

# AN INTRODUCTION TO STAMP COLLECTING



American Topical Association  
[www.americantopical.org/youth](http://www.americantopical.org/youth)



Welcome to the world's most fascinating hobby. Stamp collecting, or *philately*, began in England in 1840 when the first postage stamp was issued. Since then, millions of people, including kings, queens, and presidents, have enjoyed this pastime. Collecting stamps will introduce you to people and places around the globe. It will expand your knowledge of history and geography. Most of all, it will give you countless hours of pleasure that will last your entire life.

# TOOLS



**Stamp tongs** are made of metal and keep the stamp from getting damaged from dirt and oil from your skin. They are used for picking up and handling stamps. Tweezers are not tongs! Their sharp points can tear stamps.

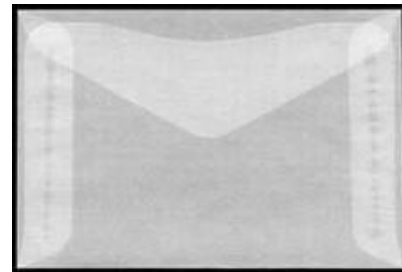


**Stamp hinges** are small, thin, folded pieces of translucent paper with special gum on one side. Stamp hinges are used to mount stamps onto paper or album pages. It's best to use them on used stamps, not mint ones.

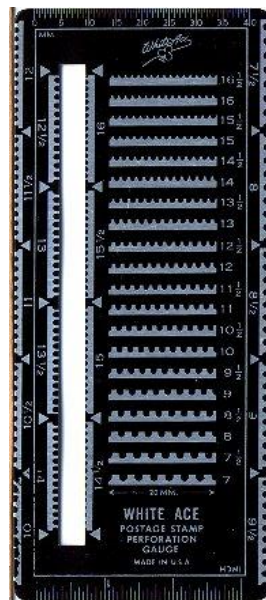
A **magnifying glass** is used to enlarge details on stamps.



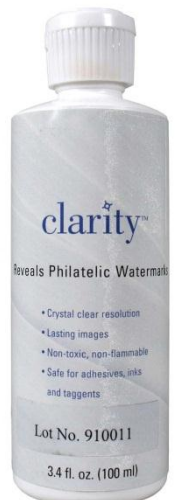
**Glassine envelopes** are very thin and translucent and are available in many different sizes. They are used to store stamps and protect them from air and moisture.



A stamp's perforation size can make a big difference between it being an inexpensive version to a very valuable one. A **perforation gauge** is used to measure the number of perforation holes (or teeth) within 2 centimeters. Move the stamp up and down until the perforations on the stamp line up exactly with the pattern on the gauge.

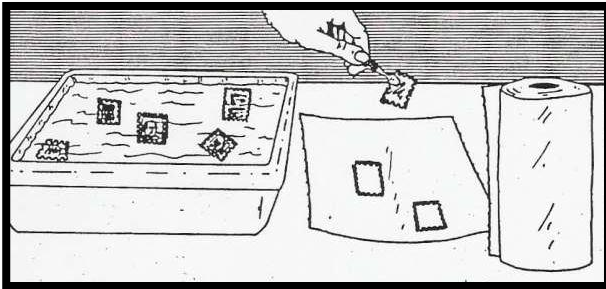


Watermarks are designs made into the paper during the manufacturing process while the paper is still wet. Where the image is impressed, the paper is thinner. The image can be seen by holding the paper up to a light or setting it against a dark background, like a **watermark tray**. When the watermark can't be seen by the naked eye, a special **watermark fluid** is used.



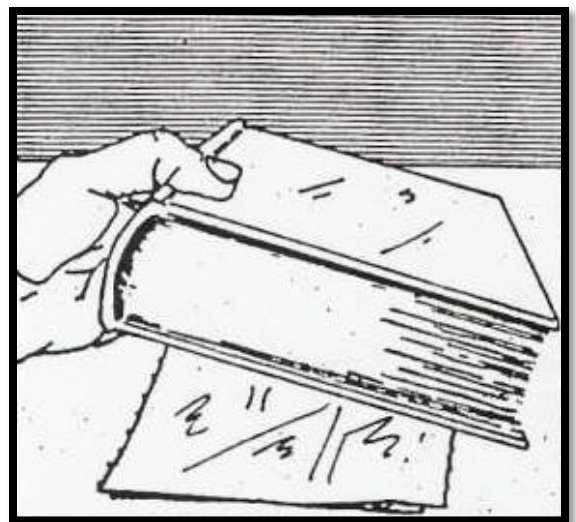
# HOW TO SOAK STAMPS

- Separate paper colors before soaking. Stamps on colored paper may bleed and should be soaked separately. Self-adhesive (newer 34¢ and higher priced stamps) should not be soaked in water.
- Use lukewarm water.
- Do just a few stamps at a time.
- Replace water when it becomes dirty.
- Allow stamps to float free of backing. Do not pull them off!



After soaking, the stamps should be dried face-down on something absorbent, like paper towels or a bathroom towel.

When they are completely dry, place them under a heavy object, like a book, to flatten them. This may take a few days.



# HOW TO HINGE STAMPS

Hinges are ideal for putting used stamps in your album.

