

ASSCO INFO-SHEET NO. 4

PERFORATIONS ON STAMPS . . .

Perforations — you know, the holes between stamps which make it easy to separate stamps from a sheet to use on a letter. Why are they important to collectors? For two reasons:—

Firstly, if some of the perforations are damaged, then we have a stamp which is not neat enough to put in our collections, and we should watch out for a better specimen.

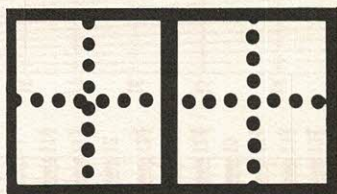
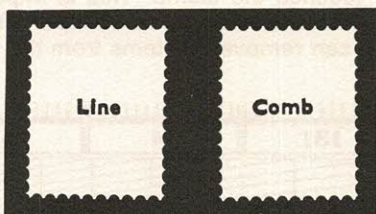
Secondly, because when making the stamps, if the printer uses two different machines to perforate — or make the holes — at different stages, we then would have the same stamp available in two different kinds, each with a different number of holes.

This is fairly important nowadays, because even with modern printing equipment, sometimes there is a good reason to change perforating machines half way through (perhaps a break down, or two different printers at work) and here in Australia, this has happened very recently, making some kinds of the one stamp more valuable than others.

There are two main types of machines used to do this job — line perforators and comb perforators. With the first sort, lines are put on one way, and then the sheets of stamps have to be turned sideways for the cross lines to be put in. The other kind — a comb perforator, means that holes going **BOTH** ways are punched at the same time. You will understand this better by looking at the pictures below. You can see how you can tell which type of machine has been used by how the holes look at the **CORNERS** of a stamp.

Perforations are measured by a perforation gauge — see picture showing how to do it. If you are interested in trying for yourself, you can buy a gauge for as little as about 75 cents.

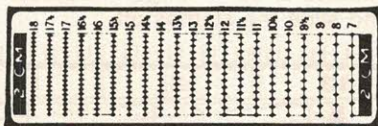
In the early days of most countries, the very first stamps had no holes (perforations) and were separated by scissors. More modern stamps without perforations are sometimes very valuable because it was accidental that the printer missed doing the perforating.



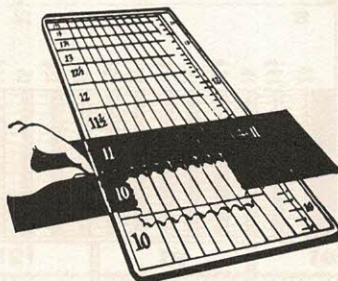
Corner intersections—line and comb



Diagram of a single perforating comb



Above—the Ivorine Perforation Gauge (with dots). Below—the transparent Instanta Perforation Gauge (with lines)



SOAKING OFF STAMPS

Like so many things, there is a right way and a wrong way of soaking stamps off paper for your collection. If you use the **WRONG** way, I can guarantee that you will damage stamps — perhaps even lose the value of important ones . . . and have many disappointments.

So, before having a 'soaking' session, you need to make some preparations . . .

1. You will need a spot where spilt drops of water won't cause damage. Talk to Mum or Dad about this!
2. You need two containers — plastic ice cream bowls are just fine. You will also need some blotting paper, or something else which soaks up extra water. (The ASSCO MAN uses plain white paper towels, which most Mums have in the kitchen.)
3. Sort out the stamps which you are going to soak. Put aside any which are on pieces of blue- or red-lined envelopes. Put aside also any stamps on that yellow-brown heavy enveloped type of paper (called manilla). And any stamps more than about 50 years old need care, because with some that age, from some countries, the ink may run.
4. The stamps left should be placed in one of the bowls with luke warm water, and left to soak for about 20 minutes. At the end of that time, place the bowl within the sink, and let cold water run over them. This is to get rid of all the glue that will have melted. Naturally take steps to make sure that you don't flush all your stamps down the drain this way!
5. Never attempt to peel stamps off the backing paper. Let them float off. You may even need to allow more time. I **REPEAT**, don't try to hurry the stamps.
6. As the stamps float off, place them in the other bowl, filled this time with **COLD** water, and stir, which will give them a last wash to get rid of the glue. Then place them **FACE DOWN** on the blotting paper or towelling you are using.
7. Remember those stamps we put aside at step 3 above? These need special treatment. First, carefully cut excess paper off, then float them face up in a bowl of cold water. Yes, **FLOAT!** If you carefully place them in the bowl you will find that they will sit above the water so that no water touches the stamp. This is important because blue-lined paper, for instance, can mean blue coloured stamps! After 10 minutes or so — longer if necessary — you can remove the items from the water and slide the stamps off.

