

St. Catharines Stamp Club Collecting Stamps for Beginners

What to collect:

Stamps can be purchased mint or used, or on cover. Generally, mint stamps are more expensive and are more difficult to store because care must be taken to keep the gum (on the back) undisturbed. Covers are bulky. Used stamps are less expensive (generally). There are about 300 different topics collected. This permits collectors to specialize in something that is interesting to them. Examples are: flowers, birds, animals, reptiles, dinosaurs, royalty, ships, aircraft, etc.

Resources:

Most libraries have books on collecting stamps. They also have catalogues that will permit the collector to identify the stamp as to country, date of issue, and suggested retail value. This is the price you might have to pay a dealer to obtain the stamp not how much you can expect to sell the stamp. Many stamps are sold by dealers out of 5 cent boxes. Trajan Publications issue Canadian Stamp News every 2 weeks. In there are listed all sorts of dealers who sell everything for individual stamps, to mixtures, to accessories and reference books. Canada Post issues "Collections" about 4 times a year and this shows the up-coming Canadian issues and these can be ordered from the Philatelic Centre in Antigonish (ask at your local Post Office for details). Every Stamp issuing country has a Philatelic service.

Clubs:

Stamp Clubs are a good way to meet other collectors and seek advice about your collecting interests. Each club offers something different but most have an exchange circuit. The club circuit is a way for club members to sell off duplicate stamps. Prices are often at 40% to 60% of catalogue and a good way of getting started on an area of interest. Many clubs have mini auctions regularly where small lots can be bought cheap.

Accessories needed:

Pages for storing stamps, tongs for handling stamps, magnifying glass (assists in identifying stamps), a storage binder, stamp hinges. Optional are: ultraviolet light (to identify phosphor bands and therefore varieties), a watermark detector, a stamp identifier (to identify country of origin), a colour chart, a perforation gauge (variety identification), a catalogue (allows one to place stamps in the binder according to catalogue number), a check list for listing your stamp wants, stamp drying book.

Storing stamps:

Mint stamps as well as used stamps can be put in special mounts (e.g. Hawid Mounts) where they are protected from damage. These are relatively expensive but are the best way to store mint stamps. Manila sheets can also be used. Used stamps can be mounted on any type of page using a stamp hinge. Recommended are the medium to heavy stock quadrille lined pages available from dealers. These are relatively inexpensive and sturdy. Albums can also be purchased by tend to be laid out by country and the annual supplements are expensive (in relation to quadrille pages).

Soaking Used Stamps:

Care must be taken in soaking and drying stamps off of envelopes. Anything on any type of coloured paper should be separated from white paper. Generally, stamps on white paper can be soaked in tepid to cold (quite cool) water. Be patient for it takes time to soak through the paper and dissolve the gum. Generally, leave the stamps alone until some are floating free. Never try and pull a stamp off the paper for you are likely to damage the stamp. Always soak hinges off stamps.

Dry the stamps face down in a drying book, on blotting paper, a clean scrap of carpet or newspaper being careful not to allow the stamp to stick. If it does stick, re-soak and try again because there was probably a little gum on the stamp.

Coloured Paper:

Choose a common stamp like the 45 cent flag. Put some water (2 inches or so) in the kitchen sink. Add a capful of Javex and mix in. Put in the stamp. Be patient. Once the stamp is off examine for discolouration on the back. If none you got the mix right. If some you are a little light with the Javex. If the stamp itself looks faded, you have too much Javex and need to cut it back. Experiment until you get it right before attempting the commemorative stamps. After soaking it is necessary to rinse the stamps thoroughly to remove all traces of the Javex. If you don't do this, over time the stamp will fade away. Red envelopes bleed colour the worst of all but green is bad as well (as is Kraft paper). Many airmail envelopes with the red and blue or red and green trim also bleed colour very easily.

Using Hinges:

Used stamps often have a hinge remained on them. Today's hinges always need to be soaked off. This will prevent damage to your stamp. To apply a hinge put moisture on the long piece of the hinge, place the hinge on the page where you want the stamp to be, moisten the short piece and then place the stamp on this piece with the hinge positioned high and in the center of the back of the stamp.

Stamp Condition:

Generally stamps should be in the best condition possible. No thins, missing perforations (or if issued imperforate, good margins) and no tears or folds, colour from the envelope, etc. However, some stamps are expensive and it is better to have one that is not perfect rather than none at all and replace the not so perfect one when affordable. If a stamp catalogues \$10 or more you probably should keep a copy even if it is slightly damaged.

Buying Stamps:

A dealer is a good place to begin. Ask if the dealer has items that meet your interest and pocket book. If not, you will often be advised where to try. Canadian Stamp News has advertisers ready to sell to meet all needs. Mixtures and auction lots are a good place to get a bunch of stamps cheap. Also ask at the local Stamp Club or the annual Stamp Bourse held in all major towns and cities.

Web site:

Canada Post has a web site (so will Postal Administrations for other countries) where you can learn about new issues, collecting for children, ordering stamps, links and so forth. Go to:

<http://www.canadapost.ca/personal/collecting/default-e.asp>

You will enjoy exploring the "hot links".

And there is Canada's Postal Museum:

<http://www.historymuseum.ca/event/the-canadian-stamp-collection/>

There are all sorts of other places to explore related to collecting on the internet.

Explore the internet to find auctions where you can buy stamps on-line. Try and isolate to Canadian Sources which will be less expensive to deal with. And a little extra browsing will find you some Chat Rooms where you can meet other collectors on-line.