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# Verifying a Graded Coin Online

*PCGS & NGC certification lookup — a plain-English walkthrough*

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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# What's Inside

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# 1 What a Graded Coin Really Is

When a coin is 'graded,' it has been sent to a professional service that examines it, decides its condition on a standard scale, confirms it is genuine, and then seals it in a tamper-evident plastic holder collectors call a 'slab.' Printed on that holder is a unique certification number. That number is the thread that ties the physical coin to an official online record you can look up yourself, for free, in under a minute.

The two largest and most respected grading services in the United States are PCGS (the Professional Coin Grading Service) and NGC (Numismatic Guaranty Company). Both let anyone — buyer, seller, or curious heir — type that certification number into their website and see exactly what the service recorded about the coin. This guide walks through both lookups in plain English.

- Grading means a pro confirmed the coin is real and rated its condition on a set scale.
- The coin is sealed in a labeled plastic holder, the 'slab,' with a unique cert number printed on it.
- That cert number lets you pull up the official record for free, no account needed.
- PCGS and NGC are the two big, trusted services; each has its own free lookup.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> You do not need to be a collector or pay anything to verify a coin. If you are buying, selling, or just sorting out a relative's collection, this free check is the smartest first move you can make.

# 2 Why Verifying Online Matters

A grading service's slab carries real value because it certifies both authenticity and condition — and that value is exactly why counterfeiters copy the slabs. Fake holders with fake labels, and even real coins swapped into tampered holders, do circulate. Looking up the certification number is how you catch them, because the official record will not match a fake.

The record the service shows you includes the coin's details and often a photograph taken when it was graded. If the slab in your hand does not match the record on the screen — wrong coin, wrong grade, wrong date, or a photo that is clearly a different coin — you have found a problem before it costs you money.

| What verifying protects against | How the lookup catches it |
|---|---|
| A counterfeit slab | The cert number returns nothing, or details that don't match |
| A real coin swapped into a fake holder | The record's photo won't match the coin you're holding |
| An altered grade on the label | The record shows the true grade the service assigned |
| An invented 'certified' claim | No matching record exists at PCGS or NGC |

**GOOD TO KNOW**

A slab adds value only if it is genuine. Spending one free minute on the lookup is the difference between trusting a label and trusting the service that actually graded the coin.

## 3 Finding the Certification Number

Before you can look anything up, you need two things off the slab: which service graded it, and its certification number. Both are printed right on the label inside the holder, usually across the top or along the bottom.

1. Look at the label inside the clear holder and find the service's name or logo — PCGS or NGC.
2. Find the certification number: PCGS numbers are typically a string of digits, often with a dash and a grade.
3. NGC numbers are usually a block of digits followed by a dash and a few more digits.

4. Note whether there is a small square barcode — a QR code — on the label, which can also open the record.
5. Write the number down exactly, or have it in front of you, before you go to the website.

> **TIP**
> Read the number under good light with a magnifier if needed. A single mistyped digit is the most common reason a lookup 'fails,' so copy it carefully.

# 4 The PCGS Certification Lookup, Step by Step

PCGS offers a free verification tool right on its official website, pcgs.com. You do not need an account. You simply go to the site, find the certification verification page, and type in the number from the slab.

1. In your browser, type pcgs.com yourself — do not follow a link from an email or a seller.
2. Look for 'Cert Verification' or 'Verify Certification' in the site's menu or search tools.
3. Type the certification number from the slab into the box exactly as printed.
4. Submit it, and the official record appears: the coin, its grade, date, and usually a photo.
5. Compare every detail — and especially the photo — against the coin in your hand.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Always type pcgs.com into the address bar yourself. Scammers set up look-alike 'verification' sites to make a fake coin seem real. The genuine record only lives on the service's own official site.

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## 5 The NGC Certification Lookup, Step by Step

NGC works the same way through its official site, ngccoin.com. The service even guarantees its grades, which is part of why verifying the record matters so much — the guarantee only applies to a coin that genuinely matches NGC's record.

