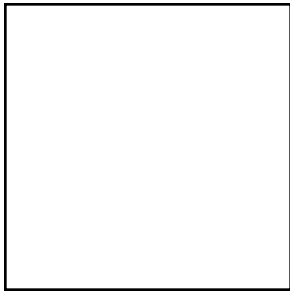


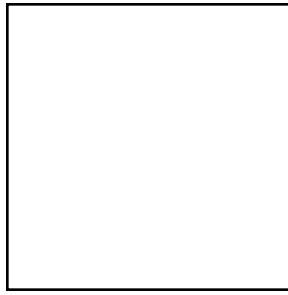


# American Philatelic Society Getting Started: Philatelic Terms Scavenger Hunt & Album

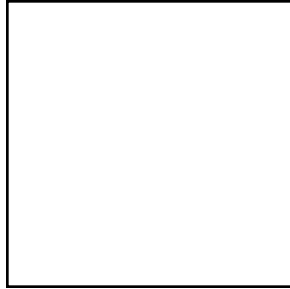
With contributions from *All About Stamps* by Wayne Youngblood, *Collecting First Day Covers* by Marj Sente, *Stamp Collecting* by Charles Adams, and *Basic Stamp Collecting* by Ada Prill.  
For these and other resources, go to [www.stamps.org](http://www.stamps.org).



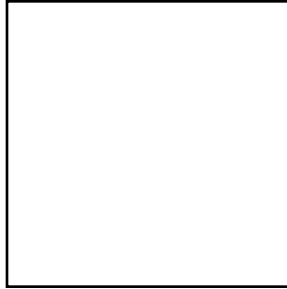
**A1. Perforated stamp**



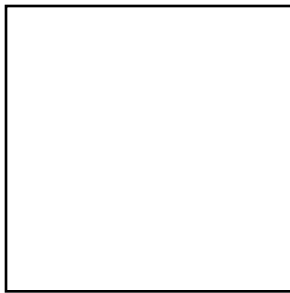
**A2. Imperforate**



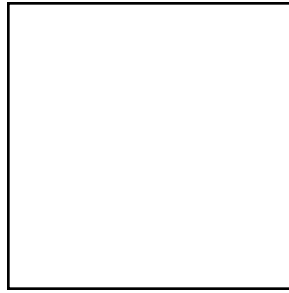
**B1. Mint stamp**



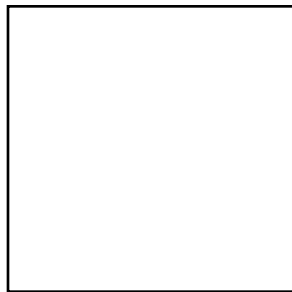
**B2. Used stamp**



**C1. Sheet stamp**



**C2. Booklet stamp**



**C3. Coil stamp**

## NOTES

**Perforations:** the holes punched between stamps. Perforations are measured by the number of holes within 2 centimeters. Line up gauge with perfs' peaks or valleys.

**Imperforate:** Straight edges; edges

**Mint stamp:** A stamp that was never postally used, usually with its gum (adhesive) still intact. Generally this term refers to stamps that are in "post office fresh" condition. If a mint stamp still has its original gum intact with no disturbances, it is classified as mint never hinged (MNH).

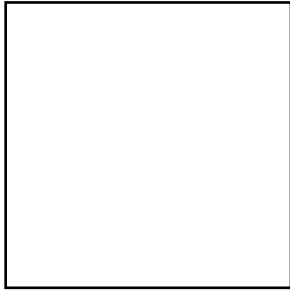
**Used stamp:** A stamp that has been canceled so that it cannot be used again.

**Sheet stamp:** Most commemoratives usually are issued as "sheet" stamps (in the United States that generally means the stamp has perforations on all sides). In everyday terms, most people use the term "sheets" to refer to the panes of stamps that they buy at the post office. In real terms, four or more of those panes may comprise the original sheet of stamps as printed — each of which is cut apart.

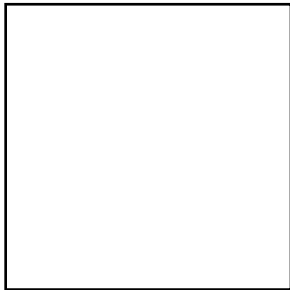
**Booklet stamp:** Small panes of stamps bound or folded within relatively stiff, thick covers. They may be glued, sewn, or stapled between the covers. Recent self-adhesive stamps on tougher, thicker backing may be folded into a booklet after the stamps are purchased. Larger size booklet stamps may have straight edges on the left and right.

