

Mounting Items In A Stamp Album

By Richard Pederson

The three principal methods employed to mount items in a stamp album are stamp hinges, stamp mounts, and mounting corners. The picture at the right shows two of the mounting methods, stamp mounts and stamp hinges. Which of these methods you use depends upon personal preference, the amount of disposable income available for purchases of supplies, and the types of items to be mounted. Following, I will discuss each of these approaches including any benefits and/or limitations associated with the approach.



First, I will discuss the use of stamp hinges to mount your philatelic items. Stamp hinges are small rectangular pieces of glassine paper with a water-activated adhesive on one side. To mount a stamp using a hinge, you first evenly fold the top third of the hinge over so that the gummed side remains up. You then then lightly moisten (by licking or a sponge) the smaller portion of the gummed side and gently position it slightly below the top of the stamp in the center of the rear of the stamp. You then lightly moisten the bottom (i.e., larger) portion of the gummed side of the hinge and gently position the bottom portion of the hinge on the album page so that the stamp, when laid flat, will rest at the center of the album space in which it is being mounted. DO NOT moisten the entire bottom portion of the hinge as that will make it difficult to lift the stamp once it is mounted and could increase the risk of adhering a gummed or partially gummed stamp to the album page in a manner that will make it difficult to remove the stamp without damaging it or the album page. Stamp hinges are the least expensive way of mounting your stamps in an album and are the preferred way of mounting used stamps. Although stamp hinges can be used to mount mint stamps, keep in mind that once the hinge is attached, the stamp is no longer considered a mint (i.e., as issued) stamp, which is likely to have a bearing on the stamp's resale value. For inexpensive stamps that are unlikely to have any significant appreciation in value, hinges may still be the choice of some collectors rather than purchasing expensive mounts that could cost more than the stamp.

Next, I will discuss stamp mounts. The following figure shows examples of several packages of popular brands of stamp mounts with pre-cut mounts used for the standard sizes of United States regular issues and commemoratives. There are many types of



mounts available for displaying philatelic items, but all of these types have some common characteristics. They are made from a special archival quality plastic, they either entirely or partially enclose the stamp in the mounting material, they come in a vast range of sizes, they are available with either clear or black backing, and they usually have water activated adhesive that allows attachment to the album page. Mounts provide an attractive way of displaying and protecting your stamps, but do have a couple of disadvantages: they are relatively expensive, especially for the display of low cost material; and they

add bulk to your stamp album which can prevent your pages from lying flat, increases the weight of the pages, and will result in your needing additional binders to hold your collection. Also, if mounts are not used properly, stamps can be damaged inserting them or removing them from the mounts. Excess application of moisture to the gummed side of the mount can also result in damage to the gum on mint stamps. Rules to follow when using mounts are: (1) make sure the mount is the proper size as a mount that is too small does not give the stamp room to breathe and can result in damaged/bent perforation teeth or creases in the stamps; (2) measure and cut the mount prior to inserting the stamp to avoid accidentally cutting the stamp; (3) limit the amount of moisture applied to the water activated adhesive on the back of the mount to avoid moisture seeping around the edge of the mount where it could come in contact with the stamp that is inserted; and (4) use stamp tongs to insert the stamp in the mount to avoid getting oils or other contaminants transferred from your skin to the stamp. You can avoid some problems (e.g., proper sizing) associated with mounts by buying mounts that are pre-cut and sized to your stamp or by using a hingeless stamp album that already has properly sized mounts attached to the album pages. One thing to consider when looking at hingeless albums is how well they accommodate stamps that are not in the standard format. For example, does the hingeless album allow enough space to mount a plate number or other margin single in the album space allotted for each stamp. Although I have listed several issues to consider when using stamp mounts, they are still the best way to protect your stamps when mounted in a stamp album.

The final way to mount philatelic items in a stamp album is the use of mounting corners. These are small pieces of archival quality paper or plastic that have a triangular shaped pocket into which the corner of a philatelic item (e.g., a cover or collateral item) can be inserted. The bottom side of the corner contains adhesive (water activated or self-adhesive) to hold the mounting corner in place on the page. A separate mounting corner is used for each corner of the philatelic item to hold it in place. Normally, mounting corners should only be used for covers and collateral material. Although it is possible to use them for stamps, they cost more and are more difficult to use than hinges and they do not provide the protective features of stamp mounts.