

4-H TUESDAY TOOL TIME



For Volunteers, Parents and Extension Professionals

Understanding the Design and Symbolism of the U.S. One Dollar Bill

Although symbols are open to many interpretations, we believe the following information offers some historical insight (and some undocumented perceptions) about the design and meaning of some of the images on the one-dollar bill. The explanations and interpretations that appear below were verified by the Truth or Fiction website, and predominantly (except where noted otherwise) reflect the official interpretations of the United States Treasury Department and the United States Department of State, the official keeper of the United States Seal.



Take out a dollar bill and study it.

This so-called paper money is in fact a cotton and linen blend, with red and blue minute silk fibers running through it. It is actually material. We've all washed it without it falling apart. A special blend of ink is used; the contents we will never know. It is overprinted with symbols and then it is starched to make it water resistant and pressed to give it that nice crisp look.

For more on the symbols...

<https://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/riddles/jokes/dollar-bill-trivia/index.htm> 2020

Origami (折り紙, from *ori* meaning "folding", and *kami* meaning "paper" (*kami* changes to *gami* due to [rendaku](#)) is the traditional Japanese [art](#) of paper folding, which started in the 17th century AD at the latest and was popularized outside of Japan in the mid-1900s. It has since then evolved into a modern art form. The goal of this art is to transform a flat sheet of paper into a finished sculpture through folding and sculpting techniques, and as such the use of cuts or glue are not considered to be origami. Paper cutting and gluing is usually considered [kirigami](#).



Inflation Calculator - The Changing Value of a Dollar

<http://www.dollartimes.com/calculators/inflation.htm> 2020

A dollar just ain't what it used to be.

Our inflation calculator will tell you the relative buying power of a dollar in the United States between any two years from 1914-2020.

It will also calculate the rate of inflation during the time period you choose.

We determine the value of a dollar using the Consumer Price Index from December of the previous year. All calculations are approximate.

Fun fact: For the ten years between 2008 and 2020, inflation has averaged less than 2% per year.

\$1.00 in 1960 has the same buying power as \$8.74 in 2020. Annual inflation over this period was about 3.68%

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2020 <https://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/riddles/jokes/dollar-bill-trivia/index.htm>



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Take out a dollar bill and study it.

The one dollar bill you're looking at first came off the presses in 1957 in its present design. According to the U.S. Treasury Department, that is when the motto, "In God We Trust" started being used on paper money. It was in use on coins long before that.

This so-called paper money is in fact a cotton and linen blend, with red and blue minute silk fibers running through it. It is actually material. We've all washed it without it falling apart. A special blend of ink is used, the contents we will never know. It is overprinted with symbols and then it is starched to make it water resistant and pressed to give it that nice crisp look.



If you look on the front of the bill, you will see the United States Treasury Seal. Although some claims have been made that the scales represent the need for a balanced budget, the Treasury Department has little to do with whether the budget is balanced, since that is actually handled by congress. The U.S. Treasury Department indicates that the balancing scales actually represent justice. In the center, some people believe there is a carpenter's T-square, a tool used for an even cut. But that image is actually a chevron with 13 stars representing the 13 original colonies. Underneath is a key that is intended to represent a symbol of authority.

If you turn the bill over, you will see two circles. The two circles reflect the two sides of the Great Seal of the United States. Before the adjournment of the Continental Congress on July 4th, 1776, a committee was appointed to develop a seal for the United States. The committee was Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson, three of the five men who had drafted the Declaration of Independence. They were merely the first committee, however. It took six years, the work of two additional committees and a total of 14 men before a final version of the Great Seal was approved. The final proposal, as accepted by Congress, was submitted on June 13, 1782, by Charles Thompson, Secretary of Congress. He brought together some of the recommendations of the three committees, their consultants, and artists.

If you look at the left hand circle, you will see a Pyramid. This pyramid was not a part of the proposals for the Great Seal until the third committee, and it was not suggested by Jefferson, Franklin, and Adams. Notice the face is lighted and the western side is dark. Although there is no "official" explanation for the shading, some interpret it as a reflection that our country was just beginning and had not begun to explore the West or decided what we could do for Western Civilization.

The Pyramid is un-capped, which may signify that our country was not yet finished. The unfinished state of the pyramid was intentional, and Charles Thompson, in his remarks to congress about the symbolism on the Great Seal, said the pyramid represented "Strength and Duration." Inside the capstone you have the all-seeing eye, and ancient symbol for divinity. Although Franklin's committee did not suggest a pyramid, it did originate the suggestion of the eye. However, the term "the all-seeing eye" was never officially used when describing it. The Franklin committee wanted the seal to include a reflection of divine providence and discussed a variety of themes including the Children of Israel in the Wilderness.

"IN GOD WE TRUST" is on this currency. The Latin above the pyramid, ANNUIT COEPTIS, means "God has favored our undertaking." It was Franklin's belief that one man couldn't do it alone, but a group of men with the help of God could do anything. The Latin below the pyramid, NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM, is interpreted to mean "a new order for the world." At the base of the pyramid is the Roman Numeral for 1776.



If you look at the right-hand circle, and check it carefully, you may notice that with only slight modifications it is the Seal of the President of the United States. It also appears on every National Cemetery in the United States, the Parade of Flags Walkway at the Bushnell, Florida National Cemetery, and is the centerpiece of most heroes' monuments. On the Great Seal, the eagle faces the talon holding the olive branch. The eagle on The Presidential Seal faced in the opposite direction-toward the talon holding the arrows until 1945, when Harry Truman had it redesigned to face the olive branch as well.



