

# Keeping Your Database Clean From the Start

You can use any rules you want to standardize the names in your database, but USPS bulk mail standards are a good place to start. Not only is it easier on the post office to have mail consistently addressed, consistent data makes it infinitely easier to match your member records against voter information files or plot your members on a map. Even if you aren't planning to do those things now, it is worth taking some time to commit to a standard so that you keep the option open.

The standards are explained in full in this USPS manual:

<http://pe.usps.gov/cpim/ftp/pubs/Pub28/pub28.pdf>

**RULE #1 No punctuation** anywhere in the address. All good rules were meant to be broken, though, so there are some exceptions: Queens, NY and Hawaiian house numbers are often hyphenated (**34-58 Vernon Ave**); some addresses include fractions (**588 1/2 Grand Ave**). Otherwise, no periods commas or dashes in the street address. **St James**, not St. James, **347A Lafayette** not 347-A Lafayette.

**RULE #2 Abbreviate cardinal and ordinal directions** or don't, but be consistent. The only abbreviations you should use for directions are N, S, E, W, NE, NW, SE, SW. If you use **E 13TH ST** then EAST END AVE becomes **E END AVE** and PROSPECT PARK WEST should be written **PROSPECT PARK W**.

**RULE #3 Use numbers for numeric street names, except for streets like Ten Eyck that are actually Dutch names: E 13TH ST, 1ST AVE**

**RULE #4 Use standard abbreviations** for street and avenue. The postal service has standards for everything from Bayou (BYU) to Well (WL), so read their manual if you need to. And remember, still no punctuation! Common terms are these:

ALY for Alley	HTS for Heights	RD for Road
AVE for Avenue	LN for Lane	RTE for Route
BLVD for Boulevard	MEWS for Mews	ST for Street (not str or strt)
BYU for Bayou	MT for Mount	TER for Terrace (not Terr)
CT for Court	PARK for Park	VIA for Viaduct
DR for Drive	PL for Place	WALK for WALK
FT for Fort (not Frt)	PLZ for Plaza	WAY for Way (not Wy)

**RULE #5 Use a space before any floor or apartment number.** Units and apartments should be noted as abbreviations: APT, BLDG, FL, STE

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for Suite; if you really don't know, use a pound sign but always with a space. **275 7TH AVE # 1205** not #1205, but **275 7TH AVE STE 1205** is better.

The [Postal Service manual](#) includes all kinds of special cases, like Bayous and Rural Routes, so have a look.

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