**Coil:** Stamps that come in a long strip or roll format. They are designed for sale from a vending machine or for use in stamp dispensers. The first coil stamps were issued in 1902.

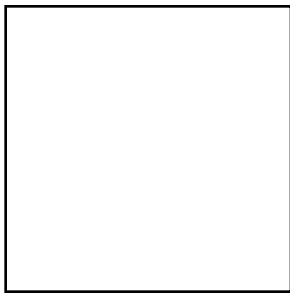
U.S. coil stamps have no perforations on two parallel sides — either top and bottom or (less commonly) both sides. Some foreign coil stamps, such as Great Britain, may be perforated on all four sides.



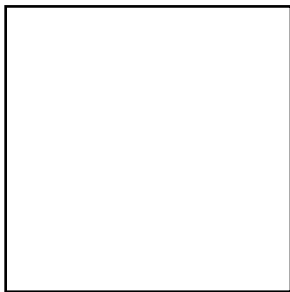
**D. Plate number**



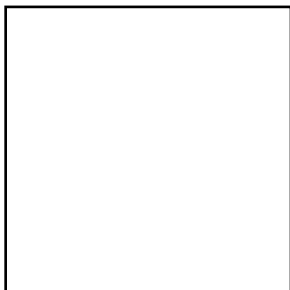
**E1. Overprint**



**E2. Surcharge**



**F. Meter Imprint**



**G1. Definitive stamp**

## NOTES

**Numbers on plate block, booklet, coil, or marginal markings:** A plate number is engraved or reproduced on the corner edges of the printing plate or sleeves, and are visible either in the stamp frame or in the stamp pane's marginal selvage. In the United States, beginning in 1981, single-digit numbers replaced the longer actual plate numbers.

**Plate number coils** or PNCs refer to recent U.S. coil stamps that have a tiny plate number at the bottom of some of the stamps. They are usually collected in strips of five, with the plate number on the middle stamp. Depending on the manner of printing, plate numbers can be found on every 14th stamp, every 21st stamp, every 48th stamp, or other intervals. Some coil designs have been printed from quite a few different plates, with some numbers being common and others scarce. The Scott Specialized Catalogue of U.S. Stamps lists each known number separately. PNCs often can be found on advertising mail and are saved as used single stamps as well as in mint strips of five. Look for PNCs on service-inscribed stamps. They usually will have a multi-colored string of numbers, one for each color being printed.

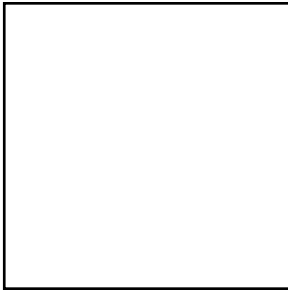
**Overprint:** Any form of printing applied to a stamp. Overprints may be text or pictorial, and can take the form of a surcharge changing the value or a country name. It also may be a precancel, a commemorative phrase, or a security feature.

**Surcharge:** An overprint that changes the denomination of a stamp.

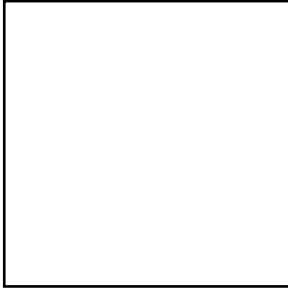
**Meter:** The impression printed by postage meter showing prepayment of postage. Meters were introduced in 1903 and have become quite collectible. They are considered stamps because (a) they are issued by an official government recognized agency and (b) they prepay for the service.

**Definitive:** Often called the postal workhorse, definitives are designed for use over a prolonged period of time and they come in a variety of denominations so that they can be used to pay the cost of various types of postal service. Definitives generally are smaller sized than the pretty "commemoratives," but definitives with values higher than the current first-class letter rate, like the \$3.85 Priority Mail rate stamp and the \$13.65 Express Mail rate stamp, may be larger. Designs on definitives may feature some person prominent in the history of the country, a symbol, a landmark, or simply the denomination.

