What's it worth?

Face value is the postal value of the stamp. This will appear on the stamp.

The above stamp has a face value of 39p.

The dinosaur stamp has the face value equal to the current 1st class postage rate. Even though this stamp was bought when the 1st class postage was lower than it is today, the stamp can still be used for 1st class post.

This penny red **had** a face value of one old UK penny before decimalisation. Just because it is a penny red doesn't mean it will be very valuable today. There is a wide range of values for these stamps and it will depend on its condition, the margins at the sides and the letters at the bottom.

It takes an expert to calculate the value of stamps in a collection and most of the stamps won't be worth very much. Some reasons that can make the stamp valuable are:
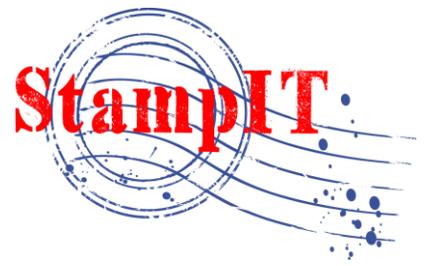
- it is very rare;
- has an error (a mistake that was made when it was printed);
- it has a rare postmark or cancellation on it.

The best advice is to collect because you like the stamps and not because you think they will be valuable one day!

Read on for:
- catalogues
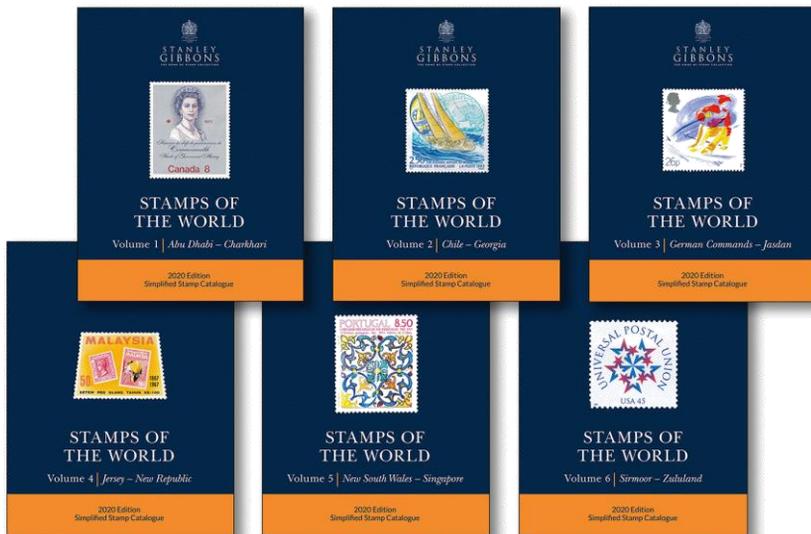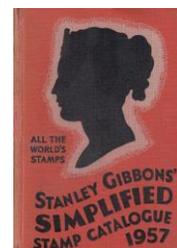- how to look up a catalogue
- catalogue quiz

Catalogues

First of all, don't get too excited if you look up a stamp in a catalogue and there is a high value beside it. The catalogue value is usually much more than you will be able to sell it for and the stamp would have to be in excellent condition.

Catalogues do give you an idea of the value but they are much more useful to find out information about the stamp. For example, the year it was issued, the reason it was issued, the other stamps that are in the set.

There are catalogues for countries and some for popular themes as well as catalogues for all world stamps. There are so many stamps today that the latest world catalogues from Stanley Gibbons, the world's oldest company to produce stamp catalogues, have to be in 6 large volumes!

Stanley Gibbons 2020 world catalogues   Stanley Gibbons 1957 world catalogue

Stanley Gibbons produced the first stamp catalogue in 1865. It was a penny price list and it continued until 1879.

Further information:

Stanley Gibbons - stanleygibbons.com

How to look up a catalogue

For this example, we are going to find out more about this stamp. If you know the year the stamp was issued it is easier to find the stamp in a printed catalogue. If you don't know the year, online catalogues can help. Read StampIT's language leaflets on 'The Story of a Stamp' to find out more about how to investigate a stamp.

This stamp has the year it was issued on it. You need a magnifying glass to see it. Look up 1991 in the catalogue and find the picture of the stamp. This catalogue entry is taken from the Stanley Gibbons 'Collect British Stamps' 2020 Edition.

We now know so much more about this stamp:

- It was issued in a set of four stamps.
- The stamps celebrate scientific achievements.
- This particular stamp celebrates the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Babbage (which means he was born in 1791).
- He was a computer science pioneer (the first to explore the possibility of a digital machine which could be programmed).

Match up the number which is under the stamp with the list. The first column of values is the mint (unused) and the second column is the used (it has been through the post). This stamp has a catalogue value of 35p mint or used. Most modern stamps have the same value mint or used.

988 Michael Faraday (inventor of electric motor) (Birth Bicentenary)

989 Charles Babbage (computer science pioneer) (Birth Bicentenary)

990 Radar Sweep of East Anglia (50th Anniversary of Discovery by Sir Robert Watson-Watt)

991 Gloster Whittle E28/39 Aircraft over East Anglia (50th Anniversary of First Flight of Sir Frank Whittle's Jet Engine)

Scientific Achievements

			Mint ↓	Used ↓	
1991 (5 Mar.) Phosphorised paper					
1546	**988**	22p. multicoloured	35	35	☐
1547	**989**	22p. multicoloured	35	35	☐
1548	**990**	31p. multicoloured	55	55	☐
1549	**991**	37p. multicoloured	65	65	☐
Set of 4			1·75	1·75	☐
First Day Cover				1·90	☐
Presentation Pack (PO Pack No. 216)			1·90		☐
PHQ Cards (*set of 4*) (133)			80	1·90	☐☐
Set of 4 Gutter Pairs			3·50		☐

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Catalogue Quiz

Using the catalogue entry below, answer the following questions about this car stamp:

What is the title of the set? _____

How many stamps are in the set? _____

Which type of car is on this stamp? _____

What is the mint and used value of this stamp? _____

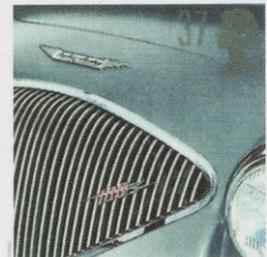Name the car stamps from this set where the values are different for mint and used.

1270 Triumph TR3

1271 MG TD

1273 Jaguar XK120

1272 Austin-Healey 100

1274 Morgan Plus 4

Classic Sports Cars

1996 (1 Oct.) One phosphor band (20p.) or two phosphor bands (others). Perf 14½

1945	**1270**	20p. multicoloured	30	30
1946	**1271**	26p. multicoloured	50	50
1947	**1272**	37p. multicoloured	60	65
1948	**1273**	43p. multicoloured	70	75
1949	**1274**	63p. multicoloured	90	95
Set of 5			2·75	3·00
First Day Cover				3·25
Presentation Pack (PO Pack No. 271)			3·00	
PHQ Cards (set of 5) (183)			1·00	3·25
Set of 5 Gutter Pairs			5·50	

Answers on StampIT website: Stampy things - What's it worth.