

# E040 Free Matter for the Blind and Other Physically Handicapped Persons

## Summary

E040 describes the standards under which mail may be sent to or from blind or physically handicapped persons free of postage.

## 1.0 Basic Information

### 1.1 General

Subject to the standards below, matter may be entered free of postage if mailed by or for the use of blind or other persons who cannot read or use conventionally printed materials due to a physical handicap. The provisions of [E040](#) apply to domestic mail only.

### 1.2 Mail Classification

Matter mailed free under this standard is not considered part of any particular class of mail and is not protected against postal inspection. This matter is treated as First-Class Mail for the exclusive purposes of determining appropriate standards for processing and delivery and for handling if undeliverable.

### 1.3 Eligibility

The following persons are considered to be blind or unable to read or use conventionally printed material due to a physical handicap for purposes of this section:

a. Certified participants in the Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS).

b. Blind persons whose visual acuity, as determined by competent authority, is 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting lenses, or whose widest diameter of visual field subtends angular distance no greater than 20 degrees.

c. Other physically handicapped persons certified by 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 unable to use standard printed material as a result of physical limitations.

(3) Having a reading disability resulting from organic dysfunction and of sufficient severity 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. Eligible participants must be residents of the United States, including the several states, territories, insular possessions, and the District of Columbia, or American citizens domiciled abroad.

#### **1.4 Certifying Authority**

For purposes of this standard:

a. The postmaster may extend the free matter privilege to an individual recipient based on personal knowledge of the individual's eligibility.

b. In cases of blindness, visual impairment, or physical limitations, "competent authority" is defined to include 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)).

c. In the case of reading disability from organic dysfunction, "competent authority" is defined as doctors of medicine and doctors of osteopathy.

#### **1.5 Qualifying Individuals**

The USPS may require individuals claiming entitlement to the free matter privilege to furnish evidence of eligibility consistent with the standards in [1.3](#) and [1.4](#), or verify by other means that the recipients are eligible to receive free matter.

## **2.0 Matter Sent to Blind or Other physically Handicapped Persons**

### **2.1 Acceptable Matter**

Subject to [2.2](#), this matter may be mailed free:

a. Reading matter in braille or 14-point or larger sight-saving type and musical scores.

b. Sound reproductions.

- c. Paper, records, tapes, and other material for the production of reading matter, musical scores, or sound reproductions.
- d. Reproducers or parts of them for sound reproductions.
- e. Braille writers, typewriters, educational or other materials or devices, or parts thereof, used for writing by, or designed or adapted for use of, a blind person or a person who has a physical impairment as described in [1.3](#).

## **2.2 Conditions**

The matter listed in [2.1](#) must meet these conditions:

- a. The matter must be for the use of a blind or other physically handicapped person.
- b. Either no charge, rental, subscription, or other fee is required for this matter; or, if required, may not exceed the cost of the item.
- c. The matter may be opened and inspected by the USPS.
- d. The matter contains no advertising. Advertising is defined as:
  - (1) All material of which a valuable consideration is paid, accepted, or promised, that calls attention to something to get people to buy it, sell it, seek it, or support it.
  - (2) Reading matter or other material of which an advertising rate is charged.
  - (3) Articles, items, and notices in the form of reading matter inserted by custom or understanding that textual matter is to be inserted for the advertiser or the advertiser's products in which a display advertisement appears.
  - (4) An organization's advertisement of its own services or issues, or any other business of the publisher, whether in display advertising or reading matter.

## **2.3 Letters From Sighted**

Letters prepared in any form by sighted individuals, to be sent to a blind or other physically handicapped person, or empty shipping materials for mailing matter described in this section, may not be sent free and must bear the full applicable postage.

## **3.0 Matter Sent by Blind or Other physically Handicapped Persons**

### **3.1 Acceptable Letters**

Only letters in Braille or in 14-point or larger sightsaving type or in the form of sound recordings, and containing no advertising, may be mailed free, and only if unsealed and sent by a blind or other physically handicapped person as described in [1.3](#).

### **3.2 Other Letters**

Letters that are handwritten, or printed or typed in a type size smaller than 14 points, may not be sent free. These letters must bear the full applicable postage.

## **4.0 Preparation**

### **4.1 Basic Standards**

All matter mailed under this standard:

- a. Must be marked “Free Matter for the Blind or Handicapped” in the upper right corner of the address side.
- b. Must meet the minimum and maximum dimensions in [C010](#) and [C700](#), respectively.
- c. Is subject to the mailability standards in [C020](#) and [C030](#).

### **4.2 Special Services**

Insurance is the only special service that can be added to mail sent under this standard. The fee for insurance must be paid by the sender.

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