

3.14 Folded Self-Mailers

3.14.1 Definition

A folded self-mailer is formed of two or more panels that are created when one or more unbound sheets of paper are folded together and sealed to make a letter-size mailpiece. The number of panels is determined by the number of sheets in the mailpiece and the number of times the sheets are folded. (For double cards see [1.2.8.](#))

3.14.2 Physical Characteristics

Folded self-mailers have the following characteristics:

- a. Height: A minimum of 3-1/2 inches and a maximum of 6 inches.
- b. Length: A minimum of 5 inches and a maximum of 10-1/2 inches.
- c. Thickness: A minimum of 0.007 inch; (0.009 inch if the height exceeds 4-1/4 inches or if the length exceeds 6 inches); the maximum thickness is 1/4 inch.
- d. Maximum Weight: 3 ounces.
- e. Rectangular, with four square corners and parallel opposite sides.
- f. Aspect ratio: within 1.3 to 2.5 (see [3.7.](#)).
- g. Maximum number of panels: 12, except under [3.14.2h.](#)
- h. Quarter-folded self-mailers made of a minimum 70-pound paper basis weight or equivalent may have as few as 4 panels. Quarter-folded self-mailers made of 55 pound or greater newsprint must have at least 8 panels and may contain up to 24 panels.

3.14.3 Panels

Panels are created when a sheet of paper is folded. Each two-sided section (front and back) created by the fold is considered one panel. When a folded self-mailer is made of multiple sheets, multiply the number of sheets by the number of panels created when folding a single sheet to determine the total number of panels. The following conditions apply:

- a. External panels created by folding must be equal or nearly equal in size.
- b. The final folded panel creates the back (non-address) side of the mailpiece. The open edge of the back panel must be at the top or within 1 inch of the top or trailing edge of the mailpiece. For horizontal folded tri-fold or multi-fold pieces, the addressed panel may be the final folded panel if the leading edge is sealed according to [3.14.4a.](#)
- c. The final folded edge must be the bottom of a folded self-mailer unless prepared as an oblong. The final folded edge of an oblong folded self-mailer must be the leading (right) edge.
- d. Internal shorter panels must be covered by a full-size panel, and count toward the maximum number of panels. Optionally, internal shorter panels may be secured but must have only one edge that is shorter and be no further than one inch away from the edge of the external panel.
- e. Folding methods and the subsequent number of panels created when folding a single sheet of paper are:
 1. Bi-fold: folded once forming two panels.
 2. Tri-fold: folded twice forming three panels.
 3. Oblong: paper folded once to form two rectangular panels with one elongated dimension and parallel opposite sides. The final folded edge is on the leading (shorter) edge.
 4. Quarter-fold: folded twice with each fold at a right angle (perpendicular) to the preceding fold. One sheet of paper quarter-folded creates four panels.
- f. Flaps are formed when the final exterior panel is folded over and affixed to the unaddressed side of the mailpiece. Flaps must meet the following conditions:

1. The folded edge of a flap must be flush with the top edge of the mailpiece and end one inch or more above the bottom edge, except under [3.14.3f4](#). Flaps must be at least 1-1/2 inches when measured from the top of the mailpiece.
 2. Flaps must be secured by a sealing method in [3.14.4](#).
 3. Flaps with die-cut shapes must be firmly secured with tabs, glue line, glue spots or elongated glue lines. A 1/8 inch wide continuous glue line that seals the contour of the die-cut is strongly recommended.
 4. Flaps on oblong pieces must be at least 5 inches long at the longest point when measured from the leading edge and must end more than one inch from the trailing edge.
- g. Flaps and pockets prepared within folded self-mailers to stabilize enclosures are not considered to be panels.

3.14.4 General Sealing Methods

Folded self-mailers must be sealed using tabs or glue under the following conditions (also see [3.14.5](#) for specific sealing standards):

- a. Tabs must meet the standards for tabs in [3.11](#). The size and number of tabs required is determined by the weight of the mailpiece and optional design elements as follows:
 1. To seal folded self-mailers that weigh up to 3 ounces created in bi-fold, tri-fold formats, pieces with multiple interior folds and a final fold on the bottom, and quarter-fold mailpieces that weigh up to one ounce; place two nonperforated tabs on the top edge, one within 1 inch from the leading edge and another within 1 inch from the trailing edge, or place one tab on the leading and another on the trailing edge, both placed within 1 inch from the top. Additionally, horizontal folded tri-fold and multi-fold pieces having the final folded panel as the addressed panel must include an additional 1-inch tab (1-1/2 inch preferred) for pieces weighing up to 1 ounce; or a 1-1/2 inch tab for pieces weighing over 1 ounce, placed 1/2 inch from the bottom of the leading edge. Instead of a tab, a 3/8-inch glue spot or 1/8-inch wide glue line placed 1/2 inch from the bottom and no more than 1/4 inch from the leading edge may be used. The glue spots or lines must be adhered from the addressed panel to the internal panel when the fold is completed.
 2. To seal quarter-fold mailpieces made with newsprint that weigh more than 1 ounce up to 3 ounces, affix two tabs, one on the leading edge and one on the trailing edge within 1 inch from the top, and affix a third tab on the lower leading edge 1/2 inch from the bottom (see [3.14.5b](#)).
 3. To seal oblong pieces that weigh up to 3 ounces, affix one tab in the center of the top edge and one tab in the center of the trailing edge (preferred) or affix both tabs on the trailing edge within 1 inch of the top and bottom edges. Tabs may not be placed on the bottom of an oblong piece.
- b. Glue must be positioned within 1/4 inch of the open edges and be placed opposite the final fold or on both the leading and trailing edges when the final panel fold is on the bottom. Apply glue by one of the following methods:
 1. Continuous glue lines at least 1/8 inch wide (0.125 inches).
 2. Three or four glue spots at least 3/8 inch (0.375 inch) in diameter.
 3. Three or four elongated glue lines. Seal folded self-mailers that weigh up to 1 ounce with lines at least 1/2 inch long. Seal folded self-mailers that weigh more than 1 ounce with elongated glue lines that are each at least 1 inch long and 1/8 inch wide, or with glue lines that are each at least 1/2 inch long and 1/4 inch wide.
 4. Distribute glue spots and elongated glue lines evenly along the sealed edge(s).
 5. Quarter-fold self-mailers must be sealed with tabs.

