

SOAKING STAMPS OFF PAPER ... THE RIGHT WAY

Why put stamps in albums?

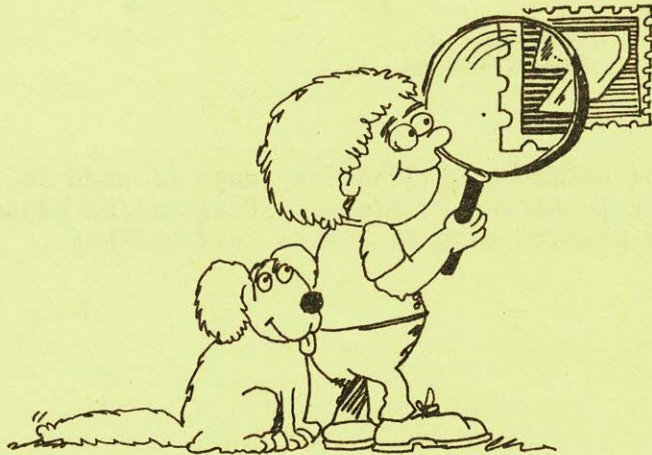
Now that's a good question, stamps are kept in albums for three reasons:-

- to keep them safe and clean
- so you can see what stamps you have
- because it's fun.

There are so many different stamps in the world, that if you tried to collect them all you would soon get confused, so why not collect a country. Australia would be the easiest

Then of course you could collect your favourite subject and that could be sport, ships, birds, flowers, bridges, fish, maps, just about every subject you have ever heard of has been shown on stamps.

Swapping is part of the fun also one of the cheapest ways of getting stamps you want.



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.
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 envelope 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.
5. Never attempt to peel stamps off the backing paper. Let them float off. You may even need to allow more time.
6. As the stamps float off, place them in the other bowl filled this time with COLD water, which will give them a last wash to get rid of glue. Then place them FACE DOWN on the blotting paper or towelling you are using to dry overnight.
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!

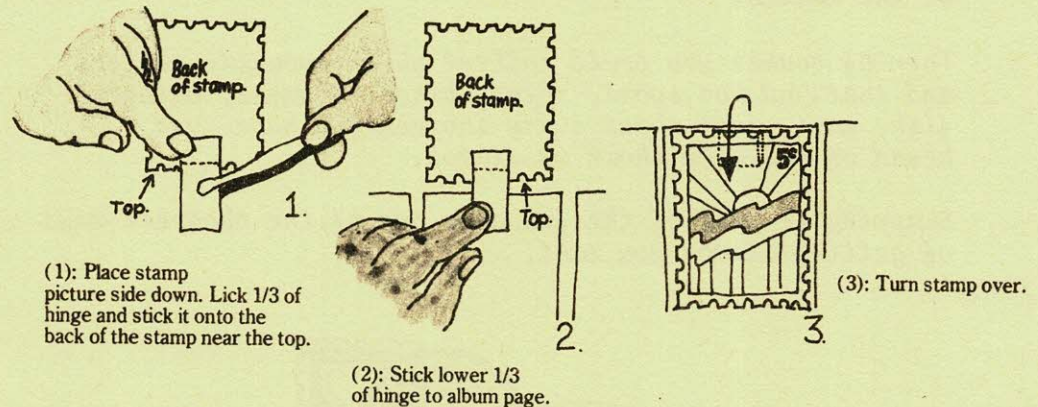


HERE ARE A FEW TIPS -

Always try to handle your stamps with a pair of tweezers, as a dirty finger mark can make a precious stamp worth much less.

A magnifying glass will enable you to see the fine details in your stamps. Try to get one that fits comfortably into your hand. If it is too heavy you will get tired of holding it.

Never stick a stamp in an album like you stick one on a letter. Use stamp hinges which are special pieces of paper, gummed on one side, which hold the stamps in without ruining them. This is how they work -



A special tool called a perforation gauge is used to measure the perforations on stamps. Perforation gauges are sold with printed easy to follow instructions.