



FIP Commission for Traditional Philately

The Judging Criteria for Traditional Philately

COEX Magok, Seoul
20 September 2025

About the revised Judging Guidelines

This seminar is based on the revised judging guidelines which was approved at the Traditional Philately Commission meeting during THAILAND 2018 in Bangkok

Approved by the FIP Board in Rio in 2019

Ratified at the 76th FIP Congress in Jakarta on 8 August 2022

The revised guidelines can be obtained from www.f-i-p.ch website or the Traditional Philately Commission sub-site

To exhibit for competition

- ❖ Title page – background, purpose, scope, references
- ❖ Scope – a logical story line to fit in one, five or eight frames with no duplication of material or missing gaps
- ❖ Pre-production material (if exist)
- ❖ Stamps themselves – printing study, varieties, rarities
- ❖ Usages – preferably on cover but can be canceled stamps
- ❖ Fill in the entry form CORRECTLY

Judging criteria

- ❖ Judging the appearance of the exhibit: **Presentation – 5 points**
- ❖ Judging the challenge and how well the challenge has been met:
Treatment 20 points and Philatelic Importance 10 points
- ❖ Judging the material included:
Rarity 20 points and Condition 10 points
- ❖ Judging what the exhibitor knows about the material presented:
Knowledge and Personal Study 35 points

1. The Appearance of the exhibit

Presentation = 5 points

- ❖ The appearance of the exhibit should complement the treatment of the exhibit by its general lay-out and clarity.
- ❖ Judges should evaluate the work put into the appearance of the exhibit from the point of view of how it facilitates the **understanding** and **attraction** of the exhibit to judges and viewers alike.

Judges should be looking for....

- ❖ Is there clear connection between the philatelic material and text?
- ❖ Connection between material and text
- ❖ Appropriate font size and style of text is the exhibit easy to read?
- ❖ Accessibility – use of tables and short paragraphs facilitates understanding
- ❖ Related non-philatelic material e.g. enlarged part of the stamp helps to make the exhibit more understandable

- ❖ The balance on each page – is it top or bottom heavy?
- ❖ The balance in the frame – avoid frames with overfilled pages vs. pages with too many blank spaces
- ❖ No wasted space –
 - Empty space (except where used for rarity emphasis)
 - Space filled with unnecessary illustrations, large maps, or other “space filler” techniques.
- ❖ The mounting – is it carefully done or sloppy?



2 sk. print 1 line perforated
Watermark 2, line perforation 12.5

All normal frames

2 sk. print 1 line perforated. First issued: Jan/1871. Number of sheets issued: <1,000. Printed with the A- and B-sheet of Frame Plate 2. The ovals in the line perforated part of print 1 is dark ultramarine with unevenly applied colour. The frames are light blue-green.



Colour trial for the 2 sk.
for more essays and proofs,
see the introduction

**Line
perforated**



print 1 pos. A51
line perforated
mint



Plate proof print 1 corner block of
three pos. A80-A90-A100
**LARGEST RECORDED
MULTIPLE OF THE
2 SK. PLATE PROOFS**



print 1 pos. A15
line perforated
mint

**Line
perforated**



print 1 used
line perforated



2 sk. print 1 LINE PERFORATED, 4 sk. print 1 comb perforated, and 8 sk. 1864 print 3 line perforated
on a registered letter sent to Sweden 21/Mar/1871. Rate: 6 sk. + 8 sk. = 14 sk. 01/Jul/1869-31/Dec/1874.
**ONE OF TWO RECORDED USAGES OF 2 SK. LINE PERFORATED IN PRIVATE HANDS
SENT TO A FOREIGN DESTINATION**

Design and production
Perforation

Perforation machines and
perforation mistakes

All regularly issued bicoloured øre stamps are comb perforated. From 1875-1895, the perforation was 14x13½. From October 1895 onwards, the perforation was 12 3/4. In the 14x13½ period, three different perforation machines were used: KI (1875, and again 1879-1889), KII (1875-1895), and KIII (1889-1895). KI and KII had the needles irregularly placed so that the vertical row in the sheet can be determined. Only six stamps with inverted comb perforation are known. These are all strongly off centre by a characteristic distance because the perforation guide dots (see previous page) were not centred exactly between row 5 and 6.



KI, 5th vertical
line



KII, 8th vertical
line



**inverted comb
perforation (KIII)
ONE OF SIX RECORDED**



KIII



perf. 12 3/4

During the comb perforation process, several things could go wrong. Most of these perforation mistakes appear as a result of improper forward displacement of the sheets between the perforation of consecutive rows. Such problems can lead to very low stamps, very tall stamps, and double perforated stamps. Almost all of these mistakes were caught in quality control, so very few stamps with major perforation mistakes actually reached collectors. Several bicolours also occur entirely imperforate. In most cases, they are plate proofs "liberated" from the printers or the Postal Museum in early times, since they are only recorded unused.



