



guidelines for variable data printing (vdp)

Preparing Database Files for Variable Data Printing

The data file that you will use for VDP is critical to the success of your project. Your database might be anything from a simple mailing list to a full-blown personalized mailing. The age old adage that you can never have too much information is definitely applicable here. Data can always be omitted, but is very hard to remanufacture.

Acceptable formats are:

Excel spreadsheets or comma separated (.csv) files.

In a mailing file, the minimum required fields are:

Name, address, city, state and zip code. These must each be in a separate field within your data file.

The data can be further subdivided into fields such as:

Salutation, First name, Middle Initial, Last Name, Suffix, Company Name, Address1, Address 2, City, State, Zip code, Telephone, etc.

These separated fields can always be put together in a VDP piece, but are extremely difficult to break apart if they are all in one field. Imagine it this way, however you supply your data that is the way it will look on your printed piece. For Example, If the data had one column with the “Last Name, First Name”, that is the way that your data will print on your piece. But if your data has two columns one with the Last Name and the other with the First Name, then your piece can be generated however you please. Likewise if you have blank/incomplete fields in your database they will print with blanks or be rejected in the CASS certification process.

Here at Foxy we run each list through CASS certification.

This process, established by the USPS, will verify that your data meets the criteria for a cost-efficient mailing. If not Foxy will supply you with a list of “bad addresses” which can be investigated or corrected as you see fit. The software can also examine your data to find duplicate entries and avoid sending an identical mail piece to the same client.

VDP Checklist

1. Include a hardcopy proof clearly marking the variable fields, where they are to be placed and what formatting is to be applied to them. For example: Your data has three name columns, one with First Name, one with Middle Name and Last Name combined and one with Last Name. If your piece only needs to show the First and Last Names then your hardcopy/list needs to represent that.
2. Include your data file.
3. Verify that your data is in one of the acceptable formats. (Excel spreadsheets or comma separated (.csv) files)
4. Verify that your data has HEADERS and there are separate fields for every possibility. (If you want an “Account Number” to appear on the mailing then there needs to be an “account number” field.)
5. State clearly if you want your data checked for duplicates.
6. State clearly if you wish the duplicate records and/or non-mailable records omitted from the printing and if you want the questionable data returned to you for further cleaning or verification.
7. State what mail classification the piece is to be mailed (first class, standard, non-profit, etc.) If Foxy has not done a mailing for you in the past we will need some information from you about your indicia to ensure the proper postal paperwork.
 - a. Permit Number:
 - b. Permit Type:
 - c. Issuing Post Office:
 - d. Date Issued:
 - e. Non Profit Authorization # (if applicable)
 - f. Contact Name:
 - g. Business Name:
 - h. Address:
 - i. City, St., Zip:

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