



United States one-dollar bill

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The **United States one-dollar bill** (\$1) is a denomination of United States currency. An image of the first U.S. President (1789–97), George Washington, based on a painting by Gilbert Stuart, is currently featured on the obverse (front), and the Great Seal of the United States is featured on the reverse (back). The one-dollar bill has the oldest overall design of all U.S. currency currently being produced (The current two-dollar bill obverse design dates from 1928, while the reverse appeared in 1976). The obverse design of the dollar bill seen today debuted in 1963 (the reverse in 1935) when it was first issued as a Federal Reserve Note (previously, one dollar bills were Silver Certificates).

The inclusion of the motto, "In God We Trust," on all currency was required by law in 1955, and first appeared on paper money in 1957.

An individual dollar bill is also less formally known as a **one**, a **single**, a **buck**, a **bone**, and a **bill**.^[3] The Federal Reserve says the average life of a \$1 bill in circulation is 5.8 years before it is replaced because of wear.^[4] Approximately 42% of all U.S. currency produced in 2009 were one-dollar bills.^[5]

History

Large size notes

(approximately $7\frac{3}{8} \times 3\frac{1}{8}$ in $\cong 187 \times 79$ mm -- see also IBM punched cards)

- 1862**: The first one-dollar bill was issued as a Legal Tender Note (United States Note) with a portrait of Salmon P. Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury under President Abraham Lincoln.^{[6][7]}
- 1869**: The \$1 United States Note was redesigned with a portrait of George Washington in the center and a vignette of Christopher Columbus sighting land to the left. The obverse of the note also featured green and blue tinting. Although this note is

One dollar

(United States)

Value	\$1
Width	6.14 inches \approx 156.1 mm
Height	2.61 inches \approx 66.3 mm
Weight	Approx. 1 ^[1] g
Material used	75% cotton 25% linen ^[2]
Years of printing	1929 – present (Small size)

Obverse



Design George Washington

Design date 1963

Reverse



Design Great Seal of the United States

Design date 1935

technically a United States Note, TREASURY NOTE appeared on it instead of UNITED STATES NOTE.^[8]

- **1874:** The Series of 1869 United States Note was revised. Changes on the obverse included removing the green and blue tinting, adding a red floral design around the word WASHINGTON D.C., and changing the term TREASURY NOTE to UNITED STATES NOTE. The reverse was completely redesigned. This note was also issued as Series of 1875 and 1878.^[9]
- **1880:** The red floral design around the words ONE DOLLAR and WASHINGTON D.C. on the United States Note was removed and replaced with a large red seal. Later versions also had blue serial numbers and a small seal moved to the left side of the note.^[9]
- **1886:** The first woman to appear on U.S. currency, Martha Washington, was featured on the \$1 silver certificate. The reverse of the note featured an ornate design that occupied the entire note, excluding the borders.^[10]
- **1890:** One-dollar Treasury or "Coin Notes" were issued for government purchases of silver bullion from the silver mining industry. The reverse featured the large word ONE in the center surrounded by an ornate design that occupied almost the entire note.^[11]
- **1891:** The reverse of the Series of 1890 Treasury Note was redesigned because the treasury felt that it was too "busy," which would make it too easy to counterfeit. More open space was incorporated into the new design. The obverse was largely unchanged.^[12]
- **1896:** The famous "Educational Series" Silver Certificate was issued. The entire obverse was covered with artwork of allegorical figures representing "history instructing youth" in front of Washington D.C. The reverse featured portraits of George and Martha Washington surrounded by an ornate design that occupied almost the entire note.^[13]
- **1899:** The \$1 Silver Certificate was again redesigned. The obverse featured a vignette of the United States Capitol behind a bald eagle perched on an American flag. Below that were small portraits of Abraham Lincoln to the left and Ulysses S. Grant to the right.^[14]
- **1917:** The obverse of the \$1 United States Note was changed slightly with the removal of ornamental frames that surrounded the serial numbers.^[15]
- **1918:** The only large-sized, Federal Reserve Note-like \$1 bill was issued as a Federal Reserve Bank Note (not to be confused with Federal Reserve Notes). Each note was an obligation of the issuing Federal Reserve Bank and could only be redeemed at that corresponding bank. The obverse of the note featured a borderless portrait of George Washington to the left and wording in the entire center. The reverse featured a bald eagle in flight clutching an American flag.^[16]
- **1923:** Both the one-dollar United States Note and Silver Certificate were redesigned. Both notes featured the same reverse and an almost identical obverse with the same border design and portrait of George Washington. The only difference between the two notes was the color of ink used for the numeral 1 crossed by the word DOLLAR, treasury seal, and serial numbers along with



