

Chapter 14 – Online Postage

There is a new kind of postage application available, and it is online! Online postage printing is offered by two major vendors: www.endicia.com and www.stamps.com. These vendors are certified by the USPS to sell their postage, without any interaction from the USPS. This means that you can do everything that the post office can do right from the comfort of your home. Further, you can save a ton of money and time over the long run! It also means that you'll have to do everything that the post office would normally do for you. Since I started selling books online, I signed up for online postage in the first month. Let me go into a little more detail about online postage.

Below is an example of what you might see if you choose to utilize an online postage vendor. This is Endicia's account screen, and it gives you a summary of all of your postage prints, refunds, etc. You can get much more detailed than this by getting reports of how much you spend on postage for the day, month, or year, drill down closer to see individual postage print transactions and many other things.

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Account Transactions Account

Month: 2009

Period: at to at

Show:

Type	Number	Amount	Average
Postage Prints	124	\$376.52	\$3.04
Postage Purchases	4	\$310.00	\$77.50

If you have any questions, our Technical Support representatives are available to assist you M-F, 7am-5pm PST, **1-800-576-3279 ext. 130**

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Endicia Account Screen

Once you decide to start printing your postage online, you'll need a few things to get started. To begin with, get yourself a nice scale that will go up to 20 lbs that will give you a readout to the nearest tenth of an ounce. This will ensure getting accurate readings for small packages, but also be robust enough to handle even the heaviest book. After you've got your scale, get some packing tape, a tape gun, and some scissors. These can be found at your local office supply store. You should already have a printer to print out your labels, right? We're going to assume you do, because you need a printer in the packing phase to print the packing slips to place inside each package.

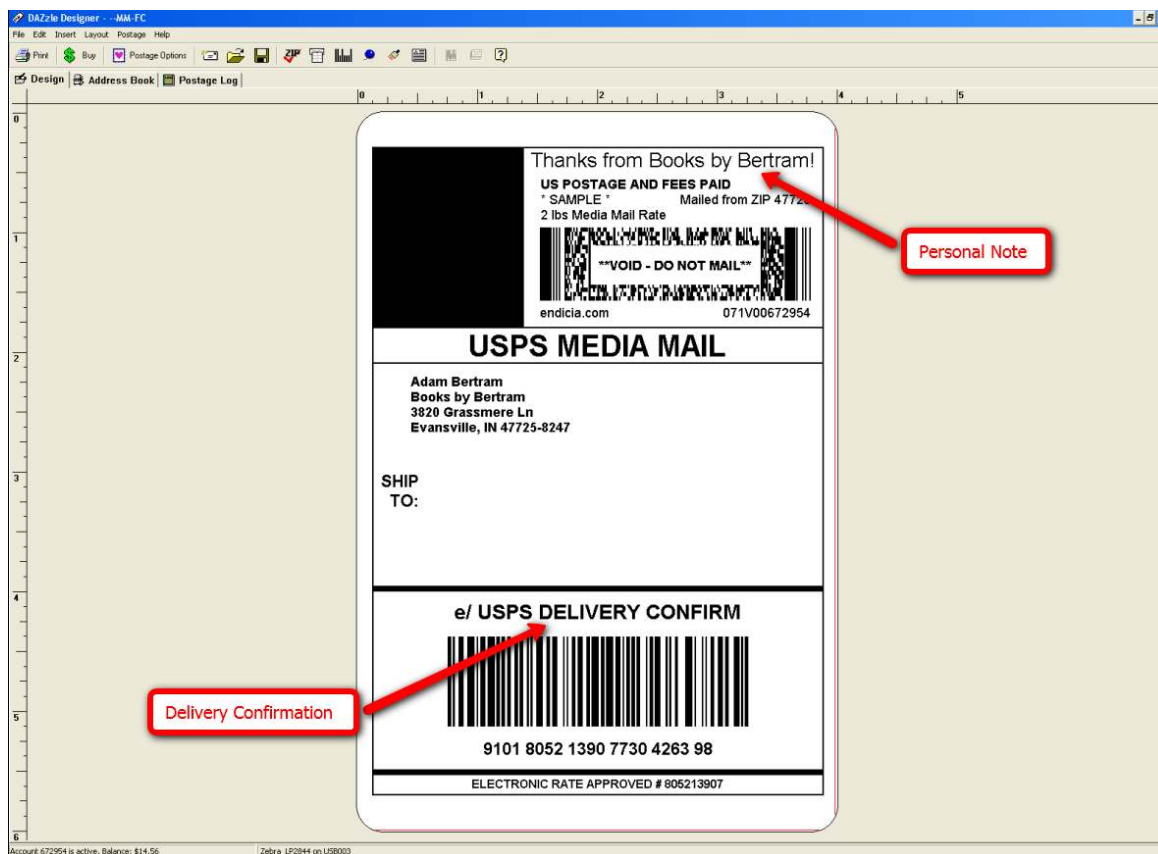
Time to get started!

