



TIPS and TOOLS for BEGINNING COIN COLLECTORS



Richard Kevin Paul

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by R. Kevin Paul

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INTRODUCTION

You've slowly acquired and assembled your coins and put them in a box or drawer, only to discover a few years later that many have developed tarnish or unsightly blemishes or spots. I hope that this guide can help prevent this from happening to you and your collection. Coins, especially silver coins, can prove to be extremely fragile when it comes to being exposed to the elements or as a result of poor storage or handling techniques. Silver, especially, negatively reacts to air, moisture, and temperature fluctuations - and the results can sometimes be devastating. Cleaned coins are considered damaged and prevention is your best defense. I'm not a coin expert but I'm a lifelong collector and I've learned, through trial and error, some strategies and tools that help reduce the negative consequences of improperly handling or storing your coins. We all work hard to build our collection - it's worth the effort to protect it to the extent that we can.

I. TIPS

1) Rent a Safe-Deposit Box.

You should rent a bank safe-deposit box (larger size). I suggest keeping a silicate inside the safe-deposit box to absorb moisture. There are some that change color when they need to be replaced. Most bank safe-deposit vaults are relatively cool and dry and maintain a reasonably constant room temperature and humidity level. If in doubt, you can measure the vault humidity with a small hand-held hydrometer.

2) Own a Burglary-Proof Safe.

You should own a home Burglary-proof Safe. Burglary rather than Fire-proof because some fire-proof safes contain fire-retardant materials that either contain or hold moisture. Your home safe should only be used for temporary storage. Permanent storage should be at the bank. A silicate is advised for both.

Along with the safe, a monitored alarm system is never a bad idea.

3) Rent a Post Office Box.

Consider a Post Office Box (larger size) for receiving coins and coin-related periodicals by mail.

4) Handle Carefully.

Only hold coins by the edge; never touch or rub the flat surfaces. It is recommended to use a cotton glove when handling your expensive coins. Some argue that using gloves can cause increased drops. To protect from drops, see tip #6 Working Over Something Soft. You should always wash your hands before handling coins (and after), even when using gloves. Oils and dirt from our hands are terrible for coin surfaces. Also, as explained in the next tip, don't blow on or talk over your coins. Using rubber-tipped coin tongs is very helpful, especially when placing coins in 2x2 cardboard/mylar holders.



Other things to avoid are **extreme heat, extreme cold, high-humidity, direct sunlight, water or damp environments**, and extreme **fluctuations** in temperature. Direct exposure to air is also to be avoided since coins can react with chemicals and particles in the air, as is exposure to any containers that contain PVC or the like. Most modern coin holders are PVC-free, and most coin supply shops sell zip-lock style and other plastic bags that are PVC-free. Most bank paper rolls are neither acid-free nor archival, so you should remove them from containers containing paper. Similarly, do not assume envelopes or photo-type storage boxes are acid-free or archival unless they specifically state as much. 2x2 inch cardboard/mylar holders are a good place to start. These holders are folded around the coin and stapled. These are cheap and offer very good medium-term protection from the elements and hands. Plus, you can write notes and information directly on the outside. A Flat Clinch stapler (or pliers to crimp normal staples) is highly recommended as normal staples can scratch coins that are stacked together. I predict that

once you use a flat clinch stapler, you will throw out all your other staplers.

5) Use 'Canned Air'.

Do not talk over or blow directly on coins. Saliva is deadly to coin surfaces, even in tiny amounts. It's almost an involuntary response to blow that piece of lint off your coin, but using an air duster, or 'canned air', works best. Try to find one with as few chemicals as possible. Follow all directions and precautions indicated on the product.

6) Work Over Something Soft.

Use a clean, thick, lint-free cloth to examine coins over - to protect the coins from accidental drops. I prefer thick, cotton diapers (unused, of course).

7) Don't Broadcast.

Avoid displaying your coins (I know that is tempting), or talking about your coins with friends, family, or neighbors. The fewer people that know you own coins, the better. It's also a good idea to have a conversation with your children about not telling their friends that you own coins.

