

Sending Articles for the blind

(This information was obtained from the Royal Mail Website at www.royalmail.com)

Introduction

Royal Mail have, for a number of years, operated a scheme, Articles for the Blind, that allows blind and partially sighted people to send certain items of post free of charge.

Who can use the Service?

To use the service, either the sender or the recipient must be a blind person*.

Organisations and institutions working with the blind can also use the service, where they are sending items that have been specially prepared or adapted for use by the blind.

*Registered blind people or people who have close-up vision, with spectacles of N12, or less.

What can be sent?

Only items that have been specially produced or adapted for blind and partially sighted people may be sent using the service. These include:

- Books, papers and letters – either embossed or in large print (minimum font size 16pt)
- Relief maps
- Devices used to produce tactile information

With our prior agreement, organisations can also send the following:

- ‘Talking’ books and ‘talking’ newspapers, which are recordings of readings from printed sources, such as books, journals, newspapers, periodicals or similar publications.
- Equipment used to play or record audio, video and electronic media i.e. ‘talking’ books and ‘talking’ newspapers.
- Computer discs and CD’s that have been prepared for blind people.
- Spoken audio, video (with added commentary) and electronic media.
- Electronic and optical magnifiers
- Games, mathematical devices, watches, clocks, timers, and measuring equipment designed for blind people.
- Stationery for tactile information or for mail
- Mobility aids including sticks and guide dog equipment
- Embossed or blank plates for producing tactile information.

Things that cannot be sent

- Personal communications except for letters impressed or prepared for blind people.
- **Printed material in a font smaller than 16 point**, unless:
 - i) It is a faithful copy of information that has been transcribed into Braille, tape, CD disc, or large print, and where it accompanies the transcribed version, or
 - ii) The material relates specifically to, and accompanies, an Article for the Blind item, such as an instruction booklet, guarantee, technical documentation or other similar information.
- Music or entertainment (more than 2 minutes or more than 10 per cent of the total duration).

How the scheme works

Items sent by Articles for the Blind service will be treated as First Class mail.

All mail posted using the service must have '**Articles for the Blind**' on the front cover, either on a label, printed or in writing. It must also show a senders name and address on the envelope or packaging.

All mail posted using the service is subject to inspection and so it must be left open, be easy to open and re-seal or the contents must be visible through the packaging. The only exception is where heavy or fragile items are posted using the service and it is unsafe or impractical to send them unsealed. Such items can be sealed provided prior notification is given to Royal Mail.

To notify us that you may need to seal an item, due to it being large or fragile please call us on **0845 607 6140**, or for textphone users **0845 600 0606**.

It is recommended that personal, sensitive or confidential correspondence should not be sent using the Articles for the Blind service, as there is a risk that the contents could fall out of an unsealed envelope. These types of correspondence should be sealed and sent using another service.

The maximum weight limit of any package under the scheme is 7kg.

The size limits are:

- Rectangular packages maximum dimensions 61cm x 46cm x 46cm.
- Cylindrical packages – the length must not exceed 90cm and the length added to twice the diameter of the packet must not be more than 1.04m in total.

If you are blind and unable to get to a postbox or a Post Office to post your Articles for the Blind items, please call us on **0845 774 0740** and we will arrange to collect it.

Surcharges

Royal Mail will levy surcharges if:

- Someone unauthorised to use the Articles for the Blind service uses the scheme.
- An item not covered by the scheme is sent via the Articles for the Blind service.

We will endeavour to avoid levying a surcharge against the recipient; however, this will be unavoidable, where a sender's address is not provided on the item. If a sender's address is provided, then we will return items to the sender without surcharging (but requesting that full postage be paid before re-posting).

For further advice or information please contact Royal Mail Customer Services on **0845 774 0740** or for text-phone users **0845 600 0606**.

Similar privileges are available for sending Articles for the Blind abroad

Send articles for the blind abroad

Introduction

Articles for the Blind is a free service for sending items designed for blind people overseas. We can even arrange to pick up your post if you're visually impaired and find it difficult to get to a postbox or Post Office™; just give us a call on 08457 740 740.

So, what can you send?

- Books, papers and letters prepared for use by the blind, or to be sent to or from a blind person
- Relief maps
- Devices used to produce tactile information

And if you agree it with us first, you can also send the following:

- 'Talking' books and newspapers
- Games (including card games)
- Mathematical devices
- Watches, clocks, timers, tools, aids and measuring equipment designed for blind people
- Stationery supplies designed for sending things to blind people
- Collapsible walking sticks
- Guide dog harnesses
- Metal plates for producing materials for blind people or plates that have already been impressed for blind people
- Computer disks and CDs specially prepared for blind people

What can't you send?

Unfortunately there are some things we can't send:

- Any written or printed mail, for example large print communications, unless they specifically relate to the contents of your package
- Music or entertainment, unless it's produced specifically for blind people. We can allow interludes, introductory and closing jingles of up to two bars as well as recordings with musical or entertainment features (such as a local orchestra) of no more than 10% of the total recording time
- Personal communications except for letters impressed or prepared for use by blind people. Letters are not private because mail is opened for inspection

How do you prepare your mail?

All you have to do is write 'ARTICLES FOR THE BLIND-CECOGRAMMES' and include your name and address clearly on the outside of the envelope or package, as well as the person you're sending it to. Please attach a Customs declaration label onto the outside of the item (label P4558) - you can get these from your local Post Office™. You'll need to leave your mail open for inspection, or at least make sure it's easy to open. If whatever you're sending is fragile, you can get permission from us to seal your package.

How big and heavy can mail be?

If it's rectangular, the combined length, depth and width can be up to 900mm, and each single dimension can be up to 600mm. The dimension of each surface needs to be at least 90mm by 140mm. If it's cylindrical, its length needs to be between 100mm and 900mm, and its length plus twice the diameter needs to be between 170mm and 1.04m. As for weight, packages can weigh up to 7kg.

What if something gets lost?

We do our best to make sure nothing ever gets lost, but in the unlikely event that it does, you can claim if you've sent your mail by Airsure® or International Signed For®. Compensation is at the basic level of £34, as the £250/£500 level doesn't apply when you use it with the reduced rate Articles for the Blind service.

Who can use the service?

Anyone who is registered as blind or visually impaired, and has a close-up vision with spectacles of N12 or less, confirmed by an ophthalmologist, doctor or ophthalmic optician.

Are there any restrictions?

Some countries only allow Articles for the Blind to be sent from or addressed to officially recognised institutions for the blind, so anything addressed to an individual may not be delivered or may be surcharged.