

# **TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

## **HOW TO SHIP TAPES (AND MORE) FOR CHEAP WITHIN CANADA**

A Lettermail primer presented by Scream & Write

Lettermail continues to be a somewhat overlooked option for shipping tapes, CDs, and other similar sized items. This information will prove useful to many who have been unnecessarily burned by double-digit parcel shipping rates.

**The main determining factor for Lettermail is the package dimensions.**

This is the most important thing to be mindful of. There is wiggle room with the max length and width being just shy of 27x38cm (10.6x14.9"), but the max thickness for shipping via Lettermail is just a hair over **2cm**, and this is where people often run into trouble. 2cm happens to be the *exact* thickness of a tape in a standard norelco case. This means that once a tape is inside a bubble mailer **nothing else can be added on top**, and if you are shipping 2 or more tapes they must be **laying flat**, side by side, *not* stacked on top of each other. If you exceed the 2cm limit in any way, even just by adding a card or some stickers, for example, you may be charged parcel rates.

**Pick a suitable mailer.** Standard 6x10" bubble mailers can hold 1-3 tapes (sometimes 4 if the internal width is on your side). 8x12" bubble mailers can hold 4-5 tapes. See examples below.



3 tapes in 6x10" mailer

4 tapes in 6x10" or 8x12" mailer

5 tapes in 8x12" mailer

Some postal clerks can be very strict about this as your package may not easily pass through the slot in their measurement tool even if you've packed it properly. They might try to say that your package can't be shipped via Lettermail. In this case you can say that you're willing to take the risk and have them send it anyways, saying that you understand that the package may be returned to you and you'll have to pay to ship it again (if you've packed properly this won't happen and the package will be delivered without issue). Worst case, you also have the option of trying again when someone else is working, or trying another post office where the staff may be more receptive (many do know the score by this point).

**The final cost will be determined by the package weight**, which maxes out at 500g. After tax it will be just over \$2 on the lower end (1 tape or CD) and closer to \$7 on the higher end (a small book). The prices increase slightly every now and then (thankfully not annually like the rest of Canada Post's rates), so it's best to check the Canada Post website for their non-standard and oversize mail postage stamp rates to keep up to date. Current costs after May 2024 increase: up to 100g (1 tape): **\$2.09**, up to 200g (2-3 tapes): **\$3.43**, up to 300g (4-5 tapes): **\$4.78**, up to 400g: **\$5.48**, and up to 500g: **\$5.89**, plus tax. Unlike parcel rates, which vary widely based on location and destination, these blanket prices are valid when shipping to/from any point in Canada.

**Beyond tapes, Lettermail can also be used for:** 1-4 CDs in a bubble mailer (2 digipaks cross-stacked remain under the limit. As do 4 ecopaks, meaning you could technically\* attempt to ship 8 ecopaks in two cross-stacks of 4 in an 8x12" mailer. Standard jewel cases are thicker, you will only be able to get 1 in a 6x10" mailer, or 2 side by side in an 8x12" mailer), a combination of tapes and CDs (i.e. 1 tape and 1 CD, side by side), zines or small books (you may want to allow room for cardboard to prevent bending), 1-5 7" (depending on thickness, either in a 7" mailer or between two pieces of cardboard in a bubble mailer).

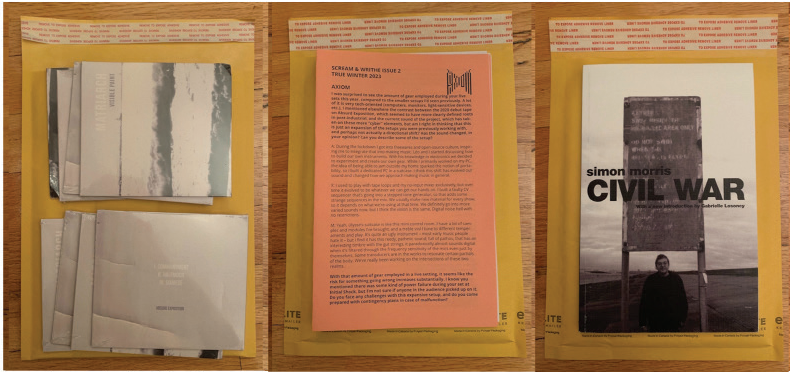
\*Things will move around in transit, and what may be stacked nicely when first shipping out will likely turn into an oversized jumble by the time it hits the sorting facility and could be returned to you. When placing CDs side by side it's best to also insert a piece of cardboard to keep the package flat and prevent this kind of slippage.



1 tape + 1 CD, 6x10" mailer

4 digipak CDs, 8x12" mailer

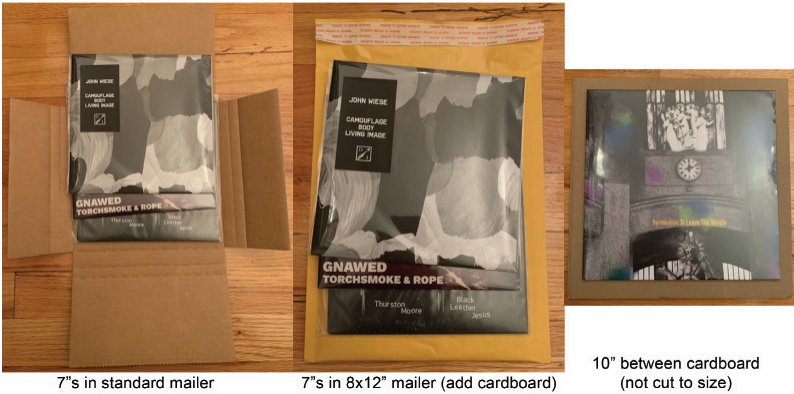
2 tapes + 2 digipaks, 8x12" mailer



8 ecopaks, 6x10" mailer

small stack of zines, 6x10" mailer

small book, 6x10" mailer



7" in standard mailer

7" in 8x12" mailer (add cardboard)

10" between cardboard  
(not cut to size)

In the last figure you will notice that even a single 10" record can be shipped via Lettermail by cutting two pieces of sturdy cardboard down to size, ensuring that it will be under both the max weight and the max dimensions. Still other combinations are possible, as long as you don't break the 2cm limit, keep the other dimensions within 27x38cm, and the weight under 500g. Get creative!

**Lettermail does not include tracking** and delivery generally takes a week or more, depending on the location (Canada Post advertises 4 business days for out of province delivery, though this is a very generous estimate). It's rare for Canada Post to lose a package (though it can happen, even with a tracked parcel). If tracking and insurance are what you need, it is worth signing up for a free Canada Post Small Business account. Having an account gets you minor shipping discounts (does not apply to Lettermail), with the added benefit of being able to ship Expedited packages with tracking and insurance (up to \$100) for the cost of Regular packages. As a bonus, Canada Post allows Small Business accounts to ship one domestic package for free (up to 5kg) every Tuesday in October. </end of endorsement>

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