First \$1 bill issued in 1862 as a Legal Tender Note



Series 1880 \$1 Legal Tender



Series of 1886 \$1 Silver Certificate featuring Martha Washington

the wording of the obligations. These dollar bills were the first and only large-size notes with a standardized design for different types of notes of the same denomination; this same concept would later be used on small-size notes.^[17]

Small size notes

(6.14 length × 2.61 width × 0.0043 in thickness = 156 × 66.3 × 0.11 mm)

In 1929, all currency was changed to the size which is familiar today. The first one-dollar bills were issued as silver certificates under Series of 1928. The treasury seal and serial numbers were dark blue. The obverse was nearly identical to the Series of 1923 \$1 silver certificate, but the treasury seal featured spikes around it and a large gray ONE replaced the blue "1 DOLLAR." The reverse, too, had the same border design as the Series of 1923 \$1 bill, but the center featured a large ornate ONE superimposed by ONE DOLLAR. These are commonly known as "Funnybacks" due to the rather odd-looking "ONE" on the reverse. These \$1 silver certificates were issued until 1934.

In 1933, Series of 1928 \$1 United States Notes were issued to supplement the supply of \$1 Silver Certificates. Its treasury seal and serial numbers were red and there was different wording on the obverse of the note. However, a month after their production, it was realized that there would be no real need for these notes and production was stopped. A small number of these \$1 bills entered circulation and the rest were kept in treasury vaults until 1949 when they were issued in Puerto Rico.^[18]

In 1934, the design of the \$1 silver certificate was changed. This occurred with that year's passage of the Silver Purchase Act, which led to a large increase in dollar bills backed by that metal.^[19] Under Washington's portrait, ONE SILVER DOLLAR was changed to ONE DOLLAR. The treasury seal was moved to the right and superimposed over ONE, and a blue numeral 1 was added to the left. The reverse remained the same.

A year later, in 1935, the design of the one-dollar bill was changed again. On the obverse, the blue numeral 1 was changed to gray and made smaller, the gray ONE to the right was removed, the treasury seal was made smaller and superimposed by WASHINGTON D.C., and a stylized ONE DOLLAR was added over the treasury seal. The reverse was also changed to its current design, except for the absence of IN GOD WE TRUST.

World War II brought about special issues of one-dollar bills in 1942. Special \$1 Silver Certificates were issued for Hawaii in case of a Japanese invasion. HAWAII was printed vertically on the left



Famous 1896 "Educational Series"
\$1 Silver Certificate



The first small-size \$1 Silver
Certificate.



Common reverse of \$1 Silver
Certificates (Series of 1928-1934)
and \$1 United States Notes (Series
of 1928), commonly referred to as
"Funnybacks"



The first small-size \$1 United States
Banknote printed.

and right side of the obverse and also horizontally across the reverse. The seal and serial numbers were changed to brown. Special Silver Certificates were also issued as payment for Allied troops in North Africa about to begin their assault into Europe. The only difference on these one-dollar bills was a yellow instead of blue seal. Both of these types of notes could be declared worthless if they fell into enemy hands.



Special issue \$1 Silver Certificate
for Allied troops in North Africa

The next change came in 1957 when the \$1 bill became the first piece of paper U.S. currency to bear the motto *IN GOD WE TRUST*; it was added over the word *ONE* on the reverse. Initially the BEP began printing the motto on notes printed with the new 32 note press, but soon Series of 1935G bills printed on a 18 note press featured the motto.

The final production of \$1 Silver Certificates occurred in late 1963. In 1964, the redemption of Silver Certificates for silver coin ended and in 1968 the redemption of Silver Certificates for silver bullion ended.

Production of one-dollar Federal Reserve Notes was undertaken in late 1963 to replace the soon-to-be obsolete \$1 Silver Certificate. The design on the reverse remained the same, but the border design on the obverse underwent considerable modification, as the mostly abstract filigrees were replaced with designs that were mostly botanical in nature. In addition, the word "one," which appeared eight times around the border in small type, was eliminated. The serial numbers and treasury seal were printed in green ink. This was the first time the one-dollar bill was printed as a Federal Reserve Note.

The \$1 bill became the first denomination printed at the new Western Currency Facility in February 1991, when a shipment of 3.2 million star notes from the Dallas FRB was produced.^[20]

Though bill denominations of \$5 and higher have been redesigned twice since 1995 as part of ongoing anti-counterfeiting efforts, there are currently no plans to redesign the \$1 or \$2 bills.

