

## Mailing Lists and Labels

If you have a database built from the QVF file for your area, here's a process for getting the name and address information organized for printing a mailing list or mailing labels.

- Safeguard your master file before you make any changes.
- Assemble a full name for each record or row – by combining the first, middle, and last names (fields 11, 12, and 10 in that order). But remember to program in spaces between the fields, so you don't end up with "JohnQPublic" all stuck together.  
NOTE: Keep the separate fields as well, in case you want to use them to sort with. If you sort by first-middle-last combined name, Adam L. Zhukov would come before Yolanda Allen.
- In the same way, compile a full street address. This time, you need to use fields 21 through 28 – though, in many places, field #21 (a character that appears before the house number) will be empty for all records. If so, you can skip it; go on to #22, street number.  
There are more steps, but the combination cycle is the same. Take the first field or column as is; for each item after that, check if the field or column has something in it. If so, add a space and those contents onto the accumulating address. A spreadsheet formula to do this would be built up of pieces looking like this:  
$$\dots \&\text{if}(X5="", ("", " "&X5)\dots$$
- Before printing a list or labels, sort at least by ZIP code (QVF field #31). This is essential if you're doing bulk mailing, and can still be helpful even if you're not.  
If you have many names within any given ZIP code, you may want to do a secondary sort by either last name or street name. This can help you keep track of how far through that ZIP code's part of the full list you've printed, labeled, and stuffed envelopes.
- Sometimes you may want to send different information to different people. This may be as simple as identifying the correct polling place for people in each precinct to vote, or it could be more detailed. In this case, you need to sort on the targeted field or column **first** – before normal sorting by ZIP code, and name or address if desired.  
Targeting your message more closely can help you reach people more effectively. It can be more work, especially if you have to go back and fix a mistake. But it can make the difference in swinging a vote your way.
- Not all pieces of data in a QVF file are needed to create lists. Still, don't delete a column or field, even from a partial working copy of the file – until and unless you're sure you don't need it even to identify which records (which voters, which areas, etc.) you're working with at the moment.

Mailing lists can be formatted to fit on standard paper. Labels probably work best in the 1" x 2-5/8" size; they come 3 wide x 10 high on a 8½" x 11" form (equivalent to Avery 5160 or 8160).

You can print out one label for each person on the list – that may save you some time, but can waste some labels. If you choose this option, you can either ignore the second and later labels within the same household, or stick all labels for the same household on the same envelope to show all the names. **For bulk mail, all envelopes are supposed to weigh the same – so just use one label.**

The other alternative is to massage the list to narrow it down to one label per household. Typically, if you do that, it will shorten the print-out by about 1/3 . . . but that's extra work up front. (Which can you spare more easily: labels or volunteer time?) If you decide to do household-matching, then you have to decide whether you're going to combine all the names in a household – and how. Male before female? Alphabetically? Or just pick whichever one comes up first just before you do the sort?

➔ **Here's how to make the computer combine names so that two in a household would be "Fiddler & Viola Strings", but three or more would be "the Woodwind Family".**

Start by putting the main database table into a spreadsheet. Add several extra columns; use one to store a "household identifier" built by combining full address and last-first-middle name; sort all rows of the spreadsheet based on that identifier column. Then:

- Take each row and compare the household identifier with the one in the previous row. If there is no match, put a "1" in the next added column; if there is a match, take the value in the added column for the previous row, and add 1 to it. For example, the formula for cell BC2 would be something like:

$$=IF(BA2=BA1,BC1+1,1)$$

This gives a running tally of how many names in a row are in the same household, and starts the count over at 1 (representing a new household found) if there's a mismatch. This also means all households with only one registered voter on your list have a "1" in this column.

