

Holiday Shipping, Step-by-Step

By Judy Nelson, Owner and Operator of Mail Copy Plus

A chill is in the air, the leaves are falling from the trees, and the holiday season is upon us. It is a time of caring and sharing with our friends and family, and sometimes it can become hectic. Let's face it, families of today are transient. Children, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles sometimes live hundreds of miles apart, so how do we keep with the spirit of giving without giving up our own sanity? Here are some tips to help keep the gift shipping chaos under control:

- 1. Ship Early!** Be aware of early holiday shipping deadlines and avoid the rush. Mondays are normally the busiest shipping days, so you can avoid lines by coming in Tuesday thru Sunday. **For a Christmas delivery, ship by December 17th (ground*) or December 23rd (express).**
**Money back service guarantees for on-time deliveries stop December 12th for ground.*
- 2. Avoid old boxes!** If a box has been shipped around a lot, it loses its strength and integrity. Use a new corrugated box that is designed for shipping.
- 3. Address inside and out!** Put the receiving address on the inside as well as the outside of the box. An index card or plain old piece of paper will do the trick.
- 4. Use the right tape!** Duct tape, string, masking tape and regular transparent tape are NOT recommended because the adhesive breaks down. Two-inch wide (minimum) professional-grade packing tape is a must.
- 5. Brown paper wrapping is out!** Do NOT take the extra time to wrap your packages in brown paper as it could get caught in carrier conveyor belts and delay the delivery.
- 6. Protect the fragile items!** Wrap each item separately with *at least* two inches of cushioning, such as bubble wrap or packing peanuts for fragile items. One of the biggest mistakes made: Underestimating the amount of packing needed. Fragile items should have no room to move in the box. Newspaper is a great filler for non-fragile items, but for fragile items it is not because it has no "give" or cushioning in it like bubble wrap and packing peanuts do.
- 7. Food rules!** All food should be sealed in an airtight container or plastic bag before putting them in gift boxes. Meats, cheeses, fruits and other perishables should ship on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, ideally via Next Day Air. Mark

the box “perishable.” *Keep in mind that if sent out Next Day Air on Friday, it is a Monday delivery unless extra fees are paid for a Saturday delivery.*

- 8. Consider the odds on the odd shapes!** Double box the item, make sure sharp corners and edges are made blunt with foam or cardboard. Depending on the object, the trained packing and shipping professionals may be the best bet.

Having been in the packing and shipping business for more than a decade, I have seen more than a few holiday delivery disasters averted by the certified packing experts employed at Mail Copy Plus. Some customers simply do not have the time or energy to waste on packaging things up properly, while others want to be certain that the perfect gift selected for that special someone arrives in pristine condition.

From my family to yours, we wish you a very happy holiday season! If it seems that time is running out for all of the things on the TO DO List, Mail Copy Plus will be open the two Sundays before Christmas!