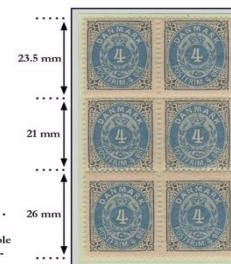
12 øre print 12, 16 øre print 12, 25 øre print 4, all pos. 99 imperforate
**ONE OF ONLY TWO RECORDED IMPERFORATE 12 ØRE,
16 ØRE, AND 25 ØRE STAMPS IN PRIVATE HANDS**



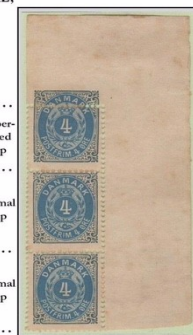
Imperforate pair
4 øre print 38 position B17-B18



**Block of four with double
perforation of the lower two
stamps**
print 15b pos. B49-B50, B59-B60



**Block of six where the top two
stamps are normal height,
the middle two stamps very short,
and the lower two stamps very tall.**
print 59 pos. B49-B50, B59-B60, B69-B70



**Corner block of three with
strongly displaced perforation
on the upper stamp**
4 øre print 55 pos. A10, A20, A30

2. Treatment of the subject chosen

Treatment = 20 points

- ❖ Title Page defines.....
 - Purpose and scope of the exhibit
 - Provides references for the subject chosen

- ❖ Material selected should....
 - Provide a logical storyline e.g. start and end dates and a balanced exhibit
 - Adequate material used to explain the subject without duplication
 - The focus is on the stamps themselves reflected in the write-up
 - Completeness – any missing material particularly the key items.

Philatelic Importance = 10 points

- ❖ The significance of the subject within the philately of the country or area exhibited
- ❖ The significance of the subject on a worldwide scale
- ❖ How difficult is the selected area to collect? i.e. The Challenge factor
- ❖ Can the exhibit be duplicated easily?
- ❖ How much of the key material of the chosen subject is present

3. The material presented in the stamp exhibit

Rarity = 20 points

- ❖ In assessing rarity keep in mind it is both an **objective** and a **relative** term
- ❖ A judge needs to assess the difference between the rarity of major printing error and a minor plate flaw even if only the same quantity of each have been so far recorded
- ❖ Does the exhibitor explain what is shown being rare?
- ❖ Does the exhibitor uses philatelic material?

- ❖ The judge should consider the rarity being shown in the exhibit
- ❖ An exhibit with only ordinary material cannot get high points
- ❖ An exhibit with many rare items relevant to the subject might get maximum points even if a few rarities are **missing**
- ❖ If an exhibit has many rarities getting close to maximum points, **adding more rarities** should generate more points in e.g. Importance/Knowledge

Levels of rarity

The judge should consider the rarity being shown in the exhibit

- ❖ Primary Material: including world rarities
- ❖ Secondary material: including great rarities and important items
- ❖ Supporting material: including unusual items

Primary Material: including world rarities

- ❖ Highest known rate or franking
- ❖ Single use of a rare stamp on cover with the correct rate



❖ Earliest usage of a stamp



MY 6, 1840 First Day of Use of the Penny Black

- ❖ Largest multiple of famous stamps
- ❖ Famous errors



Inverted 500 Mon
1871 issue of Japan



China 1897 3c Red Revenue
"Small One Dollar" block

Secondary Material: including great rarities

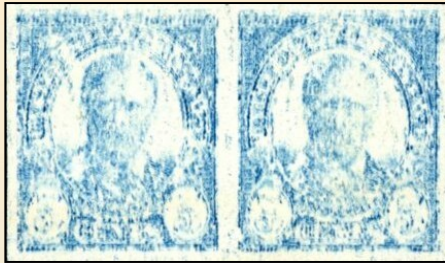
- ❖ Archival/documents supporting the stamp issue
- ❖ Covers bearing the stamp showing special rates, routes, destinations, significant dates
- ❖ Use of a rare and significant handstamp or a rare and important cancellation on the stamp
- ❖ Abnormalities in paper, watermark and perforations and colour

Secondary Material: including important items

- ❖ Same as above categories but slightly more common
- ❖ Included to facilitate understanding of the exhibit

Supporting material: uncommon

- ❖ Plate/cylinder blocks
- ❖ Printers waste



Supporting material:

- ❖ “Collector’s” Specimen
- ❖ “Collector’s” Proofs



Quantity produced is usually quite small. But would not gain marks in “Rarity”.

Rare material tends to attract forgers attention....