Avoid reading coin periodicals, etc. in public, for the same reason.

8) Keep Track.

Maintain an inventory list, with photos if possible, for insurance and estate purposes. Some kind of database or catalog to track your coin purchases and sales is recommended. I use Microsoft Access (database), but Libre Office is a free document suite that includes a database, along with a word processor, spreadsheet, etc. There are also commercial programs available that are specific to coins (graded photo examples, price estimates, etc.). Additionally, there are several coin websites that allow you to keep track of your collection online, with current market prices. Pen and paper work too.

Some important information to include in your inventory list or database, in addition to the obvious coin physical information/characteristics, would be the following:

- Seller from whom you purchased
- Purchase Date
- Purchase Price
- Location, if you have several Safe Deposit Boxes
- Assigned unique ID numbers, which will help identify identical coins: e.g. #1, #2, etc.

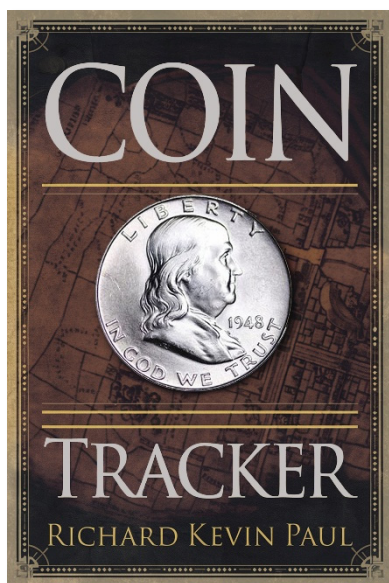
9) Use coin folders for organization.

I learned later on in my collecting that coin folders can be an easy, inexpensive way to help organize your coins. Coin folders can be an invaluable tool for assembling a series, as they do a great job of giving you a map or checklist of the chronology and existing variations and/or mintmarks that were produced. Plus, they provide some interesting facts and mintage statistics. You can either use them as intended by inserting your coins directly into the spaces provided; or if you would rather store more valuable series in flips or plastic holders, you can write annotations into the spaces. At a glance, you can see what you have already, and what you're missing.

The three most popular folder manufacturers are Harris (which have pictures of the coins on the outside), Littleton (green with gold lettering) and Whitman (blue).



I have published a book that includes checklists for most U.S. coins so you can take it with you and see all the information at a glance.



QUARTER - WASHINGTON/EAGLE: 1932-1964

90% Silver

☐ 1932 ☐ 1942-D

☐ 1932-D ☐ 1943

☐ 1932-S ☐ 1943-D

☐ 1934 ☐ 1943-S

☐ 1934-D ☐ 1944

☐ 1935 ☐ 1945

☐ 1935-D ☐ 1945-D

☐ 1935-S ☐ 1945-S

☐ 1936 ☐ 1946

☐ 1936-D ☐ 1946-D

☐ 1936-S ☐ 1946-S

☐ 1937 ☐ 1947

☐ 1937-D ☐ 1947-D

☐ 1937-S ☐ 1947-S

☐ 1938 ☐ 1948

☐ 1938-S ☐ 1948-D

☐ 1939 ☐ 1948-S

☐ 1939-D ☐ 1949

☐ 1939-S ☐ 1949-D

☐ 1940 ☐ 1950

☐ 1940-D ☐ 1950-D

☐ 1940-S ☐ 1950-S

☐ 1941 ☐ 1951

☐ 1941-D ☐ 1951-D

☐ 1941-S ☐ 1951-S

☐ 1942 ☐ 1952

☐ 1952-D

☐ 1953

☐ 1953-D

☐ 1954

☐ 1954-D

☐ 1954-S

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☐ 1957

☐ 1957-D

☐ 1957-S

☐ 1958

☐ 1958-D

☐ 1958-S

☐ 1959

☐ 1959-D

☐ 1960

☐ 1960-D

☐ 1961

☐ 1961-D

☐ 1962

☐ 1962-D

☐ 1963

☐ 1963-D

☐ 1964

☐ 1964-D

Suggestion on how to annotate your lists.

