



Skills: Comparing and contrasting

## Commemorative and Definitive Stamps

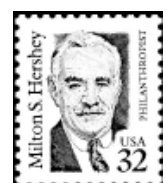


To **compare** is to identify how two or more people, places, or things are similar. To **contrast** is to show how they are different. Often, it is important to be able to compare and contrast at the same time. For example, two young brothers might be alike in many ways—but they also can be quite different from each other. Understanding those similarities and differences would be an important skill for their parents in knowing how to best raise the two boys.

The ability to compare and contrast is important to the hobby of **philately** (the technical term for stamp collecting). Stamps come in many types, but most are classified as either *commemoratives* or *definitives*. How would you go about comparing and contrasting these two types of stamps?

**Commemorative Stamps:** As the name suggests, a **commemorative stamp** usually *commemorates*—that is, honors the memory of—a person, thing, or event. Many times, a commemorative stamp is issued on a major anniversary or birthday of the subject being honored. For example, the Postal Service issues a commemorative stamp on the 50th, 100th, 150th, and 200 anniversary of each state’s joining the Union. Famous people no longer living are often honored with a commemorative stamp on the centennial of their birth. There are exceptions to these rules, and sometimes a commemorative stamp simply shows something pretty and colorful (such as flowers). Usually, commemorative stamps are printed in smaller quantities, are available for only a short period of time, and may not be available at every post office. Commemorative stamps can be used for postage and usually are printed in the **denomination** (value in dollars and cents) for first-class mail (though on rare occasion, the Postal Service will issue a set with different values). Finally, as shown below, commemorative stamps typically are larger than definitive stamps.

### Shapes of U.S. Commemorative and Definitive Stamps



**Commemorative Stamps**

**Definitive Stamps**

**Definitive Stamps:** Often called “regular stamps,” **definitive stamps** get their name from the word “definitive”—which means something definite, authoritative, and final. A definitive stamp may honor a person, thing, or event—but that usually is not the main reason for its issuance. Definitive stamps are the stamps a country prints in large quantities to serve the various postage needs of its citizens. Usually, definitive stamps are widely available over a long period of time, are reprinted as necessary, and are available in the various denominations needed for the different categories and rates of postage.

Like commemorative stamps, definitive stamps are usually printed in **panes** (or sheets). The Postal Service often makes the most frequently used definitive stamps (currently the 32¢ stamp used up to one ounce of first-class mail) also available in **coil** (a roll of stamps), booklet, and **self-adhesive** (“self-stick”) formats.

With the exception of some high-value definitives (\$1.00 and up), most U.S. definitive stamps are smaller than commemorative stamps and tend to be more in the shape of a square than the traditional commemorative stamp.

### ***Putting Your Skills to Action***

Based on what you have read in this lesson, compare and contrast commemoratives and definitive stamps using the chart below. Then, using Handout G, design a commemorative stamp.

<b>Comparing and Contrasting</b>		
	<b>Commemorative Stamp</b>	<b>Definitive Stamp</b>
<i>Definition</i>		
<i>Purpose</i>		
<i>Availability</i>		
<i>Denominations</i>		
<i>Size</i>		

# Design an Olympic Stamp!

*INSTRUCTIONS: You've been asked to design a special U.S. postage stamp to commemorate the **centennial**—or 100th birthday—of the modern Olympic Games. Use the stamp outline below for your design. When completed, the stamp should contain the following: (1) "USA," (2) "32" [the current postage rate in cents], (3) the **Olympic Rings**, (4) "Centennial" and "Olympic Games," (5) "1896 - 1996," and (6) any design you feel calls to mind the Olympics.*

