

How to Soak Early Austrian Stamps

Edited from e-mails between Daniel Howell (#2138), Steve Endicott (#2284) and Doug Turner (#2549)

The Concern:

Hi all, I just won a large lot of Austria perfins. Now how do I soak them off paper? I've used plain water (ok for a few), water with enzyme detergent (Tide) (worked on about 1/2) & dish soap & water (0 results). I tried a mild alcohol soak & the ink ran, leaving a white piece of paper with glue on the back! Any other ideas? I'll be putting some of these in the club auction. Coffee cup anyone? Thank you for your help. This problem really has me stumped.

A Response:

A few years ago a collector from Europe sent Bob Schwerdt a chemical that, when added in a small amount to water, will work when soaking off stamps from Austria. It is called Pancreatin (a digestive enzyme that is used to supplement low levels of production by a body). I don't know anything about

the safety of this chemical. On some of my visits to his house we have soaked stamps from Austria and it does work.

The Result:

I bought a bottle of Pancreatin capsules from a health food store. I opened 1 capsule and added it to about a quart or so of water. (Be sure not to get any on you - its what is in your tummy.) Mixed it up with a spoon and soaked my stamps in it.

Wonderful results! The glue on the Austrian stamps was eaten by the enzymes. After rinsing the stamps many times to get rid of all the enzyme, I dried them on wax paper with paper towels, pressed down with the telephone book. The stamps look fabulous! Now I have enough for 1,000s of stamps; one capsule works for a long time.