Use checks for coins you have.

Cross out coins you aren't looking for.

Use X or "missing" for coins you don't have.

Use this space to identify where your coins are stored.

Use this space to identify how many coins you have of this series.

Coin Folder Littleton #5 Coin Album 6 /79

Page 42 Coin Tracker, by R. Kevin Paul

COIN TRACKER™ (available on Amazon)

Your Complete Coin Checklist at a Glance

by Richard Kevin Paul

95 pages (B&W) | 6 x 9 in.

Copyright/Publish Date: 2025

Keep track of your coin collection - which coins you have, which coins you're missing, coins you may not be aware of. Access all this information at your fingertips. Coin folders are great, but you can't take them with you or have them all open your desk. Use this Coin Tracker while you're trying to complete a series, searching bank rolls, shopping online, or at coin shops or coin shows. Information printed on the right-side pages for ease of writing. This book includes complete lists of each series including:

Cents - Indian Head (1859) through 2025

Nickels - Shield (1866) through 2025

Dimes - Barber (1892) through 2025

Quarters - Barber (1892) through 2025

Half Dollars - Barber (1892) through 2025

Dollars - Trade (1873) though 2025

American Silver Eagles (1986) though 2025

II. BASIC TOOLS

Here are some basic tools you will need to maintain your collection:

1) A Bank Safe Deposit Box (or two), probably on the large size. See above for description.



2) A Home Burglary-proof Safe. See above for description.



3) A Post Office Box for receiving coins and coin-related periodicals by mail.



4) Silicate for inside both your safe and bank safe deposit box. This absorbs moisture and keeps it away from your coins. There are many different sizes to accommodate your safe deposit box. Some offer color-changing options to indicate when it is time to replace the silicate.



5) Cotton Gloves. A pair (or two) of white cotton gloves.



6) Soft Cloth. A thick, soft, lint-free cloth for examining coins over, in case a coin jumps out of you hands. (I recommend a few real cotton diapers, unused of course).



7) A pair of rubber-tipped coin tongs. Great for placing coins in cardboard/mylar 2x2s.



8) A magnifying class, preferably at least a 5x power, with an LED. Wal-Mart has a perfect rectangular slide-open version in the optical section for ~\$9.95. This is more expensive than the Whitman 10x, but this offers a much larger view window.



9) 2x2 Cardboard Holders. Several sizes (quarter, half-dollar, silver dollar, and silver eagle) of 2x2 cardboard holders that you staple together. These are cheap and very good medium-term protection from the elements and hands. Plus, you can write notes and info. directly on the outside.



10) A flat-staple stapler (or pliers to crimp normal staples flat). Normal staples can scratch coins that are stacked together. The image shown is Max Flat Clinch, but I also own a Swingline version. After trying these I threw out all my other staplers and used them for everything.

www.maxusacorp.com



11) 'Canned Air', aka a Compressed Air Duster, used to blow off lint and debris from your coins. Never blow off lint with your mouth or talk over your coins as your breath contains saliva and water vapor which are both harmful to coin surfaces. Follow all directions and precautions indicated on the product. Compressed air dusters can be found at Wal-Mart or your local office supply store.



12) Coin Boxes. An inert container to store you 2x2 cardboard-holdered coins in your safe-deposit box. The best option, if you can find them, are Intercept Shield boxes. Intercept Shield boxes (and collectible bags) are lined with copper, which reacts with any gases BEFORE they can eat at your coins. Other inert containers by Whitman (blue plastic) will also suit, because they fit 2x2 cardboard holders perfectly and come with removable dividers. You can fit the Whitman blue boxes inside Intercept Shield boxes. Avoid paper or cardboard boxes, such as shoe boxes or photo boxes (which you should also avoid for photos) unless they specifically say "archival" and/or acid-free).
www.interceptshield.com, www.whitman.com.



