

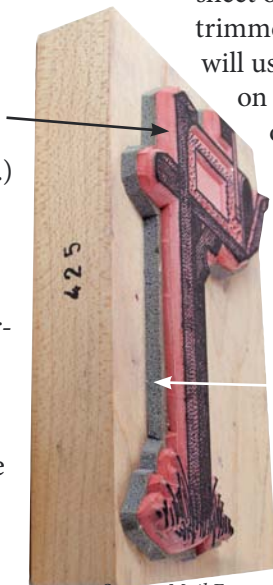
# Online Extra:

## Basics: Parts of a Stamp

A wood mounted rubber stamp is made of three layers:

**The Die:** The raised image molded out of a sheet of rubber. The die is usually closely trimmed on store-bought mounted stamps. When the die is not attached to cushion or a mount, it is called an “*unmounted stamp*” or an “*unmounted*.” (Sometimes dies with cushion attached, but that are not on a mount, are called “*unmounted*” as well.)

Unmounted stamps can sometimes be purchased individually or in sheets with multiple stamp images (referred to as “*unmounted sheets*”). Typically, when you purchase a stamp unmounted, you will need to trim the image with sharp heavy-duty scissors to get rid of the excess rubber around the image before use. (A poorly trimmed die can result in poor stamp impressions with extra unwanted inked lines.)



Stamp: Mail Expressions

You can also purchase clear “*acrylic*” or “*polymer*” stamps. Most clear stamp dies are intended to be used with a temporary mounting system. Most clear stamps will cling to clear acrylic mounts without a cling sheet. Clear stamps typically do not use cushion. They often come in sets and can optionally be stored in their packaging.

**The Cushion:** Between the die and the wood mount is a sheet of cushion, usually closely trimmed to match the trimmed die. While you can stamp without cushion, you will usually get a better impression when you have cushion on the stamp for a little bit of give when you press down on the stamp.

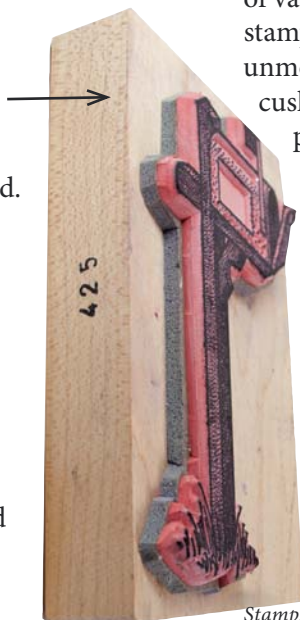
Some “*unmounted*” stamp dies come with cushion attached. Cushion can be purchased separately if you want to mount your own stamps. Cushion can have no adhesive on either side, adhesive on one side, adhesive on both sides or adhesive on one side and cling sheet on the other.

If you are using cushion to permanently mount an unmounted rubber die to a wood mount, you will either need to use rubber cement (if the cushion has no adhesive) or use the adhesive that came on the cushion to attach it to the die on one side and

the mount on the other. If you use a temporary mounting system, the system you use will determine the type of cushion you use and how it is applied. If you mount your own stamps, you will need to attach the die to the cushion and trim the cushion as well as the die to get rid of the excess cushion. (See Sept '96, Oct '96 and Oct '08 VSN for more on permanent and temporary stamp mounting methods.)

**The Mount:** The mount of a store-bought mounted stamp is usually a smoothly sanded rectangle of hardwood, sized to fit the stamp image. Most have straight sides, but some have “hourglass” shaped sizes to make them more comfortable in your hand.

Purchased stamps are usually printed with an impression (an “index”) of the stamp image. The index is sometimes printed directly on the wood and sometimes printed on a sticker attached to the mount. Most stamp indexes are printed in black ink so you can see how the stamp actually prints. Some commercial stamps from larger stamp companies have colored indexes that show the stamp’s lines as well as suggested coloring within the lines.



Most temporary mounting systems use clear acrylic mounts instead of wood mounts. The unmounted die or die/cushion combination is temporarily affixed to an appropriately sized clear acrylic mount with temporary adhesive, by cling or by hook-and-loop tape. After stamping, the die/cushion is removed from the mount and stored separately. Typically a stamper would have a set of clear acrylic mounts of various sizes that can be used as needed for a variety of stamps. You could even temporarily mount more than one unmounted stamp at a time on an acrylic mount if the die/cushion depth of the two stamp images is the same. Temporary mounting systems have the advantage of more compact stamp storage and less expense (because unmounted stamps are typically cheaper than mounted stamps.)

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