3.14.5 Paper Weight and Sealing Requirements

All references in [3.0](#) to paper basis weight are for book-grade paper unless otherwise stated (see [3.2](#)). Interior optional elements such as attachments or enclosures are not subject to the host piece's book-grade paper basis weight standards. When multiple optional design elements are incorporated in one mailpiece, the standards for the design element with the highest paper weight and corresponding sealing methods apply. Folded self-mailer paper weights and sealing methods are:

- a. Folded self-mailers, (except quarter-fold mailpieces) as described in [3.14.3e1](#) through [3.14.3e3](#):
 1. Up to 1 ounce: 70-pound paper basis weight or equivalent sealed with a continuous glue line, three glue spots; or elongated glue lines under [3.14.4b](#); or two 1-inch tabs under [3.14.4a1](#) and [3.14.4a3](#).
 2. Over 1 ounce: 80-pound paper basis weight or equivalent sealed with a continuous glue line, four glue spots; or four elongated glue lines under [3.14.4b](#) or two 1-1/2 inch tabs under [3.14.4a1](#) and [3.14.4a3](#).
- b. Quarter fold self-mailers as described in [3.14.3e4](#):
 1. Up to 1 ounce: 70-pound paper basis weight or equivalent sealed with two 1-inch tabs.
 2. Over 1 ounce: 80-pound paper basis weight or equivalent sealed with two 1-1/2-inch tabs.
 3. Newsprint: 55 pound minimum paper required. Seal pieces one ounce or less with two 1-1/2-inch tabs and those weighing over one ounce with three 1-1/2-inch tabs, see [3.14.4a2](#).
- c. Optional design elements: Die-cut openings and perforated panes. Folded self-mailers with die-cut openings in the exterior panels as described in [3.14.6](#) or perforated panes as described in [3.14.7](#) must meet the following:
 1. Up to 1 ounce: 100-pound paper basis weight or equivalent sealed with glue under [3.14.4b](#) or two 1-1/2-inch tabs under [3.14.4a1](#) and [3.14.4a2](#).
 2. Over 1 ounce: 120-pound paper basis weight or equivalent sealed with glue under [3.14.4b](#) or two 2-inch tabs under [3.14.4a1](#) and [3.14.4a2](#) or three 1-1/2-inch tabs under [3.14.4a3](#).
- d. Optional design elements: Loose enclosures or attachments. For folded self-mailers that have loose enclosures as described in [3.14.8](#) or attachments as described in [3.14.9](#), the following applies:
 1. Up to 1 ounce: 80-pound paper basis weight or equivalent sealed with glue under [3.14.4b](#) or two 1-1/2-inch tabs under [3.14.4a1](#) and [3.14.4a2](#).
 2. Over 1 ounce: 100-pound paper basis weight or equivalent sealed with glue under [3.14.4b](#) or two 2-inch tabs under [3.14.4a1](#) and [3.14.4a2](#) or three 1-1/2-inch tabs under [3.14.4a3](#).

3.14.6 Die-Cut Elements

Folded self-mailers may be produced with two types of die-cut elements in the exterior panels: address windows or die-cut reveal. Die-cut openings may not be used to create die-cut punched holes (openings in the same location on all layers and panels so that there is a hole through the entire mailpiece). Prepare die-cut elements as follows:

- a. Die-cut address windows (used to convey address information) must meet standards for window envelopes under [601.6.3](#) and meet the following additional conditions:
 1. The maximum window size is 4 inches long by 2 inches high.
 2. When an address window appears on a mailpiece, no other die-cut openings may be made on the exterior panels.
- b. Die-cut openings used to reveal the contents of the mailpiece must be:
 1. Limited to two on only one external panel.

2. Either circular with a 2-inch maximum diameter or rectangular with a maximum of 2 inches long by 1-1/2 inches high with slightly rounded 1/4 inch radius corners.
 3. Placed at least 1-1/2 inches from all edges of the mailpiece if on the addressed side.
 4. Placed at least 5 inches from the leading edge and 1-1/2 inches from all other edges if on the non-addressed side.
 5. Positioned at least 1-1/2 inches apart when two or more die-cut openings are used.
- c. A single 1/2-inch semi-circular die-cut thumb notch may be placed on the trailing edge of the addressed or unaddressed outer panel.

3.14.8 Loose Enclosures

Folded self-mailers with loose enclosures must be securely sealed to ensure containment of the enclosed material and prevent excessive enclosure shift during processing. Loose enclosures must be made of paper and must meet the following conditions:

- a. Must be contained securely within the mailpiece.
- b. Must be inserted in an interior pocket or secured by any method that prevents excessive shift during normal handling. Pockets are not counted as panels.
- c. Folded self-mailers with die-cut openings may contain enclosures only if the inserted material is larger than the die-cut opening.
- d. Enclosed material does not exceed the maximum thickness of:
 1. 0.05 inch thick for mailpiece weights up to 1 ounce.
 2. 0.09 inch thick for mailpiece weights over 1 ounce.
- e. One empty reply envelope may be inserted within the first fold (manufacturing fold) of a quarter-folded self-mailer and must be secured within a fold to prevent separation during normal handling.