



Stamp Collecting

Scouts BSA · Hobbies

Name

Started

Completed

Stamp Collecting lets you explore history, art, and the world through tiny pieces of paper. You will learn how to handle and organize stamps and build a collection you can show off. It's a hobby that can last a lifetime.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/stamp-collecting/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

1 What stamps teach

Tips for this section: Look at a few stamps and talk about the people, places, or events they show.

Example for this section: Choose three stamps and tell the story behind each: who or what it honors, why that mattered, and what it says about the country that printed it. Add a quick fact about postal history, like how the first adhesive stamp was issued in Britain in 1840.

- ☐ **1a** Discuss how collecting stamps helps you learn about people, places, institutions, history, and geography

- ☐ **1b** Briefly describe the history, growth, and development of the U.S. postal system and how it differs from other countries' postal systems

- ☐ **2** Define topical stamp collecting, then name and describe three other kinds of stamp collections

Tip: Pick a topic you love, like animals or space, and look for stamps that match it.

Example: Explain topical collecting with your own idea, like stamps showing birds. Then define three other kinds, such as collecting by country, collecting first-day covers, and collecting plate blocks or other stamps with special markings.

3 Show examples of stamp types and markings

Tips for this section: Gather a few different kinds of stamps and markings from old mail, and ask your counselor what each is.

- ☐ **3a** Perforated and imperforate stamps

- ☐ **3b** Mint and used stamps

- ☐ **3c** Sheet, booklet, and coil stamps

- ☐ **3d** Numbers on a plate block, booklet, or coil, or marginal markings

- ☐ **3e** Overprint and surcharge

- ☐ **3f** Metered mail

- ☐ **3g** Definitive, commemorative, semipostal, and airmail stamps

- ☐ **3h** Cancellation and postmark

- ☐ **3i** First day cover

- ☐ **3j** Postal stationery: aerogramme, stamped envelope, and postal card

4 Catalogs and condition

Tips for this section: Look up a few stamps in a catalog at the library and compare how their condition affects value.

Example for this section: Look up several of your stamps in a stamp catalog at the library or with your counselor. Compare a stamp with clean edges and centered design to one with a tear or heavy cancellation, and explain why condition changes value.

- ☐ **4a** Show how to use ONE standard stamp catalog to look up several different issues, and explain why catalog value can differ from what you'd pay

- ☐ **4b** Explain what condition means for a stamp and show examples of the factors that affect a stamp's value

5 Use stamp collector's tools: Choose 3 of 7

Tips for this section: Practice using tongs, a magnifier, and other tools on spare stamps.

- ☐ **5a** Stamp tongs

- ☐ **5b** Water and tray

- ☐ **5c** Magnifiers

- ☐ **5d** Hinges and stamp mounts

- ☐ **5e** Perforation gauge

- ☐ **5f** Glassine envelopes and cover sleeves

- ☐ **5g** Watermark fluid

6 Albums and preservation

Tips for this section: Mount a few stamps carefully and keep your album in a cool, dry place.

Example for this section: Soak a used stamp off its envelope in water, dry it face down, then mount it with a hinge or a clear mount. Explain why you keep the album away from heat, sunlight, and humidity.

- ☐ **6a** Show your stamp album and demonstrate mounting stamps both with and without hinges, with at least ONE page holding several stamps

- ☐ **6b** Discuss at least THREE ways to keep stamps, covers, and albums in top condition

7 Stamp activities: Choose 2 of 6

Tips for this section: Try designing your own stamp or visiting a post office or stamp show.

Example for this section: Two activities could be designing a stamp for your town or troop with a drawing and a value, and visiting a stamp show, stamp club, or post office with an experienced collector, then telling your counselor what you saw and learned.

- ☐ **7a** Design a stamp, cancellation, or cachet

- ☐ **7b** With an experienced collector, visit a stamp show, stamp club, or post office, and explain what you saw and learned

- ☐ **7c** Read an interesting article in a stamp magazine, newspaper, book, or website (with a parent's or guardian's OK) and write a review of it

- ☐ **7d** Research and report on a well-known stamp personality or the story behind a specific stamp

- ☐ **7e** Describe how a stamp is produced, including printing methods, paper types, perforation styles, and gumming

- ☐ **7f** Make a two- to three-page stamp display that uses clippings, drawings, and creativity to tell a story linking the stamps to history, geography, or a topic you like

8 Mount and show a collection in an album (bought or homemade): Choose 1 of 5

Tips for this section: Arrange your stamps by theme in your album and practice explaining your collection.

- ☐ **8a** At least 250 different stamps from 15 or more countries

- ☐ **8b** A stamp from each of 50 countries, mounted on maps that show where each country is

- ☐ **8c** At least 100 different stamps from a single country or from several closely related countries

- ☐ **8d** 75 or more different stamps on one topic, such as Scouting, birds, space, or sports (stamps may come from different countries)

- ☐ **8e** Postal items found in your mail over 30 days of watching it, including at least five different types from requirement 3