



Some people choose to collect stamps from only one country. Others collect a specific topic like sports, or a specific color or shape, like blue triangular stamps from around the world.

No matter what you decide, stamp collecting is fun; it's a hobby that reflects your interests; and it doesn't require a lot of money to get started.

## Where To Find Stamps

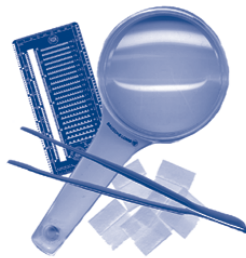
- Begin by searching for stamps on letters that you receive at home. Then ask friends, neighbors, or local businesses to save the mail they receive.
- Join a stamp club, and ask members to help you get started in the hobby.
- Trade any unwanted or duplicate stamps with other collectors. This adds to the fun of collecting and will help you get what you want.
- Buy stamps from stamp dealers or stores, on-line vendors, or mail-order companies that advertise packets or stamps by the pound.
- Join an approval service. Stamp selections are sent periodically for you to look at in the privacy of your home. You buy only what you want and return the other stamps.

## Tools of the Hobby

**Stamp tongs** look like tweezers, but they have smooth tips to handle stamps.

**Magnifiers** help you to see the details of stamps.

**Perf gauges** are used to measure the teeth-like holes (perforations) along the edges of a stamp.



## Soaking Stamps

1. Sort your stamps, setting aside any that are on brightly colored paper (especially on red or green envelopes) or those stamps with brightly colored (red or purple ink) cancellations.
2. Trim the envelope close to the stamp; be careful not to cut the stamp.
3. Soak them in a shallow bowl with several inches of cool-to-lukewarm water. Let the stamp float with the picture side up, until the stamp slides easily off the paper.
4. Put the wet stamps between paper towels and place a book on top until completely dry.
5. Stamps on colored paper or with colored ink cancels should be soaked in cool water. Soak only a few at a time — you don't want them to touch or bleed onto each other.
6. Avoid damaging your stamps with the oil on your fingers. Always use stamp tongs to handle your dry stamps.
7. Store dry, unused stamps in glassine (translucent paper) envelopes so they don't bend or tear.

## Sorting Stamps

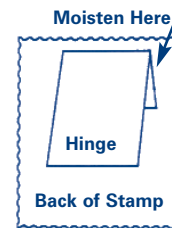
Many collectors suggest sorting your stamps according to country. If you do not recognize the country name on a stamp, go to the Worldwide Stamp Identifier at [www.iswsc.org](http://www.iswsc.org) or search our country key word guide on the back of this brochure.

After you have sorted your stamps by country or by topic, store them in separate envelopes, stock pages in a three-ring binder, or a stamp album to protect them.

## Mounting Stamps

Collectors often store stamps in albums. To attach the stamps to album pages, you may use peelable hinges or stamp mounts.

Peelable hinges are small, thin, folded pieces of translucent paper with special gum on the one side. When using hinges, moisten the small



portion of the hinge to attach it to the stamp; moisten the larger portion of the hinge to attach it to the album page.

Mounts (plastic sleeves) are used to hold stamps. Most collectors use these for their better stamps, especially mint issues.

Both hinges and mounts are available from stamp supply stores.

Do NOT mount your stamps with glue, tape, or paste as this will ruin your stamps.



## Elements of a Stamp

1. Name of country that issued the stamp: More than 260 nations from all around the world currently issue stamps. All countries include their name on a stamp issue, except for Great Britain which only uses a picture of the Queen's head and no text.
2. Denomination of the stamp: this number is the cost or "face value" of a stamp issue.
3. Topic or subject of a stamp: the design on a stamp may be a number, a famous person, or it may honor an important event, animal, plant, rock, or any theme worthy of attention.
4. Perforations of the stamp: these small holes around the edge of the stamp make it easy to tear stamps apart from a booklet, coil, or sheet.
5. Cancellation of stamp: this mark is put on the stamp to show that it has been used and to prevent it from being used again. It may include wavy lines, straight lines, fancy shapes, motifs, or a simple pen mark.
6. Color of stamp: this detail often is important for identifying older stamps.



## For More Fun, Try a Specialty

**Air mail** — stamps issued for air mail letters.

**Canceled stamps** — stamps that were used to mail a letter.

**Canceled to order stamps (CTO)** — stamps never postally used, with full gum that are canceled, usually across the corner.

**Coils** — stamps made in rolls for use in vending machines.

**Commemorative stamps** — special stamps that honor a person or event; usually available for limited period (about a year) from the post office. Definitive (regular) stamps are available for many years from the post office.

**First Day Covers** — envelopes postmarked on the day the stamp was issued.

**Mint stamps** — stamps in their original condition as issued (not used).

**Plate blocks** — four or more stamps that include the printing plate number in the margin.

**Topical** — animals, airplanes, automobiles, birds, cats, dogs, Disney, flags, horses, trains, sports, etc.

## Stamp Identifier

### Key words on stamps

Afghan or Afghans

Belgie or Belgique

Brazil

CCCP (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

Ceskoslovensko

Danmark

Deutsche Bundespost

Deutsche Demokratische Republic

Eire

Espana

Francaise

Gronland

Haute-volta

Hellas

Helvetia

Hrvatska

Island

Italia or Italiane

Liban or Libanaise

### Country

Afghanistan

Belgium

Brazil

Russia

Czechoslovakia

Denmark

West Germany

East Germany

Ireland

Spain

France

Greenland

Upper Volta

Greece

Switzerland

Croatia or Yugoslavia

Iceland

Italy

Lebanon

Lietuva or Lietuvos

Magyar

Maroc

Nations Unies

Nederland

Nippon

Norge

Osterreich

Philipinas

Picture of the Queen's head

(with no text)

Polska

Romana/Romina

Vaticane

Shqipenia

Suomi

Sverige

Turkiye

U.A.R.

Lithuania

Hungary

French Morocco

United Nations

Netherlands

Japan

Norway

Austria

Philippines

Great Britain

Poland

Romania

Vatican City

Albania

Finland

Sweden

Turkey

United Arab Republic

## Do You Know?

- cats were used to deliver mail
- a stamp was printed on the moon
- an undersea post office once existed
- the world's smallest post office is located in the United States
- candles were once used to determine the cost of mailing a letter
- who appears most on U.S. stamps

To learn more fun stamp facts, go to  
[http://www.stamps.org/kids/kid\\_FunFacts.htm](http://www.stamps.org/kids/kid_FunFacts.htm)

To learn more about the American Philatelic Society, the nation's largest and foremost organization of stamp collectors, contact the APS, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte, PA 16823; 814-933-3803; or visit [www.stamps.org](http://www.stamps.org).



# The World of Stamps



**Postage stamps** with their colorful images and real-life stories have fascinated millions of people since they first appeared more than 150 years ago. There's something to interest everyone in the world of stamps — nature, wildlife, art, sports, space ships, monuments, famous people, historical events, faraway lands and more!