



Basics of Collecting

What to do with stamps on envelopes, soaking and the basic tools of the hobby of stamp collecting. Fill in the blanks and answer the questions.



In the previous lesson, you were asked to gather stamped envelopes from parents or friends after they have opened the mail and taken out the important papers. The stamps on these envelopes are **used** and free for you to collect. We just need to get them off the envelopes!

IMPORTANT! As discussed in the previous lesson, do not cut off the stamps of First Day Covers, or FDCs. Save the whole cover because it has a special postmark and cachet (artwork) on it. Set aside any other covers you want to save. Put them in sheet protectors in a binder to keep them clean and undamaged.

Now we want to take the other envelopes with the stamps that you



want, and cut off the stamps. We are going to soak the stamps off the paper in water. It is very important that you do not damage the stamp.

Cut around the stamp without damaging the edges. Most stamps you see will have teeth or wavy cuts around the edges that we call **perforations** or **die-cuts**.



Perforations

Die-cut





Most stamps around the world have a number printed on them. It is called the **denomination**. That number shows how much the stamp cost when it was issued. In the United States, stamps that cost 37¢ or less can usually be soaked off the paper. Those with higher numbers or ones that say Forever must be trimmed close to the stamp, because most of those don't soak. What

is the denomination on the flower stamp above? ___ ___ ¢

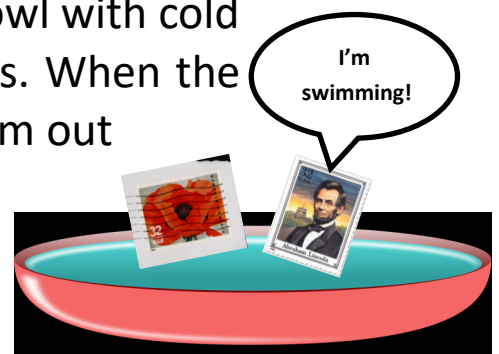
You will find some US stamps don't soak even though you think they should. Generally, most US stamps issued 2006 or later will not soak. Recent US stamps have year dates on them. Stamps that will not soak off after 15 minutes should be taken out, dried, trimmed, and put in your collection. Stamps from other countries, foreign stamps, usually soak off.

If you have stamps on colored envelopes, do not soak them. If you do, the color of the envelope will permanently stain all the stamps in the bowl. Instead trim close around stamps on colored paper and put them in your collection as is.



All the stamps on white paper can be put in a bowl with cold or warm water and soaked for 10 to 15 minutes. When the stamps separate from the paper, gently take them out and lay them flat in between layers of white paper or paper towels. Sometimes you might have to help the stamp separate from the paper with your figures, but be very gentle.

Putting them between layers can help keep them from curling. Gently placing a book on the sheets when they are drying can also help, but wait until the stamps are partially dry so you don't get the book wet. If you have a lot of stamps, you can stack your papers to let them dry over night.





When your stamps are dry and flat, put them in **glassine** envelopes, at left, to keep them safe until you are ready for the next step. Glassine envelopes are made of a non-stick paper that allows you to see the stamps and keep them clean. If you can't get these, use clean, unused white envelopes.

Eventually, the goal is to put your stamps into some sort of **album, stock book** or **stock sheet** that you can organize, shown at right. Then you can look at them any time and show your friends and family.

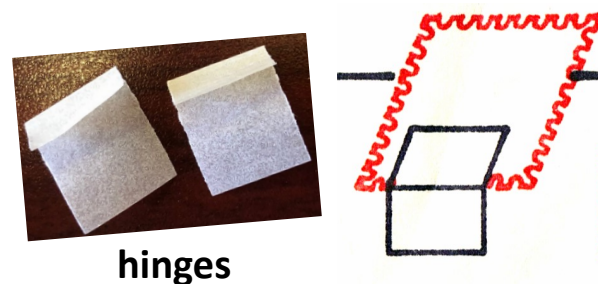


When we pick up our stamps we should make sure we have washed our hands. What is on your hands that can hurt stamps? _____



It is best to use **tongs**, to pick up our stamps and **magnifying glasses** to see the tiny details of the incredible artwork.

