

PENNY SORTING CHEAT SHEET

Quick Reference Guide for Identifying Valuable Pennies

THE THREE-PASS SYSTEM

Pass 1: Color Sort	Pass 2: Date Scan	Pass 3: Detail Check
2-3 sec/coin	5-10 sec/coin	30-60 sec/coin
Separate copper from zinc	Check key dates & mint marks	Examine errors & varieties

PASS 1: COLOR IDENTIFICATION

Metal Type	Color	Years	Action
Copper	Reddish-brown, warm tone	Pre-1982	SET ASIDE for Pass 2
Zinc	Silvery-brown, lighter	1982-present	Check specific years only
Steel	Silver-gray (or rusty)	1943 (common)	Worth 10-50¢ each
Steel ERROR	Silver-gray	1944-1946	STOP! Worth \$75,000+
Copper ERROR	Copper color	1943	STOP! Worth \$100,000+

PASS 2: KEY DATES & MINT MARKS

Mint Mark Location: Below the date on Lincoln cents

No mark = Philadelphia (P) | D = Denver | S = San Francisco

INSTANT 'SET ASIDE' DATES

Date & Mint	Value Range	What to Check
1909-S VDB	\$1,000 - \$300,000+	VDB on reverse bottom
1914-D	\$500 - \$200,000+	D mint mark present
1922 (no D or weak D)	\$1,000 - \$100,000+	Missing or faint D
1931-S	\$150 - \$150,000+	S mint mark present
1943 (copper color)	\$100,000 - \$2,500,000+	Copper NOT steel color
1944-1946 (steel/silver)	\$75,000 - \$100,000+	Steel NOT copper color
1955 (doubled die)	\$1,500 - \$240,000+	Doubled LIBERTY & date
1969-S (doubled die)	\$10,000 - \$126,000+	Doubled LIBERTY
1972 (doubled die)	\$500 - \$50,000+	Doubled IN GOD WE TRUST
1982 (copper, small date)	\$10,000+	Copper color + small date

1983 (doubled die)	\$5,000 - \$15,000+	Doubled ONE CENT reverse
1992 (Close AM)	\$5,000 - \$17,500+	A & M nearly touching
1995 (doubled die)	\$20 - \$100+	Doubled LIBERTY
1998 (Close AM)	\$5,000 - \$17,500+	A & M nearly touching
2025 (V on B error)	\$26+	V stamped over B in LIBERTY

PASS 3: ERROR TYPES & VARIETIES

Doubled Dies

- Look for clear doubling/shadow on LIBERTY, date, or IN GOD WE TRUST
- Most valuable: 1955, 1969-S, 1972 (obverse doubling)
- Don't confuse with die deterioration (mushy, weak details)

Close AM vs. Wide AM (1992, 1998-2000)

- Check spacing between A and M in AMERICA on reverse
- Close AM (rare): Letters nearly touching = \$5,000-\$17,500
- Wide AM (normal): Clear gap between letters = face value

Off-Center Strikes

Off-Center %	Date Visible?	Value Range
5-10%	Yes	\$5 - \$20
20-40%	Yes	\$50 - \$200
50%+	Yes	\$200 - \$1,000+
Any %	No	Minimal value

Die Cracks, Cuds & Breaks

- Small die cracks (raised lines): \$1-\$5
- Large cuds (blobs covering design): \$50-\$500+

WHEAT PENNY SHORTCUT

Don't read dates first—flip the coin over!

Reverse Design	Years	Action
Wheat stalks	1909-1958	SET ASIDE ALL (worth 3-10¢ minimum)
Lincoln Memorial	1959-2008	Check only if copper or key date
Union Shield	2010-present	Check only 2025 for V on B error

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- NEVER clean potentially valuable coins (destroys numismatic value)
- Don't assume all wheat pennies are valuable (most worth 3-10¢)
- Don't skip zinc pennies (valuable errors exist in modern cents)
- Don't confuse die deterioration for doubled dies (true DDs show clear doubling)
- Don't spend 1943 steel pennies (worth 10-50¢ to collectors)

ESSENTIAL TOOLS

Tool	Purpose
Bright LED lamp (5000-6500K)	Clear visibility of details
Magnifying glass (5x-10x)	Examine doubling, spacing, errors
Sorting trays/bowls	Organize by category (copper, zinc, wheat, key dates)
2x2 cardboard holders	Store valuable finds safely
This cheat sheet!	Quick reference for key dates & errors

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS (per 1,000 pennies)

- 50-100 wheat pennies (worth \$2-10 total for common dates)
- 200-300 copper pennies 1959-1982 (worth \$4-9 in melt value)
- 1-5 minor errors (die cracks, small off-centers) worth \$1-10 each
- 0-1 potentially valuable key date or major error (if you're lucky!)

*For full guide and coin database, visit PennyTreasureHunter.com
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