- In the next added column, test whether the value calculated by the above formula in the previous column for the next row was less than 2. If so, leave the value in this row as it was; if not, change it to match the next row's value. The formula for BD2 would be:

$$=IF(BC3<2,BC2,BC3)$$

A "1" in the next row means no household identifier match, so leave BD2 the same as BC2. If the next row is more than 1 (2 or more), the households **do** match, so bump up the household tally in BD2 by adding 1 to the value in BC2 and making it match, too.

BC3 will only be 2 or more if the household identifiers in BA3 and BA2 match. This means any rows not representing one-voter households will now have at least a "2" in column BD, just as in column BC all one-voter households had a "1".

- Do the same thing again, this time testing whether the value for the next row in the previous column was less than 3.

The formula for BE2 would be:  $=IF(BD3<3,BD2,BD3)$

If you want to limit "The \_\_\_ Family" to households on your list with more than three registered voters, repeat this step until all rows for households at least as big as your target size show that threshold number in the last added column you use. However, this will complicate the next step.

Once each row has in the last added column used a number value equal to the number of voters in the household the row "belongs to", we need to format a combined household name for addressing. If there's only one registered voter in the household, it's easy: just stick spaces between the first, middle (if any), and last names. For a "Family" household, it's even easier: "The " + last name + " Family". If there are two in a household, take the first row's first and middle names (remember the space); stick in a properly-spaced " and "; and add the second row's full name. Some additional notes:

- **Remember to back up your file**, both before and while you're doing this. Once the calculations and combinations above are done, calculate your formulas in these cells – and copy the resulting values back to those cells – to get to the simple voter tallies. Then save the file again. After that, it's safe to delete the other added columns. (And re-save **again**.)
- If you want to be most accurate and least wasteful of materials, check for different or hyphenated last names sharing the same address. Much or all of this will have to be done by the human eye, though; the formulas here can't find indeterminate substring matches.
- Apartments can also complicate address-matching. One spouse's record may list an apartment while the other doesn't, or puts it in a different form (Apt 10Q vs. #10Q).

- Some street addresses with apartment numbers or composite names will be too long to fit on one printed line. That can make a label look awkward or be hard to read. One way around this without

using smaller type is to format the whole list or batch of labels as hanging paragraphs (looking like this one) so that, if a name or address extends to 2 lines, that second line starts '¼' to the right.

## Walking Lists

Any database/spreadsheet program which takes in QVF-file records should be able to sort the records by ZIP code to produce an ordered list you can use to make address labels. To get a walking list for door-to-door campaigning, however, you also need to separate even & odd street numbers, and maybe print the two sides of the street separately.

You can save print-out space by matching up multiple persons in one household – but, if you haven't already, it's probably not worth the effort; it's good to have all the names of all the people you might wind up talking with. (Even if you're just leaving the literature at each targeted address without making an effort to talk to people.)

When you put the text of the QVF file into your database/spreadsheet program, the field for street number (#22) may become a number. If so, you can use a mathematical even-or-odd test on it. If that field stays as text, you can still check whether its rightmost character is a 0, 2, 4, 6, or 8 instead of a 1, 3, 5, 7, or 9. Once you have identified each household as even or odd, put the result into a combined result field or a separate even-or-odd field.

To print a walking list for a precinct, you need to organize the data by:

- precinct (name/number)
- route or sub-area within precinct  
(if any; to do this, you may need to add a field)
- street name – and maybe street type (avenue vs. court)
- street number

Watch out for multiple direction indicators (for example, if you alphabetize by street name, you may want to put both East and West Centre Streets under C) and for cases where one street name is paired with two or more street types (Clay Road & Clay Court).

Once you have walking lists printed out, you need to group them and send them out with volunteers who'll use them to do your door-to-door campaigning. Separating by precinct is handy – urban and suburban precincts are often a good size of area for a dedicated bunch of volunteers to cover on a good day, and it's easier to remind people to vote if you only need to know where that one precinct's polling place is. Still, you will need to do some sorting by hand – QVF files don't have global positioning satellite (GPS) data. So you need a street map.

