

# Introduction

The world's most popular hobby, stamp collecting is enjoyed by millions throughout the world. It is known as "the hobby of kings and kids." Many lasting friendships have begun as a result of stamp collecting.

Through this hobby you can experience history, from the Pony Express to man's first landing on the moon. You can meet presidents from George Washington to Richard M. Nixon. For most countries, their stamps are like tiny windows that introduce the people of the world to their leaders, customs, history, products, and environment.

Many stamps honor famous people—statesmen, inventors, royalty, and leaders of various movements or services. Others recognize the achievements of organizations such as Scouting, the Red Cross, or 4-H, and still others mark holidays such as Hanukkah and Easter.

Great art and artists are represented on stamps. A stamp is a masterpiece of art in miniature. Every line, every hair must be painstakingly carved on a metal die before an engraved stamp is printed.

*Philately* is the collection and study of stamps and other postal materials. A person who collects and studies stamps is called a *philatelist*. Some philatelists collect stamps from one or a few countries—the United States or the former British Commonwealth, for example. Others collect stamps from all over the world. This type of collection is called a *general collection*. Some general collectors collect stamps issued

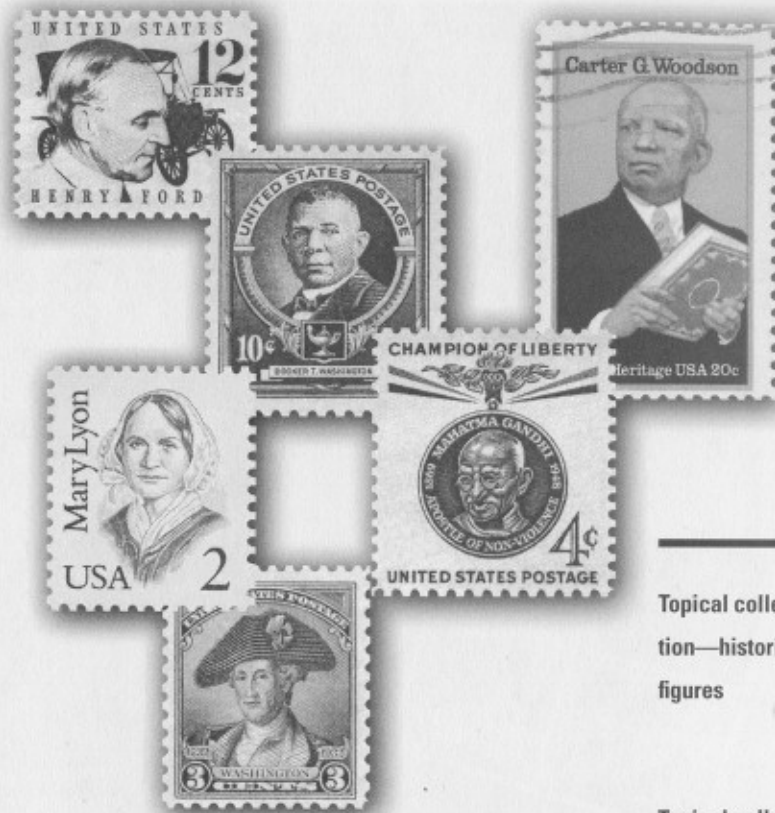




during specific years or periods—from the time they were born to the present, for example, or only those issued during World War II.

*Topical collectors* concentrate on what is shown on the design of the stamp—outer space, historical figures, horses, dogs, flowers, trains, athletes, etc.

The way you collect and what you collect should be based upon your personal interests. Collect what you enjoy.



Topical collection—historical figures



Topical collection—dogs

Note that these stamps are also CTO, or canceled-to-order stamps. CTOs are discussed later in this book.



Topical collection—sports

# Understanding People, Places, and History

In 1998, 14,597 stamps and souvenir sheets were issued worldwide—far too many stamps for one person to collect, although there are collectors who try. Let's begin by looking at the many different possibilities a beginning stamp collector can pursue. In order to fulfill the requirements of this merit badge, you must choose one or two areas of concentration. You might decide to concentrate on stamps issued by the United States or stamps issued by other countries.

## United States Stamps

According to the 1998 comprehensive statement of operations published by the United States Postal Service (USPS), on average, the USPS prints 40 billion stamps per year. In 1999, the United States produced 212 postal issues that included four Celebrate the Century commemorative sheets (for the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s), sports, trains; fish, birds, and other animals; famous people like actors, politicians, and musicians; and U.S. flags. These are typical subjects for stamps. (The USPS previously released Celebrate the Century sheets for the 1900s through 1930s, and it released the sheets for the 1980s and 1900s in 2000.)

To learn more about the stamps shown here, you can turn to a stamp catalog. Take the 1960s stamp sheet from the Celebrate the Century series, for example. If a catalog is not available at home, your local library should have a copy of *Scott* or *Minkus* catalogs, or the *Postal Service*



### Padre Félix Varela

This stamp, created by artist Keith Birdsong, uses the microprinted letters **USPS** to form the design.

*Guide to U.S. Stamps.* From the catalog we learn that these stamps were issued on September 17, 1999. The sheet of 15 33-cent stamps includes: Martin Luther King Jr. and his "I Have a Dream" speech; Woodstock music and art festival; Man Walks on the Moon; NFL team Green Bay Packers; "Star Trek" TV series; Peace Corps; Vietnam War; Ford Mustang; Barbie doll; integrated circuit; lasers; Super Bowl I; peace symbol; Roger Maris, the New York Yankee major-leaguer; and the Beatles.

Most of these stamps were printed by a process known as lithography; one, Man Walks on the Moon, was printed by two processes—lithography and engraving. For more information on these printing processes, look up "Printing Processes" under "Basic Stamp Information" in the introduction section of the *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*. The catalog also identifies that the stamps were perforated (holes punched along the edges of the stamps) with  $11\frac{1}{2}$  holes every two centimeters.

More information about these and other stamps can be found in material issued by the USPS on its Web site (<http://www.new.usps.com>) or its *Postal Service Guide to United States Stamps*, or in stamp periodicals such as *Linn's Stamp News* (and its Web site: <http://www.linns.com>) or *Stamp Collector* (and its Web site: <http://www.stampcollector.net>).

## Stamps From Other Countries

There are many stories behind stamps issued by the more than 260 stamp-issuing authorities outside of the United States.

One example comes from the Swiss Post, which in 1988 issued four Pro Juventute semipostal stamps that portray skills acquired in child development. Swiss currency is *centimes* or *rappen*, and 100 centimes equal one Swiss franc. The first (bold) figure on the stamp represents the cost of the postage, and the second figure (with the "+") is the surcharge for the agency helping the children. The 35 + 15-centimes stamp showed reading, the 50 + 20-centimes showed music, the 80 + 40-centimes showed arithmetic, and the 90 + 40-centimes showed drawing.

Many countries have very little or no need for stamps in their postal system and will print stamps, especially stamps with high value, only for the income they produce. Sometimes a stamp is purchased already canceled. These stamps are called CTO, or *canceled-to-order*. Typically, CTOs have a very neat cancellation that just touches one corner of the stamp. When you turn the stamp over, you will find that it still has its original gum on the back.



