

What Makes Good Stamp Design?

Is the background simple enough to facilitate these additional elements?



*The First Federal Duck Stamp
Artist: Jay N. "Ding" Darling*

*Since 1934, the year of the first Federal Duck Stamp, the stamp's design has included three components: a **central vignette**, a **denomination** and **textual inscriptions**. Early Federal Duck Stamp designs were entirely engraved and printed on a flatbed press.*

Today printing technology is constantly changing and combination printing techniques with security measures are standard. Federal Duck Stamps are also issued in different [formats](#) such as the water-activated (WAG) single stamp and the self-adhesive mini-sheet (PSA).

Composition

Is the composition strong with sufficient color contrast to emphasize detail and shading?

Do elements such as shape and line appear strong enough that they do not blur together?

Does the central design stand out from the background?
Is it eye-catching?

Typography

Is there space for lettering and numerals without overlapping the central featured design elements?

Is the background simple enough to facilitate these additional elements?

Reduction

Is the design simple? Avoid complicated designs that will not reduce well or in which important details will be lost. Use a reducing glass to see how the design will appear when reduced to stamp size

Originality

Is the design original? Avoid designs that are duplicates of previous Federal Duck Stamp designs. Past duck stamps and resources listed below make good sources for design ideas and information about past duck stamps.

Source: Cheryl Ganz, Chief Curator of Philately, Smithsonian National Postal Museum, with James O'Donnell, Museum Specialist, NPM, and Terry McCaffrey, Manager of Stamp Development, United States Postal Service. 2008

See page 2 for select references regarding Duck Stamp design.

References:

Books:

The Duck Stamp Story by Eric Jay Dolin and Bob Dumaine (Krause Pub. 2000).

The Federal Duck Stamps by David P. McBride (Winchester Press, 1984).

Brochure:

The Federal Duck Stamp 75th Anniversary Field Guide (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

Websites:

[*gallery link*] The Federal Duck Stamp Gallery – all Duck Stamps, 1934-present

[http://arago.si.edu/flash/?s1=5|sq=duck stamp|sf=0](http://arago.si.edu/flash/?s1=5|sq=duck%20stamp|sf=0) The Jeannette C. Rudy Duck Stamp Collection at the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum