

Barcoding

Barcoding is an important part of Australia Post’s strategy to improve services to customers mailing bulk quantities of letters.

What is a barcode?

A barcode is a machine readable representation of information, usually printed as parallel lines. A barcode can be read by barcode readers or scanners and improves the speed and accuracy of data capture and processing, and also speed up the processing and sorting of mail for delivery within Australia.

The barcode used by Australia Post is called a 4-state barcode.

Barcoding provides the following benefits:

- Simplified pre-sorting requirements
- Enhanced service. Barcodes can be read faster and more accurately than address text. This improves sorting efficiency.
- Greater addressing flexibility. Using barcodes, the range of fonts and envelope layouts is enhanced.
- Simplified pricing structure. The efficiencies created by barcoding means cost reductions can be passed on to customers.

To take advantage of barcoding, customers need to:

- Review (and modify if necessary) their customer database on a regular basis to accommodate the eight digit Delivery Point Identifier (DPID)
- Validate their customer database against Australia Post’s Postal Address File (PAF), using approved address-matching and correction software (AMAS). This software appends the correct DPID.
- Print the barcode using AMAS or alternative barcode printing software.

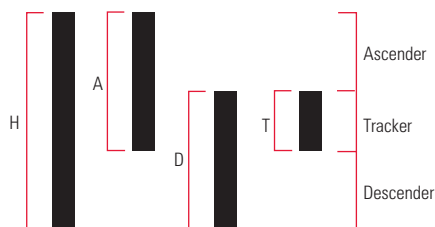
Barcodes and Business Letter Services

The table below lists the Business Letter Service and where a barcode is required for discounted postage rates.

Required	Optional	Not required
PreSort Letters/ Charity Mail Acquisition Mail Reply Paid	Clean Mail Print Post	Impact Mail Unaddressed Mail

Four states

The barcode used by Australia Post is called a **4-state barcode**. It comprises four types of bars (states), each of which is identified by both a name and a value.



Each bar comprises a ‘tracker’ (middle section), to which an ‘ascender’ (top section) and/or ‘descender’ (bottom section) may be added.

This creates four possible bar states:

- Tracker with ascender and descender (H) (value: 0)
- Tracker with ascender (A) (value: 1)
- Tracker with descender (D) (value: 2)
- Tracker on its own (T) (value: 3)

Fact Sheet – Barcoding

Barcode components

Within a barcode, the bars are separated into 6 fields.



Start bars: are the first 2 bars in the barcode. These bars assist the barcode reader to identify the start of the barcode and always contain the bar values of 1 and 3. They ensure that the beginning of the barcode can never be mistaken, even when the barcode is upside down.

Format Control Code (FCC): is a two digit number that identifies the type of barcode and always comprises 4 bars. Invalid FCCs cause mail articles to be rejected.

FCC Value	Description	Barcode Length
00	Null Customer Barcode	37, 52, 67
11	Standard Customer Barcode	37
52	Reply Paid Domestic Barcode	52
59	Customer Barcode 2	52
62	Customer Barcode 3	67
67	Reply Paid Domestic Barcode	67
72	Reply Paid International Barcode	52
77	Reply Paid International Barcode	67

Delivery Point Identifier (DPID): is an eight digit number that uniquely identifies a physical point to which Australia Post delivers mail. The point can be the letterbox of a house, a PO Box, a Rural Mailbag or other delivery point. Each delivery point in Australia is allocated a unique DPID. The DPID field comprises 16 bars in the barcode.

Customer information: This field is a section in the barcode reserved for customers to store their own information. It is only available in the 52 and 67 length barcodes. Bars can be coded by either of the two Encoding Tables, or customers

can encode these bars themselves using their own proprietary techniques.

Customer information can occupy 16 bars in the 52 length barcode, or 31 bars in the 67 length barcode.

Reed Solomon Error Correction: The field performs a backup or quality control function for the barcode. The bars enable the barcode to be resistant to errors or erasures caused by faulty printing, too much reflectance on window panels or smudging. There are always 12 of these bars in the barcode.