Pro Juventute stamps, 1988

Most stamps are printed on paper, although sometimes, to further interest collectors, they are printed on other material, such as foil or plastic. Plastic stamps issued to satisfy collectors' interests are not used to mail letters. Sometimes called *labels*, they are not highly regarded by stamp collectors. Plastic stamps that are issued to meet postal needs—such as sale through postal machines, as in areas where humidity is a problem—are used to mail letters, and are of interest to collectors.

Countries often picture their own geographical and historical landmarks. Some picture animals or birds native to their land; others depict people, places, and events of other countries as a way to show their friendship with those countries. Many of the space exploration flights by NASA have been pictured on stamps issued by other countries.

The more research you put into the stamps you choose to collect, the more you will learn and the more fun you will have. You will learn how to recognize foreign countries by the names on the stamps while learning about their history and customs.



CTO stamp



Stamp on foil



Liberian stamp featuring Apollo 16



The Egyptian pyramids depicted on airmail stamp

## Identifying Stamps

Stamps from Great Britain show no identifying name (see figure 1). The names of other areas like Hong Kong and Canada are plainly inscribed on the stamps in figures 2 and 3. Identifying most stamps is usually just this easy, although sometimes the foreign names of the countries may be different from their English names. For example, on the stamps in figures 4 and 5, one can easily figure out that *Polaska* means Poland and that *Danmark* means Denmark.

The stamp in figure 6 shows a map of Ireland and is obviously an Irish stamp. The stamp in figure 7 with the inscription *Magyar Posta* is more difficult, since there is no phonetic similarity between *Magyar* and its English equivalent, *Hungary*. With experience, collectors can learn to recognize the foreign-language names of such countries. Stamp identifier books are also available to help identify inscriptions on stamps.

Spanish stamp depicting the running of the bulls



Figure 1 ▶



Figure 2 ▶



Figure 5 ▲

Figure 3 ▼



Figure 6 ▶



Figure 4 ▲



Figure 7 ▲

# Types of Stamp Collecting

For many years, stamp specialists tried to collect all the stamps issued by a specific country. In spite of the great number of stamps that a country can issue and the expense associated with collecting so many, some collectors still pursue this type of collection. Stamp collecting today, though, is very flexible.

## Topical Collections

Topical stamp collecting is one of the most interesting and versatile forms of the hobby. A topical collection focuses on the subject pictured on the stamp, not on the country issuing the stamp. The collector picks the focus or topic and develops it to fit personal taste.

Collectors can choose from an unlimited number of topics. For some topics, a limited number of stamps will be available, while for others, there may be hundreds to choose from. The collector should pick a topic that is neither too broad nor too narrow in scope, that fits the collector's interest, and that reflects his or her ability to obtain the stamps.

A collector interested generally in sports might focus on stamps related to the Olympics or to a favorite sport, such as track, soccer, or baseball. Some collectors focus on art, music, or religion. Others might collect birds, butterflies, insects, maps, or railroads. Boy Scouts sometimes collect Scouts on stamps, as shown on page 16. (More than 135 countries have issued stamps related to



Scouting.) Topical collecting is fun because it can link two or more interests into a single hobby.

Another fun aspect of topical stamp collecting is the arrangement and display of the collection in albums. Collectors can creatively mount the stamps in a way that appeals to their personal taste. Some collectors use computers to design special pages for a collection, but printing by hand or typing a page can serve just as well.

Topical collecting can be fun to share with others who do not collect stamps. While a specialized collection of a single set of stamps, such as the 1938 United States presidential definitives, may interest only a limited number of advanced stamp collectors, a collection of dinosaurs, baseball, or Disney characters on stamps appeals to many people.

Topical stamps can be obtained in several ways. Packets of stamps on major topics can be purchased in stamp shops, at stamp shows, or through advertisements in magazines such as *Boys' Life*. Stamps in packets are often inexpensive because they are fairly common. This is an excellent way to start a stamp collection without spending a lot of money. Additional stamps can be added to the basic collection as your interest and knowledge of the collection grow.

The daily mail is another source of topical stamps. If you choose to collect stamps this way, it is best to keep your stamps on stock pages until you have enough stamps to fill an entire page. This way, it will be easier to design a page that you will be proud to share with others later on.



## Other Types of Collections

Most experienced collectors have more than one interest in stamps. A collector can, for example, focus on stamps of the United States while specializing in trains as a topical collection.

A variety of definitive and commemorative stamps and postal stationery can make an interesting and inexpensive type of collection. *Covers*—or envelopes—showing different postal rates and classes make a challenging collection. Even advertising covers used to promote different products can be collected. Without spending a cent, a person can easily collect fifty to a hundred items that reflect the complexity of the modern mail system, from their own mail.

Some collectors specialize in meter imprints and labels. These can be collected historically, going back to the many types used since the 1920s or focusing on current use alone. Some companies use interesting slogans with the postmark. Even the design of the meter imprint can be the focus of a collection.

Postmarks and cancellations can also be interesting to collect. Some people collect postmarks that have their names in them. Others seek old postmarks from towns where they live. Some collect special cancellations, such as those that picture flags or fancy designs.





A special type of stamp, such as an airmail or postage-due stamp, can be the focus of a collection. Unusual shapes—triangles, diamonds, even banana shapes—can be the basis for a very attractive collection.

Still other forms of collecting are based on postal history. Collectors keep the entire cover so that the postmarks and auxiliary marks will show how the envelope went through the mail.

In an election year, covers mailed by political candidates can make a colorful collection. Some people specialize in covers associated with a significant historical event—a war or a presidential inauguration, for example. Advertising covers related to a special interest—envelopes from hardware stores that show tools, envelopes from zoos that show animals, etc.—can also make an enjoyable collection.

*First day covers* are very popular collectibles. On the first day that a stamp is released for sale, a ceremony is held, and a special cancellation marking the release of the stamp is made available to cancel the mail. Collectors buy or prepare their own envelopes, which usually have *cachets*—pictures or words that relate to the new stamp. The envelope and the new stamp then receive the special cancellation. The USPS now allows an extended period of time after the first day to cancel and obtain these covers.

Some collectors try to get a cover for each new stamp. Others specialize in a single stamp and collect as many different cachets as possible. Contact an experienced collector or your local post office for instructions on how to obtain such cancellations. A collection of first day covers with cachets drawn by the collector can be a truly creative achievement.

