

Teacher Information on ZIP Codes

The change in the types of mail, the great increase in mail volume, the revolution in transportation, along with the steep rise in manpower costs, made adoption of modern technology imperative and helped produce the ZIP (Zoning Improvement Plan) Code.

Despite the growth of airplane transportation, the Post Office Department in 1930 still moved most of its U.S. mail by railroad. The mail was gathered, re-sorted, and redistributed for long distance hauling through the major railroad hubs of the nation. More than 10,000 mail-carrying trains crisscrossed the country, moving round the clock into almost every town and large city.

The railroads peak year may have been 1930. By 1963, fewer trains, making fewer stops, carried the mail. In these same years, 1930-1963, the United States underwent many changes. It suffered through a long depression, fought its second world war of the 20th century, and moved from an agricultural economy to a highly industrial one of international preeminence. The character, volume, and transportation of mail also changed.

The social correspondence of the earlier century gave way, gradually at first and then explosively, to business mail. By 1963, business mail constituted 80 percent of the total volume. The single greatest impetus in this great outpouring of business mail was the computer, which brought centralization of accounts and a growing mass of utility bills and payments, bank deposits and receipts, advertisements, magazines, insurance premiums, credit card transactions, department store and mortgage billings, and payments, dividends, and Social Security checks traveling through the mail.

In June 1962, the President appointed an Advisory Board of the Post Office Department. After a study of its overall mechanization problems, it made several primary recommendations. One was that the Department should give priority to the development of a coding system, an idea that had been under consideration in the Department for a decade or more.

Over the years, a number of potential coding programs had been examined and discarded. Finally, in 1963, the Department selected a system advanced by department officials, and, on April 30, 1963, Postmaster General John A. Gronouski announced that the ZIP Code would begin on July 1, 1963.

Preparing for the new system was a major task involving realignment of the mail system. The Post Office had recognized for many years that new avenues of transportation would open to the Department and they began to establish focal points for air, highway, and rail transportation. Called the Metro System, these transportation centers were set up around 85 of the country's larger cities to deflect mail from congested, heavily traveled city streets. The Metro concept was expanded and eventually became the core of 552 sectional centers, each serving between 40 and 150 surrounding post offices.

Once these sectional centers were delineated, the next step in establishing the ZIP Code was to assign codes to the centers and the postal addresses they served. The existence of postal zones in the larger cities, set in motion in 1943, helped to some extent, but, in cases where the old zones failed to fit within the delivery areas, new numbers had to be assigned.

By July 1963, a five-digit code had been assigned to every address throughout the country. The first digit designated a broad geographical area of the United States, ranging from zero for the Northeast to nine for the far West. The next two digits more closely pinpointed population concentrations and those sectional centers accessible to common transportation networks. The final two digits designated small post offices or postal zones in larger zoned cities.

ZIP Code began on July 1, 1963, as scheduled. Use of the new code was not mandatory at first for anyone, but in 1967 the Post Office required mailers of second- and third-class bulk mail to presort by ZIP Code. Although the public and mailers alike adapted well to its use, it was not enough.

Why are ZIP+4 codes used?

In 1983, the Postal Service began using an expanded ZIP Code called "ZIP+4." A ZIP+4 code consists of the original 5-digit ZIP Code plus a 4-digit add-on code. The 4-digit add-on number identifies a geographic segment within the 5-digit delivery area, such as a city block, office building, individual high-volume receiver of mail, or any other unit that would aid efficient mail sorting and delivery.

Use of the 4-digit add-on is not mandatory, but it helps the Postal Service direct mail more efficiently and accurately because it reduces handling and significantly decreases the potential for human error and possibility of mis-delivery. It also will lead to better control over USPS costs and, in turn, postage rate stability.

ZIP+4 is intended for use primarily by business mailers who prepare their mail with typewritten, machine-printed, or computerized addressing formats that can be read by the Postal Service's automated scanners during processing. Mailers who qualify receive a rate discount on First-Class, non-presorted, ZIP+4 mailings of at least 250 pieces and on presorted ZIP+4 mailings of at least 500 pieces. There are also ZIP+4 discounts for bulk business mail.

Zoning Improvement Plan

Ever notice the 5-digit number next to the state on an address on an envelope? Or maybe, an address with a 9-digit number? This is known as a ZIP (Zoning Improvement Plan) code, which was adopted by the United States Postal Service on July 1, 1963.

