

Stamp Collecting Merit Badge Workshop

Created to provide information and activities to assist counselors offer a workshop for Boy Scouts to earn their badge and allow Boy Scouts to prepare work to show a counselor as he works to meet all the requirements. We recommend counselors print the badge requirements (<http://scouting.org/sitecore/content/Home/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges/mb-STAM.aspx>) and then use this corresponding workshop to help you work through the requirements using a fun, interactive approach.

****ALL HIGHLIGHTED items have a corresponding attachment in .pdf format that you can print and use.**

Pre-Visit Activities - Scout Troop

Continents - Requirement **1a** ([1a_Preview_continents.pdf](#))

- a) Scouts receive a small pack of stamps and as a troop they work together to identify information about stamps. Each boy should complete the informational sheet and bring it to the program. The sheet contains questions that are easy to answer by examining the stamps.

Design a stamp - Requirement **7a** ([7a_Preview_Design_Stamp.pdf](#))

- a) Scouts design a stamp for a country other than the U.S. The correct currency must be shown and the design must highlight some aspect of the history, culture, or geography of that country. This should also be brought to the program, where they will be asked to explain the design and share some information about the country.

Program

Introduction - 10 minutes

- a) Welcome the group, collect any remaining program fees.
- b) Have the group store their lunches, etc.
- c) Introductions of the program leader and staff/volunteers.
- d) Introductions of the scouts and leaders.

1) How you can better understand people, etc? - Requirement **1a** - 20 minutes

- a) The boys will share information they learned from the Pre-visit activity. Did they find a country they had not heard of in their packet? Did they learn about a new historic event? Did they have a favorite stamp? If so, why?

b) Postal History – Requirement **1b** - 20 minutes

Boys are provided a U.S. Postal History Timeline ([1b_US Postal History Timeline.pdf](#)). The leader will involve the boys by providing the information in a question and answer form rather than straight lecture. What invention put Pony Express out of business? What U.S. system provided mail delivery to the country? Go to <http://www.usps.com/postalhistory/welcome.htm> to follow the development of the U.S. postal system. Compare the U.S. postal system to that of another country.

- 2) Define topical stamp collecting – Requirement **2** – 15 minutes
 - a) Describe the different ways to collect stamps, i.e., worldwide, by country, topical, mint, used, etc. ([2a_Ways to collect.pdf](#))
 - b) Using the worksheet ([2b_Worksheet.pdf](#)), the boys will hinge stamps to start a topical collection.

- 3) Stamp Identification - Requirement **3a-j** - 30 minutes
 - a) In the scout notebooks will be a packet containing each type of philatelic material listed in requirements 3a-j. The program leader will review each kind of material to ensure the boys can recognize it and how it is different from the other materials.
 - b) A scavenger hunt is used to ensure the boys are finding the right material ([3b_Scavenger hunt.pdf](#)). What country issued the imperf stamp? What country issued the overprint? How much was the surcharge? If this is not possible, the program leader will engage the boys by providing the information in a question and answer form. What is the name of the stamp without perforations? What is the name of the cover with a special design on it? What kind of stamp has new numbers printed over the old ones?

- 4) Catalogue exercise - Requirement **4a** - 20 minutes
 - a) Show the boys a catalogue, i.e., Scott, Gibbons, etc. Show them how to read a catalogue ([4a_Read a Catalogue.pdf](#)). Countries are listed alphabetically, then the stamps go from oldest to most recent. Is the date printed on every stamp? Is it commemorating an event that might help them find the date the stamp was issued? Explain that not every stamp has a picture.
 - b) Explain the term condition. Show the factors that affect prices ([4b_Factors that Affect Prices.pdf](#)) and condition of stamps ([4b_Condition of stamps.pdf](#)) to the group. Show the boys two stamps of the same catalogue number. One should be in fine or very fine condition, the other should be off-center and/or damaged. Have the boys look them both over front and back and then vote as a group which stamp is worth more. Explain that a well-centered stamp is the ideal and that the condition of a stamp is also important. It should be free of tears and thin spots. If it is a mint stamp, its original gum should be intact. If possible, provide some real examples of rare stamps that have lost their value because they were not cared for properly. Explain other factors that influence the value of a stamp: scarcity; supply and demand; inverts. While many boys are very interested in especially rare/valuable stamps, keep the terms simple. If possible, show the boys one stamp that is somewhat rare. Explain that age alone is not a factor. For example, the Penny Black is a fairly common stamp, and therefore not one of the most valuable. Divide the boys into teams based on the size of the group. Using an activity sheet ([4b_Activity Sheet.pdf](#)) and catalogues, have the boys identify the Scott Catalogue number for several stamps.

