



## Direct Mail Basics

Chances are, most every designer will be called on to do a Business Reply window envelope or card. Here's the lowdown.

The **MLOCR** (multiline optical character reader) is a machine that scans the address block and translates it into a bar code, then sprays it onto the envelope.

### Return Address

In addition to being 23/4 inches above the bottom edge of the envelope, the return address should occupy no more than 50 percent of the length of the mailpiece. The return address should be in a type size smaller than the type size of the delivery address.

### Most neglected part of a mailing?

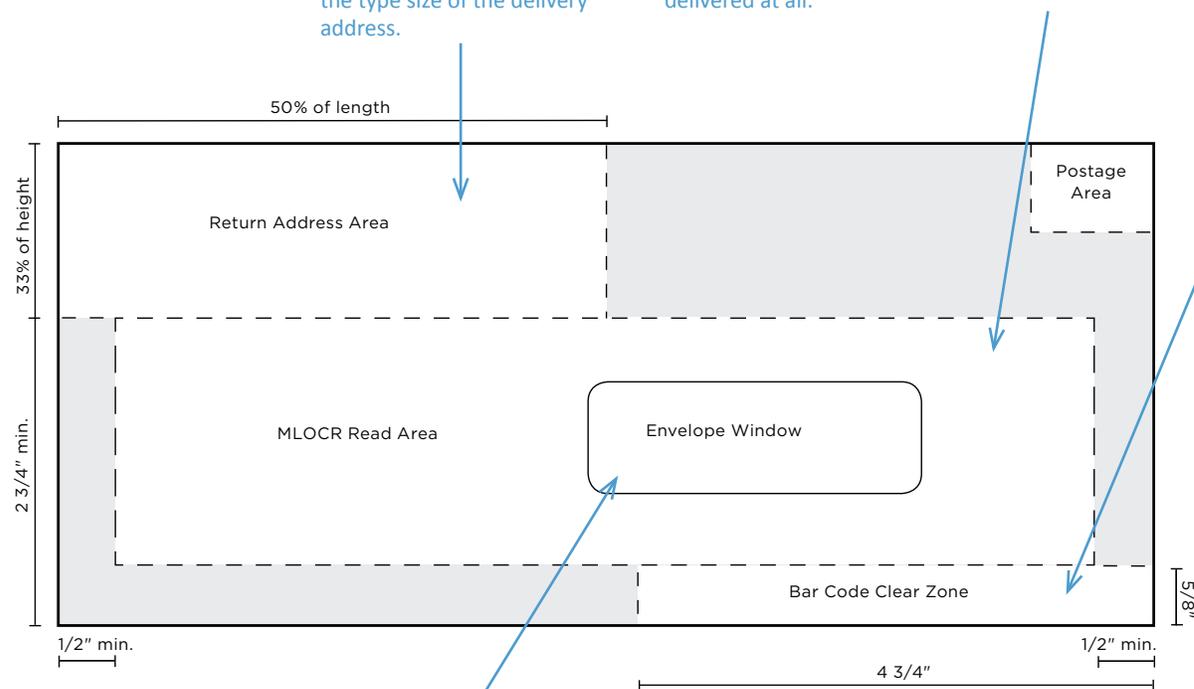
It's the quality of address information. If an address is incorrect, the piece may receive a negative response to the mailer's message, or may not get delivered at all.

### Reserved Spaces

Certain areas on the envelope are reserved for addressing and related information only. These places are the MLOCR read area, the bar code clear zone, and the return address area.

### Bar Code Clear Zone

After reading the address, the MLOCR prints the appropriate barcode in the lower right corner. To ensure the bar code is readable, the bar code clear zone must be clear of all printing and colored borders. Avoid using colored or coated papers. It's highly recommended to take an example of the envelope to your post office to see if it will be mailable.



### Fast Processing

Include in the delivery address street designators (for example, Blvd. or Dr.); directionals (NE, SW, etc.); the apartment, suite, or room number; and the ZIP+4 code.

### Address Window

To ensure successful processing, design your window so the entire address and barcode appear in the window during full movement of the insert. See *Quick Tip* at right.