1. Online Postage Vendors - Each vendor is different, but they all require a fee. If you go onto a vendor's site, you will more than likely have to provide your name, address, and credit card number to sign up for their service. Once you do this, you will also most likely have to download some software onto your computer. After you've gotten signed up for the monthly charge and have downloaded the software, we're ready to start shipping out books.

2. Calculating the Weight of Your Packages – First, weigh the books. This part is extremely easy to do and I promise you just some minimal math skills are required. Place the book on the scale and record how much the book weighs. After you make a mental note of the weight of the book, weigh the package medium that you're going to use for shipping. Is it a box or a bubble mailer? Be sure to include that weight as well as an additional ounce for good measure for the packing tape and packing slip that will be included in the package. Always overestimate. If you underestimate, you risk having the customer being charged for the remainder of the postage due, or having the package returned to you. Also, be certain how many orders the customer placed with you this time; place as many books on the scale as you will be shipping in the order.

3. Once you get all the weights recorded, you will then need to start inputting names and shipping addresses into the software. Each piece of software is different, but they all need the weight, shipping names, and addresses.

4. Now decide what kind of postage you would like to apply. As I mentioned earlier, there are a lot of different options, but for now, let's assume you have a few books to ship via "standard" mail. When customers request "standard" shipping, the choices are either First Class or Media Mail. Let's also assume that the books are over the 7 oz cutoff. Because of this weight, all of these books will be going Media Mail. Simply choose that option for each book. Since I recommend using Delivery Confirmation, add that in as well.



Endicia's Dazzle Program for Online Postage

5. Now print out all of the labels. Hit print (it may or may not be this easy) and your labels will start printing out. Once you start to accumulate more orders, you should eventually upgrade to a label printer. After all of the labels are printed out with the weights, postage types, names, address, and actual postage applied, you now need to apply them to the packages.

6. Depending on how you have configured the software, your labels will be printed onto the paper in a number of different ways. In the past, my software printed out four labels on one sheet of paper. This is common for most sheets of labels from office supply stores. Use your scissors to cut out your labels and try to keep them in order to prevent having to go searching for the matching book with packing slip.

7. Apply the labels to the packages. The easiest way I have found to do this is to configure your software to print out four labels to a sheet of paper so that when they are cut out and put on the mailer, three strips of packing tape is all it will take to properly tape down the shipping label to the package. I have tried a few different combinations and this is the quickest and easiest way to get the labels securely taped to the package. Don't worry about covering over the label. As long as you have clear packing tape, the USPS's scanners can scan right through the tape.

Your packages are now done, and ready to go out the door to your waiting customers! Congratulations!

There is one final step: you need to schedule a pickup of your packages by the USPS, or drop them off at your local post office. USPS will pick up any number of books right from your house on their next run if you have at least one Priority Mail or International item.

If you can't schedule a pickup, your next best bet is to drop them off at the post office or in a post office blue bin somewhere. Word of warning: I have dropped numerous books into the USPS's blue bins, but I have recently read that anything that is over 13 oz is not allowed in these bins, so err on the side of caution. It is safest to drop them off in person at the post office; you do not want to have your books returned to you.

If you decide to take your packages to the post office, you have a leg up on the other customers, because you require no attention at all. You have already done all the hard work for them and simply need to drop the books off. If there is a big line, don't even think about wasting your time in it just to drop off your books. Always go straight to the counter to tell them that the postage is already applied and everything is ready to go. Depending on the postal worker, they will more than likely just accept them and drop them in the bin. There is always the chance they will insist on checking every single package. My advice is to find a nearby post office that gets a lot of business, so that they don't have time to mess with you. Or get to know your local postal clerks: I have a favorite post office and they know me by name.

You've picked your books, packaged your books, and shipped your books. You are done! Finished! Finito! Pat yourself on the back for a job well done. Now all you have to do is repeat these steps a few thousand more times to really make some cash!

I hope that you shipped your books within two days of the customer's order. If you did, you did an excellent job and will most likely get great feedback from your customer! Don't forget to let me know how your online book selling business works out.