

Become A Stamp Collector



TIPS FOR COLLECTING STAMPS

#1

Get some stamps!

You can get new stamps at any Post Office™. Most Post Offices will have some of the cool stamps. You can also order stamps from the United States Postal Service® Web site at www.usps.com by clicking on "Buy Stamps & Shop," or call their toll-free phone number at **1 800 STAMP 24** (that's 1-800-782-6724).

Another way to get stamps is to trade with your friends. For older stamps, ask your parents, grandparents, or neighbors for old letters, postcards, or unused stamps. Or go to a stamp dealer or check stamp collecting sites on the Internet. There are even stamp shows where people come from all over the country to add to their collections.

#2

Get organized and display your stamps.

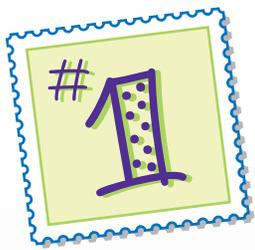
Now that you've got stamps, what do you do with them? Keep them in a cool album where you can show them off. For individual stamps or stamp panes, you can buy a stamp album or make your own using a three-ring binder. But don't tape or glue stamps – that destroys their value. Instead, slip them into specially designed plastic pages with pockets. Or if your album has paper pages, use hinges or mounts.

Get excited!

Like what you collect and collect what you like! Your stamp collection should express your own unique personality. You can collect stamps from all over the world or from just one country. Pick several topics like animal stamps, sport stamps, or stamps about history.

You can create a stamp collection about almost anything. Let the stamps be your guide!

#3

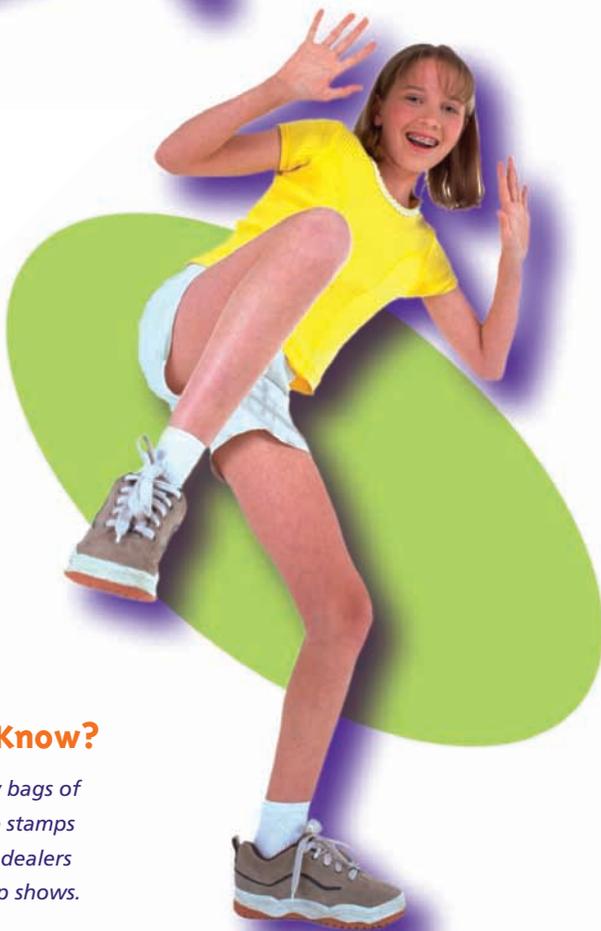


GET STAMPS: The Quest



Cool stamp collections are not born...they are built!

You can construct one...if you know how. To begin, gather as many stamps as you can. Ask everyone you know to save stamps for you.



Did You Know?

You can buy bags of inexpensive stamps from some dealers and at stamp shows.