Stop bars: are the last 2 bars in the barcode. These bars assist the barcode reader to identify the end of the barcode and always contain the bar values of 1 and 3. Like Start bars, the Stop bars ensure that the bar is read correctly, even when the barcode is upside down.

Printing the Barcode

The 4-state barcode must be printed within certain specifications to ensure that the barcode can be read and processed efficiently by Australia Post's sorting equipment.

The Barcode print requirements are:

- **Barcode length:** When printed, each 4-state barcode has a minimum and maximum size it must comply with to ensure efficient reading of the barcode and processing of the mail article, as outlined below:

Barcode	Min Length (mm)	Max Length (mm)
37	37.0	42.2
52	52.2	59.5
67	67.5	76.8

Fact Sheet – Barcoding

- **Bar dimensions:** The individual bars and spaces within the barcode have their own minimum and maximum measurements.

These are important because any major variations can cause the sorting equipment to reject the mail article. Each bar has a minimum and maximum height.

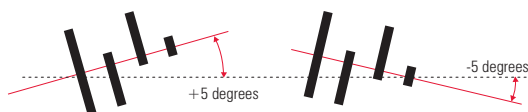
Bar type	Min Height (mm)	Max Height (mm)
T (Tracker on its own)	1.0	1.6
A (Tracker with ascender)	2.6	3.7
D (Tracker with descender)	2.6	3.7
H (Tracker with ascender and descender)	4.2	5.8

As well as the height of each bar, the width and gap also have a minimum and maximum size:

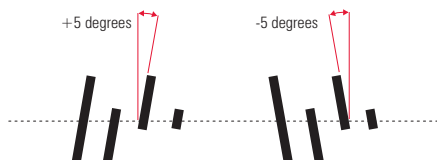
	Min Width (mm)	Max Width (mm)
Bar gap (the distance between each bar)	0.4	0.7
Bar width (the width of the individual bars)	0.4	0.6

- **Barcode 'Skew':** Occasionally a barcode may not be printed straight ('skewed'). This can happen if the mail article was not lined up correctly when moving through the printer or it shifted during the print process. A certain amount of skew ('tolerance') is allowed, as the sorting equipment is still able to read slightly skewed barcodes without causing any processing issues. There are two types of skew:

Code skew – refers to the skew of the whole barcode in relation to the bottom edge of the mail article. A code skew of +/- 5 degrees is acceptable.



Bar skew – refers to the skew of individual bars within the barcode. A bar skew of +/- 5 degrees is acceptable.



- **Reflectance:** 'Reflectance' is the degree to which light reflects from a surface. Since the colour of the envelope, patterns in the envelope and colour of ink used to print the barcode can affect machine reading of the barcode, the reflectance of the barcode needs to be within a specific range. Barcode reader devices are sensitive to the reflectance of the following:

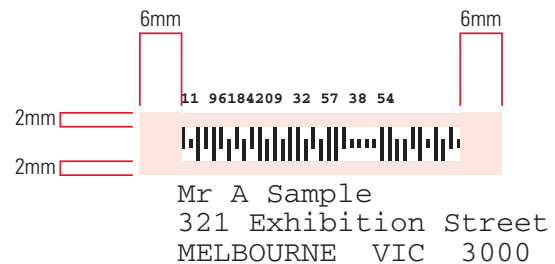
- printed barcode,
- space around the barcode
- window material through which barcodes are scanned, when a window face envelope is used

- **Quiet Zone:** The Quiet Zone refers to the area around the printed barcode. This area needs to be kept clear to ensure that the barcode can be detected by the reader and processed correctly.

If there is any 'noise', such as other printing, patterns and textures, this may affect the ability of the barcode to be scanned.

There is a minimum requirement of Quiet Zone around the barcode:

- 2mm above and below the barcode
- 6mm on the left and right of the barcode



Want to know more?

For more information about barcodes refer to the Customer Barcoding Technical Specifications available at the Australia Post website (www.auspost.com.au).