**Pacific '97—**

**Stagecoach  
and Ship**

The U.S. Postal

Service made his-

tory on March 13,

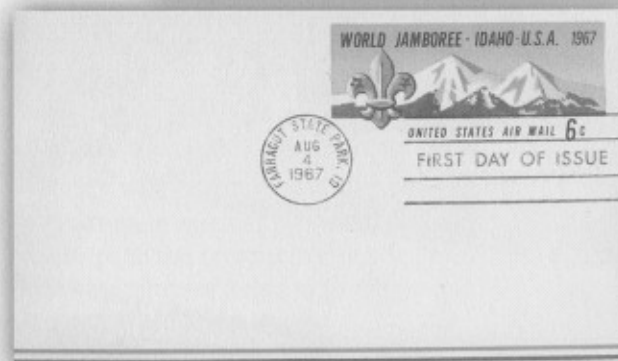
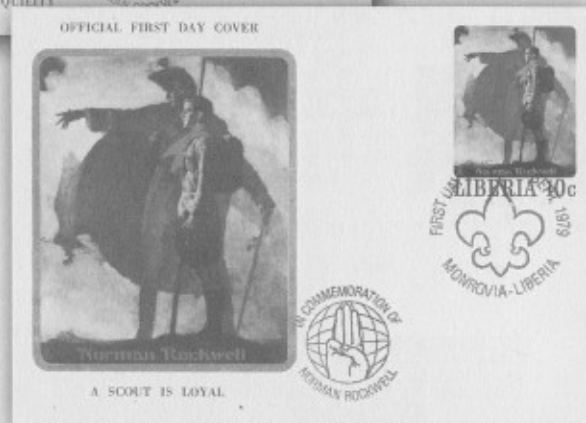
1997, when it

issued—for the

first time ever—

triangular-shaped

stamps.



These first day  
covers pay tri-  
bute to Scouting  
around the world.



# Learning the Lingo

Like many hobbies and businesses, stamp collecting has its own lingo, or terminology. You will find it easier to collect stamps when you know the hobby's special terms. As your interest and knowledge of stamp collecting grow, you will discover other areas of interest, such as printing methods, reasons for issuing stamps, and how to identify varieties of stamps.

Listed below are some of those special terms used by stamp collectors. Additional terms and definitions can be found in reference materials available in local libraries.

**Aerogramme.** A letter sheet made of a single sheet of lightweight paper with gummed flaps, normally used for international airmail. When folded and sealed, the message is on the inside; the outside resembles an envelope on which a stamp has been printed, and the rate is usually slightly less than the first-class air letter rate.

**Airmail stamp.** A stamp formerly issued to prepay airmail postage rates, especially for foreign or overseas mail, which were usually more expensive than surface mail. Since 1977, the United States mail has been carried by air, when appropriate, at no extra charge.



**Approval.** A convenient method by which a dealer sends selections of stamps to the prospective buyer. From these stamps the collector chooses items to purchase and returns the balance with payment.

**Airmail**

**Bank note issue.** A stamp printed by the American Bank Note Company, the Continental Bank Note



Blocks of stamps



Cachet

Company, and the National Bank Note Company during the 19th century, under contract from the United States Post Office.

**Block.** A unit of four or more stamps. A block of four stamps is two stamps high and two stamps wide. A plate number block shows the number of the plate used to imprint the stamp.

**Booklet.** Traditionally, panes (also can be just one pane) of stamps that are cut into strips, or blocks, which are put between a protective cover for the convenience of the customer. More recently, a booklet could also be a self-adhesive pane designed to be folded by the customer. This type of booklet has been issued in the United States and other countries.

**Cachet.** A design printed on an envelope to commemorate a special event such as the issuance of a new stamp, the president's birthday, or stamp show.

**Canceled-to-Order (CTO).**

A mint stamp that is canceled (with full gum) even though it has never been postally used for mailings. Most CTO stamps are not highly sought after by collectors.



PLATE NUMBER

**Cancellation.** A marking that shows a stamp has been postally used and that prevents its reuse.

**Catalog value.** The value that is printed in a specific catalog indicates a relation price for purchasing the stamp from a dealer. The value is usually determined by its supply and demand.

**Coil stamp.** A stamp issued in a roll generally for use by stamp-dispensing machines.

**Commemorative stamp.** A stamp, normally larger than regular definitive stamps, that is issued to honor a person, place, historic event, organization, etc. These stamps are usually available for sale for a limited period of time at the post office.

**Cover.** An envelope.

**Definitive stamp.** A common stamp, usually small, in regular use over a period of years. Also called a "regular" stamp. Typically, definitive stamps stay on sale for many years, whereas commemorative stamps are seldom sold for much longer than a year after their issue.

**Error.** A mistake in the production of a postage stamp that was not caught before the stamp's release to the public. These include inverted centers and mistakes in color, paper, etc.

**Face value.** The value, or denomination, of a stamp, as it appears on the stamp.



Commemorative



Definitive

**Strip of stamps from a coil.** Note the plate number near the bottom of the stamp to the far right.



**First day cover.** An envelope with a stamp affixed that has been canceled on the first official sale date of the stamp. Recently, in the United States and many other countries, postal services have been allowing an extended period of time after the first day to cancel and obtain these covers. (See page 21.)

**Hinge.** A small strip of paper gummed on one side and used by collectors to put their stamps in albums or on pages. Today, collectors store mint stamps with full gum or expensive stamps in a mount or a stockbook, not hinged.

**Imperforate stamp.** A stamp issued without perforations.

**Mint stamp.** A stamp that was never postally used. If a mint stamp still has all its original gum intact with no disturbances (such as a hinge mark), it is classified as mint never hinged (MNH).



Mint



**Mixture.** An assortment of stamps, usually still mounted on paper and containing some duplicates.

**Mount.** A clear, thin plastic holder in which a stamp is placed in an album. Mounts protect stamps by reducing handling and eliminating hinge marks. Mounts are usually used for mint and/or more expensive stamps.

**Official stamp.** A stamp issued for exclusive use by government departments and organizations.

**Overprinted stamp.** A stamp that has printing applied to it after original production. Overprinting may indicate the stamp has been used in more than one country or to recognize a special event, to change a stamp's value, or for other than postal use.

**Perforations.** Small holes or slits around the perimeter of a stamp that enable one stamp to be separated from another.

**Philately.** Derived from the Greek words *philo* (fond of) and *ateleia* (free of tax, prepaid). The term was coined by the French collector Georges Herpin in 1864, and means the collection, study, and enjoyment of postage stamps.

**Plate number block, booklet, or coil (PNC).** A block, booklet, or coil of stamps bearing the number(s) of the plate(s) used in printing.



Official stamps



Overprinted stamps



Plate block



Postage meter



Postage-due

**Postage meter stamps and labels.** Meters are used by businesses and other organizations with large mailings. They can be set for varying amounts of postage, and include a form of a precancel that may have special slogans or marks.

**Postage-due stamp.** A stamp formerly issued that was applied to the mail when not enough postage had been paid by the sender. The amount due had to be paid by the receiver or the item was returned to the sender.

**Postal card.** A government-produced card, usually with a stamp imprinted in the upper right-hand corner that pays the postage fee.



*Yorkshire*  
Black Ball Line  
packet ship,  
circa 1850

© USPS 1999

Postal card

**Postcard.** A card with a picture or information on one side and a space for a message and address on the other. A stamp must be affixed to pay the postage fee.

**Postmark.** An official mark(s) applied to mail in the postal system; usually includes the date and place of the mailing.

**Precanceled stamp.** A stamp canceled before it is placed in the mail, usually by a mechanized printing process. Normally produced by heavy users of mail, these require a special-use permit from the postal service.



Precanceled stamps

**Regular or definitive stamp.**

A common stamp, usually small, in regular use over a period of years.