How to Remove Used Stamps from an Envelope

- 1.** DON'T PEEL THEM! Cut or tear the envelope around the stamps.
- 2.** Float the stamps face up in cool water. Soak for one hour or until the stamps separate from the paper. Then rinse the stamps to remove any leftover adhesive.
- 3.** Lay the stamps face down on white paper towels. Cover with more paper and press flat under something heavy (like books) for several hours until dry. (Use plastic to protect books.)

Where to Get Stamps

Post Office: You can buy new stamps here.

usps.com: You can see and order stamps online.

Mailboxes: Many people get stamps every day. Ask family and friends to save them for you.

Stamp dealers: You can buy older stamps here. Look in your Yellow Pages under "Stamps for Collectors."

The Internet: Web sites on the Internet sell stamps and stamp-collecting supplies.

Grandparents and other relatives: Write to relatives about stamp collecting. It will make them happy and they will probably write back using cool stamps.

Pen pals: Find another kid who likes to collect stamps and become pen pals.

Vacationers: Ask friends who go on vacation to mail you a postcard.

Trade: When you have more than one of the same stamp, trade with a friend to get new ones.

Did You Know?

Some stamp dealers will mail "approvals." You get to look at the stamps, buy what you want, and return the rest — undamaged, of course.

What You Will Need

- A 3-ring loose-leaf notebook
- White paper (acid-free, if possible)
- A 3-hole punch
- Stamp hinges or mounts

1. Punch holes in the paper. With a pencil, draw a *light* line, from top to bottom, two inches from the left edge. Draw a second top-to-bottom line two inches from the right edge.

2. Draw *light* lines from left to right about every two inches. Do the same on all of your pages, front and back.

3. Use your grid to help you position your stamps neatly. You might mount two columns of stamps per page. There are no rules; do what looks good to you.

4. Write notes next to each stamp. When was it issued? What is it all about? Who gave it to you?

What Is Acid-Free Paper?

When paper is acid-free, it does not contain chemicals that may harm your stamps over time. Look in the scrapbook section of hobby shops, art supply stores, and discount stores for paper that is labeled "acid-free."

What Are Stamp Hinges or Mounts?

A *hinge* is a small strip of glassine, which looks like waxed paper. It has gum on one side, and you use it to attach a stamp to a page. A *mount* is a clear plastic sleeve. You put your stamp inside it, and then you attach the mount to the page. A hinge is very inexpensive. Mounts cost a little more.

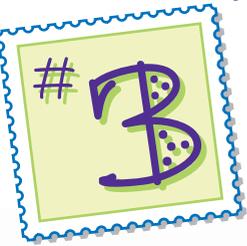
GET ORGANIZED: 'The Album



Now that you've got stamps, what do you do with them? Keep them in a cool album where you can show them off.



GET PROFESSIONAL: The Tools



If you want to get serious about stamp collecting, you need the cool tools of a pro! Here are some of the most important ones.



Did You Know?

Stamp supply shops sell all kinds of albums. Some have pictures of stamps — you find the stamp and mount it over the picture. Some are blank so you can create your own special collection.

What You Will Need

Tongs: Pick up and handle stamps with tongs, which are like tweezers with special tips that won't harm stamps. Natural skin oil makes stamps dirty.

Magnifier: View the stamp details. Look for flaws and tiny variations.

Perforation gauge: Measure the spacing of the small holes on the stamp's edges. The "same" stamps with different perforations are actually different stamps worth different amounts.

Watermark detector: Put a stamp in a watermark tray, pour in a special fluid, and see if an invisible watermark appears. (A watermark is an invisible design pressed into paper to help prevent forgery.)

Stock book: Keep your stamps clean and fresh in this storage album until you are ready to mount them. It comes with rows of pockets for stamps.

How to Use a Hinge

Pick up the hinge with your tongs. Moisten the short end just a little. Position it on back of the stamp so the fold is under the stamp's top edge. Pick up the stamp with tongs. Moisten the tip of the long end. Place it onto your album page. Place a piece of clean paper or cardboard over the stamp and firmly press the stamp onto the page.

