

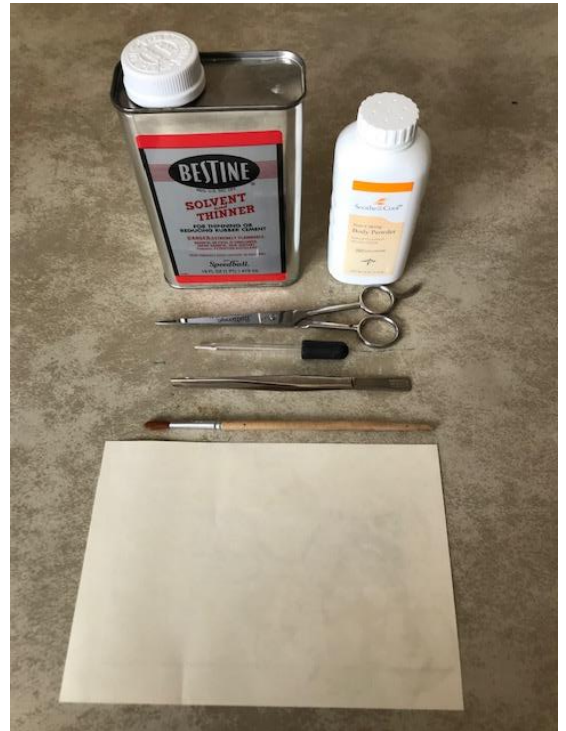
# Self-Adhesive Stamp Removal Made Easy

By James Steckley

The removal of self-adhesive stamps has been a topic of conversation for a long time, so I recently had occasion to explore the process.

The tools necessary are a pair of scissors to trim the stamp's paper away on three sides leaving a little extra on one end to handle it during the process. Also, the less paper you have, the less solvent you will use. A small bottle of baby or body powder (it goes a long way) to cover the back of the removed stamp, an eye dropper to enable a bit of control when dispensing the solvent and a small piece of paper or chipboard on which to work, making sure that the surface on which you are working will not be affected by the solvent being used.

The solvent I use is Bestine, a product for thinning or reducing rubber cement. I'm sure there are others but this one seems to work well, act very fast and does not have a strong odor. It is, as many solvents are, very flammable so care needs to be taken when and where you use it. Because it evaporates so fast it is best to keep the lid on, at least loosely, when not filling the dropper.



1. With the stamp on its face, dispense enough solvent to cover the paper.
2. When the paper becomes translucent (in about 15 seconds) and you can see the outline of the stamp, turn it over and bend the paper a bit and with tongs lift the stamp off and place it face down ... obviously!
3. Most of the adhesive will remain on the paper but enough remains on the stamp to be very sticky. Then drop the small paint brush into the powder and the bristles will fill up. Place the brush on the stamp and brush it to the edges. Holding it with tongs, brush off the excess powder and the job is done! The entire process should take less than a minute.

You will find that some of the older self-adhesives are more difficult to remove as the glue used is different from the glue used today. I discovered this on the 2015 issue of Flannery O'Conner Scott # 5003. Removing self-adhesive stamps from plastic or corrugated paper such as Priority Mail envelopes can be a bit more challenging.

The front paper of a corrugated material should be removed otherwise; a lot of solvent would be wasted. I used a small pen knife to aid in the separation and then carefully peeling it off the corrugated part of the paper.

On plastic it is a bit more difficult. Placing the stamp face up, apply the solvent to the face and wait. When you can peel up a corner of the stamp, slowly try to remove it. I found that another few drops of solvent between the stamp and the plastic will aid in the total removal. The use of the powder is the same.



Some of the finished high-denomination stamps after backing removal.

I found the process so easy, that I sat for hours removing stamps. It doesn't take much to excite a stamp collector! Good Luck!

**James Steckley**, our current President and Donations Chair, is a member since 2018. His main collecting interest is U.S. Revenues.

**Editor:** Another product to loosen the stamp adhesive is Pure Citrus which has an orange smell (air freshener), is 100% natural and is cheaper than Bestine. One downside is it comes in a spray can (non-aerosol) which makes it difficult to use over a small area, like the back of one stamp. The procedure is the same as James describes above. I bought my Pure Citrus at Home Depot a few years ago (and it still works).

