

The Coin Doc's Guide to U.S. Small Coinage

Member/Authorized Dealer of:



The Gold Shield Standard for Collectors



www.coinsite.com

© 2015 The Coin Site, a unit of Roko Design Group, Inc.

All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Disclaimer

All the material contained in this book is provided for educational and informational purposes only. No responsibility can be taken for any results or outcomes resulting from the use of this material.

While every attempt has been made to provide information that is both accurate and effective, coinsite.com does not assume any responsibility for the accuracy or use/misuse of this information.

Contents

Introduction	4
What Makes A Coin Valuable?	4
Mint Marks	5
What's It Worth?	5
Grading	6
A Bit About Cents	6
A Bit About Nickels	8
A Bit About Dimes	9
A Bit About Quarters	10
A Bit About Half Dollars	11
A Bit About Dollars	12
Conclusion	14



www.coinsite.com

Introduction

Coin collecting is an exciting trip through history. Coins are rarely tossed away or destroyed and many survive for centuries. Even ancient coins are relatively plentiful today as they have been secreted away by owners to save them from foreign invaders or thieves or when they went off to war. Many never returned to reclaim their stash.



1883 "Racketeer" Nickel

Generally, old coins are worn and they usually aren't worth very much money. Of course, there are exceptions, but generally it is coins in new condition, preserved since the time they were issued, that collectors find the most desirable. This guide is only a taste of what is available, but there is so much more to explore. If you want details on any of the coins mentioned in this guide, visit our website [here](#).

What Makes A Coin Valuable?

Coin value is based on rarity, grade and collector demand. Absolute rarity is related to the number of pieces minted of a particular issue and how many of those survive today.



1893
O-Morgan Dollar

When comparing coins, a coin from a more popular series will bring more than an unpopular series. A coin's grade is based upon an evaluation of its present condition in relation to when the coin was minted.

Mint Marks

Mint marks are letters that identify where a coin was made. The letter can appear anywhere in the design, but it is usually placed near the date or in an area near the edge of the coin. The combination of the date and the mint mark, or lack of one, can have great importance to a coin's value.



Mint Mark
U.S. Morgan Dollar - Reverse

For example, the 1882 Double Eagle Philadelphia issue without a mint mark is worth almost \$10,000 in average condition, but the “S” mint San Francisco issue is worth little more than its gold value, about \$1100, in average grade.

What's It Worth?

Date, mint mark, mintages and popularity are readily found with research. Coin catalogs like [A Guidebook of United States Coins](#) by R. S. Yeoman list coins by series, grade and price. Other good reference books are the [Standard Catalog of World Coins: 19th Century Edition 1801-1900](#) and the [Standard Catalog of World Coins: 1901-2000](#).

You can also check our website [here](#).

These sources will give you a rough idea about value, but it takes either an experienced numismatist (coin dealer) or a third-party coin grading services to evaluate the grade of a coin properly.

Grading

Grading is the method used to describe the present condition of a coin compared to its condition at the moment of manufacture. It is a common language used to describe coins to others. As coins get marks and blemishes over time, it is important to clarify the severity of the damage. Numismatists and third-party grading services in the U.S. use the 70 point Sheldon Scale.

There are four leading coin grading services in the U.S. which authenticate, grade and encapsulate coins in tamper-proof hard plastic holders called “slabs”. There are subtle differences in the standards of each, but it is strongly recommended you submit higher value and rare date coins for evaluation and certification. There is no substitute for knowledge and experience.

A Bit About Cents

One-cent coins, called pennies, have been minted since 1793, and took their present small size in 1857. There have been only three basic design types of small cents. The Flying Eagle cent was the first small cent. It has an eagle in flight on the dated side and a wreath of corn, wheat, cotton and tobacco on the reverse. Flying Eagle cents in average condition are generally worth \$15 to \$20, except the very rare 1856 that is worth about \$4,500.



Flying Eagle



Indian Head

In 1859 the cent was redesigned to portray an Indian princess. The rarest dates in the Indian Head cent series, are the 1877, worth about \$600, the 1908-S worth \$45 and the 1909-S valued at \$400.