**Se-tenant stamps.** Stamps joined together as in the original sheet but differing in design, denomination, overprint, or color. Sometimes, by combining a series of connected stamps, a picture is created (much like a jigsaw puzzle).



Regular definitive



Se-tenant

**Semipostal stamp.** Postal authorities sometimes issue special stamps for which an amount is charged in addition to the regular postage. This extra fee or surcharge is designated for some special purpose that benefits special groups such as child-care and special-education agencies.



**Sheet.** As printed, this is a complete unit consisting of four or more panes of stamps, each of which is cut apart when the stamps are sent to the post office. The size and design of the stamp affects the size of the pane and sheet.

**Souvenir sheet.** A sheet of one or more postage stamps that usually has a commemorative inscription or artwork in the border.

**Special-delivery stamp.** A stamp formerly used to pay for prompt delivery without waiting for the normal delivery time. This type of stamp is no longer used in the United States postal system.

**Special stamp.** A stamp that may be reprinted and is used for periods longer than commemoratives but shorter than definitives. "Love" and Christmas stamps are examples.



Special stamps



#### Stamped envelope

**Stamped envelope.** An envelope on which the post office has printed or embossed a stamp. The U.S. Postal Service has produced some special envelopes with holograms in place of the stamps.

**Surcharged stamp.** A stamp whose value has been changed by overprinting.

**Tagging.** The chemical marking of postal items to help prevent mail fraud and allow them to be "read" by mail-sorting machines.

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



Surcharged  
(and overprinted)



Used, or canceled



## Grade Definitions

In 1997, the publishers of the *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* began listing values for stamps in the grade of "Very Fine." Understanding the terms used to analyze the condition of a stamp is important; illustrated reference books or catalogs can also help clarify them.



Very Fine



Fine-Very Fine



Fine



Average

**Very Fine.** The design is very well-centered, with the four margins between 50 percent and 100 percent equal. That is, the widest margin is not more than twice the width of the narrowest margin. A stamp with the perforation barely clearing the design on any side does not qualify as Very Fine.

**Fine-Very Fine.** The design is well-centered. Either the vertical margins or the horizontal margins qualify as at least Very Fine (the wider margin is not more than twice the width of the narrower), while the other margins qualify as at least Fine (the perforations visibly clear the stamp design).

**Fine.** The perforations visibly clear the stamp design on all four sides.

**Average.** The perforations cut slightly into the design on one side.

## Stamp Condition

The condition of a stamp influences its price. The more perfect the stamp, the higher the price. Many factors, such as margins, color, and condition of the gum, are important in the valuation of the stamp. Some of the words used in assessing the value of a stamp are as follows.

**Original Gum.** Gum as applied to the stamp when it was manufactured.

**Regummed.** A stamp that for some reason has lost its gum and to which new gum has been applied.

**No Gum.** Stamps sent through the mail and removed from envelopes by soaking have no gum. Some mint stamps are issued without gum.

**Never Hinged.** Stamps that have never been hinged and whose gum shows no evidence of disturbance. With the development of good mounts, many collectors demand stamps that are classed as mint never hinged (MNH).

**Lightly Hinged (LH).** A stamp showing a faint trace of a gum disturbance where the hinge has been removed.

**Heavily Hinged.** A stamp showing a hinge remnant on the back, or evidence of missing gum.

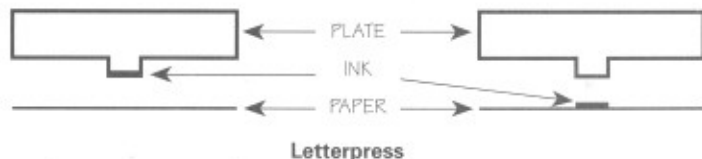
Other faults that affect the grading of stamps are missing perforations, tears, thin spots, pinholes, creases, etc. These flaws can cause a stamp to lose all or most of its value.

# How Stamps Are Made

## Stamp Printing Methods

Stamps are printed in three basic ways: with the design (1) above the surface of the printing plate, (2) level with the surface, or (3) below the surface.

**Letterpress or Typography.** In this printing method, the design is inked above the surface of the plate. In a rotary letterpress, the plate is a cylinder that revolves as the paper passes under it. In typography, the plate is flat, and the printing is done on a flatbed press. Most overprinted, surcharged, and precanceled stamps are typographed.



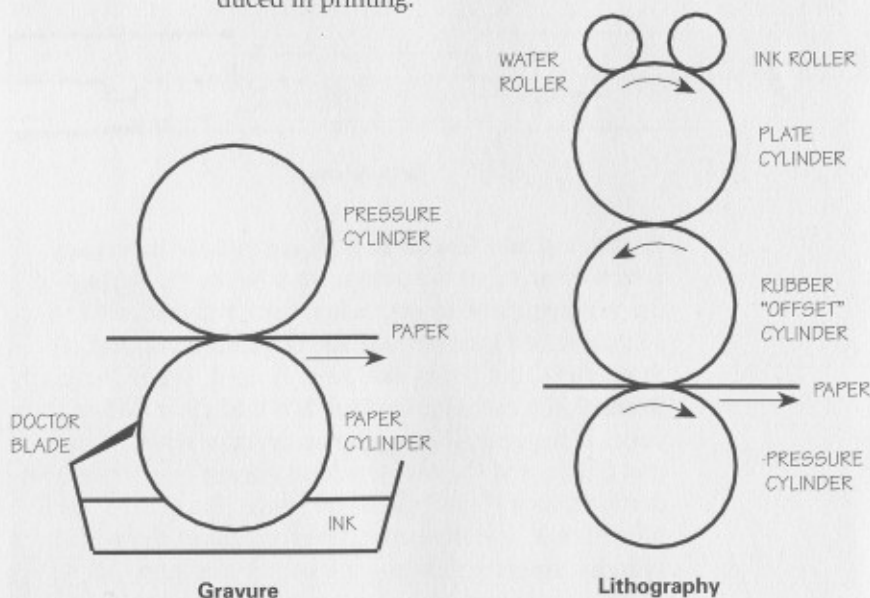
Letterpress

**Engraving and Gravure.** Both are *intaglio* processes, which means that the design stays below the surface of the printing plate. In engraving, thick ink that remains slightly raised is used, whereas in gravure printing, a thinner ink that pours like water is used. When the plate is inked, the excess ink on top is wiped clean before the paper is impressed. The gravure cylinder revolves in a tray of ink, and the excess ink on the surface of the cylinder is scraped clean by a metal blade. The etched "wells" fill with ink, and the paper, pressed against the wiped cylinder, actually pulls the ink by suction from the plate.



**Lithography or Offset Lithography.** In this printing method, the design is level with the printing plate surface. Because the oil-based ink does not mix with the water that moistens the blank area of the plate, an impression of just the design results. In offset lithography, the design is printed from the metal plate to a rubber-covered cylinder and then to the paper.

Modern presses in all processes print several colors at the same time (except in engraving, where each color must be printed separately). Many stamps listed in catalogs as multicolored were made from four different color-process plates. By using screens of three basic colors—red, yellow, and blue—plus black, every color can be reproduced in printing.



## Separations

**Perforated Stamps.** Perforations make it possible to separate stamps from one another with ease. Most stamps are perforated with small holes by machines that remove the paper from the holes.

