

Coin Cleaning Tips

for Common US Coins.

I've been at this great hobby for quite some time and I have my methods for cleaning common clad coins that I'll share here. I don't like to take cruddy-looking change to the bank, if I can help it, and it really doesn't take all that long to clean a few batches of coins. This is a task I often save to have something to do on a snowy or rain-soaked day or in the evening.

Equipment I Use:

- A Lortone 2-Barrel Tumbler
- Aquarium Gravel (I use the white synthetic type.)
- Dawn Dish Soap (I prefer it in the yellow version, but other brands will do.)
- Cream of Tartar (Optional, but I use it out of habit.)
- Liquid Toilet Bowl Cleaner (I just get the bargain \$1 liquid from dollar stores.)
- Strainer & Gravel Catcher (I use a Garrett Gravity Trap gold panning set with the larger 14" gold pan and the 'Grizzly' or strainer because I had them.)
- Plastic Jar w/Lid (I use an empty peanut butter jar.)
- 'Flexible' Plastic Container (I use a soft-spread margarine type.)
- Terry Cloth Towel (I have a few I keep for such tasks when we get new towels.)
- Latex Gloves (Optional, but I recommend them.)

The 7 Steps I Take to Clean Coins:

I do coin cleaning sessions throughout the year based on accumulation of finds.

STEP #1. Separate coins into three groups:

- Pennies and the Sacajawea & new President Dollars
- Nickels
- Clad Dimes, Quarters, Halves and Susan B. Anthony & Ike Dollars.

DO NOT MIX THE THREE DIFFERENT GROUPS.

STEP #2. Wash and rinse all coins, **in their separated groups**, to remove surface dirt, making sure all soap and soil is rinsed from the coins.

STEP #3. Double check the pennies to make sure any dark, dirty dimes aren't among the numerous pennies. If so, remove them to clean with the dimes. If the nickels and clad coins are cleaned with the pennies, they can/will become pink-tinted and difficult to restore.

STEP #4. Pre-Treat all stained coins, by their individual grouping, prior to final tumbling.

- First, let me tell you that I usually wear latex gloves when handling coins in this Pre-Treat process. I use a peanut butter jar and plastic margarine container so I can re-use the 'solution,' and I make sure I do this procedure where it is well ventilated and have a sink with running water to rinse the solution off the treated coins.
- Second, I'll remind you again, DO NOT mix the different coin groups!
- Complete Step #4 immediately before the coins go into the tumbler to get processed. Often, you can finish with Step #4 and the coins will look pretty good and ready to go to the bank, but they aren't. The liquid toilet bowl cleaner treatment can leave a film on the coins that will appear dull after they dry. That's why cleaning is done in 'steps', making sure that after they have been thru Step #4 for Pre-Treatment they immediately go to Step #5 to get tumbled, then Step #6 to get well rinsed and dried.

A. I put one type/group of coin in a plastic jar (peanut butter) about ¼ to ½ full.

B. Wearing gloves, squirt an ample amount of liquid toilet bowl cleaner (TBC) into the plastic jar. **DO NOT** fill it to the top. Use just enough TBC to cover the coins. Screw on the lid (tightly) and agitate by shaking and rolling the jar around. This will tumble the coins in the jar so they all get a good 'coating' of the TBC on all surfaces. Do NOT let this mixture of coins and TBC stand for too long. Usually, go no longer than maybe 5-15 minutes, frequently agitating it to let them get completely covered.

C. Pour all the coins and toilet bowl cleaner into a flexible plastic container (I use a margarine tub). Then, 'pinch' the plastic container so that you can keep all the coins in it and pour the used TBC back into the plastic (peanut butter) jar. This liquid can be re-used a lot with all coin types!

Note: I do this in a stain-free sink and make sure I limit where the toilet bowl cleaner touches. I also make sure I continually keep all cleaning mess cleaned up.

D. With all the coins and a little remaining TBC in the plastic tub, rinse it all very thoroughly! I wash and rinse coins in hot water, and stir them around while rinsing them off. Make sure ALL of them get well rinsed and the entire TBC residue that was left with the coins in the plastic tub gets rinsed away.

E. Once well rinsed, pour them into a strainer until quickly moved into the tumbler.

F. At this point, many of the coins will appear to be quite spendable! It is best to continue with the tumbling process to ensure that all the 'TBC' and residue is cleaned from the coins!

STEP #5. Tumble for 30-60 minutes. Yep, that's all it should take, just a half-hour to an hour! In a tumbler barrel, add about a rounded ½-cup of coins (remember not to mix the coin groups), then add aquarium gravel to a little less than ⅔ to ¾ full. Cover the mixture with water (do NOT fill), add 1 SMALL squirt of Dawn dish soap, and I also use 1 tsp. of Cream of Tartar. (Most won't use this, but I do.)

STEP #6. After the 30-60 minutes of tumbling, and with the strainer (Grizzly) in the catch container (14" gold pan), pour out the tumbler of coins and gravel. Rinse it all well while 'stirring' it so that the aquarium gravel falls through into the gold pan and all the coins are retained in the strainer (grizzly). Once all the aquarium gravel has been separated from the coins, rinse the coins with hot water. This helps increase the drying time.

STEP #7. Pour the rinsed coins onto a towel on a counter top and allow them to dry. Continue with the next batch of coins to be tumbled. Once all coins are completely dry, they can be stored for display and/or taken to a bank for counting.

- As stated, you can re-use the Toilet Bowl Cleaner a number of times. This does an excellent job of ridding the clad coins, especially, of tarnish. A very low percentage of coins will look bad when you've completed the cleaning process.
- Most of the "dollar stores" sell a Lysol brand liquid toilet bowl cleaner, or whatever similar brand they carry. Most of them work about as well as another. Just be sure to wear Latex gloves and do the Pre-Treatment in a ventilated area.
- You DO NOT have to tumble the coins for very long, if you include my **Step #4** and Pre-Treat/Clean the coins. Seldom will you go over 30 minutes tumbling, and it only reaches 60 minutes of tumbling if you are busy preparing the next batches of coins in the process. Almost never do you need to tumble more than an hour.

Questions? E-mail me at: monte@ahrps.org

Happy Coin Hunting and Happy Coin Cleaning,

Monte