

U.S. Postal Service Unveils Holiday Shipping Secrets

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The holidays can go from Ho, Ho, Ho to Bah Humbug! when it comes to shipping gifts to our loved ones. Thankfully, the US Postal Service has unveiled helpful holiday shipping tips. Here are six shipping pointers, courtesy of Krista Finazzo, consume advocate for the Postal Service.

- **Receive discounted shipping costs.** Skip the trip to the Post Office by using Click-N-Ship on usps.com/holiday and receive up to a 16 percent discount off your shipping costs. Customers can print their own mailing labels with postage from the convenience of home or office. And by requesting Free Package Pickup online, customers can have the Postal Service pick up packages from homes and offices across the country. The service is free regardless of the number of packages being requested at usps.com/pickup/.
- **Confirm addresses.** Print addresses clearly in all CAPITAL LETTERS and be sure to include all address elements — apartment numbers, suite numbers and directional information for streets. Include both “to” and “from” information on packages — and only on one side.
- **Use a sturdy box.** 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 or at the Postal Store on usps.com. Express Mail and Priority Mail boxes and envelopes are free. And if you’re not sure — customers can use our convenient Flat Rate Boxes that come in a variety of sizes and once again are always free. Remember—“If it fits, it ships,” for a low flat rate.
- **Pack delicately.** Cushion contents with shredded or rolled newspaper, bubble wrap or foam peanuts. Plain air-popped popcorn is also good for cushioning — it’s inexpensive and environmentally friendly. Always use tape designed for shipping, like pressure-sensitive tape, nylon-reinforced craft paper tape or glass-reinforced pressure-sensitive tape. Do not use wrapping paper, string, masking tape, duct tape or cellophane tape.
- **Remove batteries and fragile items.** Be sure to 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. And 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.
- **Mark your calendars.** Be sure to take note of the following mail-by dates to have your package arrive in time for the holidays: Dec. 11, Express Mail International; Dec. 14, Parcel Post; Dec. 17, Global Express Guaranteed; Dec. 20, First-Class Mail; Dec. 21, Priority Mail and Dec. 22, Express Mail.