



Books, Magazines, Newspapers and Other Publications

Provincial Sales Tax Act

This bulletin provides information on how the provincial sales tax (PST) applies to books, magazines, newspapers and other publications.

If you publish and print your own publications, you should also see [Bulletin PST 109](#), *Printers and Publishers*.

Table of Contents

Exempt Publications	1
Taxable Publications and Other Goods	5
Bundled Sales	6
Promotional Materials	6

Exempt Publications

The following publications are exempt from PST. Publications that do not meet the criteria provided below are subject to PST and may be found under the section, Taxable Publications and Other Goods.

Books

Printed bound books are exempt from PST when they are published solely for educational, technical, cultural or literary purposes. To qualify for the exemption, a book must have a distinct cover and must not contain advertising. An incidental amount of advertising, such as lists of other books from the same author or publisher, price lists and order forms, is acceptable and does not make the book taxable. A publication in the form of printed loose-leaf sheets inserted into a ringed binder may qualify as a book if it meets the content requirements.

The exemption for books does not apply to directories, price lists, timetables, rate books, catalogues, reports, albums or any similar publications.

Audio books are subject to PST, whether purchased electronically or in a tangible format such as a CD.

Electronic books or e-books are not subject to PST. For more information on the application of PST to e-books and other digital products, please see [Bulletin PST 107](#), *Telecommunication Services*.

Magazines and Periodicals

Magazines

Magazines are exempt from PST if they are printed and bound in a magazine format and are issued at regular intervals each year by one of the following:

- a professional body
- a trade or industrial organization
- a commercial publishing firm
- a non-profit organization
- an employer to their employees

To qualify for the exemption, a magazine must not be an excluded publication (see the section below, Taxable Magazines, Periodicals and Newspapers) and at least 10% of the content must be technical, literary, editorial and pictorial (see the section below, Technical, Literary, Editorial and Pictorial Content for Magazines and Periodicals).

Periodicals

Periodicals are exempt from PST if they are printed and bound in a periodical format and are issued at regular intervals each year by one of the following:

- a professional body
- a trade or industrial organization
- a commercial publishing firm
- a non-profit organization

To qualify for the exemption, a periodical must not be an excluded publication (see the section below, Taxable Magazines, Periodicals and Newspapers) and at least 10% of the content must be technical, literary, editorial and pictorial (see the section below, Technical, Literary, Editorial and Pictorial Content for Magazines and Periodicals).

Technical, Literary, Editorial and Pictorial Content for Magazines and Periodicals

The following are included in the technical, literary, editorial and pictorial content of magazines and periodicals:

- maps, charts, pictures and diagrams that are related to, or are part of, that content
- the masthead
- the title page

The following are not included in the technical, literary, editorial and pictorial content of magazines and periodicals:

- all advertisements, promotional material and promotional articles, regardless of who bears the cost for the publication of the advertisement, promotional material or promotional article
- all material and articles paid for or sponsored by a person who is not an owner or publisher of the magazine or periodical
- maps, charts, pictures and diagrams that are related to, or are part of, advertisements, promotional material and promotional articles
- covers, indices, tables of contents, borders, and duplicated or blank pages

Calculating Magazine and Periodical Content

The technical, literary, editorial and pictorial content of a magazine or periodical must be calculated as follows:

1. Determine the area of all the pages of the magazine or periodical, but do not include the area of the covers, indices, tables of contents, borders, and duplicated or blank pages.
2. Determine the area of all the technical, literary, editorial and pictorial content.
3. Calculate the percentage of technical, literary, editorial and pictorial content by dividing the area determined under step 2 by the area determined under step 1, and multiplying by 100.

If the percentage of technical, literary, editorial and pictorial content is 10% or more, the magazine or periodical is exempt from PST.

Please note: If you sell or give away a publication inside another publication (e.g. a magazine inside a newspaper), you must consider the content of each publication separately to determine if either qualifies for an exemption.

Newspapers

Newspapers are exempt from PST if they are printed and unbound in a newspaper format and are published at regular intervals each year. Newspapers do not include:

- excluded publications (see the section below, Taxable Magazines, Periodicals and Newspapers)
- advertising material known as flyers or advertising circulars, even if the flyers or advertising circulars are sold or given away as part of the newspaper

To qualify for the exemption, at least 20% of the content must be editorials, news and articles of local or common interest.

Editorials, News and Articles of Local or Common Interest for Newspapers

The following are included in the editorials, news and articles of local or common interest content of newspapers:

- business market quotations
- comics
- crosswords and similar puzzles
- horoscopes
- letters to the editor
- maps, charts, pictures and diagrams that are related to, or are part of, that content
- the masthead
- movie, theatre and other reviews
- public service listings of events, activities or attractions for which no consideration of any kind is paid or exchanged and for which editorial control rests solely with the publisher
- sports scores
- television listings
- the title page
- weather forecasts

The following are not included in the editorials, news and articles of local or common interest content of newspapers:

- all advertisements, promotional material and promotional articles, regardless of who bears the cost for the publication of the advertisement, promotional material or promotional article
- all material and articles paid for or sponsored by a person who is not an owner or publisher of the newspaper
- maps, charts, pictures and diagrams that are related to, or are part of, advertisements, promotional material and promotional articles
- covers, indices, tables of contents, borders, and duplicated or blank pages

Calculating Newspaper Content

The editorials, news and articles of local or common interest content of a newspaper must be calculated as follows:

1. Determine the area of all the pages of the newspaper, but do not include the area of the covers, indices, tables of contents, borders, and duplicated or blank pages.
2. Determine the area of all the editorials, news and articles of local or common interest content.
3. Calculate the percentage of the editorials, news and articles of local or common interest content by dividing the area determined under step 2 by the area determined under step 1, and multiplying by 100.