Lesson Resources (2020):

1. The Spending Game
<https://store.extension.ias.tate.edu/product/The-Spending-Game>
2. Money Habitudes for Teens – Card Game
<http://shop.moneyhabitudes.com/money-habitudes-for-teens/>
3. 4-H Financial Champions Curriculum – 4HCCS BU-07712, BU-07710 and BU-07711
<https://shop4-h.org/products/financial-champions-curriculum-1-money-fundamentals-digital-download>
4. Art and History of Origami
5. Understanding the Design and Symbolism of the US One Dollar Bill; *National Institute of Environmental Health and Science*
<http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/jokes/triviadollar.htm>
6. Kids and Money <https://4-h.org/about/blog/tag/kids-and-money/>
7. Field Trip to the Money Factory <https://4-h.org/about/blog/tag/kids-and-money/>

No one knows for certain what the symbols mean. But although there is no explanation of the imagery of the eagle in the official records, most historical references to the bald eagle indicate that it represents something of uniquely American origin. One of the original design proposals for the Great Seal featured a small crested white eagle, which is not uniquely American, but this was later changed to the uniquely American Bald Eagle. An unsupported interpretation of the inclusion of the Bald Eagle is that it could also represent victory and independence, because the eagle is not afraid of a storm, is strong and smart enough to soar above it, and wears no material crown.

Also, notice the shield is unsupported. Charles Thompson said it denoted that the United States of America ought to rely on their own virtue. The shield consists of red and white stripes with a blue bar above that represents Congress. The colors are taken from the American flag and officially the red represents hardiness and valor, the white represents purity and innocence, and the blue, vigilance, perseverance, and justice. In the Eagle's beak you will read, "E PLURIBUS UNUM", meaning "one nation from many people."

Above the Eagle you have thirteen stars representing the thirteen original colonies. Again, we were coming together as one. Notice that the Eagle holds an olive branch and arrows in his talons. The official meaning is that the olive branch and the arrows "denote the power of peace and war." As noted previously, the design shows the eagle facing the olive branch. This was the opposite of the Presidential Seal, which showed the eagle facing the arrows, until President Harry Truman had it redesigned to face the olive branch in 1945.

Some feel that the number 13 is an unlucky number. You will usually never see a room numbered 13, or hotels or motels with a 13th floor. But the significance of the number 13 in U.S. history is very strong. The number 13 as used on many U.S. symbols (the stripes on the flag, steps on the Pyramid, 13 stars above the eagle, 13 bars on the shield, 13 leaves on the olive branch, 13 fruits, and 13 arrows) all represent the beginning of our country, as established by the thirteen colonies. But it should also remind us of the importance of the "13th Amendment". And you can, and should, be reminded of the history of this country each time you look at a one-dollar bill.

Craft: Origami Shirt from dollar bill

The Shirt – Introducing Consumerism & Textile Science



Start with a relatively clean, crisp bill. It will make it much easier. All folds should be sharply creased. It helps to go over the fold with a fingernail on a flat, hard surface (like a ruler).

Step 1 - Start by folding the bill precisely in half lengthwise. (I prefer to fold in toward the front of the bill. I think it produces a nicer design on the end product. For your first attempt, it will be easier to follow exactly the same orientation on the bill as shown in the photos.) Unfold the bill, leaving the crease produced by the fold for the next step.



Step 1



Step 2 - Fold the bill one quarter of the way in from each side lengthwise. The edge of the bill should just meet the crease made by the fold in the previous step. Do this for both sides as shown.



Step 3

Step 3 - Turn the bill over. Fold the white of one end over as shown. This will become the collar in the next step. (If the bill is printed unevenly, use the wider edge.)

Step 2



Step 4 - Turn the bill over again. From this side, angle-in the two corners from the end you folded in the last step. The two points should meet precisely at the centerline. The angle is not terribly important, but should be about the same as shown in the photo.



Step 4

Step 5 - Fold a little less than one third of the bill lengthwise from the opposite end as shown. If you're following in the same orientation as the photos, use the markings on the bill for a fold point. (Notice that the edge of the bill just meets the word "OF" on the reverse printing.) If you fold too little, the shirt will appear too long in the end. If you fold too much, the next step will not work. See below.

Step 5



Step 6

Step 6 - Now you will fold inward in the same direction, tucking the previous fold under the "collar" created in step 4. So far it looks kinda 'nifty, and if you know it is *supposed* to look like a shirt, you get the collar concept. But wait, there's more...

Step 7 - Gently unfold the previous two folds, keeping the creases. On the lateral fold furthest from the collar, refold it straight across as shown. (On the flatbed scanner, this made a bit of a mess of it, but it is fairly easy in 3D.)



Step 7



Step 8

Step 8 - (This step is hard to describe, but it is actually fairly easy.) You are going to introduce two new folds on each "sleeve". I do this by holding each side of the previous fold between thumb and forefinger in the orientation shown, just on either side of the vertical fold as shown. Just force the angle to close slightly, and force the extra paper inside the vertical folds. Once you've got it looking right, force the insides to crease by pressing on a hard surface. (Try looking at the next photo - like I said, it is hard to describe!)

Step 9 - (This is a close-up of what the fold should look like when complete.) Do this for both sides.



Step 9

Step 10 - (This is what it should look like after both sides are

complete.)

When you re-tuck the fold you've been working on back under the collar, you're done! It should look about like this. With the basic shape, the collar and the sleeves, it should be recognizable. Once



you've done a few, you can try folding the whole thing into the reverse side, leaving the obverse side out. (Like I said, I think this looks better. This is especially true with 1 dollar bills where the edge seal on the reverse under the collar looks a little bit like a necklace.)



Step 10

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Resources: <http://www.instructables.com/id/How-to-Fold-a-Dollar-Bill-Shirt/> and Video <http://www.origami-instructions.com/money-origami-shirt.html> 2020 and more...