This design continued until the year 1909 when the cent was changed again to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth.

From 1909 to the present, the Lincoln cent has had only two major design changes: in 1959, when the Lincoln Memorial reverse replaced the "wheat" design, and 2010, when a shield appeared on the reverse. Most "wheat" pennies are of common value, but the 1909-S with the initials VDB on the reverse is the most famous and is worth about \$550. Other major dates are the 1914-D, worth \$150 and the 1922 without mint mark, worth \$400.



Lincoln

Fun fact: In the 1800s, the U.S. also minted two-cent and three-cent coins. Find out more here at www.coinsite.com

A Bit About Nickels

Five cent pieces made of nickel were first minted in 1866. The first nickel had the shield of the United States with the date below the shield and the words “In God We Trust” above it. The reverse has the number “5” in the center with either stars and rays surrounding it or stars alone. Shield nickels are worth about \$12 in average condition.



Shield

In 1883 the shield nickel was replaced by a nickel with a representation of Liberty on the dated side and a Roman numeral “5” on the reverse. The Liberty Nickel series contains the rarest 1913 nickel (5 only).



Liberty



Indian Head or
Buffalo Nickel

The Olsen specimen, famously known for its appearance in a 1973 episode of *Hawaii Five-O*, sold at public auction for \$3,737,500 in January of 2010.

In 1913 the Indian Head, or Buffalo Nickel, was introduced. This coin shows a portrait of an Indian facing to the right with the date below and a buffalo on the reverse. The most rare of these are the 1918 over 17-D and the 1937-D three-legged Buffalo. The overdate is worth about \$800 while the “three leg” is valued at a minimum of \$400.

The Jefferson nickel has been made since 1938. These are popular with new collectors, but there are no real rarities in the series. However several dates bring a premium such as the 1939-D at \$3 and the 1950-D at \$5. In 2006, the coin was redesigned to show Jefferson as forward facing, a first in U.S. coinage.



Jefferson

A Bit About Dimes

The United States has made ten cent pieces since 1796, but only three designs appear with frequency: The Barber, Mercury, and Roosevelt dimes. The Barber dime is named after the designer Charles E. Barber.



There are several rare dates in the series, among which is the 1895-O, valued at about \$275 in average circulated condition, and the 1896-O, 1896-S, 1897-O, 1901-S and the 1903-S, each worth \$50 or more.



Barber

The Barber series also includes the rarest dime of them all, the legendary 1894-S, of which only 24 pieces were made. The 1894-S Barber dime has long been considered one of the “Big Three” American numismatic rarities, along with the 1913 Liberty nickel and the 1804 Draped Bust dollar. In July of 2007, an 1894-S dime graded Proof 66 by PCGS sold at auction for \$1,900,000!

The Winged Liberty, or Mercury Dime, appeared between 1916 through 1945. Liberty faces left and the mint mark is on the reverse just to the right of the word "ONE." Mercury dimes are very common coins and are generally worth the value of the silver in the coin (.07234 troy oz.) However, the 1916-D, is worth \$650 in average circulated condition, and the 1921 and 1921-D are worth about \$40 each. The 1942 over 1 is worth more than \$400.



**Winged Liberty or
Mercury Dime**

The Roosevelt dime began in 1946 and continued until present day. Roosevelt dimes minted before 1965 are generally no longer found because they have silver. The only key dates in the series are the 1949-S and 50-S, worth about \$8 in average circulated condition.



Roosevelt

A Bit About Quarters

Eight types of quarters have been minted since 1796, but only three are common.

The Barber quarter was first minted in 1892 and continued to be made until 1916. The series has no major rarities, but "type" collectors particularly favor 1892, the first year of issue, and 1909-O, the last issue from the New Orleans Mint.



