

Stamp Collecting 101

Thanks to the advent of technology that has made almost any chore less time consuming. Now, more people can indulge more on various hobbies. One age-old past time that never loses its luster is stamp collecting.

Are you one to start a plethora of stamp collection, too? It's easy. Here are some tips for newbies to get started:

If you have none, buy some. Some assorted stamps from all over the world are available from stamp dealers or hobby shops. With just a few dollars, you can be an instant collector. If you are lucky enough to have access to stamp shows, you can even buy more than a handful of stamps in just a few bucks, as well. Just be in the know of stamp resources.

A good bit of advice in starting out a stamp collection is to become a general stamp collector at first. This is for you to be able to amass thousands of stamps that will eventually make you an informed decision of what kind of stamp collector you plan to be. When you get the hang of it, you will develop a certain inclination to a few kinds of stamps that allow you to single out the kind of stamp that you really would want to focus on.

Collect them like a pro. There's no safer way to collect stamps, safe in a sense of preserving them, than to collect them on paper. This means that if you collect stamps that are from mails, you have to cut the mail with the stamp. Stamps on paper are easier to handle since it prevents them from getting creased, torn or lost. One tip is to never try to pull the paper backing of a stamp as chances are it will get damaged. To be able to get the stamp in good condition, cut first the paper around the stamp with a sharp pair of scissors. Take care not to cut the perforations or edges of the stamp.

De-paper them. It will be advisable for a newbie stamp collector to do this process with an expert as it will require soaking stamps into water that might make the color of the stamps run if not done properly. Of course, dry the stamps after soaking and taking off the paper backing. Even the drying part necessitates utmost precaution, too. After drying, flatten the stamps with any clamping device, a book can be an improvised clamp but there are really some customized stamp drying books that can do this job quite well.

Sort them out. It will be helpful if you sort your stamps according to countries. Aside from identification purposes, it will also help in knowing what really makes you tick with your stamps. If stamps from a certain country enamor you, keep a mental note of that.

Store them well. A stamp belongs to either an album or a stockbook. They are for holding your stamps. One can easily mount stamps on an album.

The other perk of stamp collecting is getting stamps for free. Here's how?

Solicit from your kins. What's hard with announcing that you are now officially a stamp collector and that all of your relatives are requested to save all the stamps they get from mails? If you don't have too many relatives, befriend! Also, if you are still one of few who get snail mails from distant friends, you can simply ask them to use more special stamps, e.g., commemorative stamps, to vamp up your collection. Your grandma might even have mails back in the olden days which have stamps that were made available when you were not yet born.

Penpals can help. It's easy to look for pen pals. Go surf the Net and you will find a lot of people looking for others who prefer the old way of communication - snail mail. Vary your pen friends, much better if you can speak other lingo as it will widen your horizon and consequently your stamp collection.

Look for international business offices or government offices that receive foreign mails regularly. If you know people who handle the mails that go to those offices, it's easy to ask for some of the stamps. Just ask.

Rummage through paper waste baskets near P.O. boxes. Since people who get mails from P.O. boxes usually discard their mails' envelopes on the nearest trash cans, chances are you can find a few stamps from those supposed to be garbage cans. Talk about one's waste can be one's treasure!

Trade or swap. This is one way to widen the variety of your collection. Ask other stamp collectors to trade with you some of their duplicate stamps. Or if you know some more experienced collectors, ask if they can give you some of their duplicate stamps. Definitely, there will be some good-hearted folks who would be more than willing to give you a piece or two of their duplicate collections.

With that rundown of basic know-how's of stamp collecting and some "begging" techniques, becoming an expert collector would be a cinch for you in no time.