

# Special Article: Making Your Stamp Album

*So, you spend a huge amount of time working on your collection and maybe you also spent a lot of money. But is your collection properly presented and organised, or is it scattered throughout files, folders, envelopes and boxes?*

This month, we have written a special article about making your stamp album and getting your collection presented in a really beautiful way, and without any huge expenses.

First of all, we need to clarify exactly what a stamp album is. Many people think a stamp album is one of these...



Sorry! This is not a stamp album. What you see here is known as a “stock book”. These are used, primarily by stamp dealers, to store their stock (inventory) of merchandise for sale. Stamp collectors also use them to store their duplicates, items for trade or material not yet added to their stamp albums.

Whilst stock books are a very simple and safe way to store your philatelic material, they are quite unsuitable for the presentation of your precious collection. For this purpose, a proper stamp album is required. There are many kinds of stamp album but typically, they look something like this...



As you can see, the stamps are mounted (attached) to pages and are arranged in a pleasing, symmetrical way, in chronological order, with dates, titles, notes and sometimes even catalogue numbers. Not only stamps are mounted in albums. Souvenir sheets, minisheets, se-tenants, FDCs, maximum cards, in fact, just

about any kind of philatelic material can and should be included.

We can hear you say “Of course I know what a stamp album is! But they are outrageously expensive and only for rich people with high-value collections!” Our response is that this is not necessarily so.

For starters, your collection of Moldovan stamps is valuable! Maybe it’s not crammed with Penny Black’s and Inverted Jenny’s, but it’s priceless to you and therefore deserves to have the very best home. So, where to begin?

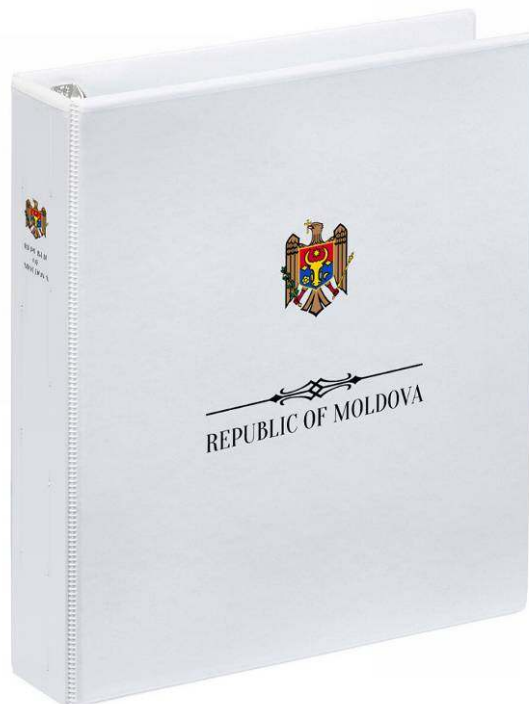
## Step 1: The Binder

The lovely binder illustrated on the right cost an absolute fortune! Right? Actually, no, only about €8. What you are looking at is a white vinyl presentation binder, which is available from any office supplies retailer, anywhere in the world. These binders have a 25mm wide spine and are designed to house standard A4 sheets of paper.

The binder has 4 “D” shaped rings to securely hold the sheets. There are transparent plastic overlays on the front cover and on the spine. These overlays are open at the top, allowing you to slip in paper inserts, describing the content.



IMPS has designed two nice inserts for this purpose, which are available, free to members. Login (or register) to the IMPS members member’s area and then scroll to the top of the page and click the “My Membership Page” link. From



**In this article, we will explain how you can make this beautiful album binder to house your collection for about €8**

there, look for the “Download Stamp Album Pages” link and click. On the resulting page, scroll down to see the two links “Album Cover Image” and “Album Spine Image”. These files are in Adobe PDF format. The PDF reader is pre-installed on 99% of the world’s PCs. Print the inserts and slip them carefully into the plastic overlays. Note that you will need to cut the spine image to size.

Presto! You now have a really nice presentation binder just like the one illustrated above, fit for a king only costing only about €8.

## Step 2: The Album Pages

IMPS has also designed beautiful album pages for all stamps issued by Moldova, from 1991 until 2018. In January each year, we will upload the supplement for the previous year’s issues.

From the same link mentioned above, “Download Stamp Album Page”, click the link for the year you want to download. Once again, all files are in Adobe PDF format.

