

# How to Detect a Counterfeit Dollar Bill

By an eHow Contributor

*Though counterfeit money is rare, knowing how to spot it can save you personal embarrassment and trouble with the law (a \$5,000 fine and up to 15 years in prison). And while good fake bills are almost identical to their legitimate counterparts, the differences between them are very noticeable, as long as you know how to detect them.*

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

## Instructions

○ 1

Look at the details in the bill's portrait. If the bill is real, the eyes should be lifelike and the facial features should stand out clearly from the background.

○ 2

Look at the Federal Reserve and Treasury Seals. The pointy "teeth" around their edges should be clear and sharp, instead of muddled or hazy.

○ 3

Look at the intricate lines in the bill's border. Genuine bills have scrollwork that is highly defined, but the margins of counterfeit bills may be broken, fuzzy or indistinct.

○ 4

Look at the serial number on the bill. The color and shade of these numbers should match that of the bill's Treasury Seal. Counterfeits also tend to have numbers that are unevenly spaced or lined up crooked.

○ 5

Look for the distinctive red and blue fibers woven into the bill's paper. Counterfeiters often try to emulate these fibers by printing tiny red and blue lines on their bills, instead of embedding them in the fabric, itself.

## o 6

Check to make sure that the monetary amount of the bill's numerals and written amounts match. This seems like an obvious point, but many counterfeiters try to raise the value of genuine bills by changing the numbers in its corners, even though the portrait remains unchanged (imagine a \$10 bill with George Washington in the middle instead of Alexander Hamilton).

## Tips & Warnings

- If you think you've gotten hold of a counterfeit bill, make note of who gave it to you and where you got it. Then call the PISD police department to report the fake. Please check the BOPM for steps on how to handle Counterfeit Money.
- Since genuine bills have ink that can rub off, don't try to detect a counterfeit by rubbing it against a piece of paper.

## Resources

- [Check out the Secret Service's counterfeiting page. It has great visual examples of fake bills.](#)

# Secret Service Counterfeit Page

## KNOW YOUR MONEY

### *How To Detect Counterfeit Money*

The public has a role in maintaining the integrity of U.S. currency. You can help guard against the threat from counterfeiters by becoming more familiar with United States currency.

Look at the money you receive. Compare a suspect note with a genuine note of the same denomination and series, paying attention to the quality of printing and paper characteristics. Look for differences, not similarities.

#### Portrait

The genuine portrait appears lifelike and stands out distinctly from the background. The counterfeit portrait is usually lifeless and flat. Details merge into the background which is often too dark or mottled.



#### Federal Reserve and Treasury Seals

On a genuine bill, the saw-tooth points of the Federal Reserve and Treasury seals are clear, distinct, and sharp. The counterfeit seals may have uneven, blunt, or broken saw-tooth points.



#### Border

The fine lines in the border of a genuine bill are clear and unbroken. On the counterfeit, the lines in the outer margin and scrollwork may be blurred and indistinct.



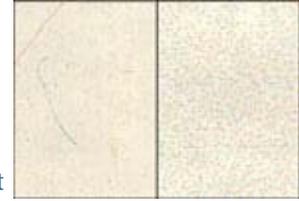
#### Serial Numbers

Genuine serial numbers have a distinctive style and are evenly spaced. The serial numbers are printed in the same ink color as the Treasury Seal. On a counterfeit, the serial numbers may differ in color or shade of ink from the Treasury seal. The numbers may not be uniformly spaced or aligned.



## Paper

Genuine currency paper has tiny red and blue fibers embedded throughout. Often counterfeiters try to simulate these fibers by printing tiny red and blue lines on their paper. Close inspection reveals, however, that on the counterfeit note the lines are printed on the surface, not embedded in the paper. It is illegal to reproduce the distinctive paper used in the manufacturing of United States currency.



## Raised Notes

Genuine paper currency is sometimes altered in an attempt to increase its face value. One common method is to glue numerals from higher denomination notes to the corners of lower denomination notes.

These bills are also considered counterfeit, and those who produce them are subject to the same penalties as other counterfeiters. If you suspect you are in possession of a raised note:

- Compare the denomination numerals on each corner with the denomination written out at the bottom of the note (front and back) and through the Treasury seal.
- Compare the suspect note to a genuine note of the same denomination and series year, paying particular attention to the portrait, vignette and denomination numerals.



## Counterfeit Coins

Genuine coins are struck (stamped out) by special machinery. Most counterfeit coins are made by pouring liquid metal into molds or dies. This procedure often leaves die marks, such as cracks or pimples of metal on the counterfeit coin.

Today counterfeit coins are made primarily to simulate rare coins which are of value to collectors. Sometimes this is done by altering genuine coins to increase their numismatic value. The most common changes are the removal, addition or alteration of the coin's date or mint marks.

If you suspect you are in possession of a counterfeit or altered coin, compare it with a genuine one of the same value.

If it is above five cents in value, it should have corrugated outer edges, referred to as "reeding." Reeding on genuine coins is even and distinct. The counterfeit coin's reeding may be uneven, crooked or missing altogether.

### ***Illustrations of Currency, Checks or Other Obligations***

The law sharply restricts photographs or other printed reproductions of paper currency, checks, bonds, revenue stamps and securities of the United States and foreign governments.

For additional illustrations of U.S. currency visit the [Bureau of Engraving and Printing](#).

#### U.S. Currency

The Counterfeit Detection Act of 1992, Public Law 102-550, in Section 411 of Title 31 of the Code of Federal Regulations, permits color illustrations of U.S. currency provided:

- The illustration is of a size less than three-fourths or more than one and one-half, in linear dimension, of each part of the item illustrated
- The illustration is one-sided
- All negatives, plates, positives, digitized storage medium, graphic files, magnetic medium, optical storage devices, and any other thing used in the making of the illustration that contain an image of the illustration or any part thereof are destroyed and/or deleted or erased after their final use



#### Other Obligations and Securities

Photographic or other likenesses of other United States obligations and securities and foreign currencies are permissible for any non-fraudulent purpose, provided the items are reproduced in black and white and are less than three-quarters or greater than one-and-one-half times the size, in linear dimension, of any part of the original item being reproduced. Negatives and plates used in making the likenesses must be destroyed after their use for the purpose for which they were made. This policy permits the use of currency reproductions in commercial advertisements, provided they conform to the size and color restrictions.

Motion picture films, microfilms, videotapes, and slides of paper currency, securities, and other obligations may be made in color or black and white for projection or telecasting. No prints may be made from these unless they conform to the size and color restrictions.

## Coins

Photographs, printed illustrations, motion picture film or slides of United States and foreign coins may be used for any purpose.

With few exceptions, existing law generally prohibits the manufacture, sale or use of any token, disk or device in the likeness or similitude of any coins of the United States, or of any foreign country, which are issued as money.

## U.S. Postage Stamps, Foreign Postage Stamps and Revenue Stamps

Printed illustrations of United States and foreign stamps are permissible for any non-fraudulent purpose. Black and white illustrations of uncanceled United States and foreign postage stamps are permissible in any size. Color illustrations of uncanceled United States and foreign postage stamps must be less than three-fourths or more than one and one-half times the size of the genuine stamp. Canceled United States and foreign postage stamps may be of any size whether the illustrations are in color or black and white.

Note: Canceled U.S. and foreign postage stamps must bear an official cancellation mark, i.e., the stamps must have been used for postage. Also, the plates and negatives, including glossy prints, of any United States or foreign obligations must be destroyed after their final use for the purpose for which they were made.

Printed illustrations of United States and foreign revenue stamps are permissible in black and white only. There are no size restrictions for revenue stamps.