1. Type ngccoin.com into your browser yourself, rather than clicking a provided link.
2. Find the 'Verify NGC Certification' or 'NGC Lookup' tool on the site.
3. Enter the certification number from the slab exactly as it appears.
4. Submit it to see the official record, including the grade and, for many coins, images.
5. Check that the coin, grade, date, and photo all match what you are holding.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Both services also offer free phone apps that let you scan the slab's barcode with your camera and open the record instantly — handy at a coin show or a kitchen table, with no typing at all.

## 6 Reading the Record You Get Back

Once the record loads, take a moment to read it rather than just glancing at a green checkmark. The record is a small dossier on the coin, and comparing each field to the slab in front of you is where the real protection happens.

| On the record | What to confirm against your slab |
|---|---|
| Coin description (type, year, mint) | Matches the coin and the label exactly |

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade | The same grade printed on the label |
| Certification number | The exact number you typed, returned by the service |
| Photograph (when shown) | Clearly the same coin — toning, marks, and features line up |

**WATCH OUT**

A matching number but a mismatching photo is the classic sign of a coin swapped into a genuine-looking holder. Trust the photo comparison, not just the fact that a record came up.

# 7 Using the Phone Apps and Barcodes

Both PCGS and NGC publish free apps for iPhone and Android, and many slabs carry a small square barcode. Scanning it with the app is the fastest way to verify, because it fills in the number for you and goes straight to the record — no chance of a typo.

1. Install the official PCGS or NGC app from your phone's app store (check the maker's name matches).
2. Open the app and choose the scan or verify option.
3. Point your camera at the barcode on the slab; the app reads it automatically.
4. The official record opens on your screen, with the grade and any images.
5. If there is no barcode, just type the certification number into the app instead.

**TIP**

The apps are especially good at a coin show or an estate sale, where you can verify a coin on the spot in seconds before you decide to buy.

# 8 What a Grade Actually Means

The number in the grade is not arbitrary; it sits on a long-established scale that runs from a well-worn coin at the low end to a flawless one at the top. Understanding roughly where a coin falls helps you make sense of the record and of what a seller is claiming.

- Grades run on a numeric scale, with higher numbers meaning better preserved coins.
- 'MS' on the label means Mint State — a coin that never circulated as money.
- 'PR' or 'PF' means Proof — a specially struck coin made for collectors.
- Small differences in grade can mean large differences in value, which is why accuracy matters.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The lookup confirms the grade the service assigned; it does not re-grade the coin for you. If you disagree with a grade, that is a conversation with the grading service, not something the verification tool decides.

# 9 Buying a Graded Coin Safely

If you are buying — in person, at a show, or online — the certification lookup is your best friend. A reputable seller will gladly give you the certification number before you pay, and will not mind you checking it. Reluctance to share the number is itself a warning sign.

1. Ask the seller for the certification number before any money changes hands.
2. Look it up yourself on pcgs.com or ngccoin.com — do not rely on a screenshot they provide.
3. Match the record, including the photo, to the exact coin being offered.
4. For an online purchase, ask for clear photos of the actual slab and compare them to the record.
5. Pay in a way that offers protection, and keep the record and listing for your files.

**WATCH OUT**

Be wary of a seller who will not share the cert number, insists you use their own 'verification link,' or pressures you to decide quickly. Genuine coins stand up to a genuine lookup every time.

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# 10 Spotting Fakes and Common Red Flags

Verification catches most trouble, but a few patterns are worth recognizing on sight. Counterfeiters are improving, so pair the online lookup with a little common sense about how the coin and slab look and feel.

| Red flag | What it may mean |
|---|---|
| Cert number returns nothing | The slab or number is fabricated |
| Record photo differs from the coin | A coin was swapped into the holder |
| Holder looks crude, cloudy, or poorly sealed | A counterfeit slab, not a real service holder |
| A price far below the going rate | If it seems too good to be true, verify twice |

**GOOD TO KNOW**

No single clue is proof by itself, but several together are a strong signal to walk away. The free online record is always the tiebreaker.