Look out for:-

- Fake stamp, covers and errors
- Fake rare postmarks on stamps
- Fake rare overprint and perfins
- Fake perforation errors
- Fake archival material

Notify the expert group for further examination if needed

Condition = 10 points

- ❖ When assessing condition the shown items should be in the best possible condition **for what is available** to get full points
- ❖ Any repaired stamps and covers not described will lead to reduction of points.
- ❖ Judges could refer the item to the expert particularly when the postal marking or the stamp is damaged.
- ❖ Postmarks on stamps and covers should be clear unless clear examples do not exist

Condition & Rarity

- ❖ An item in remarkable condition may be truly exceptional even though a relatively large number of examples exist
- ❖ On the other hand, rare material in poor condition will not score as high if this material does exist in better condition

4. What the Exhibitor knows about the Material Shown

Philatelic knowledge and Personal Study = 35 points

- ❖ Implicit Knowledge

- Material selected to tell story

- ❖ Explicit Knowledge

- Explanations and analysis in write-ups

- ❖ Research & Personal Study

- New Information presented as part of exhibit story

Implicit knowledge

- ❖ Assess the material included or excluded from the exhibit to tell the philatelic story....this will indicate a strong or weak grasp of the chosen topic
- ❖ Determine if the exhibit consists of mostly common single stamps and covers showing common rates, routes or markings

Explicit knowledge

- ❖ Determine if the items shown are properly and accurately described.
- ❖ The judge should determine if all relevant information about the stamps being noted e.g. printing quantities, shade, perforations, watermark, postmark on used stamps, in case of rarities, how many known
- ❖ Avoid lengthy write-up of the rates, routes and markings of covers
- ❖ Significant items should be highlighted and explained

Implicit vs. Explicit Knowledge

1874 cover Hong Kong to Melbourne via Galle
1/- rate franked 24c green wmk CC and 18c no
wmk in the lower left corner as late fee



Implicit knowledge: For usage of the 24c value - the use of a cover to Australia via Galle with a late fee rather a cover to England (common) demonstrates knowledge in choice of material

Explicit knowledge: Description is “auction catalogue”

Implicit vs. Explicit Knowledge

Same cover written up for a Traditional Philately Class exhibit



Personal Study

- ❖ If the subject is relatively unstudied area the judge would expect to find a good deal of personal study and the exhibit should be given credit for this or lose points if not present
- ❖ If the subject is well-studied assess the amount of personal study by the exhibitor's grasp of the literature in their chosen subject and the analysis of this research
- ❖ If the exhibit of well-researched subject provides an appropriate fresh approach this adds points for personal study

Good demonstration of personal study in the write-up of the page

Design and production Perforation

Imperforate stamps (continued from previous page)

8 øre print 43 and 4 øre print 38 imperforate got into the hands of a contemporary philatelist. Most exist unused except for six covers and less than 10 used stamps. Single sheets of 8 øre print 70 and 108 also exist unused. 8 øre print 108 imperforate with frame tête-bêche is shown on page 16. The only imperforates which probably reached a post office by mistake were 4 øre print 22, 8 øre print 51 and 8 øre print 53. One unused stamp is known of 8 øre print 53. 8 øre print 51 was until recently thought to be the only imperforate bicoloured stamp known to have been genuinely used. Two stamps cancelled Fredericia (see under 8 øre print 51) and one cancelled Randers (shown here) have been recorded. In 2023, a genuinely used imperforate 4 øre stamp from print 22 was sensationally found 140 years after it was issued.



8 øre print 53 position A99
imperforate

**THE ONLY RECORDED
IMPERFORATE STAMP
FROM PRINT 53**



8 øre print 70 position B87-B88, B97-
B98 in block of four with one normal
and three inverted frames
One single sheet of print 70 was issued
imperforate, so the normal frame is
THE ONLY ISSUED EXAMPLE!



8 øre print 51 position
A4 imperforate
all three recorded copies
are defective!

THE RANDERS COPY
(The best Fredericia
example is shown under
8 øre print 51)

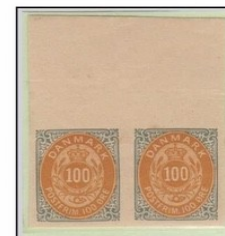


8 øre print 43 position B91
imperforate



4 øre print 22 position B4 imperforate

**THE ONLY RECORDED IMPERFORATE 4 ØRE
FROM PRINT 22 AND THE ONLY RECORDED
4 ØRE IMPERF SOLD FROM A POST OFFICE**



100 øre print 2 position 5-6
imperforate



**IMPERFORATE STAMPS ON COVER: 4 øre print 38 pos. B7-B8 and pair 8 øre print 43. Correctly paid 36 øre letter.
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF THE SIX RECORDED COVERS WITH IMPERFORATES**

Judging One-frame exhibit

- ❖ All judging criteria for judging multi-frame apply to assessing One-frame exhibit
- ❖ Appropriateness: check whether the exhibit is TRUELY one-frame or part of a multi-frame exhibit
- ❖ A selection of items from a multi frame exhibit may be suitable only if the selection can completely treat a natural sub-theme of the exhibit within one frame
- ❖ Consult more experienced judges in other classes if in doubt

What is expected of a good philatelic judge?

- ❖ Adequate preparation before arriving at exhibition
- ❖ Judge all exhibits within the time-frame allocated
- ❖ Consult more experienced judges in other classes if in doubt
- ❖ Give helpful critique/feedback verbally or written to exhibitor or commissioner
- ❖ Be courteous at all times – discuss in a harmonious manner with the exhibitor and judging team members

Thank you for listening