13) Coin Albums. If you don't want to use boxes, I find the H. E. Harris brown **plastic generic albums** work well, especially when you want to keep specific groups of coins together. They come in two sizes and hold 2x2 cardboard holders, 60 or 80 slots. I would also keep these albums in larger Intercept Shield boxes, and the Intercept Shield "keepsake boxes" would hold several Harris albums.
www.heharris.com



III. ADVANCED TOOLS

1) A **10x magnifier**. Whitman makes a very nice, super small sliding led magnifier. This is actually cheaper than the above 5x, but the window is much smaller. The best would be to have both. www.whitman.com



2) A **small digital scale**, specific for coins. One with a plastic cover, and auto-off feature is better.



3) A **mm caliper**, either digital or physical sliding-type, that measures both outside and inside dimensions. If you have a choice, plastic would be preferred in case it slips against the coin.



4) Coin Holders. Some variation of **inert plastic holders** for more expensive coins. Some popular manufacturers are AirTite®, Guardhouse®, Lighthouse®, etc. Of course, It doesn't make sense to spend \$2 on a plastic holder for a coin worth \$1.75 and cardboard/mylar 2x2s should work fine for those. I have tried many different plastic holders and the following are my observations:

a) **AirTites®** are great but being round and having many sizes can cause some storage issues, they are very expensive, and there is no extra room for labeling. Years with no toning! www.air-tites.com

b) **Guardhouse®** Tetra 2x2 plastic holders are a nice product, but again not much room for labeling. The advantage I've found with Guardhouse 2x2 plastic holders over Lighthouse 2x2 plastic holders (which look virtually identical) is that Guardhouse holders have far fewer scratches out of the box. I ended up throwing most of the Lighthouse plastic holders out. Years with no toning! www.guardhouseholders.com.



Ken from Translinesupply.com offered the following dimensions for Guardhouse holders

Dime-17.9mm
Cent - 19mm
Nickel - 21.2 mm
Quarter - 24.3 mm
Small Dollar - 26 mm

Half Dollar - 30.6 mm
Large Dollar- 38 mm
Silver Round - 39 mm
ASE - 40 mm

c) **Lighthouse®** Quadrum Intercept 2x2 holders. The new Lighthouse® Intercept holders come in a range of sizes from 16mm to 41mm in 1mm increments. Hopefully the foam insert will accommodate the "in-between" coins. So far, they have not had many scratches like the normal holders, and I have not discarded any. www.lighthouse.us.



d) Having recently inspected some stored coins that have been in Coin World Premiere holders for between 6 & 12 months, EVERY coin has signs of slight (some more) edge toning. Scandalous! A few coins I consider ruined. Obviously, I have taken all the precautions described herein, so I am quite surprised, disappointed, and puzzled as to the cause. All holdered coins have been stored in binders with Littleton Anti-Corrosion pages and silicate. I recommend NOT using CW Premiere Holders and removing any coins you have stored in them immediately.

Again, Guardhouse® would be my number one choice, but they do not have as many sizes as Lighthouse®. You should try each out yourself.

Guardhouse® # 1. Lighthouse® # 2. Air-Tites® # 3.

5) Labeler. I use my 10-year-old Brother® handheld P-Touch Labeler. It can create very small labels (with some scissors) which will fit in the bottom corners of Guardhouse® and Lighthouse® holders.
www.brother-usa.com.



I label the outside for the following reasons:

- 1) These particular labels stay on until you take the off.
- 2) I can change or update info. when needed without removing the coin
- 3) I don't want the label material, adhesive and print locked away inside with the coin
- 4) The coin is not permanently sealed, and you can reuse the outside and inside.

