

MATCH TIPS for New Collectors

by "Billboard Bill" Thomas

How To Become a No-Longer-New Collector In 10 Easy Lessons Or One Hard One

1. Learn the language of the hobby. It's a caddy to us, but it's a carton to the merchant. If you ask for a box you may just get that—one box, so carton is better. Learn the difference between full-length and full-frontal, Jewelite and Jewelite-type.

2. If you don't know, ask. Most old-timers are eager and willing to help you if you make known your needs. But, not all old people are old-time collectors. Sit next to an old-timer at an auction but keep your questions low—auctioneers hate competition.

3. Advertise. My car has a bumper sticker, "I COLLECT MATCHBOOKS" and I am often approached by folks in traffic with questions or offers of matches. have a hobby business card or, better yet, a personal matchbook. Put a display into a bank lobby or store window, and be sure your name & phone number are readable.

4. Participate. Most club meetings have plenty of warm bodies, so you be a warm, active body—volunteer to take on some task; it won't kill you, but it will make you known. Run for an office. No club officer ever died of overwork, and it might prepare you for a career in politics.

5. Learn about making displays and then make some. It's no great art or skill; if you can fry an egg, you can make a display. Bring and show your display(s). You may not win an award, but look at the winners and see why they won. Then try again.

6. Gather matchbooks whenever you can. On a lunch break, hit the local eatery or bistro. Ask for matches everywhere: gas stations, malls boutiques, appliance stores, funeral homes.

Friends, relatives, and neighbors who travel can bring you matches, but show them how to shuck so they aren't overloaded with full matchbooks in their carry-on luggage. Go to flea markets; they often have matches. But beware of prices asked. YOU are the smart collector and they are just trying to get rich on a basket of old matchbooks. Learn to haggle.

7. Join many clubs, not just your local one. Most all club dues are cheaper than a movie ticket, and every club gets you a new bulletin, new list of collectors, new news about covers. Many clubs now have mail auctions. Meeting & Swapfest dates will help you to plan a trip which might get you into town in time for such an activity.

8. Trade by mail a lot, even if you have little time. No need to write long letters if you don't want to. Trade fairly; don't send junk or used or bobtailed covers. Learn what your traders like, and tell them about what you get from them—whether it's great or not so great. Arrange to meet them at upcoming conventions or swapfests.

9. Select a few easy categories to collect at first. You can always expand to more. Decide in advance how you're going to abumize your covers so that you'll have neat, orderly albums that enable you to find covers easily. Buy big, 3" wide album covers at Office Depot & use plastic pages at least for your most prized covers. Slitted pages are becoming obsolete.

10. Stockpile your trading covers/boxes by category or by size, or both. Makes answering trades a lot easier. Low on trading stock? Get out there & gather some, or buy some from Sierra-Diablo MC. Watch for businesses going out of business or changing name or locale; they may have outdated matches to toss out...or give to you.

[Hey, I'm Bill Thomas of 222 S. Ranger Blvd., Winter Park, FL 32792. Phone/fax is 407-657-0222 and I welcome your questions, ideas, or complaints. If you include some nice covers, I'll return some from Florida's Walt Disney World.]