How to Use a Mount

Trim the mount to the right size. Slip the stamp in. Moisten one flap of the mount and press it onto the album page.

Where to Buy Stamp-Collecting Tools

Look in your Yellow Pages under "Stamps for Collectors."

How to Determine a Stamp's Value

An uncommon stamp is more valuable than an ordinary one. The stamp may be uncommon because it was printed with an error or because it is old and there are not many left.

A stamp's condition affects its value. Usually, a stamp that has never been used and is in "mint" condition is more valuable than the same stamp that has been used. Keep your stamps in a condition as close to "mint" as possible.

The color: The color of the stamp should be bright. Fading can be caused by sunlight, artificial light, dirt, pollution, and natural skin oils.

The cancellation: For a used stamp, the lighter the cancellation, the better. The cancellation mark (which a postal service makes on a stamp to show that it has already been used) should not blot or cover the stamp design.

Centering: Is the stamp centered inside the white perforation border? The more centered, the better.

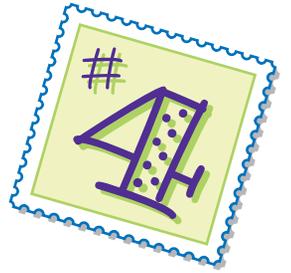
The paper: The stamp should not be torn or damaged. All perforations (the small holes on the stamp's edges) should be complete. The stamp should not be creased or wrinkled.

The gum: The gum, or dry adhesive on the back of the stamp, should be as perfect as possible. Hinges can damage the back of the stamp. Light hinging is good; heavy hinging (caused by too much licking and sticking) is bad.

Did You Know?

Occasionally, an old, used stamp on an envelope with a special cancellation is worth more than the same stamp unused.

GET SMART: The Money



Ever hear of stamps worth over a million dollars?

Try one of the most famous printing mistakes in U.S. postal history: A 1918 airmail stamp with the plane printed upside down! Nicknamed the "Inverted Jenny" (the stamp pictures a Curtiss "Jenny" airplane), this stamp is valued at \$400,000, and a block of four is valued at \$3 million! (Original price: 96 cents.) An 1847 10-cent George Washington stamp in mint condition is worth about \$27,500!



The more centered, the better.

The color of the stamp should be bright.





GET EXCITED: The Fun

Like what you collect and collect what you like!

Once you learn the how-tos, your stamp collection should express your own unique personality. You can collect stamps with weird shapes, gorgeous stamps, old stamps, animal stamps, or only stamps about history. Pick several topics. You can combine stamps with other things in your album, too, such as drawings and writing. Using loose-leaf pages lets you rearrange and replace parts of your collection whenever you want to.

Another fun way to collect stamps is to create a First Day Cover collection. These are stamped envelopes canceled with the special First Day of Issue postmark.



Be sure to call
1 800 STAMP 24
(1-800-782-6724)
to get your free
copy of USA
Philatelic Catalog.

Album Ideas

Gift album: garden of stamps



Have a friend or parent who is into gardening? Collect U.S. and worldwide flower stamps. Alternate pages of stamps with pages of gardening tips and facts about the flowers on the stamps. (Do some library research to find the gardening information.) What a great gift for a gardener!



Into space and sci-fi?

Collect all of the great space exploration and science stamps. Write a chilling sci-fi thriller story and put it into the center of your album. Or draw the space creatures of your imagination.



Are you a leader? Do you care about freedom and America?

Collect a whole album of U.S. presidents and other world leaders. Maybe your face will be on a stamp one day! (Mount a small mirror on your last page!)



Love the idea of travel and adventure?

Collect stamps that celebrate the 50 U.S. states or that come from exotic places like Belize, Iceland, Samoa, and Zimbabwe. (Can you find them on a map?)

You can create a stamp collection about almost anything. Let the stamps be your guide. You can follow them to learn about birds, flowers, animals, trains, airplanes, holidays, flags, sports, music, movies...
the list goes on and on!

