

Sending letters and parcels

How to make sure your post and parcels arrive safely, and what you can do if things go wrong.

The information below will help you to make sure that your post and parcels arrive safely, such as choosing the correct postal method for your needs and how to give yourself the best chance of getting compensation if your item is delayed, lost or damaged.

Advice about sending post and parcels correctly

Always check if you can send the contents of your mail item through the postal network or if any restrictions or prohibitions apply

When sending valuable items to the UK or international destinations, you are responsible for checking whether the contents of your mail item are restricted or permitted to be transported through the mail network. If in any doubt, check with the postal company you are using or if using Royal Mail check at any Post Office branch or Royal Mail website. Many everyday items, such as aerosols, nail varnish and perfumes are considered dangerous goods under transport legislation.

Top tip: You must complete and attach any customs declarations when sending items outside of the UK and EU.

Choose the best postal service for your needs

There are many postal service delivery options, such as recorded delivery, signed for delivery or using a courier or express pick-up service. The service you need will depend on the value or weight of the item, for example money or jewellery. [Click here for an overview of the delivery service options that Post Office provide.](#)

Choose your parcel compensation cover you need

Some services will include compensation cover as standard so check that the amount of cover is suitable for your item or take out additional compensation cover if required. Additionally, most operators have a list of items they don't provide compensation for (these can include musical instruments, glassware and electrical items).

Pay the correct postage

The price you pay for sending an item depends on its size, weight, how fast you want it to get there, and where it's going. Depending on what postal operator you use, you can pay online, or if you using Royal Mail you can pay at a Post Office. Make sure you pay the correct postage, or your item may not be delivered, or the recipient may be asked to pay a handling fee before they can get the item.

To save money, shop around and compare prices offered by different postal providers. You can also think about how fast you need to send the item, if it's not urgent, you'll likely be able to get a cheaper option, as fast delivery is often the most expensive.

Proof of posting

Ask at the counter for proof of posting when posting your items at your local post office or parcel drop-off point. This is your proof that you sent the item and you'll need to show this if you are placing a compensation claim if something's gone wrong. Ensure your proof of posting is date stamped and contains the destination of your postal item.

Consider where to take your mail for posting

If using Royal Mail, customers can take their item to any post office branch in Northern Ireland or post at a post box if the items fit. When using a Post Box, it is important to note the time of the last collection, which should be displayed, as this will inform you if you have missed today's collection. Royal Mail and some alternative parcel operators offer collection at your premises (there may be a charge for this service) or drop-off at convenience stores. If you run a business or post a large volume of mail, your postal operator may offer a collection service.

Check the recipient's address and make sure it is clearly labelled

Include the house number or name, street name and postcode on a separate line. You can use Royal Mail's address finder at www.royalmail.com/postcode-finder.

Consider the size and type of envelope you need

When sending greeting cards or correspondence using dark coloured or red envelopes, use a white label to display the address.

Top tip: Avoid using very small or square envelopes to send cards and letters.

Ensure items are adequately wrapped

Package your item per the postal operator's rules on packaging requirements. Use a strong, but lightweight box, bubble wrap, and mark the item as "fragile" if appropriate. Following the postal operator's rules is important in case something goes wrong, as if your package is damaged, they may say it is your fault for not packaging it correctly. It's a good idea to take a photograph of your item before sending it.

Check the size and weight of your item

The amount you pay depends on the size and weight of the item you are posting. If using an online service, be sure to measure and weigh your parcel correctly so you don't pay extra.

Always include a return address

Put a return address on the back of the parcel or envelope, and for parcels, include an address inside as well. If the item can't be delivered, it will be returned to you.

Other help and information

Complaints about postal services

How to make a complaint about lost, delayed, or damaged mail, what you can expect, and how we can help.

Online shopping and parcel delivery rights

Your consumer rights when shopping online, what you are entitled to, and what to do if things go wrong.

Junk mail

Types of junk mail, what to do if you receive it, and how to stop it.

Royal Mail stamp swap out scheme

Information and advice regarding the Stamp Swap Out Scheme.