Experimental issues

Since 1933, the one-dollar bill has been the exclusive experimental denomination among circulating US currency; however, an exception was made in August 1981 for several Richmond \$10 notes produced on Natick test paper. The first experiment was conducted in January and February of that year to assess the effects of using different ratios of cotton to linen in the make-up of the bills. Series 1928A and 1928B \$1 silver certificates with serial number block letters X-B and Y-B were used as the experimental group; the Z-B block was used as the control group. The results of the experiment were inconclusive.

In 1937, another test was conducted, similar in style to the 1933 experiment. This test used Series 1935 one-dollar bills. The particular notes used in this experiment can be identified by their serial numbers. Notes ranging from A00000001B to A06180000B and B00000001B–B03300000B were the experimental group and notes ranging from C00000001B to C03300000B were part of the control group. No conclusive results were found.

A better known test was done in 1942 during World War II to test alternative types of paper. This was a precautionary measure in case the current type of paper supply could not be maintained. Series 1935A notes made of the special paper and were printed with a red "S" to the right of the treasury seal, while notes of the control group were printed with a red *R*. Because they have some collector value,

fake red S's and R's have been applied to regular Series 1935A notes to try to pass them at a higher value; checking a note's serial numbers can prevent this. Serial numbers of the R group range from S70884001C to S72068000C and serial numbers of the S group range from S73884001C to S75068000C.

Sometime in the early to mid-1960s, the BEP experimented with a new firm, the Gilbert Paper Company, to see if they could duplicate the usual paper production.^[21] The BEP selected a series of notes printed by the Philadelphia FRB as the test subjects. Serial numbers for this group range from C60800001A to C61440000A.

One-dollar bills were again the subject of experimentation in May 1992, when the BEP began to test a web-fed Intaglio printing press. Because of a need for greater quantities of \$1 FRNs, the BEP sent out REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) (year 1985) NO. BEP-85-73 to procure a web-fed intaglio printing press to dramatically increase the production of currency notes within the confines of their current (1985) 14th & C street facility. Instead of printing one side of a square sheet of 32 notes at a time, the web-fed press used 96 engraved images or plate-cylinder to print the back of the note, then another 96 image engraved plate-cylinder to print the front of the note. Both sides of notes were printed from a continuous roll of paper. The Alexander-Hamilton intaglio Web press printed both sides of intaglio at the same time. The web-press was designed as a full-blown production press as opposed to an experimental press. The notes were issued in Series 1988A, 1993, and 1995. Because of mechanical problems and operator error, as well as the sometimes poor quality of the notes, production was ended in July 1996. Web notes can be identified by the back plate number next to IN GOD WE TRUST and the removal of face check letters and quadrant numbers.^[22]

Obverse of current \$1 bill



Example
Federal
Reserve Bank
Seal (for San
Francisco) as
it appears on
a \$1 bill; the
number 12
appears four
times to
confirm

The portrait of George Washington is displayed in the center of the obverse of the one-dollar bill, as it has been since the 1869 design. The oval containing George Washington is propped up by bunches of bay laurel leaves.

To the left of George Washington is the Federal Reserve District seal. The name of the Federal Reserve Bank that issued the note encircles a capital letter (A–L), identifying it among the twelve Federal Reserve Banks. The sequential number of the bank (1: A, 2: B, etc.) is also displayed in the four corners of the open space on the bill. Until the redesign of the higher denominations of currency beginning in 1996, this seal was found on all denominations of Federal Reserve notes. Since then it is only present on the \$1 and \$2 notes, with the higher denominations only displaying a universal Federal Reserve System seal, and the bank letter and number beneath the upper left serial number.



Detail of the
Treasury Seal as it
appears on a \$1 bill

To the right of George Washington is the Treasury Department seal. The scales represent justice. The chevron with thirteen stars represents the original thirteen colonies. The key below the chevron represents authority and trust; 1789 is the year that the Department of the Treasury was established. The series 1969 dollar bills were the first to use a simplified Treasury seal, with the wording in English instead of Latin.

Below the FRD seal (to the left of George Washington) is the signature of the Treasurer of the U.S., which occasionally varies, and below the USDT Seal (right side) is the Secretary of the Treasury's signature. To the left of the Secretary's signature is the series date. A new series date, or addition or

change of a sequential letter under a date, results from a change in the Secretary of the Treasury, the Treasurer of the United States, and/or a change to the note's appearance such as a new currency design.

On the edges are olive branches entwined around the 1s. A small plate serial number-letter combination is on the lower right, and a small plate position (check) letter is on the upper left corner of the note. If "FW" appears before the lower right plate number it indicates that the bill was produced at the satellite Bureau of Engraving and Printing facility in Fort Worth, Texas. Currency has been printed here since Series 1988A. No "FW" means the bill was made at the main plant in Washington, D.C.