### Avoiding Address Problems

1. Don't use fancy typefaces. Condensed, extended, or italic sans serifs aren't easily machine-read.
2. MLOCRs can recognize type sizes between 8 and 18 pts.
3. Make sure spaces between your words are at least the size of a capital letter **M**.

### QUICK TIP

Do the "tap test" to check the insert shift in your window:

1. With the insert in the envelope, tap the mailpiece on all sides, joggling the insert in every direction.
2. As each side is tapped, check that the clear space of 1/8 inch is still maintained between the address and all edges of the window.

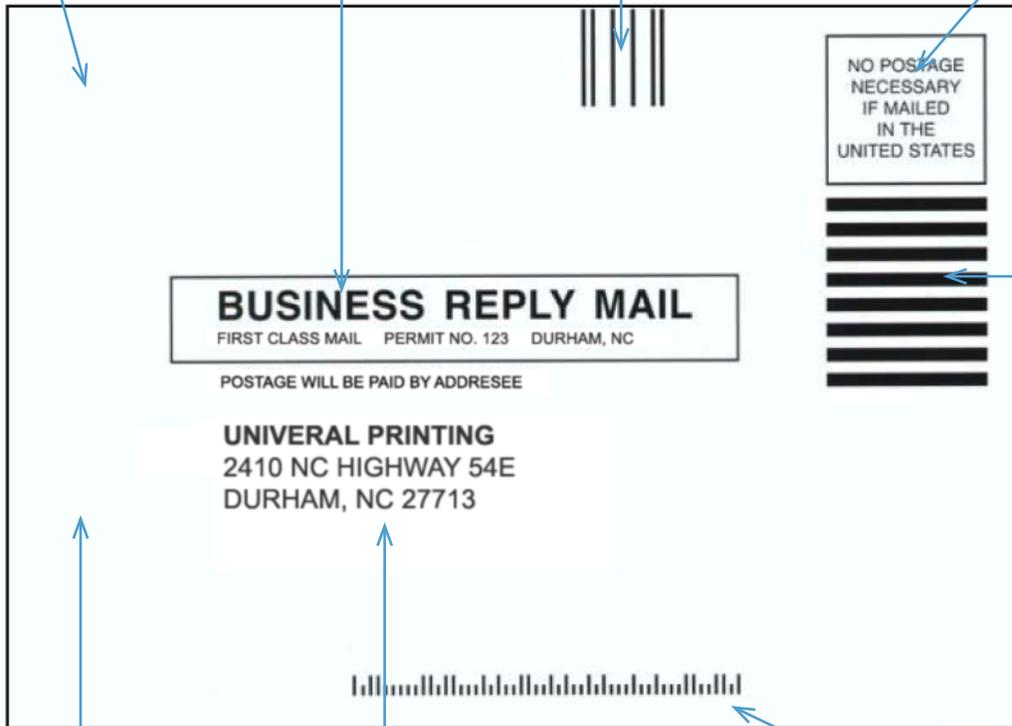


**Permit Holder Space**  
May contain information such as a return address or logo.

**Business Reply**  
The words "BUSINESS REPLY MAIL" must appear above the address. Immediately below, place the words "FIRST CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO." followed by the permit number and name of the issuing post office, all in capital letters.

**FIM**  
The FIM (Facing Identification Mark) allows automated processing equipment to identify, orient, and separate reply mail. FIM bars must be between 1/2 and 3/4 inch tall and 1/32 inch thick. Available at USPS website.

**No Stamp Required**  
"NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES" must appear in the upper right corner and cannot extend further than 13/4 inches from the right edge.



**Horizontal Bars**  
A series of uniform bars, parallel to the length of the mailpiece, identifies the card as Business Reply Mail. The bars must be 1/16 to 3/16 inch thick, evenly spaced, and at least 1 inch long.

**Great place for logo**  
A logo may be used in this area if it is placed no lower than 5/8 inch from the bottom.

**Delivery Address**  
Use the complete return address here. The post office will assign a unique four digit add-on to the ZIP code.

**Bar Code**  
The bar code represents ZIP code information for fast scanning. Every five lines represent a number. The code above is for the number 6. To get a bar code, call your Post Office, see Designing Letters and Reply Mail, or go to the USPS website.