6) Coin Binders. I have also found Lighthouse® GRANDE binders are extremely useful as they hold ENCAP snaplock pages for any 2x2 holder. You can organize similar coins or series, and they look great on your bookshelf.
www.lighthouse.us

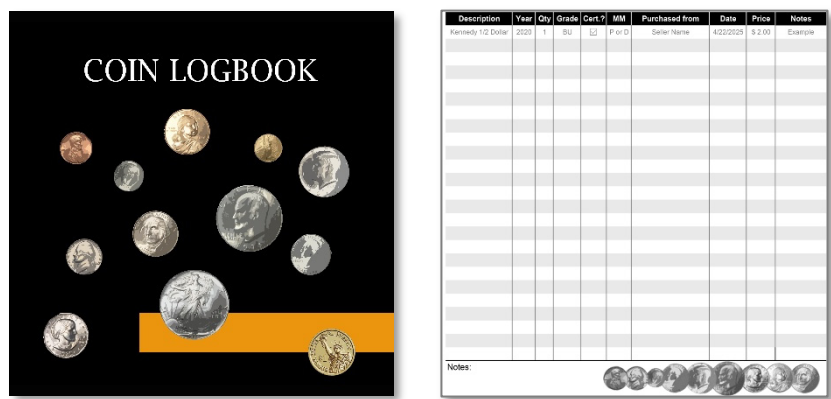


6) Coin Tubes. For larger groups of similar coins, I recommend either Numis, Lighthouse®, or CoinSafe® **square tubes**. They have a good seal and since they are square, they don't roll. They are also easily labeled on the outside or top for quick identification.
www.coinsafeholders.com, www.lighthouse.us



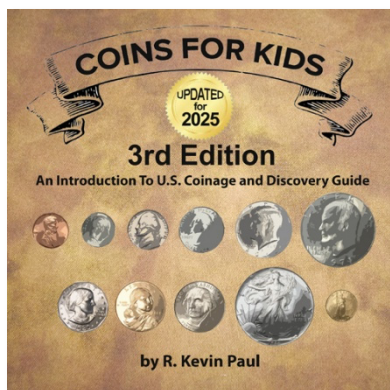
7) Coin Log. Some kind of database or catalog to track your coin purchases and sales. I use Microsoft Access (database), but LibreOffice is a free document suite that includes a database, along with a word processor, spreadsheet, etc. There are also commercial programs available that are specific to coins (graded photo examples, price estimates, etc.). Additionally, there are several coin websites that allow you to keep track of your collection online, with current market prices. Pen and paper works too. This is important for insurance purposes and estate planning. Also see above Basic Tips #9 for recommended data fields.

I have published several options for keeping track of your collection (available on Amazon®.com):

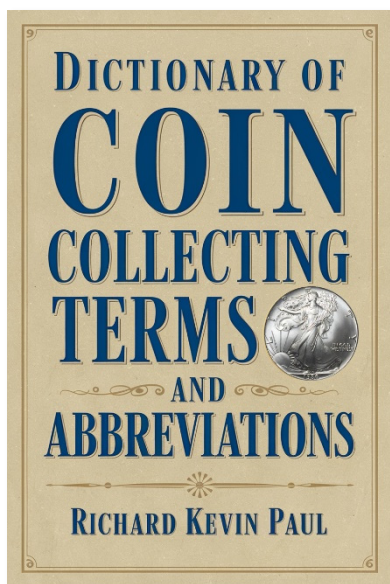


COIN LOGBOOK (available on Amazon)
by Richard Kevin Paul
72 pages (B&W) | 8.5 x 8.5 in, | 7 oz.
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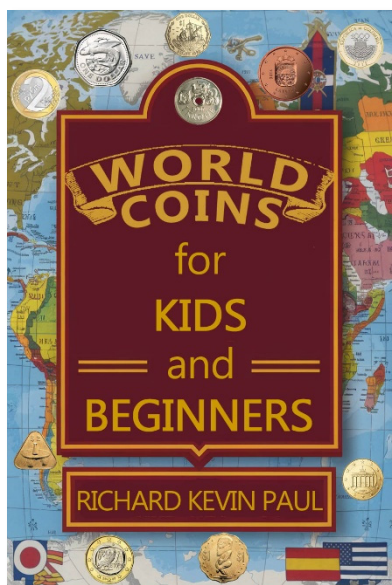


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