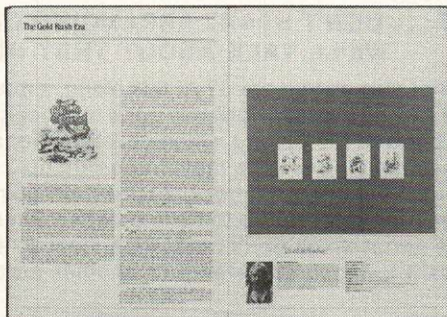
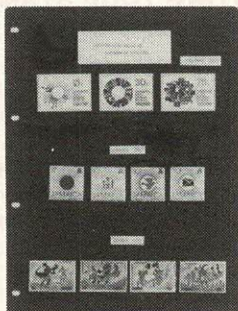


ASSCO INFO-SHEET NO. 1

HOW TO COLLECT STAMPS

You only need a few things to get started collecting stamps . . . a book to keep your best stamps in, a pair of tweezers to handle them with . . . some small boxes or old envelopes to keep your spares in . . . and you are in business! Later on there may be other things you require to make stamp collecting more interesting — such as a magnifying glass to look at the picture or design on the stamp more closely . . . a catalogue or books which tell you more about your stamps . . . and small devices which detect perforation and watermark types.



But first you need a book to keep your stamps in — a **STAMP ALBUM**. Now there are all sorts and shapes of albums one can buy, so here are a few tips . . .

If you are still at primary school, we suggest that your best album is what is called a stock book. This has card pages, with clear strips made into pockets on each page, which makes it easy to re-arrange your stamps easily and often as your collection grows. You don't need anything to stick in your stamps, and it makes things really easy: when you learn a story about a set or one of your stamps, you can write this on a small bit of paper about the size of a big stamp and slip this into the pocket beside or below your stamps.

The kind to be careful of is the stock book album printed in some Oriental countries (some of them have Chinese-type writing on the cover.) Because the gum used to put the clear strip on the page is not best quality, if not stored in a safe, cool spot, the gum **CAN** leak out and go over your best stamps. So take care . . . if you are thinking of buying a new album, I suggest you contact a stamp dealer's shop. They will give you good advice.

In secondary school, you may prefer to start off by using stamp hinges to mount your stamps. This is fine, but it takes a lot of patience as hinges are sticky things, and if you are not careful, the gum will make marks on the face of the stamps. We suggest you pick a loose leaf album, so that when you want to start a new page for the same country or subject, you can insert one in the correct order. There are several types of loose leaf albums on the market, but the main things to look for are that extra pages can be bought later easily, that the cover or binder is rigid and won't bend, and that the fastening doesn't tend to cut or damage the edge of the pages. Another system for protecting Mint stamps is called "mounts" — little devices of folded plastic. But we'll talk about these in another **INFO SHEET**.

You are never too young or too old to use tweezers. They are awkward to hold and use at first, but it's worth it to avoid getting moisture or dirt on your prized stamps. Try to pick a pair that don't have to be squeezed too hard. I wish I had used tweezers years ago when I started collecting!

A postage stamp is one of the smallest personal belongings anyone can have, and if you are not careful it may blow away, drop out of sight on the ground, get bent in your pocket, or disappear between the leaves of a book. So right from the start, get into the habit of keeping your stamps in a safe box or envelope until you mount them in your album. When you find you have more than one of the same stamp, keep these in another box or envelope marked "**SWAPS**". It's harder to lose a box or envelope than to lose a little stamp!

WAIT . . . DON'T START ARRANGING OR MOUNTING YOUR STAMPS YET. WE'LL TALK ABOUT THAT IN ANOTHER INFO-SHEET.

What else do you need? At this stage, a magnifying glass might do . . . it will help you to see just how much work has gone into designing the stamp picture, and you may see other parts of the picture which your eye alone can't see. And for those of you who are using stamp hinges . . . a most important tip . . . buy stamp hinges that cost a few cents more than the cheapest because there are so many in a packet of hinges, it hardly costs anything for each stamp to have a better hinge. I'm afraid there **ARE** some very cheap hinges about which don't work! **YES**, they do stick OK, but **NO** they won't peel off when you want to move that stamp to another part of your album.

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WHO CAN ISSUE POSTAGE STAMPS?

Usually only the official post office or government of a country is allowed by law to issue stamps. Sometimes you will notice what appears to be a rare stamp, but it is either printed "facsimile" or "reprint" on the back, or is printed on a special card or sheet. These can often be interesting to have, particularly if you can't afford the real thing . . . but their value has nothing to do with the original. Many stamp clubs and similar organisations issue this sort of souvenir at exhibitions they hold, but just don't get confused with the real stamps! What is worse still, because it is harder for collectors to find out about, some small countries which don't really have much postal traffic **PRINT** a postmark onto their stamps to sell just for collectors' albums.

Usually "fine used" means a stamp with a very small section of postmark, with most of the design left clear. And it usually means that the stamp is itself in good condition. But in the early days of Afghanistan, post office workers cancelled stamps by tearing a piece of the stamp with their **TEETH** to prevent re-use! So a tattered stamp from that country could be "fine used". When you think about it, the invention of postmarkers must have been really welcomed by those poor Afghan postal workers!

A **POSTAGE STAMP** is printed proof that the cost of carrying the message or parcel has been paid for by the sender. Postage stamps can be adhesive (that is, with gum on the back) or pre-printed onto an envelope or similar. The "stamp" can be automatically applied as a "meter frank" in a busy office, or rubber stamped to denote posting a lot of letters at once by special arrangement with the post office, or even, in some Australian post offices, by a cash register ticket torn off a roll and stuck onto the item.

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