The United States went through many changes in the last century. It fought in world wars, suffered a long a depression, and changed from an agricultural society to an industrial one. Mail also changed from a social activity to more of a business practice. By 1963, business mail was 80% of the total volume. There was a tremendous increase in amount of mail that needed to be transported and a rise in labor and fuel costs. The Postal Service had to think of some way to sort mail more efficiently. It experimented with a number of coding programs to handle the sorting of mail. On July 1963, a five-digit code was assigned to every address in the United States.

The first digit designates one of ten geographical regions of the United State, ranging from zero for the Northeast to nine for the far West. The next two digits pinpoint large cities and population concentrations or the mail processing facility (MPF). The two final digits represent small post offices or postal zones in the larger cities.

In 1983, the Postal Service began using an expanded ZIP code called "ZIP+4". The four added numbers represent a geographic region within the 5-digit delivery area, such as a city block or an office building. It is not mandatory, but it is one more way that the Postal Service can sort the mail more efficiently, accurately, and cheaper.

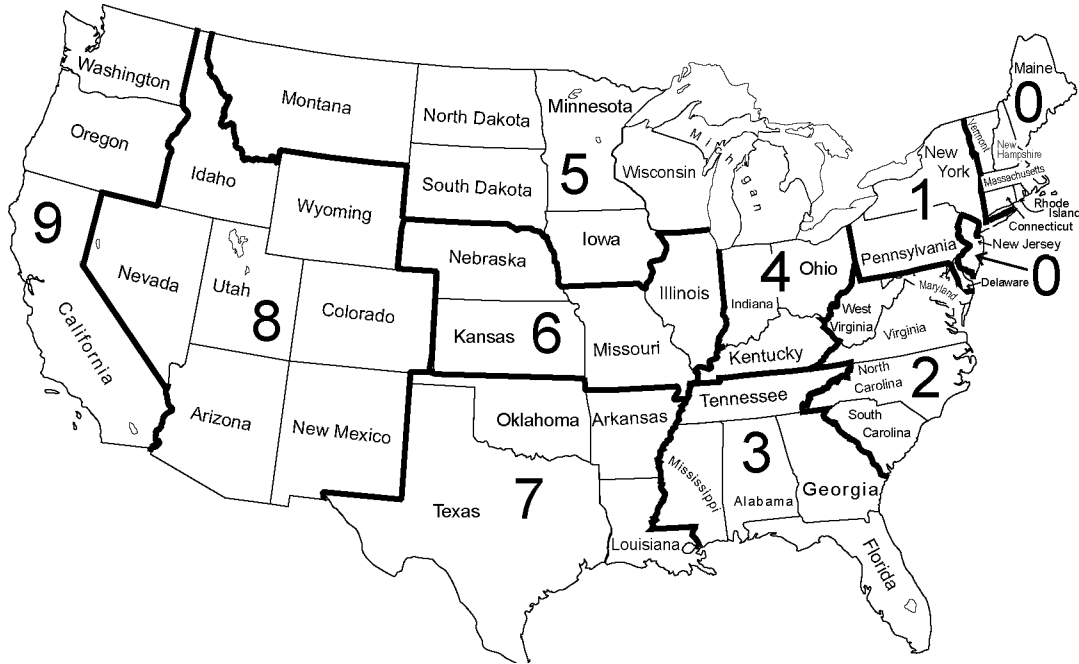
ZIP codes are used to sort mail automatically. When a piece of mail reaches the MPF, it is fed into a large scanning machine. The scanner read the entire address, identifies the 4-digit code and prints a bar code on the bottom of the address.

Today, there is a big emphasis on going "paperless." This means that not sending mail through the post office but doing business electronically by email. However, if you check your mailbox, you will still see lots of envelopes still being sent.