When we put used stamps in an album, we use **hinges**. Hinges have glue on the outer sides. A small amount of water is used to moisten the small outer side of the hinge and attach to the back of the stamp near the top center. Then we put a small amount of water on the larger outer part of the hinge, turn the stamp around and attach it to the album page with the hinge. This allows us to see the front of the stamp and the back, if we lift it up.

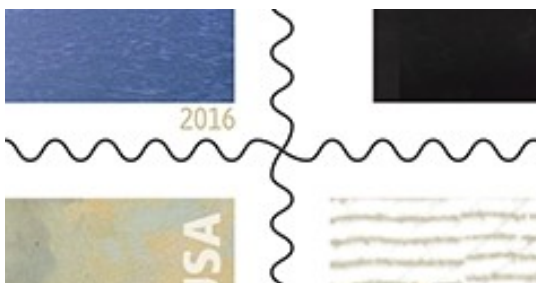


hinges



Most stamps from the 1990's and earlier have perforations. Those stamps had gum on the back and needed a bit of water to glue onto the envelope. We use a **perforation gauge**, at left, to measure the size of the perforations because all stamps do not have the same size of perforations. The number on the gauge indicates how many perforations there are per two centimeters. We hold the stamp up to the gauge to find which line of dots match the teeth of the perforations on the stamp. By looking at the US 1991 Olympic stamp above, what size perforations does the stamp have? _____

Over the years, edges on stamps have changed as new machinery and methods has been invented for making stamps easier to separate. Since the mid 1990s most US stamps issued are **self-adhesive** and Serpentine Die-Cut. The **die-cut** is a metal device that produces perforation-like



wavy lines for separating stamps, see at left. No more holes or old-fashioned perforations. Today, self-adhesive stamps peel easily off the back of the sheet.

Specific information about each stamp such as perforation type and size, name of a stamp, year a stamp is issued, value, and more, can be found in catalogues printed by various companies around the world. If you want to know more about your stamps, go to the library, visit a stamp dealer, or visit non-profits like the Postal History Foundation.



Review Quiz

1.) If I want to add this stamp to my collection I should:

- a) leave it the way it is
- b) trim it
- c) glue it in my album



2.) All stamps can be soaked off paper in water.

- True
- or
- False

3.) If I want to know more about my stamps I can look in

- a) the encyclopedia
- b) a newspaper
- c) a stamp catalogue

4.) When we soak stamps we should use

- a) cider
- b) milk
- c) water

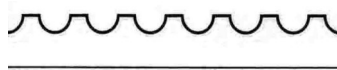


5.) What is the denomination of this stamp? a) 20¢ b) 21¢ c) 27¢

6.) To keep my stamps safe until I have time to put them in an album, I should keep them in

- A) my pockets
- b) a glassine envelope
- c) my purse or wallet

7.) Draw lines from the words to the pictures.



Magnifying Glass

Hinge

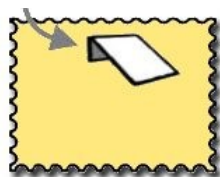
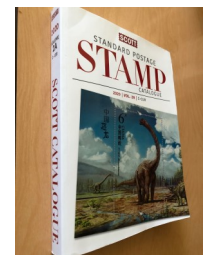
Tongs

Glassine Envelope

Perforation gauge

Stamp Catalogue

Perforations



Page 2 - 32¢

Page 3 - oil and dirt

Page 4 - 11

Quiz - Answer key

- 1) b
- 2) False
- 3) c
- 4) c
- 5) a
- 6) b

Over **100 Lessons** in worksheet or PowerPoint form accompanied by real postage stamps can be ordered online at

<https://postalhistoryfoundation.org/education/education-during-covid-19/>

Topical stamps and a **Beginning Starter Kit** can also be ordered at the web address above.

7.) Draw lines from the words to the pictures.

Magnifying Glass

Hinge

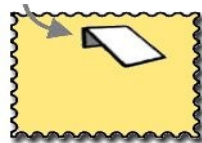
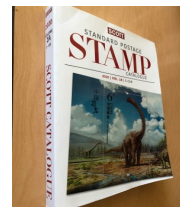
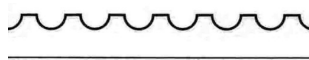
Tongs

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See more printable lessons and activities at

<https://postalhistoryfoundation.org/education/activities/>