# 11 Helping With an Inherited Collection

Many people meet graded coins for the first time while sorting out a parent's or relative's estate. The certification lookup turns a mysterious box of slabs into an understandable inventory, because each coin can be confirmed and identified from its own record.

1. Gather the slabs and note which service graded each — PCGS or NGC.
2. Look up each certification number and save or print the record for your inventory.
3. Keep the slabs sealed; breaking a holder can reduce a coin's value and voids the grading.
4. Build a simple list — coin, grade, cert number — before talking to any dealer or appraiser.

> **TIP**
> Resist any urge to crack open a slab to 'see the real coin.' The sealed holder is part of what makes the coin verifiable and valuable. Leave it sealed and rely on the online record.

# 12 Keeping Records and Staying Safe

Once you have verified a coin, a little record-keeping pays off later, whether you plan to sell, insure, or simply pass the collection on. And because coins attract scammers, a few steady habits keep you out of trouble.

- Save or print each coin's official record alongside a photo of the slab.
- Keep cert numbers in a simple list in case a slab is ever lost or damaged.
- Only ever verify on pcgs.com or ngccoin.com, or their official apps — never a link someone sends you.
- Ignore unsolicited offers to 'authenticate' or 'buy' your coins that arrive by text or email.

**WATCH OUT**

A real grading service will never text you asking for payment to 'release' or 're-verify' a coin. Any such message is a scam; the genuine lookup is always free and needs no payment.

## 13 When to Get Expert Help

The lookup tells you whether a coin matches its record, but it does not replace a professional when real money or a disputed grade is involved. Knowing when to bring in an expert saves both mistakes and regret.

- For a valuable coin or a large collection, consult a reputable dealer or appraiser.
- If a record and a coin do not match, stop the transaction and seek help before proceeding.
- If you suspect a counterfeit slab, the grading service itself can advise you.
- For selling, get more than one opinion so you understand the true market value.

> *The free lookup answers 'is this coin what the label says?' An expert answers 'what is it truly worth?' — and you often want both.*

## 14 Recap

Verifying a graded coin is one of the easiest and most valuable habits in collecting. Find the service and certification number on the slab, go to the official site or app yourself, type or scan the number, and compare the record — especially the photo — to the coin in your hand. One free minute confirms authenticity, condition, and identity, and protects you from the fakes that prey on this hobby.

- The cert number on the slab unlocks a free official record at PCGS or NGC.

- Always type pcgs.com or ngccoin.com yourself, or use the official app — never a sent link.
- Match the coin, grade, date, and photo; a mismatched photo is a classic warning.
- Keep the records, leave slabs sealed, and bring in an expert for high-value coins.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Last verified November 2026. PCGS (pcgs.com) and NGC (ngccoin.com) both offer free online certification lookup and free phone apps with barcode scanning. Call Bill at (330) 200-8042 if you'd like help checking a coin or a whole collection.

CHEAT SHEET

# Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you to the right step for verifying a coin.

| I want to... | Do this... |
|---|---|
| Start a verification | Find the service (PCGS or NGC) and the cert number on the slab label |
| Check a PCGS coin | Type pcgs.com yourself, open Cert Verification, enter the number |
| Check an NGC coin | Type ngccoin.com yourself, open the NGC lookup, enter the number |
| Verify the fastest way | Scan the slab's barcode with the official PCGS or NGC phone app |
| Confirm it's genuine | Match the coin, grade, date, and especially the photo to the record |
| Buy safely | Get the cert number first and look it up yourself before paying |
| Handle an inherited collection | Look up each cert number, keep slabs sealed, list coin/grade/number |
| Avoid a scam | Only use pcgs.com or ngccoin.com; ignore 'verify' links sent to you |
| Get help | Call Bill: (330) 200-8042 |

**BEFORE YOU GO**

# A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

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**GOOD TO KNOW**

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