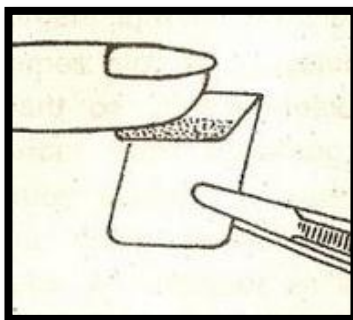
**Do not use tape, glue, or staples  
to affix them to the pages.**

**This will ruin the stamps!**

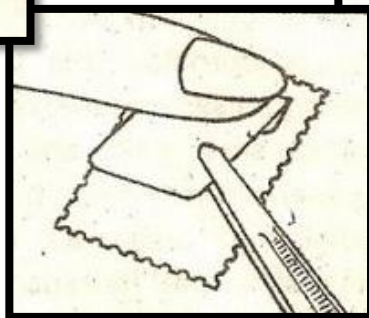
1. Hold the hinge with a pair of tongs or your fingers.
2. Gently moisten the small flap.
3. Apply hinge to reverse side of the stamp, placing it in the center towards the top.
4. Lightly moisten the larger flap and place stamp into the album.

You can either lick the hinge or use a slightly wet Q-tip.

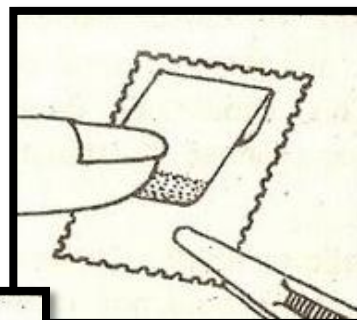
*The less moisture the better.*



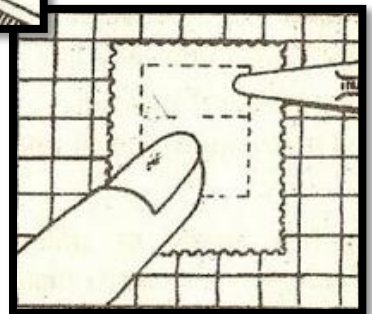
First



Second



Third



Fourth

# STAMP GLOSSARY

**Album** - A book for storing stamps, it usually has printed pictures of the stamps.

**Cancellation** - A mark used by the post office to show that a stamp has been used.

**Commemoratives** - A stamp issued to honor persons, organizations, events or causes on significant anniversaries. They are usually larger in size and sell for a limited time.

**Definitives** - Usually these are smaller size stamps that are printed in huge quantities. They are available from the post office for along period of time which may be many years.

**Denomination** - Usually the numbers on a stamp that indicate the face value or the amount of postage which the stamp pays. Many stamps today are "Forever" stamps and do not carry a value.

**First Day Cover** - An envelope with a stamp canceled on its first day of sale.

**Gum** - Adhesive that is used to attach a stamp to an envelope.

**Mint** - A stamp that has its full gum and has not been hinged. It is in the same condition as it was when originally issued at the post office: unused, undamaged, and with full original gum.

**Perforations** - Holes punched between stamps to make it easier to separate them.

**Postmark** - A mark indicating when and from where a letter was sent. It may or may not also serve as a cancel.

**Selvage** - The margin of a pane of stamps that may include the plate number and other markings such as copyright notices.

**Topicals** - A collection of stamps based on subjects, like dogs, ships, and flowers.



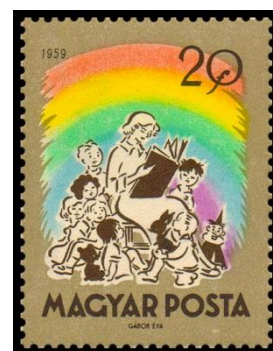
# STAMP IDENTIFIER

Sometimes, you will find a stamp and not know where it's from. This identifier will help you.

There are many more countries, so if what you need is not on this list, check your library or online.



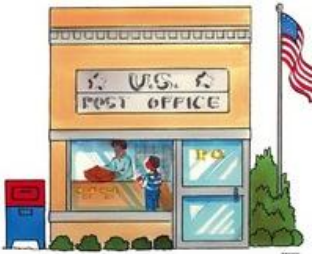
**BELGIE:** Belgium  
**BIJAWAR:** India  
**CCCP:** Russia  
**DDR:** German Democratic Republic  
**DEUTSCHES REICH:** Germany  
**EIRE:** Ireland  
**E.R. (with Queen Elizabeth's head):** Great Britain  
**ESPAÑA, ESPAÑOLA:** Spain  
**FILIPAS, FILIPINAS:** Philippines  
**HELVETIA:** Switzerland  
**ISLAND:** Iceland  
**ITALIA, ITALIANE:** Italy  
**MAGYAR:** Hungary  
**NEDERLAND:** Netherlands  
**NIPPON:** Japan  
**NOREG, NORGE:** Norway  
**ÖSTERREICH:** Austria  
**POLSKA:** Poland  
**ROMANA, ROMINA:** Romania  
**REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE:** France  
**S.A.K.:** Saudi Arabia  
**SUOMI:** Finland  
**U.A.R.:** United Arab Republic



# WHERE TO FIND STAMPS

## FOR FREE:

- From the mail that comes to your home-ask friends and relatives to save theirs, too
  - Find a local business that will save them for you
- Ask relatives if they have old letters in their attic or basement (check cover value before cutting)
  - From pen pals
  - Join a local stamp club
  - Become a member of the Young Stamp Collectors of America Club sponsored by the APS



## FOR PURCHASE:

- Check with dealers at stamp shows
  - Visit a stamp store
- Order online or through the mail from a stamp company (with your parents' permission)