the same size, number and placement standards for tabs.

Q8. Are colored tabs allowed on FSMs?

A. If properly placed according to sealing standards for FSMs and they do not obscure any pertinent information on the piece or affect required clear areas and spacing requirements, colored tabs may be used.

Q9. On the unenveloped letter-size mailpieces with tear-off strips, it states that the unfolded edge (top or bottom), "Must be sealed...". Does this mean that the open edge must be sealed with a continuous glue line?

A: No, the open edge may be sealed with two or three glue spots, glue lines, or tabs (depending on length of mailpiece). A USPS review of the mailpiece prior to full production or mailing may be required to determine if the piece is properly sealed. Reminder, tabs cannot be placed on the bottom edge.

Paperweight:

Q10. Can you indicate which types of paper are equal in weight to book grade?

A: Text and offset papers are considered equitable to book grade by the paper manufacturing industry.

Q11. All panels of FSMs must meet the minimum paper weight – even internal panels – does this apply to attachments and loose enclosures?

A: No, paper basis weight applies only to panels.

Panels:

Q12. DMM states exterior panels must be equal or nearly equal in length. What length is “nearly” equal?

A: FSMs must have at least two qualifying panels. The non-address panel can be no more than one inch shorter from the top for horizontal folded pieces or from the trail edge if vertical/oblong fold style.

Q13. I have a piece that is folded along the longer dimension three times to create four equal panels. The piece is folded from the bottom up towards the back three times. The final folded panel is the front panel which would be the address panel. DMM 201.3.14.3b states that the final folded panel creates the nonaddress panel. Does this standard apply to pieces that are folded to create four panels, or could either side be addressed?

A: For pieces that are created by a horizontal “roll-fold” (where four or more panels are continuously folded in the same direction), or horizontal tri-fold and multi-fold design, there are fold/sealing options that will allow the mailpiece to be eligible for machinable/automation prices:

1. The last panel is the one that has no fold at the top and should be oriented on the non-address side. For horizontal folded pieces, conventional folding outlined in DMM 201.3.0 indicates the last folded panel should fold up from the bottom to the non-address side.

2. The addressed panel will be accepted as the final folded panel if the lead edge is sealed with either an additional 1” tab (1 1/2” preferred) for pieces up to and including 1 oz or 1 1/2” tab if over 1oz placed 1/2” inch from the bottom of the leading edge, or a 3/8” glue spot or a 1/8” wide glue line placed 1/2” from the bottom and no more than 1/4” from the leading edge. The glue spots or lines must be adhered from the addressed panel to the internal panel when the fold is completed. (Section 201.3.14.4 was updated to clarify this option.)

3. When the outside panels are folded in to create an “invitation/gate fold(s)” and then the piece is folded up like a horizontal bi-fold type piece, either of the external panels will be accepted as the address panel.

Note: Oblong (vertical fold) pieces must have the last folded panel folded from the lead to the trail edge on the non-address side.

FSMs in General:

Q14. The new standards do not allow the bottom edge to be open; however, with oblong pieces the bottom edge is open. Could you explain why the open bottom edge for oblongs are eligible for automation but not a regular FSM with the final fold at the top and the bottom edge open?

A: For horizontal folded pieces, the fold on the bottom edge and the closure on the sides or at top provides stability; oblong pieces have the folds vertical, which creates an open edge at bottom, but these types of folds are considered stable because the closure is not placed on the bottom edge.

Q15. What is considered the host piece?

A: The host piece is the portion of the finished mailpiece that is not an attachment or loose enclosure. The host piece consists of the panels formed when a sheet or sheet(s) of unbound paper are folded together and sealed to create a letter-size mailpiece. (Note: Attachments and loose enclosures are optional elements, therefore they are not required to meet the required paper basis weight of their host piece).

Q16. Do the FSM sealing requirements apply to First-Class Mail double postcards paid at the card price?

A: No, the sealing requirements for FSMs do not apply to First-Class Mail double postcards paid at the card price.

Q17. Can we use clean release cards on folded self-mailers under the new standards?

A: Yes, see DMM 201.3.13.5, *Standards for Release Cards*.

Inserted Reply Envelopes

Q18. For a reply envelope in a quarter-fold – clarify how the envelope must be enclosed to comply with 201.3.14.8e and if that is just one option for securing the envelope in the mailpiece.

A: The rules state the "...envelope may be inserted within the first fold to prevent separation during normal handling." The intent of the rule is that this loose insert be placed within the folded pages and not dropped into and sandwiched between the pages, where the tab is the only thing containing the insert within the piece. Optionally, instead of incorporating within a fold, these envelopes may be secured to any interior panel and considered an attachment.