ZIP Codes®

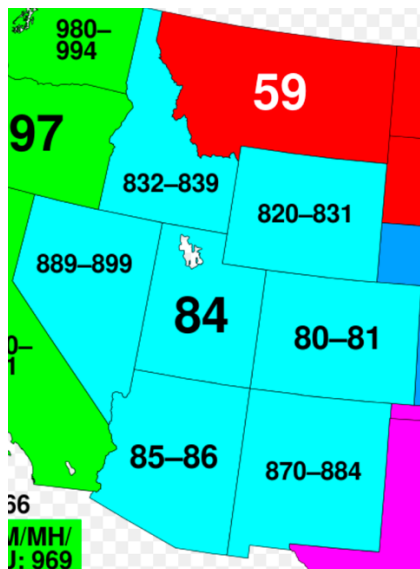
A ZIP Code is a numeric code that is used to simplify the distribution of mail in the United States and its territories. It can be found in the return address and the address, right after the city and state. Here is how to identify the five-digit ZIP code:

National Areas



The first digit divides the United States into 10 large groups of states. The numbers increase from 0 in the Northeast, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, to 9 in the far west.

Region 8 Area



<https://upload.wikimedia.org>



Each state is divided into an average of 10 smaller geographic areas. The second and third digits, together with the first digit, represent a sectional center facility.

Post Office or Delivery Area

The fourth and fifth digits identify the local delivery area in a large city or a post office, station, or branch.

Crack the Code Practice Sheet

Name _____

Use the maps to solve the codes:

1. Which states have “**8**” as their first digit?
2. Which states have “**5**” as their first digit?
3. Which states have “**2**” as their first digit?
4. Which states have “**7**” as their first digit?
5. Which states have “**9**” as their first digit?
6. Which state has “**84**” as its first two digits?
7. Which state has “**82**” and “**83**” as its first two digits?
8. Which state has “**89**” and “**88**” as its first two digits?
9. Which state has “**85**” and “**86**” as its first two digits?
10. Which state has “**80**” and “**81**” as its first two digits?
11. Which state only has “**83**”?
12. Which state has “**87**” and “**88**”?
13. If a ZIP code begins with **853** then it is from what part of Arizona?
14. If a ZIP code begins with **864** then it is from what part of Arizona?
15. If a ZIP code begins with **856** then it is from what part of Arizona?
16. If a ZIP code begins with **859** then it is from what part of Arizona?
17. The first digit for Pennsylvania mail is _____.
18. The first digit for California mail is _____.
19. The first digit for Texas mail is _____.
20. The first digit for Montana is _____.

Crack the Code Practice Sheet **Answer Key**

Use the maps to solve the codes:

1. Which states have “8” as their first digit? *Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico*
2. Which states have “5” as their first digit? *Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin*
3. Which states have “2” as their first digit? *Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina*
4. Which states have “7” as their first digit? *Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana*
5. Which states have “9” as their first digit? *Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, Hawaii*
6. Which state has “84” as its first two digits? *Utah*
7. Which state has “82” and “83” as its first two digits? *Wyoming*
8. Which state has “89” as its first two digits? *Nevada*
9. Which state has “85” and “86” as its first two digits? *Arizona*
10. Which state has “80” and “81” as its first two digits? *Colorado*
11. Which state only has “83” as its first two digits? *Idaho*
12. Which state has “87” and “88” as its first two digits? *New Mexico*
13. If a ZIP code begins with **853** then it is from what part of Arizona? *west/southwest*
14. If a ZIP code begins with **864** then it is from what part of Arizona? *west/northwest*
15. If a ZIP code begins with **856** then it is from what part of Arizona? *south/southeast*
16. If a ZIP code begins with **859** then it is from what part of Arizona? *east/east central*
17. The first digit for Pennsylvania mail is **1** .
18. The first digit for California mail is **9** .
19. The first digit for Texas mail is **7** .
20. The first digit for Montana is **5** .

Zippadeedoda Assessment

Name _____

Directions: Fill in the blank with the right answer.

1. If a ZIP Code begins with “1” then it probably is located in the _____.
 - a. West
 - b. Midwest
 - c. Northeast
 - d. Rocky Mountain States
2. If you address a letter to Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands, then the first digit is _____.
 - a. 0
 - b. 9
 - c. 6
 - d. 3
3. If you live in Arizona then your ZIP Code begins with _____.
 - a. 9
 - b. 8
 - c. 7
 - d. 6
4. The original ZIP Code has how many digits? _____.
 - a. 6
 - b. 5
 - c. 4
 - d. 3
5. The first digit of a ZIP Code divides the country into how many groups? _____.
 - a. 5
 - b. 9
 - c. 10
 - d. 12

Zippadeedoda Assessment *Answer Key*

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 - c. 10**
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