

Your Quick Introduction To The Hobby of Playing Card Collecting



Welcome To Card Collecting

Whether you're an experienced collector or a newcomer to the world of playing card collecting, let me be one of the first to welcome you. My name is Lee Asher, and I'm the president of the world's largest playing card collector's association - *52 Plus Joker*. Since its inception in 1985, *52 Plus Joker* has continually been a passionate advocate for collecting playing cards, and this short, informative manual is no exception.

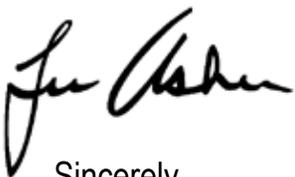
The goal of this resource is to help you become a better collector.

While this manuscript is filled with great information that will hopefully encourage you to further your knowledge about playing cards, remember that it's just the tip of the iceberg.

You're urged to use the internet, your local library, and other resources available so that you may learn as much as you can about cards. If you seek even more information, then I highly suggest that you [join 52 Plus Joker](#). As I said before, the sole purpose of this club is to promote the hobby of collecting playing cards.

When you join, you meet legendary collectors & designers, hobnob with premier card manufactures, and talk playing cards with other enthusiasts like yourself. It's truly playing card heaven! However, more on joining the club later.

For now, you probably have lots of questions and need to find answers. Let's get started right away!



Sincerely,
Lee Asher
(2016)

Author, Playing Card Enthusiast & President Of 52 Plus Joker

*Special thanks goes to Steve Bowling, Tom & Judy Dawson, Kristin Patterson, The Hochman Encyclopedia, & Don Boyer for their help and support in creating this resource about collecting playing cards.

Antique? Vintage? Modern?

Are you a modern deck collector, or maybe you fancy yourself as an antique collector? Vintage? Not sure? The easiest way to tell is by the age of the decks you collect.

- > You're an **ANTIQUE** collector if the majority of your deck collection predates the 1930s.
- > You're a **VINTAGE** collector if the majority of your deck collection dates from 1931 - 1995.
- > You're a **MODERN** collector if the majority of your deck collection dates from 1996 - today.

Should you own and collect decks / ephemera from all three categories? **I absolutely hope so!**

While I personally consider myself a vintage card collector, I'm the proud owner of a handful of wonderful antique decks as well as a plethora of modern decks. Simply put, the more you learn about playing cards in general, the more interesting each category becomes.

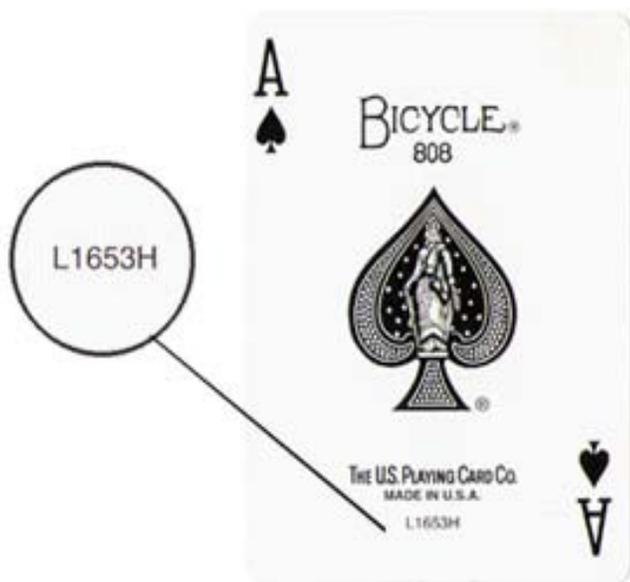


Clockwise from top left: Antique Samuel Hart playing cards (1865), A pair of vintage Jerry's Nugget Casino decks (1970), and a modern brick box of Lance Miller Bicycle Actuators (2012).

Date Your Playing Cards

While dating most decks is relatively easy, sometimes it can be tricky. Here are three simple steps to help you date your decks. Have fun learning more about the playing cards you already own!

STEP 1 - Take a look at the box, Joker, Ace of Spades, or any advertising cards. Sometimes these items contain a date or a clue. If you cannot find a date, then continue to step 2.



STEP 2 - If your deck is made by United States Playing Card Co., then find the Ace of Spades. It contains a dating code which was placed on it at time of manufacture. The code first came into use in 1904, and it applies only to Aces of Spades that bear a letter plus a four-digit number. **Now refer to this chart with your code to find your date.** If you're deck is sealed, then continue to step 3.

STEP 3 - If your deck is sealed and you cannot see the Ace of Spades code, then you might be able to date the deck by how the deal is sealed.



If your deck dates from 1862 to 1871, it will most likely come with a 1 or 5-cent U.S. IRS tax stamp.



If your deck was made between 1894 - 1965 and sold in the U.S., it will come with some kind of blue U.S. IRS tax stamp.



If your deck has a perforated blue stamp / seal then your deck is most likely from 1966 to 1976.



If your deck has a sticker (blue, black, red, gold, etc.) then your deck is most likely from 1977 to current day.

NOTE: The above examples are generalizations based on the assumption that your deck was sold in the United States. There are MANY instances where these rules do not apply. If your deck cannot be dated by the above methods, then **email me**, and I will try and help you date your deck in question.

