



## Foreign Records and How to Deal With Them

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You may be in the process of developing, exporting, or preparing your next marketing mailing list. If you have decided to keep all foreign records — including Canada — in your database, you need to apply quality control checks as you do with domestic records. Quality control opens the door to many issues, specifically with proper formatting.

If your project demands that every possible record is deliverable, then the goal must be applied to foreign records as well. Foreign countries have postal service organizations and strict regulations concerning labeling. Unfortunately, there are no international postal guidelines that follow a standard that applies to every country. However, you can come close to meeting their requirements by applying a general format that will increase the deliverability chance. So that answers the “Why” — you want it delivered to its destination.

How will you achieve this success? You need to know how foreign records should be formatted. Where does the name line appear, where does the apartment, unit, suite, or flat number, titles, firms, or ZIP go? As mentioned earlier, there is no general format that applies to ALL countries in the world. You will have to use a format that can be generally applied by most countries. If all of your foreign records are going to one country, then you’ll want to apply that country’s specific format. The format that seems to fall into the majority of foreign country acceptable address formats is the following:

- Four lines total
- Use all capital letters without punctuation
- Diacritical characters (special ticks and symbols above or around letters) are acceptable, but not necessary.
- An attention line is optional in most cases

#### Four Lines Required

- 1st Line-Individual person, organization, or firm
- 2nd Line-Street Address
- 3rd Line-City and Postal Code
- 4th Line-Country Name

The example for this format is:

KURT VARKHEIT  
LEKTRIONIK DARCH ICHT  
SUMVEHR 327  
GERMANY

We know that all domestic records require a five-digit ZIP Code. This is the US standard format, to ensure deliverability. Most countries have different requirements. When “cleaning or



formatting” your data file, be sure to exclude the foreign records when applying standard format updates to your database. If you received a three- or seven-digit Postal Code from your customer, leave it alone, unless you know the proper format of the country destined for.

The order of information is most critical. Most countries read the address information in specific order, as the USPS does. If you have five lines of address in a data file/table with foreign records that will be used, be sure to maintain that order when cleaning or formatting your records, table or database. You may need to remove a few lines of addresses and add a title and firm field, but be sure to keep the order from top to bottom.

Refer to the USPS International Mail Manual online for more details or call an *immedia* Data Services Operator.

<http://pe.usps.gov/cpim/ftp/manuals/imm/immtc.pdf>