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Pages can be printed in black and white or in colour, but high-quality print output is advised. For the very best results, we recommend using a colour laser printer. If you don't have one at home or in work, use the services of a local print bureau.

All of the images on the album pages are actual sizes, with an added 2mm black border for presentation.

The selection of paper is very important. Firstly, the PDF files are designed to use standard A4 sheets only. If you try to use US Letter or any other size, the stamp image placeholders will become distorted.

Do NOT print on ordinary 70 or 80 gram photocopy paper. This paper is too thin and is too easily warped and creased. Use 90 gram paper or heavier. Ideally, try to get acid-free archive paper, 100 gram or better, but that can be quite expensive.

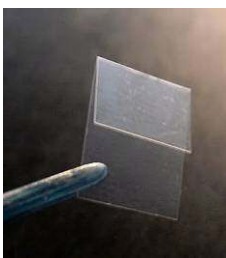
### Step 3: Mounting the Stamps and Other Material

"Mounting" is the term used to describe attaching the material to the album pages.



For mounting, you have three options. If you collect used stamps or CTO stamps and you are not concerned about disturbing the gum on the back side of the stamps or sheets, then you can use simple stamp "hinges".

A stamp hinge is simply a small rectangle of semi-transparent paper, lightly gummed on one side and folded. Both sides are moistened, The shorter fold is



attached to the back of the stamp and then the combination is attached to the album page, taking care to place in the correct position and to avoid crookedness.

This is a very low cost solution to stamp mounting and a packet of 1000 Prinz brand hinges will cost just a few euro and last for a very long time.

However, if you collect mint (unused) material, hinges should never be used. Disturbing the perfect gum on the back of a mint stamp will reduce it's value by as much as 80%. Please note the philatelic abbreviations "MNH", meaning "mint—never hinged" and "MH" meaning "mint—hinged".

For collectors of mint material, a non-damaging method must be used. These come in the form of small plastic "pockets" known simply as "mounts".



Mounts are manufactured either in black or transparent colours and come in strips that need to be cut to size. The back sides or the mounts are gummed for attachment to the album page. Some brands of mount need to be moistened while others are "peel and stick" (self-adhesive). We especially like the quality of the self-adhesive Davo "Easy" brand from the Netherlands.



Mounts are sold in packets with various sizes and quantities. It is necessary to use the correct sized mount for the size of the stamp. Fortunately, in Moldova only a small number of size varieties are used, so it is only necessary to buy a small number of different mount sizes.

FORMAT	SIZE (mm)	DAVO TYPE
Horizontal	46.00 x 27.50	Size 34
Vertical	27.50 x 46.00	Size 56
Square	34.00 x 34.00	Size 34
Diamond	48.08 x 48.08	Size 56
Panoramic 1	69.00 x 27.50	Size 92
Panoramic 2	68.00 x 34.00	Size 92
Souvenir Sheets	Up to 150 x 168	Size 92
Booklet	Up to 156 x	Size 92
Minisheets	Various	See Photo

The stamp (or whatever material to be mounted) is placed inside the mount and then the mount is cut to size, very precisely, using a special cutting tool. A little practice is needed to achieve a perfect 2mm border every time.



We have been using the low cost Prinz brand of mount cutter for many years, with perfect results.

Stamp mounts are not cheap. Expect to pay about €9 (plus shipping) for a pack of 25 Davo Size 34 strips, enough for about 125 standard sizes stamps. However, as a method of protecting and presenting your material, there really is no substitute.

