

Free Digital Perforation Gauge, Measurement and Centering Tool

by Dave Parsons

As most of us get older, our eyesight and hand steadiness is not what it used to be. So it's a bit harder to use perforation gauges or rulers. One solution to this issue and a solution when exact measures are needed, is the digital option. A free software program has been made available to stamp collectors courtesy of Keijo Kortelainen of Finland. To access the program just go to the website: <http://www.stampcollectingblog.com/free-digital-perforation-gauge/> . There are two YouTube videos showing how to use the program at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqsUvwjc9vPd7zlB449DPXA>

The program is fairly easy to use and includes a utility to straighten scanned images which is a function lacking in other digital perf programs. One key is to make sure the dpi settings in the program match the scanner dpi setting. Although the scans take longer it is recommended to scan at 1200 dpi for better accuracy and visibility.

The first function of the program is to offer a perforation gauge. The scanned image is opened, then straightened, then markers are placed at either the perf tips or holes along one side, or all sides. This is useful for measuring stamps on cover or paper or which cannot be perfed using a standard perf gauge. This also can be used when there are small (1/4) differences in perfs. An example of the markers along the side of a stamp is shown below.



The stamp shown at left had perfs digitally measured at 11.08. For this variety, possible perfs were 11, 11.5, and 12; hence we can assume that this one has 11 perfs on the vertical side.

The program also has a feature that lets the user to measure stamp dimensions. This allows the user to distinguish between different printers or printing methods. This is especially useful in differentiating early U.S. flat plate vs. rotary press printed stamps.

The third feature is a centering tool that measures how well a stamp design is centered in the overall presentation. Results will show the percentage offset left and right and top and bottom. In examining the photos provided in the Scott Specialized catalog for various grades, it is possible to estimate the centering grade of scanned stamps, keeping in mind that centering is just part of the grading process which also includes coloring, faults, strike clarity, etc. As an exercise the Scott grade for Fine/Very Fine averaged

left/right offsets of 65.2% and top /bottom offset at 62.3%. Correspondingly the VF stamps came in at 59.1% and 59.0% and the Extra Fine examples were at 55% and 54.0%. Slight differences in measured offsets were observed when the total stamp dimensions were measured from the perf tips vs. the interior perf holes.

This program is quite powerful and useful in many circumstances. Our kudos to Stamporama member Keijo for his efforts. He also has a stamp collecting blog which offers insights into other collecting topics.

Dave Parsons' collecting interests include U.S. used and BOB, Mint U.S. Commemoratives, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, South Africa and Liberia.