Grade Your Playing Cards

The most frequent question I'm asked about playing cards relates directly to value. "What are these worth?" The simple yet cold answer is that they are worth what someone will pay for them.

Just like beauty, value is in the eye of the beholder.

A majority of the time, value is based on the condition of the playing cards so it's best to know the grade of the cards within your collection.



Listen to a short interview with playing card experts Tom and Judy Dawson, as they casually talk about how to grade your own playing card collection.

With permission, here's Eugene Hochman's original definitions of how to grade your playing cards.

AS ISSUED: A complete deck, in mint condition, with all cards, jokers and extra cards contained in the original packaging when first distributed for sale. It might be unopened packaging when first distributed for sale. It might be unopened or carefully opened for examination, but not necessarily unbroken, and the cellophane or wrapper would be attached.

MINT: A complete deck showing no signs of use. Normally all cards would be present as would the original box in mint or near mint condition. The inside wrapper would not be there.

EXCELLENT: A complete deck that has been occasionally used, but still in first class condition. Gold edges would still be intact and you would be proud to use this deck in your game.

GOOD: A complete deck showing signs of repeated use, but still usable. There would be no serious creases or bent/broken corners. The deck would not be swollen or misshapen and would fit comfortably into the original box.

POOR: A deck not good enough to fit into one of the above categories. It likely would have at least one of these serious faults - bent or broken corners, bad creases, heavy soiling, etc.

WITH FAULTS: A deck in one of the good to as issued categories, but with serious faults such as a missing or damaged card or a damaged, incomplete or missing box.

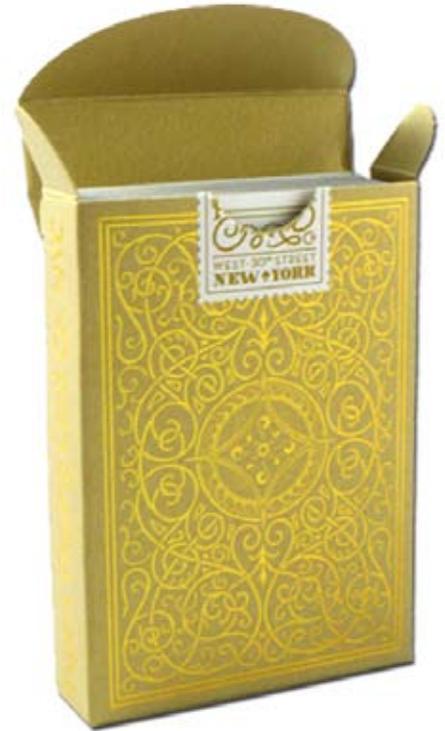
Care & Storage For Cards

Where should your collectible playing cards be kept?

A dry, cool, well-ventilated storage area is optimal. Avoid storing cards in the attic, basement, along a wall, or wherever else moisture and temperature fluctuate to the extremes and where condensation could occur.

Humidity and high temperatures increase deterioration and invite the growth of mold and mildew, which breaks down the binder layers of the card and potentially mars the surface.

Playing Cards prefer a 68° F (20° C) and a relative humidity range of 30% - 40%. They can be stored in temperatures as low as 30° - 40° F (-1° through 4° C), as long as the humidity stays constant between 30-40%. For maximum longevity, a consistently dark, dry, and cool area is the best place to store cards. Dehumidifiers can reduce the moisture in a room or storage area and are inexpensive.



Classic Gold Deck by The Expert Playing Card Company (2015)

“ Consider using a dehumidifier or a fan to promote air circulation in the summer, or even spring & autumn if you live in a rainy climate.

- **Tom Dawson** EXPERT PLAYING CARD COLLECTOR

The ultimate goal is to protect the bricks, decks, or cards from dust, light and potential changes in the environment. Archival paper enclosures, free of acids, peroxides, and sulfur or a chemically-stable plastic container are best.

If a plastic sleeve is desired, choose coated polyester, polypropylene, or polyethylene sleeves. Most of the best museums, libraries and archives strictly use polyester (found under the commercial name - Mylar) without any anti-static coatings. It's a big no-no to use any type of PVC casing.

Deterioration and fading can be caused by a multitude of lights, so beware of ultraviolet rays from both artificial and natural sources. For even more protection from light, dust, and fluctuations in the environment, store the cased cards in a safe deposit box within a banking institution.

Join 52 Plus Joker Org.



For only 25.00 USD per year, your 52 Plus Joker membership includes:

- **CARD CULTURE:** digital monthly magazine with access to all issues
- **CLEAR THE DECKS:** printed quarterly in color with access to all issues
- Access to the *Ask Alexander* database of all our archives
- Personal club account on the world's largest Playing Card Forum
- Access to advice & information on all things playing cards
- Inclusion within *52 Plus Joker's* club roster
- Invitation to the Annual *52 Plus Joker* convention

Join The Club & Get Started

We're always eager to welcome new members, including collectors, artists/designers, Kickstarter project backers, magicians, cardists and anyone else with an interest in playing cards, regardless of their experience!

Still want more information about 52 Plus Joker?
Download a complimentary copy of CARD CULTURE, and see what members receive monthly.