Reverse of current \$1 bill

The reverse of the one-dollar bill has an ornate design that incorporates both sides of the Great Seal of the United States to the left and right of the word *ONE*. This word appears prominently in the white space at the center of the bill in a capitalized, shadowed, and serified typeface. A smaller image of the word "ONE" is superimposed over the numeral "1" in each of the four corners of the bill.

"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" spans the top of the bill, "ONE DOLLAR" is emblazoned along the bottom, and above the central "ONE" are the words "IN GOD WE TRUST," which became the official motto of the United States in 1956 by an Act of Congress. Below the reverse of the Great Seal on the left side of the bill are the words "THE GREAT SEAL," and below the obverse on the right side are the words "OF THE UNITED STATES."



President Franklin Roosevelt's conditional approval of the one-dollar bill's design in 1935, requiring that the appearance of the sides of the Great Seal be reversed, and together, captioned.

The Great Seal, originally designed in 1782 and added to the dollar bill's design in 1935, is surrounded by an elaborate floral design. The renderings used were the typical official government versions used since the 1880s.

The reverse of the seal on the left features a barren landscape dominated by an unfinished pyramid of 13 steps, topped by the Eye of Providence within a triangle. At the base of the pyramid are engraved the Roman numerals MDCCLXXVI (1776), the date of American independence from Britain. At the top of the seal stands a Latin phrase, "ANNUIT COEPTIS," meaning "He favors our undertaking." At the bottom of the seal is a semicircular banner proclaiming "NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM" meaning "New Order of the Ages" that is a reference to the new American era. To the left of this seal, a string of 13 pearls extends toward the edge of the bill.

The obverse of the seal on the right features a bald eagle, the national bird and symbol of the United States. Above the eagle is a radiant cluster of 13 stars arranged in a six-pointed star. The eagle's breast is covered by a heraldic shield with 13 stripes that resemble those on the American flag. As on the first US flag, the stars and stripes stand for the 13 original states of the union. The eagle holds a ribbon in its beak reading "E PLURIBUS UNUM", a Latin phrase meaning "Out of many [states], one [nation]", a *de facto* motto of the United States (and the only one until 1956). In its left talons the eagle holds 13

arrows, and in its right talons it holds an olive branch with 13 leaves and 13 olives, representing, respectively, the powers of war and peace. To the right of this seal, a string of 13 pearls extends toward the edge of the bill. A plate position (check) number is normally found to the left of the eagle.

Collecting Federal Reserve dollar bills

Except for significant errors, and series 1988A web notes printed in small batches for some of the Federal Reserve districts (those from others are more common), green seal dollars are of little collector value. However, two notes have generated public interest, although neither is scarce.

In 1963 dollar bills were produced for the Eleventh Federal Reserve District, headquartered in Dallas. Since the FRD jurisdictions are sequentially numbered, notes received the corresponding letter "K", for the 11th letter of the alphabet. Some people noticed that the 1963 Dallas note, with the number "11" and a "K" surrounded by a black seal, appeared about the time President John Kennedy was shot in Dallas in November 1963. The bill was not a commemorative issue and there was no connection between it and the shooting.^[23]

In 1968–69 Joseph W. Barr was Secretary of the Treasury for only 31 days and his signature appeared solely on the 1963B dollar bill. It was thought that his brief tenure might make these notes valuable, but use of their plates continued for some time afterwards and over 400 million were printed. Thus they are very common.^[24]

Redesign or replacement of the dollar bill

In modern times, the one dollar bill is used much more than the dollar coin, despite the U.S. Government's efforts to promote the latter.^[25] There are organizations specifically aimed at either preventing (Save the Greenback)^[26] or advocating (Coin Coalition)^{[27][28]} the complete elimination of the one-dollar bill in favor of the dollar coin.

On November 29, 2012, a House subcommittee met to consider replacing the dollar bill. This action took place after the seventh Government Accountability Office report on the subject. The latest report claimed that switching to dollar coins would save \$4.4 billion over thirty years. However, according to polls, few Americans want to give up dollar bills.^[29] Recent budgets passed by Congress have included provisions to prevent the Treasury Department from spending any of its funds to redesign the one-dollar bill, largely because of potential cost impacts on the vending machine industry.^[30]

See also

- In God We Trust
- Sherman Silver Purchase Act
- George Washington
- Where's George?
- Great Seal

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- The Official RED BOOK A Guide Book of United States Paper Money
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External links

- The One Dollar Bill, Zoomable and Annotated (http://s3.imagediver.org/topic/album/4294b0e/one_dollar_bill_5/1/index.html)
 - High-Res Federal Reserve \$1 Note (<https://uscurrency.gov/security/1-security-features-1963-present>)
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