



Numismatic Terms for Law Enforcement

- **Abrasions** - marks or small scratches on the surface of a coin, not to be confused with hairlines or bag marks.
- **Alloy** - a combination of two or more alloys.
- **Altered** - a change in a numismatic item that is often done to deceive an individual and increase the value of the item.
- **American Gold Eagle** - Bullion coins released by the U.S. mint in one ounce, half ounce, quarter ounce and tenth ounce. These coins are traded at current bullion prices.
- **ANA** - American Numismatic Association. Largest association dedicated to the hobby of numismatics.
- **Ancient Coin** - a coin usually identified as being issued before A.D. 500.
- **ANACS** - American Numismatic Association Certification Service. A third party grading service.
- **Bag Mark** - Minor abrasions on an uncirculated coin, acquired when coming into contact with others in a mint sewn bag.
- **Bank Note** – Paper currency issued by a bank.
- **Bar** - Any precious metal shaped in the form of a rectangle weighing anywhere from 1gram to several thousand ounces.
- **BEP** – Bureau of Engraving and Printing.
- **Block** – A series of related notes indicated by the same prefix and suffix letters in the serial number.
- **Blue Book** – Handbook of United States Coins. An annual price guide for collectors.
- **Border** –The outer edge of the design on either the face or the back of a note where the design ends and the plain currency paper outer margin begins.
- **Bourse** – An area within a coin show where dealers set up tables to display and sell numismatic collectibles.
- **Broken Bank Note** – paper money issued by a bank that went out of business or failed and often applies to any obsolete bank note.

- **Brown Back** – A Brown Back note is a Second Charter, First Issue national bank note. The note has brown ink on the back.
- **Bullion Coin** – Coins made of precious metal and sold at current bullion prices.
- **Bullion** – Uncoined precious metal in the form of bars, ingots or plate.
- **Check Number** – A small number found at the lower right on the reverse of a note. The number identifies the printing plate from which the note came from.
- **Civil War Token** - Token like coins issued during the Civil War due to the shortage of small change. There were two types issued patriotic and store cards.
- **Clad Coins** – Coins that have a core and outer layer made of different metals. Clad coinage started in 1965.
- **Colonial** – refers to coins or paper money issued by the thirteen colony states.
- **Commemorative** – A coin issued to honor or identify a special event, person or anniversary.
- **Compound Interest Note** – A type of U.S. paper money issued in 1863 and 1864.
- **Contact Mark** – Mark or marks on a coin that occur when encountering contact with other coins. (Also, may be considered an abrasion or blemish)
- **Continental Currency** – Banknotes issued from 1775-1779 to finance the Revolutionary War.
- **Copper Nickel** – Coinage composed of copper and nickel.
- **Counterfeit** – coinage or paper money that is fake or reproduced to deceive or defraud.
- **Currency** – legal tender and applies to both coins and paper money.
- **Demand Note** – The first paper money issued by the Federal Government in 1861.
- **Denomination** – The face value of a coin or paper note.
- **Die** – A metal stamp or hardened metal punch to impress a design into a planchet.
- **Dipping** – The act of removing dirt, tarnishing or changing the coloration of a coin by chemical means.
- **District Number** – Designates the Federal Reserve Bank that issued the note. The number appears four times on the face of the note.

- **Double Die** – A die which has multiple images, created during the die-making process. Coins will show double letters or numbers.
- **Double Eagle** – A term used to describe a twenty-dollar gold piece.
- **Eagle** – A \$10.00 gold coin of the United States.
- **Edge** – The side of a coin.
- **Educational Note** – 1896 series silver certificate large size notes issued in \$1, \$2 and \$5 denominations.
- **Error** – a numismatic item including coins, paper money and tokens that have some type of defect or mistake during its manufacture.
- **Exonumia** – A broad category of non-money, non-legal tender numismatic items, including tokens, medals and badges.
- **Face** – The front of a piece of
- **Face Value** – The value of a piece of currency.
- **Federal Reserve Bank Note** – A series of U. S. paper money authorized by the Federal Reserve Acts of 1913, 1918 and 1933. The obligation to pay was the individual issuing bank and not the Federal Government or other Federal Reserve Banks.
- **Federal Reserve Note** – The only form of paper money being printed in the United States.
- **Field** – The flat part of the surface of a coin surrounding and between the head, legend or other designs.
- **Fineness** – Represents the purity of precious metal, either in monetary or bullion form.
- **Flip** – a plastic coin holder that can be folded over.
- **Fractional Currency** – Usually refers to the United States paper money issued from 1862 to 1876 in denominations from three to fifty cents.
- **Gold Certificate** – A form of U. S paper money once redeemable in gold coin.
- **Grade** – The condition of a coin or a piece of paper money.
- **Grading Service** – A business that grades and authenticates numismatic items and places them in some type of sealed plastic packaging.
- **Greenback** – Issued in 1861 and was the first note to have a green reverse or back.
- **Hairlines** – Fine scratches on the surface of a coin.
- **Half- Dime** – A silver 5-cent coin of the United States.

