

# Collecting History



photo by Chris Gladis

**Mini Fact:**  
The U.S. Mint offers many different types of coins for sale.

When is a quarter worth more than 25 cents? Or a penny more than 1 cent? For coin collectors, a single coin can be worth many times its original value. And as time goes by, some coins become much more valuable.

Whether exploring the history of a nation's currency, hunting for a particular coin or learning about the value of money, coin collecting has much to offer enthusiasts (en-THOO-see-uhsts) of all ages. (An enthusiast is someone who is very interested in a certain subject, sport or hobby.)

## American coins

In the United States, coin money is **minted**, or made, by the U.S. Mint, which has been a part of the federal government since 1792. Before that, each state made its own coins, and buying things from other states could get confusing.

The U.S. Mint makes millions of coins each year. The most common coins are those we use every day, including the penny, nickel, dime and quarter. Half-dollars and dollar coins are also made in large numbers. These are said to be in **circulation** — they are used by people to buy things.



image courtesy U.S. Mint

The Morgan dollar is a large silver coin that was minted between 1878 and 1921. The coins are named for the designer, George Morgan.

Most U.S. coins are made in either Denver or Philadelphia. On a coin, a “D” or “P” shows where it was minted. Most proof coins (those made for collectors) and some older coins have an “S,” which shows that they were minted in San Francisco.

## Valuing coins

Several factors determine the value of a coin:

- **Condition.** When you carry coins in your pocket or wallet, they constantly knock into each other. This can scratch and dent them.

That's why many collectors look for “uncirculated” coins, which are more likely to be in good condition.

Valuable coins may be **graded** by numismatic experts, who look for flaws.

**Numismatics (new-miss-MAT-icks) means the collecting of coins or paper money. A collector is called a numismatist (new-MISS-ma-tist).**

- **Mintage.** A coin's mintage means the total number produced. For example, more than 1.7 billion nickels were minted in Denver in 1964. But in 1950, only 2.6 million nickels were made in Denver. Generally, the lower the number of coins made, the more valuable the coin. Coins with low mintages are often called “rare.”

- **Metal.** Before 1964, many coins contained silver or gold, which are called precious metals. Today, silver and gold are worth a lot of money. So even a coin in poor condition will still have the value of its metal content.



photo by Dan Cipolla

Parents or grandparents may have a collection they can share with you to get you started.

## Become a collector!

Starting your own coin collection is as easy as looking through spare change. You may find a variety of coins from several different years.

As with any hobby, you'll need a few supplies as you get started:

1. A place to keep your coins. Coin folders and holders are designed to keep your coins safe from damage. Many folders also include information about the history, art and mintages of specific coins.
2. A magnifying glass. Lettering, designs and mint marks on coins can be tiny. A magnifying glass makes them much easier to read.
3. Gloves or a cloth. The natural oils or dirt on your hands can leave smudges and fingerprints on the surface of a coin. Use a clean cloth or wear cotton gloves to handle your coins.

## Resources

**On the Web:**

- [money.org/young-numismatists](http://money.org/young-numismatists)

**At the library:**

- “Lots and Lots of Coins” by Margarette S. Reid




## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of coin collecting are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

CIRCULATION, COINS, COLLECT, CONDITION, CURRENCY, DIME, DOLLAR, ENTHUSIAST, GLOVES, GRADED, HOBBY, METAL, MINTAGE, MORGAN, NICKEL, NUMISMATICS, PENNY, QUARTER, WORTH.

G G R A D E D N A G R O M R F  
S N I O C O N D I T I O N M D  
N U M I S M A T I C S V U V T  
E L A T E M S E V O L G E F L  
G P E N N Y C N E R R U C E E  
A Y T S A I S U H T N E K S M  
T B O F J H C O L L E C T G I  
N B G Q U A R T E R I G A N D  
I O N R A L L O D N H T R O W  
M H L T N O I T A L U C R I C




## Cook's Corner

### Mango-Honey Sherbet With Lime

**You'll need:**

- 2 cups chopped mango
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 3 tablespoons honey

- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1/2 teaspoon lime zest



**What to do:**

1. In a food processor or blender, combine all ingredients. Puree until smooth.
2. Transfer mixture to a bowl or airtight container and freeze until firm, about 1 hour. Serves 4.

Adapted from “The Robin Takes 5 Cookbook for Busy Families” with permission from Andrews McMeel Publishing ([andrewsmcmeel.com](http://andrewsmcmeel.com)).

\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

1. Coins or bills used to buy things (5-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □

2. Money returned when payment is more than the amount due (6-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □

3. A U.S. coin with a value of 25 cents (7-letter noun)

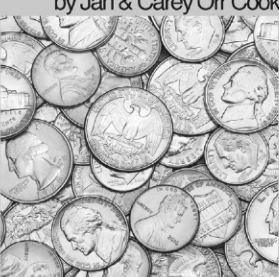
□ □ □ □ □ □ □

4. Tally one by one to find a total (5-letter verb)

□ □ □ □ □

1. Dante gave Sam \_\_\_\_\_ to buy an apple for his lunch.  
2. Al got \_\_\_\_\_ for a \$1 bill — a dime and a nickel.  
3. Connie used a \_\_\_\_\_ to buy a book at a garage sale.  
4. Amy likes to \_\_\_\_\_ the coins her mom keeps in a jar.

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Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: Money, Change, Quarter, Count.

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## Mini Jokes



**Penelope:** What is brown and has a head and a tail, but no legs?

**Peter:** A penny!

## Eco Note



Climate change is causing East Africa's two endangered mountain gorilla populations to have to drink more frequently. The rainforest dwellers typically get most of their hydration from the food they eat. But the warmer weather in recent years has caused them to become more reliant on water from streams, puddles and even swamps. “In these conditions, drinking water likely helps to maintain a healthy body temperature range,” said Edward Wright of the Max Planck Institute.

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**For later:**  
Look in your newspaper for articles about types of currency.

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