Pane stamps are perforated on all four sides; booklet pane stamps are perforated on one, two, or three sides; and coil stamps are printed in strips and perforated on just two sides.

**Rouletting.** Rouletting is a type of separation achieved by making slits without removing any paper. This method is not used very often in the United States, although it was used for the 1991–92 Flower stamp (see *Scott 2001 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* listing No. 2525).

**Imperforate Stamps.** The early United States stamp issues were neither rouletted nor perforated. They had to be cut apart with scissors and are referred to as *imperforate* stamps. Most imperforate stamps today are issued by countries in the hope that collectors will buy the stamps,



Perforated



Roulette perforation



Imperforate stamp and souvenir sheet

thereby generating revenue, but not use them except in their collections, thereby saving the cost of providing postal services.

Examples of imperforate stamps issued by the United States include the 1989 souvenir sheets for the World Stamp Expo and the Twentieth Universal Postal Union Congress.

## Types of Paper and Gum

While most stamps are printed on paper with a gummed backing that you moisten for adhesion, some are printed on other material or have a pressure-sensitive adhesive that requires no moistening. Some stamps have even been issued without a gummed surface.

By popular demand, in the late 1990s, the format of many U.S. definitive stamps went to self-adhesive. Many stamps in the United States continue to be printed on rag paper. However, some are printed on other materials. Plastic sheets are sometimes used so that the stamps can be sold more easily in vending machines. Holographic and three-dimensional stamps also require a special printing surface.

Because gum reacts with high humidity (causing stamps to stick together), countries have experimented with different types of gum. Stamps issued without gum must have an adhesive applied by the sender. Stamps with pressure-sensitive adhesives are sold with a protective backing that must be removed before affixing the stamp to an envelope.

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Self-adhesive stamps make stamp-licking a thing of the past.

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miss the pleasure of collecting other stamps that may be more fun to acquire and display.

## Equipment and Procedures

An important part of any stamp collection is the album in which the stamps are stored. An album helps to organize the collection in a logical order and protects the stamps from damage. You can make your own, or purchase one

of the many types of albums for stamps and covers on the market. A printed album with spaces for specific stamps can serve as a stamp identifier and can make the job of mounting easier. Although most printed albums are organized by country, topical albums are available for special interests.

However, as a beginning stamp collector, you might not know which topic or country you want to collect.

To avoid spending a great deal of money on an album that could later be of little use, you might start with a three-ring binder and some graph paper (craft-weight). You can buy blank pages with or without borders and headings, or you can generate your own pages using a computer. This type of album makes the mixed mounting of stamps and covers easy and avoids empty spaces that make the collection look incomplete.

**Tip:** Do not use a "magnetic" type photograph album for your stamp collection. The adhesive used on the pages will ruin your stamps.

Loose-leaf pages can be added or rearranged easily so that the album can grow with the collection. Use pages printed on one side so that the stamps on facing pages will not interlock and be damaged when the album is opened.

Stock sheets, heavy pages with strips that form pockets to hold the stamps, can be used as temporary album pages that allow for the easy rearrangement of stamps.

Albums should be stored in an upright position away from heat, moisture, and light. If stored in a damp basement or near a window, the stamps can collect moisture and be damaged. Also avoid eating or drinking while working with your collection.

**Insects & Spiders** — BASIC INFORMATION OF STAMP OR SET

**INSECTS & SPIDERS**

**LISTING STYLES**  
1. MINORS  
2. MAJORS

**ILLUSTRATION NUMBER**

**SCOTT NUMBER**

**DENOMINATION**

**COLOR OR OTHER DESCRIPTION**

**METHOD USED TO PRINT THE STAMP**

**CATALOGUE VALUES**  
1. USED  
2. UNUSED

**1999, Oct. 1**

**Litho.**

**Perf. 11**

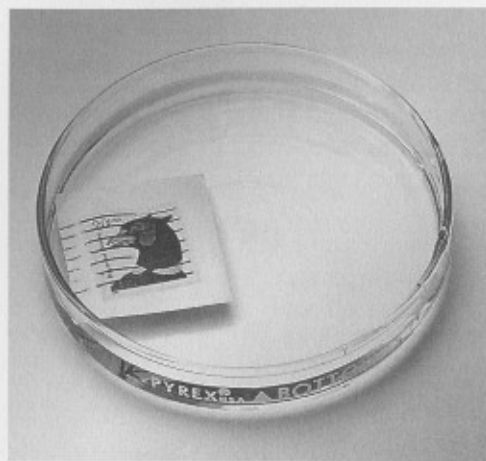
**3351 A2597 Pane of 20**

**a-t. 33c any single**

**13.00 .65 .20**

**a. Black widow. b. Elderberry longhorn. c. Lady beetle. d. Yellow garden spider. e. Dogbane beetle. f. Flower fly. g. Assassin bug. h. Ebony jewelwing. i. Velvet ant. j. Monarch caterpillar. k. Monarch butterfly. l. Eastern Hercules beetle. m. Bombardier beetle. n. Dung beetle. o. Spotted water beetle. p. True katydid. q. Spinybacked spider. r. Periodical cicada. s. Scorpionfly. t. Jumping spider.**





**Tip:** Store your stamps away from heat, moisture, light, food, drinks, and young brothers and sisters, too.

Stamps are soaked in cold water to remove them from the paper they are attached to. Once the paper and stamps have separated, place the stamps into rinse water to remove any additional paper particles; remove

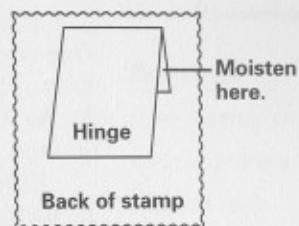
the stamps from the rinse water; and place them facedown on an absorbent surface. If the stamps curl while drying, flatten them under a heavy weight. New self-adhesive stamps sometimes will not separate from the envelope using only water. A special chemical (found at stamp supply stores) may be needed to remove such stamps.

**Tip:** Steam or hot water may cause colors to run; soak separately any stamps that have colored cancellations or are on colored paper.

Stamp *hinges* are pieces of specially gummed, translucent paper that is usually horizontally prefolded to make a hinge. First affix the short portion of the hinge to the back of an inexpensive stamp just below the top. The bottom of the hinge (the longer side) is attached to the page of the album. Apply moisture to the short side by gently touching it with the tip of your tongue and blotting it lightly on your lower lip before placing it correctly on the back of the stamp. The amount of moisture you apply is important—the smallest amount will make the hinge stick to the stamp. Next, apply only a small amount of moisture to the bottom portion of the hinge to be attached to the page. You want to keep the stamp free to lift so you can view the backing.

To remove a hinged stamp from an album, carefully grip the stamp and the attached hinge with tongs and gently pull down to release both from the album. The hinged stamp then can be placed facedown and the hinge pulled away slowly from the stamp. If the hinge appears to tear or pull paper fibers from the stamp, stop and soak it off with water. Do **not** attempt to remove a hinge from a freshly hinged stamp until it has dried thoroughly!