The local clerk can sell you a local map with precinct boundaries marked on it – and quite probably polling places identified, too – but it may cost a fair amount of money. Your local library may also have a precinct map you can look at and copy from for free – but make sure it's current before you start copying its borders onto a regular city/county/township map to make your own master precinct map.

If you have two marked-up copies of your master precinct map, you can take one and cut it up into portions of the map area matching your precincts and sub-areas or routes, then paste the portions onto blank sheets. If you have only one marked-up final version, make copies of the portions. (But be careful – copying copies of copies can make a map, and particularly street names, unreadable.)

The ultimate goal is to give each pair of door-knockers a map of their walking area on a single sheet (8½" x 11" if possible) to go with the walking list into a large mailing envelope – or a clipboard, which is a better writing surface. Each walker also needs:

- pens
- memo with info about campaign
- plain paper to make notes
- names & phone numbers (home & cell) of campaign contacts

## Hints for Door-to-Door Campaigning

Walking from door to door should be done in pairs: it's safer if you have someone looking out for you, it goes faster and easier, and it's more fun to compare notes. Depending on the area you're covering, you can take different sides of the street (or buildings in an apartment complex, etc.) or you can "leapfrog" houses up one side of the street and back down the other. Either way, you can keep your partner in view fairly easily – and they can do the same for you. Here are some more door-to-door hints:

- **Know the plan for the day:** In situations where the campaign needs personal contact to explain the issue and persuade people to vote your way, you need to take time. You will cover less territory that way – but actual contact with a human being in a home can bring you more good results. (More information about the household, at the very least – whether the people on the list are actually still in that house, the residents' positions on the issues, whether they'd be willing to put up a yard sign or need a ride to the polls on Election Day — and more.)

**Still, it is rarely a good idea to go into a voter's house to talk the issue over with them.** If you do, your walking partner may get worried, stop walking, and look or wait for you.

At other times, you may just want to spread your basic printed message as far and wide as possible. That's the time for a "knock and drop", also called a "lit drop" or a "cold drop" – no warmth of human contact, just a quick march from one house on your list to the next. (Sometimes you may drop your "lit", short for literature, on all houses – not worrying whether there are voters in a home, or whether they support you.)

Sometimes a walking strategy may blend both these tactics. Sometimes shortages of flyers, volunteers, or time may change the strategy. You need to know what you're expected to do. But knowing more of the possibilities can make you flexible.

- **Know your message:** Even if you're just dropping a flyer on every doorstep, you may run into someone reading on their front porch, or mowing the lawn – and they may have questions for you. So, before you go out, know what questions you can answer – and be willing to say "I don't know the answer to that question; let me note it down and someone will get back to you."
- **Be polite,** and dress appropriately – and reasonably respectfully – within the limits of keeping yourself comfortable enough to walk.
- **DON'T put your literature in a mailbox** – it's illegal. Find someplace you can fit a folded or rolled-up flyer so it stays snugly where you put it and doesn't become litter on someone's lawn – or get wet. Having a corner tucked under the welcome mat holds most flyers down pretty well. Door handles and spaces between walls and doorknobs offer opportunities, too. If a screen door is unlocked, you can tuck literature inside it – or close the door on it, flat or half-folded. But make sure the door closes all the way.
- **Don't walk on the grass.** It's not likely to get you arrested – but it also probably won't help you win people's hearts, minds, and votes.
- **Know when to leave, or skip a house:** If there's a "Beware of Dog" or "No Trespassing" sign; if they want to argue the issue with you; if you're threatened or harassed; if they ask you to leave . . . just move on, as politely and promptly as possible. You're not very likely to persuade them . . . so don't waste your time. There's always more to do than you can get done. (Similarly, signs – or security guards – may keep you out of entire apartment or condominium complexes or mobile-home parks.)

➔ **You're trying to persuade people to vote with you. If what you're doing is interfering with that – or distracting from it – or just not helping with that – do something else instead.**