If the percentage of editorials, news and articles of local or common interest content is 20% or more, the newspaper is exempt from PST.

Please note: If you sell or give away a publication inside another publication (e.g. a magazine inside a newspaper), you must consider the content of each publication separately to determine if either qualifies for an exemption.

Taxable Magazines, Periodicals and Newspapers

The following are excluded from the exemption for magazines, periodicals and newspapers described above, and are subject to PST:

- albums (e.g. photo albums)
- brochures
- course calendars
- date calendars
- directories
- pamphlets
- price lists
- programs
- rate books
- reports
- sports or recreation calendars
- timetables
- publications published for the same or similar purpose to any of the excluded publications listed above

- catalogues and similar publications whose primary purpose is to describe, promote or encourage the purchase, use or consumption of goods, software, services or real property

Other Exempt Publications

The following publications are exempt from PST:

- employee newsletters
- sheet music (including loose sheet music, photocopies of sheet music and bound sheet music)
- student yearbooks

Examples of Exempt Publications

The following are examples of publications that may qualify for exemption. If the example is a book, magazine, periodical or newspaper, the publication must also meet the criteria explained above to be exempt from PST:

- almanacs
- art and photography books
- atlases
- books (e.g. hard cover, paperback)
- charts in book form
- children's colouring books, cut-out books, and bound sticker books
- comic books
- cookbooks
- crossword puzzle and Sudoku books
- electronic books (e.g. sold in PDF, ePub or .mobi formats)
- employee newsletters and magazines
- magazines
- manuals – instructional, procedural, repair, service, training
- maps in book form
- newspapers
- pattern books and magazines
- periodicals
- sheet music
- student yearbooks and handbooks

Taxable Publications and Other Goods

Publications and other goods that do not meet the criteria provided above are subject to PST. This includes:

- audio books – in a tangible format (e.g. CD) or electronic format (taxable as a telecommunication – see [Bulletin PST 107](#), *Telecommunication Services*)
- bookmarks
- blueprints (see below)

- calendars
- contracts
- day planners (e.g. student agendas)
- electronic book readers
- maps – except in book form
- requests for proposals
- specifications
- stationery (unless exempt as school supplies - see [Bulletin PST 202](#), *School Supplies*)
- studies
- tablets
- tenders
- tide tables (unless purchased by qualifying commercial fishers - see [Bulletin PST 102](#), *Commercial Fishers*)
- union agreements

Blueprints

The original or master copy of a blueprint is not subject to PST when provided under a contract for professional services with an engineer or architect. Other original or master copies of publications (e.g. a contract, specification, study or tender) are not subject to PST if they are provided as a part of a contract for services and:

- the fundamental and overriding objective of the contract is the acquisition of the service and not the acquisition of the publication,
- there is no separate purchase price for the publication, and
- the total consideration payable for the service, including the publication, is the same as, or only marginally different from, what would be the total consideration payable for the service if the publication were not provided.

Bundled Sales

If you sell an exempt publication with a taxable publication for a single price, you charge PST based on the rules for bundled sales of taxable and non-taxable goods. For more information on bundled sales, please see [Bulletin PST 316](#), *Bundled Sales: Taxable and Non-taxable Goods or Services Sold Together for a Single Price*.

Promotional Materials

Promotional materials are goods you use or give away to help advertise or promote your business. Examples of promotional material include flyers, samples, gifts, premiums and prizes. Promotional materials also include goods that are given away as part of a loyalty or rewards points program.

If you give away a flyer, or advertising or promotional publication, you must pay PST on your cost of the publication. If you sell the publication for a charge that is less than your cost, you must collect PST on the purchase price.

You must also self-assess PST on the difference between the selling price and your cost as provided by the following formula:

$$(\text{Cost} - \text{Customer's purchase price}) \times \text{PST rate} = \text{PST to self-assess}$$

For example, if you pay \$6 to produce a sales catalogue of your products, and you sell the catalogue for \$2, you must collect PST from the purchaser on the \$2 sale (i.e. \$0.14 in PST).

You must also self-assess PST on the remaining \$4 based on the formula above:

$$(\$6 - \$2) \times 7\% = \$0.28 \text{ PST to self assess}$$

In total, you remit \$0.42 in PST for each catalogue (\$0.14 + \$0.28 = \$0.42)

If you sell the publication for more than cost, you must collect PST from your customer on the purchase price. You do not pay PST on your cost because, in this case, the item is not promotional material.

For more information on promotional materials, please see [Bulletin PST 311](#), *Promotional Materials*.

Need more info?

Online: gov.bc.ca/PST

Toll free in Canada: 1 877 388-4440

Email: CTBTaxQuestions@gov.bc.ca

You can access our forms, publications, legislation and regulations online at gov.bc.ca/PST (go to [Forms](#) or [Publications](#)).

The information in this bulletin is for your convenience and guidance and is not a replacement for the legislation.

For up to date information on the return to PST, subscribe to our What's New page at sbr.gov.bc.ca/msbr/whats_new/consumer_taxes/whatsnew.htm

References: *Provincial Sales Tax Act*, sections 1 “non-taxable component”, “taxable component” and 137; *Provincial Sales Tax Exemption and Refund Regulation*, sections 15-17.