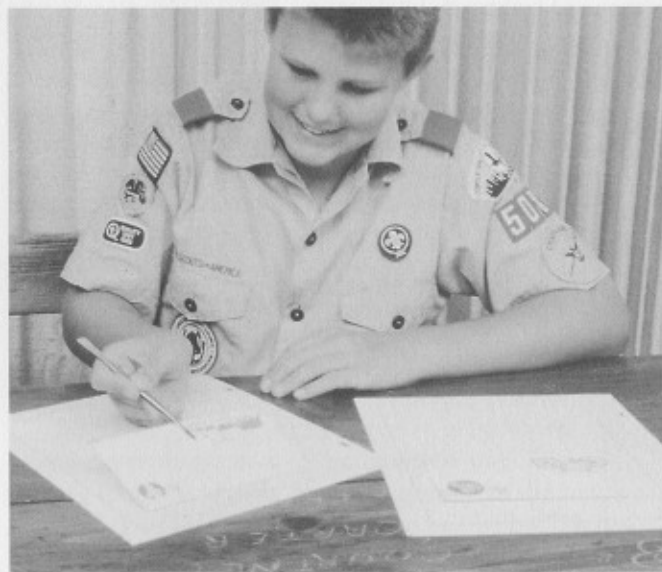
Stamp mounts are small, transparent pockets into which a stamp can be slipped and mounted on a page. Stamp mounts are usually preferred for mounting mint stamps, rare stamps, and fragile stamps. The back of the mount has a special gum that, when moistened at the top, can be placed on your album page. By using this type of mount, you do not disturb the gum of mint stamps.



Use only cold—  
never hot—water  
to loosen a stamp  
from paper.

There are several different types of mounts available. One type is a sleeve that covers the stamp; another consists of two pieces that form a "track" for the stamp to sit in. As you become more familiar with working with stamps, you can decide which type best suits you.

Envelopes can be attached to a page with corner mounts, triangular "pockets" with gummed backs. To protect covers, a transparent protective material such as a mylar sheet protector can be put over the envelope first. Both the sheet protector and the cover can then be attached safely to the album page with the corner mounts.



**Tip:** Do *not* use any type of tape, rubber cement, or glue to affix your stamps or envelopes in an album. The chemicals in these materials can quickly migrate into your collection and cause permanent damage and staining.



Polyethylene cover sleeves come in a variety of sizes to suit the collector's different needs.

Polyethylene cover sleeves work well for storing excess stamps. These transparent, chemical-free envelopes vary in size and allow you to see their contents at a glance.

Stock cards or sheets are also useful for storing stamps. They are usually available in manila or black with a horizontal cardboard fold into which the stamps can be placed. Some of these have an additional plastic cover sheet to protect the stamps. Three-hole punched cards or sheets are also available. These will allow you to store loose stamps in the back of your album, and will come in handy when you have received new stamps but have not had time to mount them.

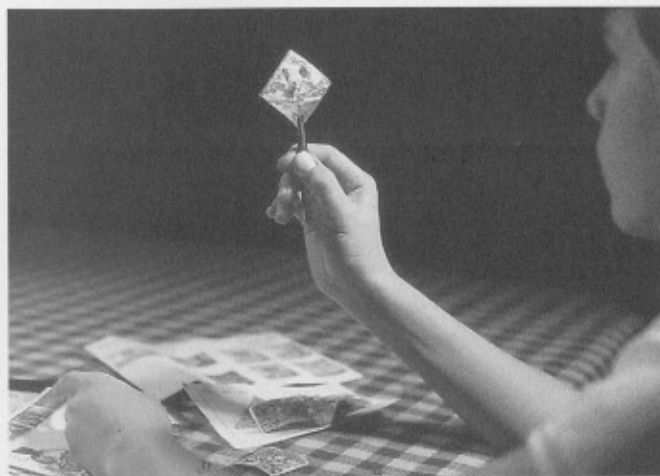
In addition to mounts, hinges, and albums, there are other tools you will need.

*Stamp tongs* look like tweezers but have rounded tips for grasping. They are approximately five inches long and make the handling of stamps much easier. Tongs also help protect stamps from soil and damage. Fingertips that appear to be clean and dry can still contain body oils and perspiration that can damage stamps.



Stamp tongs

Using stamp  
tongs helps keep  
your stamp collec-  
tion unsoiled.



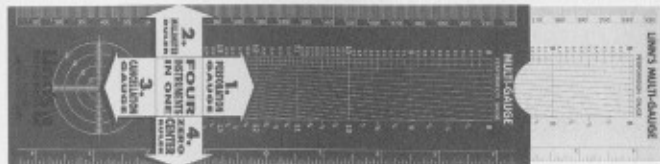
A *magnifying glass* is helpful for examining the fine details of a stamp's design, allowing you to recognize and enjoy the fine art of an engraved stamp.

*Perforation gauges* are used to measure the number of holes within a two-centimeter length on a stamp. The perforation gauge was developed to allow a collector to identify stamps by distinguishing among the many types of perforations that have been used over the years.

One type of *watermark detector* is a shallow, black or dark-colored dish in which the stamp in question is exposed to a nonflammable watermark detector fluid that is used to detect watermark design in the stamp's paper. When the paper is manufactured, raised areas on the rollers transfer a subtle design, called a *watermark*, to the paper pulp.



Magnifying glass

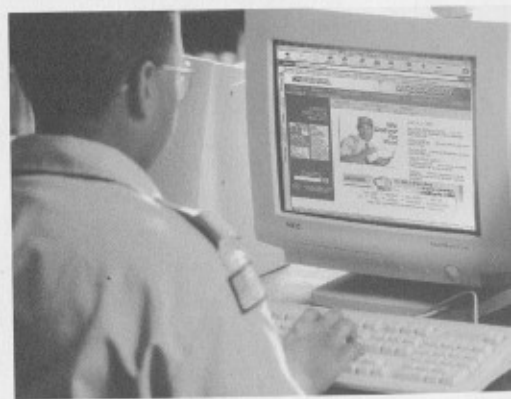


Perforation gauge

An *ultraviolet (UV) light* is a basic tool used by stamp collectors to detect and identify luminescent stamps, stamps coated with "invisible" fluorescent ink. A UV light also will help the collector determine whether or not repairs have been made to a stamp.

**Tip:** Ultraviolet lights are harmful to the eyes. Before using such a device, consult with your qualified merit badge counselor to learn how to take the necessary precautions.

All the special tools you will need as a stamp collector can be found at stamp shows, hobby shops that specialize in stamp collecting, through mail order, and on the Internet. (You must be at least 18 years of age to make purchases through the Internet. Seek assistance from your parents.)



# Displaying Your Collection

Prepared album pages from your loose-leaf notebook will allow you to display part or all of your collection. Arranging a topical collection in story form will allow you to remove the pages and show them to friends. If you are collecting by a particular country, you can arrange these stamps in order of their issue date.

At stamp shows, specially prepared pages are displayed in frames that usually contain 16 pages each. Many shows have sections for exhibits by young collectors. Contact your merit badge counselor or a member of a local stamp club for more information about displaying your collection in this manner.

