

[Anatomy Of A Collector's Coin](#)

Prior to becoming collectors, the two sides of a coin were simply known as "heads or tails," but since becoming engulfed by the thrill of this new experience it is time to learn the proper terms when describing your coins. This is the special language of a numismatist who is people who study and collect coins. Other collectors will understand what you mean when describing a particular coin and show you a lot more respect in return.

The "head" or front of a coin is the correctly called the obverse. This side always has the name of the country and usually has a specialized portrait or coat of arms. The "tails" or back of a coin is known to collectors as the reverse. When coins were once struck individually by hand, the side in which the anvil die was on was considered to be the obverse, and the side that took the strike of the hammer was the reverse.

The outer border of a coin, which is also considered to collectors as the "third side," is the edge. The edge is at times confused with the rim, but it is the actual side of a coin. There are a variety of features an edge can contain, which are reeded, lettered, decorated, or simply plain. If an edge of a coin is lettered, then it is known as a lettered edge. The same goes if it was decorated, then it would be considered a decorated edge. A coin that has a reeded edge on their normal, circulating versions will have reeded edges on their proofs also.

The upraised part of a coin that runs all the way around the edge on both sides is called the rim. The rim helps to protect the design of a coin from wearing down too quickly. It also makes a coin much easier to stack and helps bring up the devices during the striking process while they are being minted. A rim is actually created by the upsetting machine, which means that the rim is set upward from the surface of a coin, and due to this the technical term for rim is actually upsetting rim.

The legend, which is also known as the inscription, is the main inscription or lettering on a coin, which will tell which country a coin is from and what the face value is. The part of the design on a coin that is raised above the surface is known as a relief. The field is any flat area on a coin that has not been raised off of a coin during the minting process and does not contain a design or inscription. When a coin was minted, which normally only includes the year, is known as the date.

A letter or symbol that identifies where a coin was minted at is known as a mint mark. Since the beginning of ancient Greek and Roman times, mint marks have appeared on all types of coins. They tend to serve as a sort of quality control mark within the coin collecting world. If a coin was found to have an error located on it some where, then it is easily traced back to original minting facility. The United States currently has minting facilities at Philadelphia - P, Denver - D, San Francisco - S, and at West Point - W.

A motto is a word or phrase inscribed on a coin that has special meaning to the people of the country it is from. For instance, the United States uses three mottos on all their coins, which are "Liberty," "In God We Trust," and "E Pluribus Unum" which means "Out Of Many, One." On the majority of coins minted in the United States there will be the initials of the designer, although they are sometimes very difficult to locate. You may even need the use of a magnifying glass to read them even if you know exactly where they are.

Coins that contain different layers of metals that have been pressed together are known as clad coins. In the United States today, most dimes, quarters, and even half dollars are clad coins. Usually, when you look at a coin from the side view you will be able to see the copper in the middle, then on the outer layers of the copper is a silver alloy compound called cupro-nickel. Cupro-nickel is the technical term for a metal that is made from copper and nickel mixed, which the United States began using on their coins in 1968.

One of the most important features on a coin is its design, which is known as its portrait. The majority of coins released have a portrait. For example, the United States features the "Statue of Liberty" on a lot of their coins, and even former Presidents. A proof coin is created by using a unique minting process that results in an especially high quality coin that are not meant for regular circulation. These coins are primarily for collectors and only a limited number are produced.

Through out the years the proof process has dramatically improved and one of its primary features is the cameo portrait. A cameo portrait has a frosted, matte finish that seems to stand out in the sharp contrast of these highly polished coins. Not all proofs will have a cameo portrait, which is often called simply the cameo, because the process for creating a cameo is so new. However, a proof should have a mirror glass surface and a design that is clean and seems to come off a coin.

About the Author

Victor Epanand is an expert consultant about rare coins, stamp collections, and rare collectibles. Follow these links to find the best marketplace for: [rare coins](#), [collectors](#), and [rare collectibles](#).

