

The New \$5 Bill
Safer. Smarter. More Secure.



Fact Sheet

Money Fact(ory)

The buck starts here. Since February 1862, the Secretary of the Treasury has been responsible for the designs that appear on paper currency, including the portraits. Secretary Henry M. Paulson, Jr., current Secretary of the Treasury, approved the new \$5 bill design, which entered circulation on March 13, 2008.

Lifespan. The “average life” of a \$5 bill is 16 months in circulation before it is replaced due to wear and tear.

Number of 5s. Approximately 9 percent of all paper currency produced by the U.S. Treasury’s Bureau of Engraving and Printing today are \$5 bills.

Who’s on the five? The U.S. \$5 bill currently features U.S. President Abraham Lincoln’s portrait on the front side and the Lincoln Memorial on the back. Previous versions of the five dollar bill featured Alexander Hamilton (1862), Andrew Jackson (1869) and Ulysses S. Grant (1886).

President Abraham Lincoln and the Secret Service. During Lincoln’s presidency more than one-third of U.S. currency was counterfeit. With the advice of the Treasurer at the time, the President established a commission to address this widespread problem. That commission came to be known as the United States Secret Service. Originally responsible for safeguarding the integrity of United States currency, the agency is today part of the Department of Homeland Security.

The 5th District? The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond is the headquarters for the Fifth Federal Reserve District, which includes Maryland, D.C., Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and most of West Virginia. The 5th District has branches in Charlotte, N.C. and Baltimore, Md.

Do you have a fin? The \$5 bill was sometimes referred to as a “fin.” The term has German/Yiddish roots and is remotely related to the English “five,” but is far less common today than it was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Posthumous portraits only, please. Since 1866, U.S. law has prohibited portraits of any living person on United States currency.

Staying power. Portraits of the same historic figures have been featured on U.S. bills since 1929.

What’s in a name? The nickname “greenback” originated as a name for Demand Notes, non-interest-bearing notes with green backs issued by the United States in 1861 to finance the Civil War.

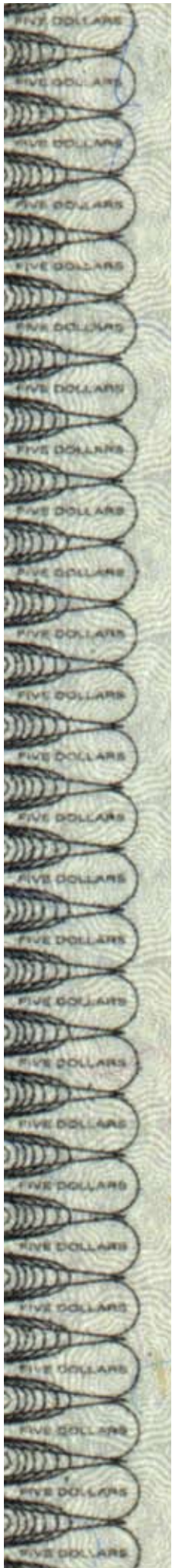
Enduring value. All forms of paper money issued by the U.S. government since 1861 are considered legal tender and redeemable today at full face value. The U.S. government has never devalued its currency.

Graced with a feminine face. Martha Washington is the only woman whose portrait has appeared on U.S. paper currency. It appeared on \$1 Silver Certificates, Series 1886, 1891 and 1896.

The biggest buck. The highest-value bank note ever printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing was the \$100,000 Gold Certificate, Series 1934. These bills were not circulated among the general public, but only issued for transactions between Federal Reserve banks and the U.S. Treasury.

“In God We Trust.” This inscription first appeared on U.S. coins in 1864. Almost a century later, Congress made it the official National Motto, and today its use is required by law on both U.S. coins and paper currency. Use of the motto has been challenged in court many times over the years but has been consistently upheld by the various courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, as recently as 1977.

Recycled “note” paper. Some of the bills removed from circulation by the Federal Reserve System wind up as recycled stationery.



Writer's cramp! When the U.S. government launched its first major issue of paper currency in 1861, each and every Demand Note was signed by hand by representatives of the Register of the Treasury and the Treasurer. This impractical practice prompted new legislation allowing the signatures of the Register and the Treasurer to be engraved and printed on currency. This measure went into effect with the issuance of the first series of United States Notes in 1862.

"1" is NOT the loneliest number. More \$1 bills are printed than any other denomination—\$1 bills represent about 45 percent of all currency produced by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

Super-sized "money belt." The approximately 8 billion U.S. bills printed each year are enough to wrap around the earth's equator over 30 times.

Mile-high millions. A stack of currency 1 mile high would contain more than 14½ million bills.

Different strokes for different folks. The most commonly used denominations in the U.S. are the \$1 and the \$20; internationally, it's the \$100 bill.

In for a pound...The approximate weight of a currency note, regardless of denomination, is 1 gram. There are 454 grams in a pound, so one pound of currency would contain 454 bills.

Red, whitish and blue. Neutral-colored U.S. currency paper is composed of 25 percent linen and 75 percent cotton. Red and blue synthetic fibers of various lengths are distributed evenly throughout the paper.

Tough stuff! You would have to double-fold a U.S. currency note about 4,000 times before it would tear.