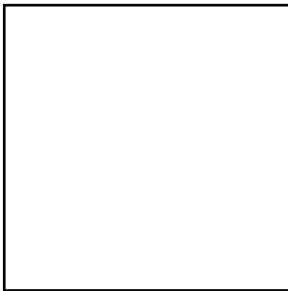
Some examples of definitives are the U.S. Flag series, the Washington-Franklin series, and the French Marianne series (1997—).



**G2. Commemorative**



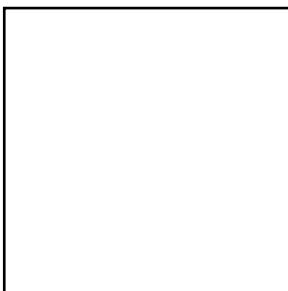
**G3. Semipostal**



**G4. Airmail**



**H. Cancellation/Postmark**



**I. Postal stationery**

## NOTES

**Commemorative:** Stamps issued to honor an individual, an event, or a historic site important to the history of the country. Such stamps commemorate events like the 100th anniversary of statehood, the 200th anniversary of the birth of a famous individual, or a famous event such as a battle. Commemorative stamps may also illustrate the natural history of a country — its plants, animals, minerals — or its scenic wonders.

Identified living persons may not appear on the stamps of the United States, although some U.S. stamps have pictured living persons without identifying them. Many foreign countries, on the other hand, have stamps featuring the reigning ruler or other living people.

Typically, definitive stamps stay on sale for many years, whereas commemorative stamps are seldom sold for much more than a year after their issue.

**Semipostal:** A fund-raising issue, the semipostal reflects a postal rate fee plus an additional amount. In most countries they are easily identified by the fact that such stamps have two denominations. Thus, the value might be listed as 24+6. The first figure represents the cost of the postage. The second figure is an added charge to raise funds, typically for a charity.

**Airmail:** Airpost or airmail stamps, as suggested by the name, pay for transporting mail by air. These are usually easy to identify since they have words meaning "air mail" on the stamp. They often feature airplanes, wings of some sort, or famous aviators in the design. Airmail has been abolished in the United States as a separate class for both domestic and international first-class mail -- all mail goes by air except letters traveling a short distance.

**Cancellation/Postmark:** A mark put on a stamp to show that it has been used and to prevent it from being reused. It may include wavy lines, straight lines, fancy shapes, mottos, or a simple pen mark.

**Postal stationery:** This term includes **stamped envelopes** with the "stamp" printed directly on the envelope paper (Scott Catalogue prefixes "U" and "W"), **postal cards** (post cards with postage imprinted on them, but not picture post cards that have no postage printed on them, Scott Catalogue prefix "UX"), and **aerogrammes** (prefix "UC"), which are folded letter sheets that often can be sent abroad for less than the cost of sending an ordinary letter.

Postal stationery should be collected intact, but some people collect just the "stamp" part, also called a **cut square**. These are common in older collections.

## NOTES

**First day cover:** An envelope with a stamp and a cancellation that includes the date and place that the stamp was first issued. Postal stationery with a cancellation that includes the date and place that it was first issued also subscribes to the definition of FDC. The definition seems simple and straightforward, but the meaning has changed over the decades — as a result of collectors' interest and Post Office policy.

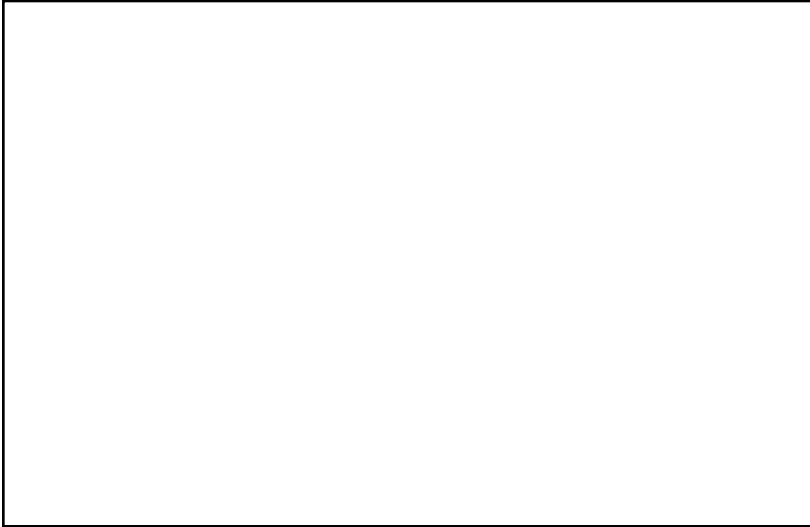
In the 1920s and 1930s before interest in them mushroomed, FDCs were canceled on the actual date the stamps were issued and at the designated first day site. A notable exception was the FDC canceled for the 1932 Washington Bicentennial series, when the demand for first day cancellations was so great that it took several days to fill customers' orders. As the interest in FDCs grew, the covers were canceled ahead of time and released into the mail stream on the first day of issue.