Barber

The Standing Liberty was minted from 1916 until 1930. This beautiful coin features a full-length figure of Liberty. There are two very rare dates in the series and several lesser ones. The 1916 is worth about \$2000 and the 1918 over 17-S is worth about \$1100 in average circulated grades. Several others such as the 1921 and 1923-S are scarce and can bring well over \$100.



Standing Liberty

The Washington quarter began in 1932. Rare dates in the series include the 1932-D and S and these are worth, in the lowest grades, about \$125 each but considerably more in higher grades.



Washington

Any United States dime, quarter, half dollar or dollar that is dated 1964 or earlier is made of 90% silver and is worth at least fourteen times its face value.

A Bit About Half Dollars

There are four designs commonly seen for half dollars. The Barber Half dollar was made from 1892 until 1915. The most valuable Barber half dollars in average circulated condition are the ones dated 1892-O and 92-S, each worth around \$175 or more, and the 1897-O and 97-S, priced in the \$100+ range.



Barber

The Walking Liberty design, made between 1916 and 1947 and the rarest Walking Liberty halves are the 1921, worth at least \$100 and the 21-D, valued at slightly over \$200.

Two other dates to look out for are the 1916-S and 1938-D, each worth \$75+. However, an uncirculated 1921-S Walking Liberty half dollar can bring \$12,000+ in the coin market.

The Franklin Half was made from 1948 until 1963. The Franklin series, however, contains no particular rarities and most circulated coins are only worth their silver value, currently about \$6.00.

The Kennedy Half dates from 1964 to the present. Kennedy halves dated 1964 are also worth only their silver value while those dated 1965 through 1970, with only a 40% silver content are worth at least the silver content.

Note that gem uncirculated Barber, Walking Liberty, and Franklin half dollars are worth considerably more than their silver value.



Walking Liberty



Franklin



Kennedy

A Bit About Dollars



Bust

U. S. dollars up until 1935 were made from mostly silver. Early silver dollars of the Bust and Seated Liberty design are very scarce.



Seated Liberty

Morgan Dollars and Peace Dollars are plentiful and commonly worth between \$12-20. More than 650 million Morgan dollars, named for designer George T. Morgan, were struck between 1878-1921, and uncirculated coins may be bought for around \$250. The rarer dates include the 1885-CC, worth about \$400, the 1889-CC, worth about \$500, the 1893-S, valued at \$3000+, and the 1895, worth \$20,000+.

Peace Dollars date between 1921 and 1935. In the Peace series, the scarcest dates are the 1921, worth about \$80 and the 1928, worth \$275. Perfect uncirculated examples of either type can be worth considerably more.

The Eisenhower dollar dates between 1971 and 1978. The small dollar made from 1979 through 1981 is called the SBA dollar after the portrait of Susan B. Anthony on the coin. Both designs are made from a copper and nickel alloy and are worth only face value.

In 2000, the Sacagawea “Golden Dollar” was issued as a replacement for the unpopular Susan B. Anthony dollar. The Sacagawea coin depicts the young Shoshone woman with her infant son slung on her back. The coin is worth only face value.



Morgan



Peace



Eisenhower



Sacagawea "Golden Dollar"

Beginning in 2007, the U.S. Mint began production of the Presidential Dollar coin series. The Presidential Dollars will be issued at the rate of four per year until all of the deceased U.S. Presidents have been featured by 2016.



Presidential

Conclusion

We mentioned that this guide just touches on U.S. coins. There are many more coins and details that we could not fit into this short guide.

If you are looking for in-depth information about a particular U.S. coin, please check our U.S. coin resources [here](#). We also have many articles on specific coins and answers to many customer enquiries that may help you.

If you are interested in finding out what your coins are worth, please visit our [CoinSite Buyers FAQ](#) page. It answers many of the questions you may have regarding the process.

CoinSite is a longstanding member of the American Numismatic Association (ANA), Florida United Numismatists (FUN) and the Commercial Coin Exchange (CCE). We are authorized dealers for the Professional Coin Grading Service (PCGS) and the Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC).

We would be happy to provide you with references if you are interested in doing business with us. Please visit us at:



www.coinsite.com