



Grading United States Coins

EPISODE 7

Alphabet Soup: Designations

INTRODUCTION

This episode explores specific designations given to coins that do not influence the grade but do influence value. Requested by collectors, this aspect of grading examines strike quality in specific areas of certain coins.

DESIGNATIONS

Certain coins have specific designations based on the coin design, color, or intended production use.

Common Silver Dollar Designations

- Proof Like | PL
Determined by the state of the die when struck
 - Deep Mirror PL | DMPL
Made with early strikes of a die
- Proof Like and Deep Mirror Proof Like are coins that were made for circulation. The designation is determined by how new the die was when the coin was struck. Early struck coins may have mirror surfaces, earning the designation DMPL.*

Standing Liberty Quarter Designations

- Full Head | FH | Full strike on the head of liberty on obverse

The key Standing Liberty quarter designation is given when there is a full strike on the head of Liberty, often with special attention focused on Liberty's ear.

Side Note: When a coin is graded with a (+), it means that it has been graded as close to the next highest grade.

Mercury Dime Designations

- Full Bands | FB | Full strike with the separated bands on reverse

The key Mercury dime designation indicates whether there are full bands on the reverse. The bands are shown on the coin's reverse as the binding that holds together the sticks in the bundle. There are three band sets: one at the top, one in the middle, and one at the bottom. The Full Bands designation is given to the coin when the middle band is clearly separated.

Franklin Half Dollar Designations

- Full Bell Lines | FBL Full strike on the Liberty Bell lines

The key Franklin half dollar designation looks for full bell lines at the base of the Liberty Bell on the reverse. Grading services look for full separation of the bell lines. There must be at least three clear lines to the FBL designation.

Roosevelt Dime Designations

- Full Torch | FT Full strike on the bottom band of the torch on reverse

This Roosevelt dime designation indicates whether there is a full band on the bottom of the torch on the reverse of the coin. The band at the bottom must show full separation to receive this designation.

Jefferson Nickel Designations

- Full Steps | FS | Full strike with 5 or 6 steps completed

The key Jefferson nickel designation indicates if there are full steps on Jefferson's Monticello. Five or six steps are considered FS. Grading services indicate the difference as 5FS or 6FS.

Copper Coin Designations

- Red | RD Shiny red copper coins
- Red Brown | RB Brown toning on top of red
- Brown | BN Mostly brown

Although not discussed in this course, these copper coin designations are used by grading companies. The Red designation on a copper coin indicates the earliest state of preservation.

COIN OF THE EPISODE

1884 O Morgan Dollar

- Reflective surfaces
- Clean fields
- Slight ticks on the cheek

Graded as MS 65 PL