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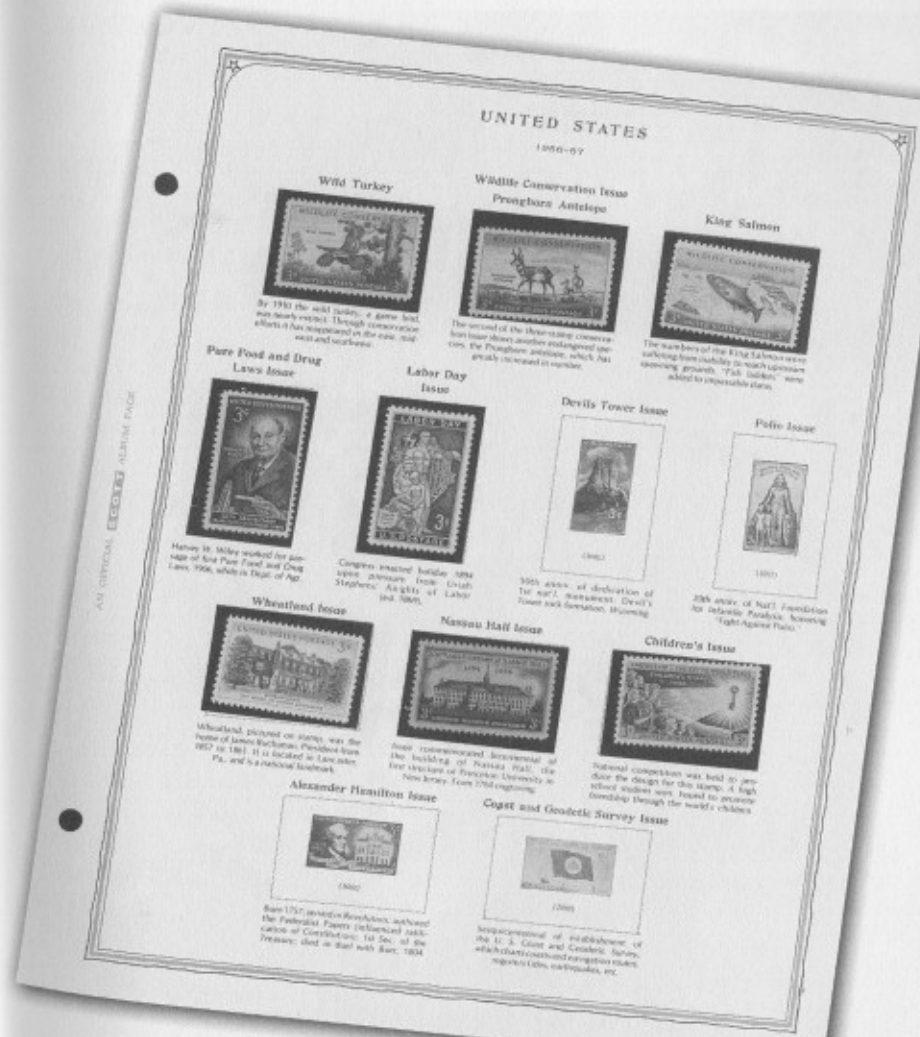
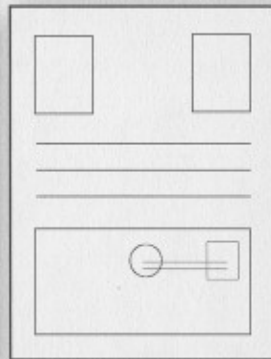
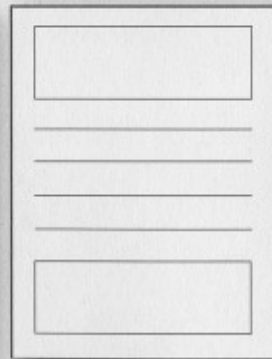
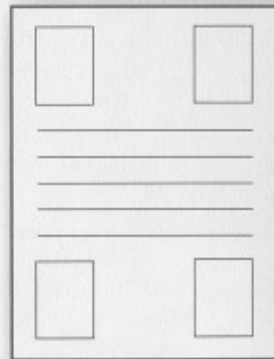
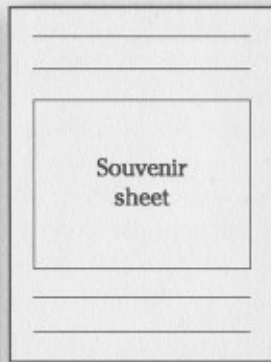
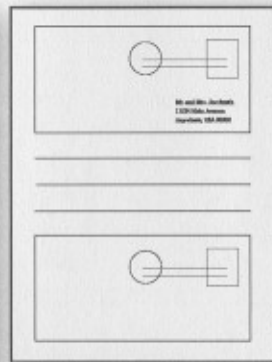
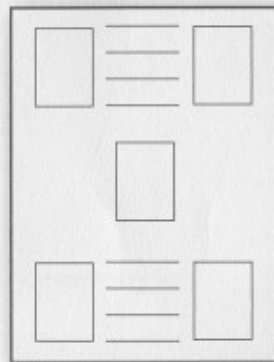
Many people who began stamp collecting at a young age continue the hobby throughout their lifetime.

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## Ideas for Laying Out Pages

The following illustrations show layouts for display pages. Remember that the layout of your collection is up to you—use your creativity.





# Fun Projects

## Designing a Stamp

First determine what you would like your stamp to depict. Will it commemorate a person, place, or thing? Are there printed stamps you could use as references? Below are some examples of different stamp designs.

## Designing a Cancellation

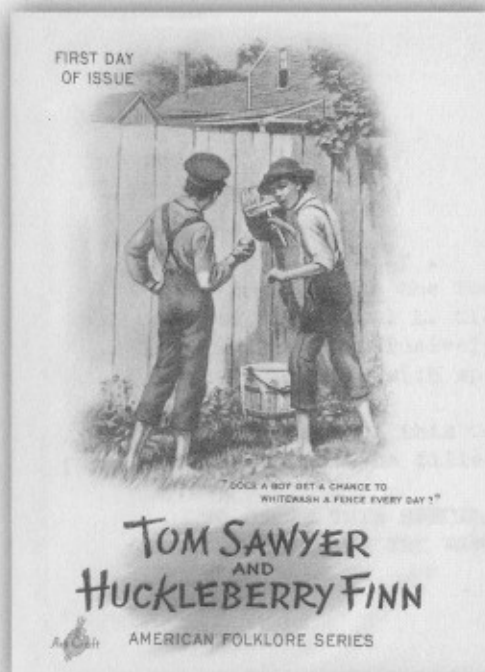
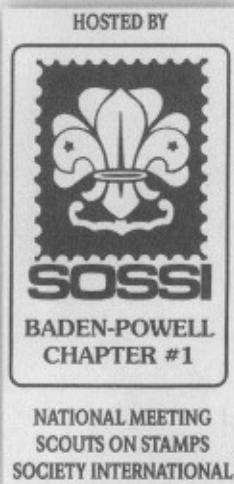
Special cancellations usually focus on a special event, cause, or theme. They can have simple designs or have complex and detailed ones that relate to a stamp, cachet, or special event. You will need to check the *Domestic Mail Manual* at your local post office or on the Internet for requirements on designing a cancellation. (Visit the United States Postal Service online at <http://www.usps.gov/>.)



