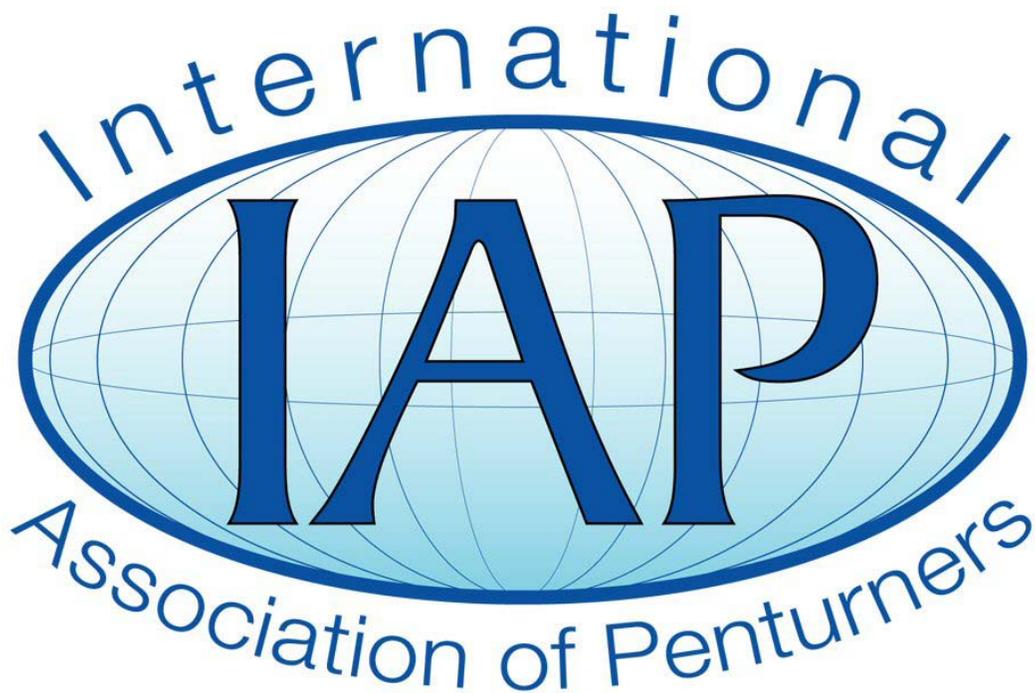


Flat Rate Shipping 101

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Flat Rate Shipping 101 by Richard Box

Why a tutorial on shipping flat rate you ask?

Many activities on the IAP require shipping something to another member. The super bowl pool, PITH, Pass it Forward and Service Pens to name a few. Other time folks just swap a few blanks or send another member a few goodies. For some of us who have done it before, shipping flat rate is so easy we don't realize that some members have never shipped a flat rate parcel and may rarely even ship anything.

This tutorial is written for them. Others may find a useful titbit or two as well.

Why use Flat Rate Shipping?

It is easy, economical and includes everything you need for most small parcels.

What is included?

The post office provides the box (or envelope in a few cases) at no charge. They will even deliver the boxes to you on request, also at no charge.

The label can be printed at home on your computer.

The mail carrier will pick up the box from you at no additional charge. You never need to go to the post office.

The postage includes the cost of shipping as well as insurance. If the package is "lost" or damaged in transit the contents are insured. For high value packages you can add insurance above the standard \$50 that is included in most cases.

The address you input is automatically standardized to USPS format, including the addition of a ZIP code if you do not have it.

"If it fits, it ships[®]" anywhere in the U.S. up to 70 lbs. While the weight limit rarely applies to what we usually ship, there is a limit on each parcel of 70 lbs.

What do I need to do to use the service?

Log on to <https://www.usps.com/> .

Create an account. It is simple to do, just click the "Sign In/Register button" in the upper right hand corner of the page. (The Post Office may change the layout from time to time but these instructions will work as of the writing of this tutorial.) You will need to choose a "User Name" and "Password", as well as a security question. As always it is a good idea to use something unique as a password, but that is up to you. The Post office does not store and confidential information by setting up an account. You will also enter your shipping address, (the address where you receive mail.) This information then automatically populates the form when you are ready to print your label.

You will also need to have the box you intend to ship in. I keep a few of each of the standard sizes on hand, but for our purposes here I will focus on a “Small Flat Rate Box”, often referred to as a SFRB. There are several other sizes, but once you choose a size the procedure is the same.

Keep in mind that there are a few restricted items such as ammunition and flammable liquids, but those will come up in the process and usually don’t apply to us.

You can also order boxes to be delivered from you. Just click the “Mail & Ship” tab. From here you will see that you can:

1. Print & Ship
2. Order Stamps & Supplies
3. Calculate a Price
4. Schedule a Pickup
5. Look Up a ZIP Code
6. Find USPS Locations
7. Learn about Mail & Shipping

All of this is in one easy location. If you are in a hurry to ship right away, you can pick up free boxes and mailing supplies at your local Post Office.

To print your label, select “Print & Ship”.

Fill in the required information. You **MUST** provide a complete and accurate address recognized by the Post Office. It is very difficult to enter a “wrong” address. This ensures that your package will get where you intend to send it.

When you have completed your form, you will proceed to the payment screen. The form of payment you choose is up to you, but I personally use PayPal. If you choose that option the Post Office will not need to have your credit card information, but again, the choice is yours.

Print your label at tape it to your package. You are almost done!

Then you can “Schedule a Pickup”. (This can be done as soon as you print the label, but if you forget, just click that tab.) Let them know where you want the package to be picked up and on what day. A Postal Worker will pick it up on their regular route. I usually just arrange to put the package in my regular mailbox. Put the package in the predetermined pickup location and **YOU ARE DONE!**

What you get:

- Free boxes
- Confirmed address shipping
- Insurance
- Tracking