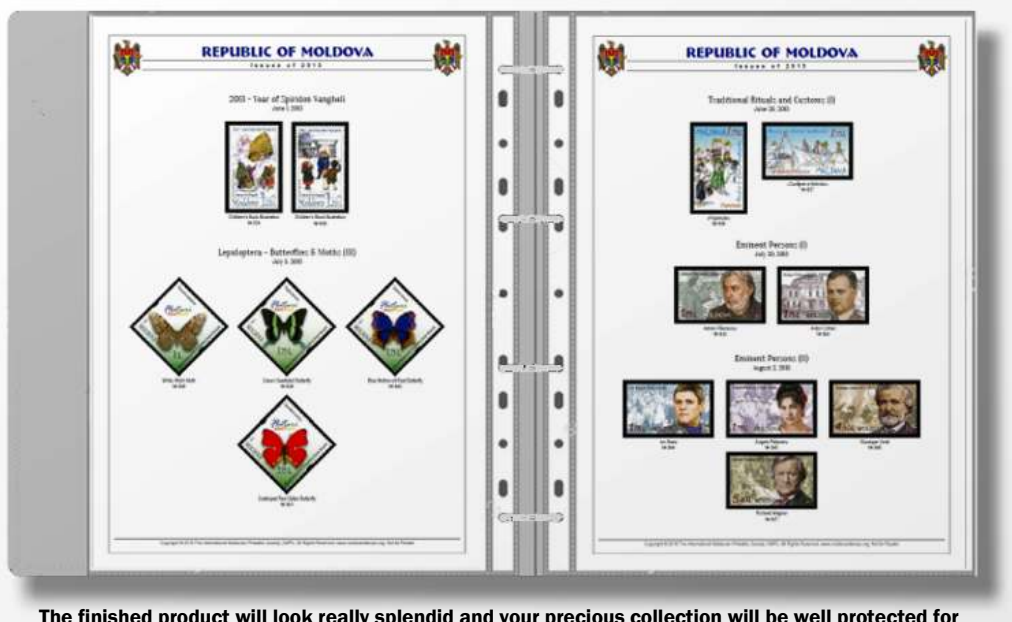
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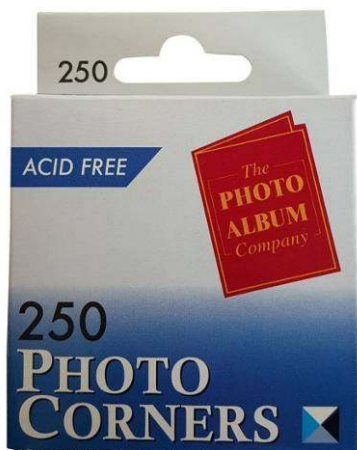
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Some material is either too thick and heavy for mounts (for example, FDCs, post-cards, booklets etc.) or the material is just too large and a suitably sized mount cannot be found (for example, large sheets). In these cases, you have a third option for mounting, namely photo corners.

Photo corners are small rectangular self-adhesive plastic “pockets”, originally designed for mounting photographs in photo albums, but are also ideal for mounting philatelic materials such as FDCs, post-cards and other bulky or large items in stamp albums.

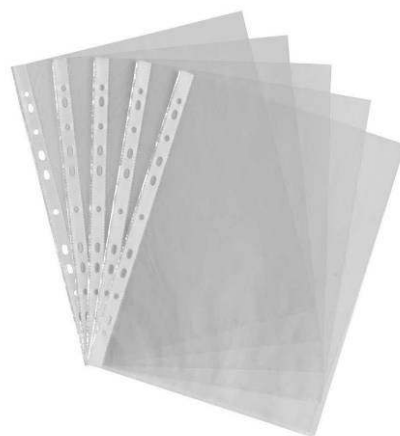


The finished product will look really splendid and your precious collection will be well protected for many years.



material into your album, we have provided a “blank” page, which can also be downloaded from the website.

This page includes the same decorated borders as the usual pages but the main body is blank, allowing you to mount any kind of material you choose.



## Step 4: Protecting Your Stamp Album & Pages

Each printed album page should be protected by inserting them into A4 size transparent plastic sleeves as illustrated above. These are available very cheaply from any office supplies retailer.

The plastic sleeves are pre-punched, with every possible combination of 2, 3 or 4 ring binder. If you attempt to punch holes in the printed album pages them-

selves, you will not only damage the pages but you will find that the pages are very difficult to turn. The plastic sleeves will not only give added protection to your material against moisture, but will also protect the pages from getting dirty from constant handling of the paper.

In each plastic sleeve, two pages should be inserted, back to back. This allows the album to display two pages, side by side, when opened (as illustrated above).

The album should be stored in a cool, dry place and away from direct sunlight. We also suggest that the album be kept in an upright position and inside a cloth bag, to prevent dust from accumulating on the top.

The finished album will look really splendid and your precious collection will be well protected for many years.

We remind readers that whilst the IMPS pre-designed album pages are free to members for their personal use only, they are copyright protected and IMPS retains Intellectual Property rights. You may not sell, trade or otherwise redistribute the files or paper prints produced from the files. The PDF files are digitally encrypted and it is not possible to edit or reverse engineer them. It is also not possible to copy the text or to extract the images from the files.