
A Crash Course On Jargon

“Hey, did you see the bobbed striker on that 20-strike Universal Mirro-Gloss?”

“Huh?”

“And what about that beautiful Signet Cameo 30 with no footer and the odd manumark?”

“Huh”

Sometimes we forget that we *do* have our own language in this hobby, and it can be pretty confusing to the novice collector. There are basics to be learned in any endeavor, and our hobby is certainly no exception. Although some of the terminology is fairly obscure and technical, a new collector quickly needs to learn the basic vocabulary or he’s at a loss for understanding lists, auction catalogs, traders’ wants, and so forth. Even worse! He may have problems understanding my articles! So, for our always-valuable new members, here’s a quick little guide to terms that should be mastered right away.

Size Terms: The width of covers is normally measured by the number of matches they held. Thus, a cover that held 20 matches is a ‘20-strike’, 30 matches is a ‘30-strike’, and so forth. The length of a cover is usually only referred to if it is extra long, and the terms for that are “XL” or “tall”.

Parts of a Cover: The “outside” (the side designed to be shown the most) of any normal cover is divided into four parts. Holding a flattened cover right side up, and starting at the top, the area right above the “striker” (where the match will be struck) is called the “top”. Going down from there, the area between the striker and the middle of the cover is the “back panel”; the middle of the cover, between the two creases is the “saddle; and the area below the saddle is the “front panel”. The “inside” of the cover is the opposite side from the outside!

In addition to these parts, there are two text items that appear on almost all covers: the “manumark” is right below the striker and consists of 1-3 lines identifying either the match manufacturer or the distributor. At the bottom of the cover (bottom of the front panel), there will also normally be the “footer”, most commonly ‘CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING’. But some of the older covers had additional wording, such as ‘DIAMOND QUALITY’, ‘SAFETY FIRST’, making those particular covers especially sought after.

Conditions of a Cover: A cover in mint condition is in brand new condition (no if’s, and’s, or but’s), but a cover that has had one or more matches struck against the striker is thereby “used”, and we classify it as a “struck” cover. If there’s anything else wrong with the cover, it’s said to be “damaged” (wrinkled, crushed, torn, discolored, etc.). Thus, a cover may be struck and yet be undamaged. A cover that still has its matches is referred to as a “full-book”, whereas just the cover without the matches is said to have been “stripped.”

A “bobtailed” cover is one that has had the striker and top portion of the cover purposely cut off (an early practice by some collectors). A “holed” cover has had a nail, tack, etc. put through it at some time and now has a resulting hole (This is different from the hole that is often seen in the manumark area, said hole being part of the cover’s production process).

Cover Types: There are many different classifications based on the type of cover. For example:

-By physical appearance: Most of the fancier covers are thus classified—

- “Filigree”: a cover with a bubbled surface (by Universal)
- “Cameo”: a cover with a debossed design (by Universal)
- “Uniglo”: a cover with a soft, oily texture (by Universal)
- “Foilite”: a cover with a foil-printed design (by Universal)
- “Signet”: a cover with a debossed foil-printed design (by Universal)
- “Matchorama”: a color photo-type cover (by Universal)
- “Jewel”: a longer than usual 30-strike sized cover (by Universal)
- “Jewelite”: a die-cut cover, usually hourglass-shaped (by Universal)
- “Jute”: a cover with a paper bag look to the finish, usually brown or tan (by Atlas)
- “Midget”: a smaller than usual cover, wider than a 10/smaller than a 20 (by Diamond)
- “Click”: a cover that open from the top (by Click)
- “Metallic”: a cover whose finish is all foil (by various)
- “Lenticular”: a 3-D type cover featuring a design/picture in a plastic panel that moves when the cover is tilted (by Atlas)

-By appearance of matchsticks: —

- “full-book”: cover with the matches intact
- “cover”: just the cover; matches have been stripped out
- “Printed Sticks”: a full-book with matchsticks with text printed on the sticks (by various)
- “Feature”: a full-book with pictures on the matchsticks (by Lion)

-By subject matter: —

-“Airlines”, “Lobsters”, “Chinese Restaurants”, etc. There are literally hundreds, so I won’t go any further here.

-By striker: —

- “wide-striker” - these are older covers with unusually large strikers, usually in the 8, 9, and 10mm

-By manufacturer: —

-“Crown”, “Federal”, “General”, “Douglas”, “Rex”, “Jersey”, “Manhattan”, and more: these refer to the manufacturers, normally seen in the manumark. One simply has to become familiar with at least the more common manufacturers bandied about within the hobby.

-By number of covers: —

- “sets”: two or more covers issued at the same time with the same design (often identical but different colors), as opposed to...
- “series”: a group of covers issued at different times (more or less) with the same design but different advertisers
- “caddy”: a box of full-books (50 20-strikes, for example)

-By Miscellaneous terms: —

- “shucking”: stripping covers of matches
- “bobbed”: the striker has been cut off
- “lot”: a cover or group of covers up for auctions

Well, there are certainly more terms than this, but this should be enough to get any novice into the hobby’s wonderful world of jargon!