## Designing a Cachet

A *cachet* is a design that is usually hand-drawn, rubber-stamped, or printed on the left side of an envelope. Cachets are usually created to draw attention to the stamp on the envelope or to an event you are promoting. Again, the design can be simple or complex.

To make a cachet on a photocopy machine, open a 6 1/4-inch envelope completely. Using your imagination, draw your own design or select a picture to place on the open envelope. Make as many copies as desired. Cut each copy to envelope size, fold, and glue together to simulate an envelope (a filler card might be added before closing). Address the envelope, attach the correct postage, and have the envelope canceled by mailing it to yourself.



## Places to Visit

Visit a post office, stamp club, stamp store, or stamp show with an experienced collector, parent, or friend, or with your merit badge counselor. Your local library might have stamp newspapers, magazines, books, or other materials that will be helpful in your research.

**Tip:** Call in advance and make an appointment before you visit your local post office.

# How the United States Postal System Works

## Processing Mail

We have all seen letter carriers delivering mail to houses. Have you ever thought about the many people and processes that make it possible for that letter to reach us? If we study some of the major steps that must take place to get the letter from where it was mailed to the mailbox at your door, we can better understand and appreciate the United States Postal Service (USPS).

Let's suppose that someone places a letter to you in a mailbox in a city 200 miles from your house. Later that same day, all the letters that have accumulated in the mailbox are picked up by a letter carrier and taken to the local post office. Employees at the post office sort through the letters, separating mail designated for local delivery. The remaining mail is then sorted into two or three trays: one for the mail designated for delivery within 100 to 200 miles of the post office; one for the mail that must travel more than 200 miles; and one for the mail that will go overseas.

The trays are then carried by truck to an area processing station, where they are further sorted by zip code. In a process called *dispositioning*, the mail is *faced*, or arranged, so that the stamp is in the same position on each piece, allowing the letters to be canceled by a clerk or a machine. The trays of letters are then picked up by postal employees and loaded into trucks for distribution to local post offices or loaded onto airplanes for delivery to more distant places.





The destination post office must then sort the mail and distribute it to the proper mail carrier, who will make one final sort before delivering the mail to the appropriate address on his or her route.

This is a simplified description of the USPS's complex procedures. Many special machines have been developed to streamline and quicken the process. The USPS is continually studying, designing, and testing new equipment to improve its service.

## History of the United States Postal Service

The USPS is a descendant of the oldest department in the United States government. That department was formed by action of the Continental Congress in 1775, and Benjamin Franklin was named the first postmaster general. When the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1789, all postal services came under the control of the federal government.

The present system still reflects the many plans and methods devised by Franklin. The postmaster general was in charge of 75 post offices and 2,000 miles of post roads. The means of transporting the mail was progressing along with the country—from on foot, to horseback, stagecoaches, steamboats, and railways.

One of the most significant changes in the postal system was the adoption of postage stamps as the method of payment for carrying the mail. The first stamps were issued on July 1, 1847. This new system required the sender to prepay the fee instead of the receiver paying it. Through the years, the system has been modified and the equipment improved to keep up with the increase in quantity of mail processed.

In the early 1960s, it became obvious that there was a great need for a system that would process mail mechanically or electronically. A system using the now-familiar zip code (zone improvement plan) was installed

on July 1, 1963. On September 13, 1978, the USPS announced a plan to assign an additional four-digit code to further assist in the sorting of mail.

Because of many difficulties, both financial and organizational, the U.S. Congress passed a bill entitled the Postal Reorganization Act that was signed into law by President Nixon on August 12, 1970. This act separated the Postal Service into an independent establishment, which over the next few years took over all the functions, powers, and duties of the Post Office Department. It now endeavors to operate as a self-supporting corporation.

## BADEN-POWELL'S "FIRST" BOY SCOUT...

... WAS PICTURED ON A POSTAGE STAMP DURING THE SIEGE OF MAFEKING, SOUTH AFRICA.

FORMED INTO A CADET CORPS, ALL BOYS FROM NINE YEARS OF AGE WERE LED BY A YOUTH "CADET-SERGEANT-MAJOR" WARNER GOODYEAR. "B-P" WAS GREATLY IMPRESSED BY THEIR EFFICIENCY...

THE STAMPS WERE IMPROVISED BY EXPOSING A GLASS NEGATIVE ON PHOTOGRAPHIC PAPER WITH SUNLIGHT. THIS ACCOUNTS FOR THE DIFFERENT SHADES OF BLUE STAMPS OF WHICH 9,476 WERE MADE

"B-P" WROTE THE BOOK "SCOUTING FOR BOYS" WHICH LED TO THE WORLD-WIDE SCOUT MOVEMENT STARTED BY HIM IN 1907, IN ENGLAND



## "UNCLE DAN" BEARD HONORED ON A POSTAGE STAMP OF THE AFRICAN NATION OF TOGO

OUR FIRST NATIONAL SCOUT COMMISSIONER OF THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA, AND ONE OF SCOUTING FOUNDERS, DAN BEARD WAS LOVED BY AMERICAN BOYS FOR HIS MANY BOOKS AND ARTICLES IN BOYS' LIFE MAGAZINE ON CAMPING, COOKING, WOODCRAFT, PIONEERING AND NATURE.

1961



## Interesting Stories About Stamps

Some stamps have interesting stories behind them. One such stamp is known as the First Scout stamp. During the Boer War in South Africa in the late 1800s, the British commander was Robert S. S. Baden-Powell. To help communications, Baden-Powell formed a cadet corps of boys, who served as uniformed messengers, carrying messages from the commander to his outposts.

During the long siege of Mafeking, the officers began producing postage stamps, mostly for their own amusement. When Baden-Powell discovered what they were doing, he suggested that his messenger, Cadet Sergeant Major Goodyear, be pictured on one of the stamps. These stamps were recognized as real postage stamps when the war ended in 1902.

In 1907, Baden-Powell formed the Scouting movement. In later years, he called young Goodyear his "first Scout," because Baden-Powell's ideas for Scouting had been forming during the siege of Mafeking.

The first stamp, known throughout the world as the Penny Black and depicting Queen Victoria, was introduced in England in May 1840. The stamp's use on an envelope indicated that postage had been paid. On July 1, 1847, the United States started issuing postage stamps featuring George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.





The stamp shown on the previous page is one of the world's most valuable stamps. In 1980, it was sold at auction for \$935,000, and its *face value*, or original value, was one cent. This stamp was printed in 1856 in the British colony of British Guiana, now the independent country of Guyana. British Guiana's stamps normally were printed in England. This one, however, was printed in the colony as part of a temporary stock, because supplies were slow in arriving from England.

Seventeen years after it was printed, the stamp was found by a 12-year-old boy, L. Vernon Vaughan, in the attic of his home in British Guiana. He soaked it off the envelope and put it in his album, but later sold it to a local collector. It was sold many times, each time for a higher price, until 1980, when it brought the then-world's record price for a single stamp. As you can see, the corners have been clipped and the surface has been badly rubbed. But it is the only known stamp from this rare issue, and so its poor condition does not detract from its value.