

Retail Service Talk

May 21, 2026

Local (Manual) Postmarks Must Be Applied at Retail Locations Upon Request – Updated to include Philatelic Hand-back Service

This is a reminder to all retail employees that customers may request a local (manual) postmark, also called a “round-date stamp,” at the retail counter of any Post Office, station, or branch.

When a customer tenders a mailpiece and requests a postmark, retail employees must hand-cancel the customer’s mailpiece, free of charge, upon taking possession of the mailpiece.

This is not a new policy. Our rules on local postmarks are set forth in POM 312.1 (“Local Postmark Requirement”) and POM 312.2 (“Local Postmark Requests”), and those rules are still in effect. We have also recently added new language to the Domestic Mail Manual (608.11) to help make customers aware of our postmarking practices, including the availability of a local postmark on request. Because this recent language reaffirmed our existing postmarking practices, some customers may request a postmark due to what they may understand to be “new rules” or “changes.” You can reassure them that postmarking practices remain the same and that we are happy to apply the mark nonetheless.

As additional reminders:

- Local postmarks must be applied upon request to all Single-Piece First Class Mail, including letter-shaped and flat-shaped pieces, regardless of postage payment method or indicia (stamped, metered, permitted, Business Reply Mail, SSK label, etc.)
- Retail employees may not postmark a mailpiece if the customer wants the mailpiece back and is not entering it into the mailstream **with the exception of philatelic purposes as listed in POM 231.4 (“Hand-Back and Mail-Back Service”).**
[23 Philatelic Postmarks](#)
- **POM 231.4 Hand-back Service** (only on the date of the postmark):
 - (1) When a customer personally presents an addressed or unaddressed envelope, postal card, or other item described in section 231.63 to a Postal Service employee for postmarking, the Postal Service employee must examine the item to ensure that it is clearly intended for philatelic purposes. Bill payments, tax returns, applications, and/or other date-sensitive mail cannot be handed back. Only after careful examination should a philatelic item be postmarked and handed back to the customer/collector.
 - (2) The envelope, card, or other item does not enter the mailstream. All such materials requesting postmarking must bear uncanceled postage at the applicable First-Class Mail® rate. If the customer wants to mail the postmarked item, it must be trayed or bagged separately and flagged “nonmachinable” to avoid being over postmarked in processing.
- Under POM 312.2, customers who want significant mail volumes (50 or more pieces) postmarked should contact the postmaster or other manager in advance to ensure that adequate resources are available.

To support you in case customers have questions or concerns about our postmarking practices, mailing dates, or proof of mailing, reference [Postmarking Myths and Facts](#). Please review this information and keep it handy.

If you’re not sure how to answer any questions received, use the document as a guide or reach out to your local management. Thank you for continuing to provide great customer service.