In 1977, with the introduction of a grace period — initially 15 and now sometimes up to 60 days to request first day cancellations — the term FDC changed dramatically. Today, FDCs are canceled weeks or months after the stamps are initially issued. And with the United States Postal Service centralized canceling system, they are frequently canceled hundreds or thousands of miles from the designated first day site.

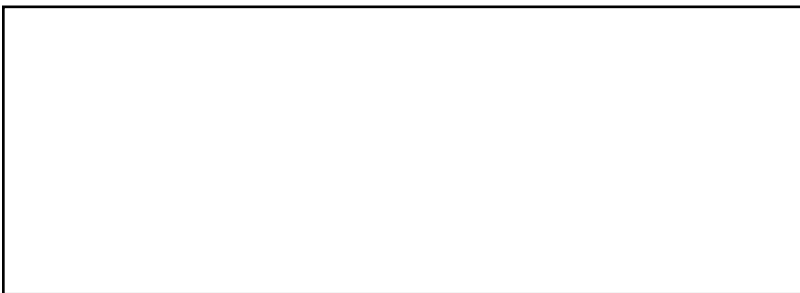
Today's FDC is a souvenir, a philatelic representation, of when and where a stamp is issued. It denotes the date and place that the Postal Service first officially placed a stamp or piece of postal stationery on sale. Neither the envelope nor the stamp has necessarily been to the first day site. And with the grace period that allows collectors to submit covers for cancellation after the first day of issue date, many FDCs are actually backdated. Remember that the first day of issue postmark should not be taken literally.

**J. First day cover**

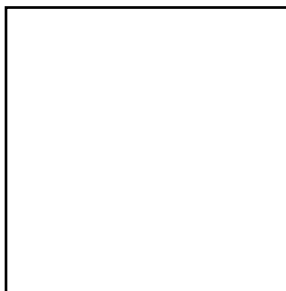
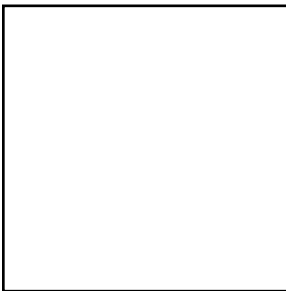
## NOTES



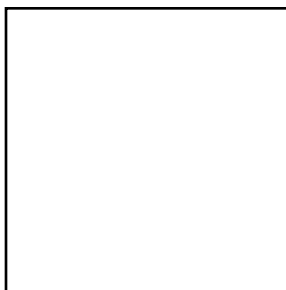
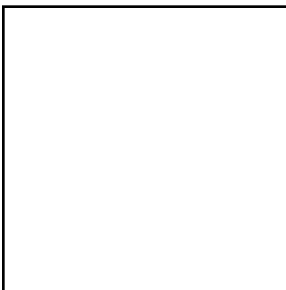
### K. Souvenir sheet



### L. Se tenant



### M. Revenue stamp



#### **Souvenir sheet:**

Commemorative stamp(s) in a small pane or sheetlet. The margins frequently are large and contain a design and/or printed information describing the stamps, the purpose of the issue, or a special event, like a large stamp show. Some stamps are perforated; some are imperforate. The United States has issued only a few; recent U.S. examples are the Bureau of Engraving and Printing souvenir sheet (1994) and the Cycling souvenir sheet (1996).

**Se tenant:** Stamps of different designs are “joined together.” The other multiple format, *tete-beche*, refers to two adjacent stamps whose images are upside down with respect to each other. When stamps are produced with either of these formats, collectors frequently will save an example of the attached pair.

**Revenue:** Issues that served as receipts and showed that taxes had been paid on items as diverse as photographs, wine, and matches. Duck stamps are a special form of revenue stamps that are used on hunting permits.

# NOTES

---

---