- 5) Stamp Collecting Tools - Requirement **5 a-g, 6 a-b** - 30 minutes ([5_Stamp Collecting Tools.pdf](#))
 - a) Hand each boy a pair of tongs. Explain that this is one of the least expensive tools that will help keep their stamps in good condition. Ask why tongs should

- be used instead of hands: keeps oils and stains off the stamps; prevents ripping or creasing. Explain that when they mount their own collections they should use tongs, not tweezers from home. Allow the boys to use their tongs.
- b) Each boy should select a stamp on paper from the bag of stamps and put it in a bowl of water to soak [\(5b_Soak.pdf\)](#). Explain that they should not soak stamps on bright colored paper in the same batch as other stamps, because the ink of the paper will run. Allow them to remove their stamp when it has soaked free.
 - c) Show the boys a magnifier. Show them a stamp that has small printing on it. Explain that sometimes differences in a valuable stamp and a common stamp can only be seen with a magnifier. Allow them to use a magnifier to look at a stamp.
 - d) Show the boys a page of hinged stamps and a page of mounted stamps [\(5d_Hinged.pdf\)](#). Explain how each works. Show them a sleeve for mounts and a package of hinges. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of both: hinges are inexpensive but hard to work with and can damage the original gum; mounts are excellent for preservation but are more expensive. Have hinges and mounts available for the boys to use.
 - e) Show the boys a perforation gauge and explain what it is used for. Have a few available if they want to use them but do not make each of the use the gauge. (This activity may cause the boys to lose interest before they start to mount their own collections.)
 - f) Show the group glassine envelopes and cover sleeves. Give the boys some glassines in which to store their stamps. If possible, give each boy a cover in a sleeve for their collection.
 - g) Show the boys watermark fluid. Show them a stamp with a watermark before it is put into the fluid. Show them the watermark that is displayed once the stamp is put in the fluid.
- 6) Stamp Storage – Requirement **6a** – 10 minutes
- a) Discuss stamp storage [\(6a_Storage.pdf\)](#). Explain that the kitchen, laundry room, bathroom, attic, or basement may contain too much moisture to be good places to store their collections. Show several different albums containing stamps. Albums should be stored like a library book, to prevent pressure on the stamps.
 - b) Explain ways of preserving stamps [\(6b_Preservation.pdf\)](#), such as keeping stamps in albums, keeping them away from moisture, don't mount them using scotch tape or paper clips, etc.
- 7) Design a Stamp – Requirement **7a** – 15 minutes
[\(7a_Preview_Design_Stamp.pdf\)](#)
- a) Have the boys show the stamps they designed as a prework activity. Allow them to explain the country, image, and denomination they chose.
 - b) Visit a Stamp Show with an experienced collector – Requirement **7b** – 20 minutes
Give the boys a guided tour of the Stamp Show floor. Explain dealers and exhibits. Allow them time to look at some of the exhibits. If possible, arrange for a dealer to take a few moments to talk to the group.

- 8) Finishing their collection. Requirement **8** - One hour or more
The boys should complete one of the following:
- a) a collection of 250 or more different stamps from at least 15 countries.
 - b) a collection of a stamp from each of 50 different countries, mounted on maps to show the location of each.
 - c) a collection of 100 or more different stamps from either one country or a group of closely related countries.
 - d) a collection of 75 or more different stamps on a single topic.
 - e) a collection of postal items discovered in your mail over a period of 30 days.
Must include at least 5 different philatelic items listed in requirement 3.
- 9) As each boy finishes, have them bring their collection (either mounted or on stock pages) to a Merit Badge Counselor. Review all the materials. If all requirements have been adequately met, sign his card and give it to him or the scout leader. Retain the portion of the card labeled "counselors' record" and keep filed for future reference. If a boy ever loses his blue card, one may be recreated from this record. This will also help track the number of boys who receive their badge.