- **Half- Eagle** – A gold \$5 coin of the United States.
- **Hard Times Token** – An unofficial large cent sized copper token struck in a wide variety of types during 1833-1843, serving as a de facto currency. May bear political legends or advertising.
- **Hoard** – coins secretly hidden in the past and accidentally found or discovered.
- **Horseblanket** – A popular nickname for U.S. Large size notes.
- **Junk Silver** – circulated coins made of 90% silver. Sold in bags or rolls and does not contain any key or rare date coins.
- **Key date** – Indicating the rarest date and mintmark of a coin series. Some coin series have multiple key date coins.
- **Krugerrand** – A gold bullion coin of South Africa.
- **Large Cent** – A U. S. cent issued from 1793 to 1857. Larger than a quarter and smaller than a half-dollar.
- **Large Date** – A variety of coins on which the date is larger than other varieties of the same year.
- **Legal Tender** – Coins, paper money or other currency issued by a government and used as money.
- **Legend** – The Principal inscription on a coin.
- **Love Token** – A coin that has been altered by smoothing one or both surfaces and engraving initials or messages.
- **Luster** – The surface quality of a coin. Glossy appearance.
- **Medal** – A metal object resembling a coin issued to recognize an event, place, person or group, with no stated value and not intended to circulate as money.
- **Medieval Coin** – A coin struck from about A.D. 500 to 1500.
- **Military Currency** – Notes officially issued solely for the use of its armed forces by a country's military.
- **Military Payment Certificate** – Also called MPC. Military notes issued solely for use by its military and only in establishments of the U.S. armed forces.
- **Mint Mark** – A letter or symbol that identifies which U.S. Mint produced a coin.
- **Mint Set** – A complete set of coins produced by a particular mint.
- **Mintage** – The number of coins produced.

- **Motto** – A phrase or saying on a coin.
- **Mylar** – A clear plastic material used to store coins.
- **NGC** – Numismatic Guaranty Company. A third-party grading service.
- **National Gold Bank Note** – National bank notes payable in gold coin by some California banks and one Boston bank pursuant to authorization by Act of July 12, 1870.
- **Nick** – A small mark on a coin.
- **Numismatics** – The study of coins, tokens, paper money, medals and other items.
- **Numismatist** – A person knowledgeable in numismatics.
- **Obsolete Bank Note** – Note of an American bank of issue prior to 1865.
- **Obverse** – The front side of a coin.
- **Overdate** – The date made by superimposing one or more different numbers on a previously dated die.
- **PCGS** – Professional Coin Grading Service – A third party grading service.
- **Pattern** – A coin struck as an experimental or trial piece and was never issued for circulation.
- **Pieces of Eight** – Silver Spanish 8-real pieces. Pirate treasure.
- **Pioneer Gold** – Gold coins, often privately produced and struck in areas of the US to meet the needs of a coin shortage.
- **Plate Number** – A small number that sometimes appears on currency showing the number of the plate used to print it.
- **Planchet** – Disk on which a design is impressed to make a coin, metal or token.
- **Postage Note** - The first issue fractional note series.
- **Proof** – A coin struck on specially prepared planchets on special presses to receive the highest quality strike possible. Mirror looking finish.
- **Proof Set** – A set of one proof coin of each current denomination for a specific year.
- **Radar Note** – A note whose serial number reads the same. Forward or backward.
- **Rag** – A well worn piece of paper money.
- **Raw** – A term used to describe a coin that has not been slabbed or certified.
- **Red Book** – “Guidebook of United States Coins”. An annual price guide for collectors.
- **Replacement Note** – A note which has been issued to replace a damaged destroyed or lost note. A star at the beginning of a serial number indicates a replacement note.

- **Restrike** – A numismatic item produced from original dies at a later date.
- **Rim** – Raised border around the circumference of a coin.
- **Rounds** – Coin shaped silver pieces. Produced privately and are not official legal tender.
- **Scrip** – Paper currency usually of denominations less than a dollar issued as a substitute for currency to private persons or organizations.
- **Serial Number** – A numbering system used on paper currency to keep track of the number of notes in circulation.
- **Series** – collection of coins of one denomination that contains all the dates and mint marks of that design.
- **Show** – Usually means coin show where dealers and collectors set up tables and display for sale their numismatic items.
- **Silver Certificate** – Notes, which guaranteed payment of its face value in silver.
- **Slab** – Nickname for plastic encapsulation of numismatic items.
- **Small date** – refers to a specific variety of a coin where the date is physically smaller compared to other versions of the same year, meaning the numbers of the date are noticeably smaller in size on the coin, making it distinct from other "large date" varieties.
- **Small Size Currency** – Usually refers to paper money issued on or after July 10, 1929.
- **Special Mint Sets** – Coins produced under special conditions by the U.S. Mint at San Francisco during the years 1965, 1966 and 1967.
- **Specimen Note** – A sample currency note. The purpose of such notes was to provide banks and other agencies with examples of newly issued money.
- **Star Notes** – Intended as replacement notes that were damaged, destroyed or lost. A solid star appears at the end or beginning of the serial number.
- **Sterling Silver** – Silver that is .925 fine.
- **Strike** – The act of impressing the image of a die into a planchet, making a coin.
- **Token** – A piece of durable material appropriately marked and unofficially issued for monetary, advertising or other services.
- **Toning** – Natural patination or discoloration of a coin's surface. Results when surface come into contact with the air and environment.
- **Treasury Note** – Sometimes called a coin note. Redeemable in silver and gold coins.

- **Type coin** – a coin from a given series or period.
- **Type Set** – A collection composed of one of each coin of a given series or period.
- **Two By Two** – nickname for a typical holder for one coin. Usually made of cardboard with a clear plastic center measuring two inches by two inches.
- **Variety** – A minor change from the basic design of a coin.
- **Vest Pocket Dealer** – Part time coin dealer.
- **Vignette** – A pictorial element of a bank note design that shades off gradually into the surrounding unprinted paper or background rather than having sharp outlines or a frame.
- **Watermark** – Design formed by differing thickness of paper during production; often used as a security device in paper money.
- **Whitman** – Whitman Publishing Company. Produces coin books, albums and collecting supplies.



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