

Guidelines for Exhibiting and Judging First Day Cover Exhibits

Article 1: Competitive Exhibitions

First Day Cover (FDC) exhibits will be displayed as an experimental class at the Boston 2026 World Stamp Exhibition. The primary purpose is to introduce a popular form of philately into competition at the world exhibition level, and to encourage more collectors to participate in philately and philatelic exhibitions.

As an experimental class, flexibility, originality and creativity by exhibitors are encouraged. Similar flexibility on the part of the judges is also encouraged in order that the Guidelines may be developed further based on real world experience gained from their application.

FDC exhibits may comprise 19th, 20th or 21st century material and should be distinctive from traditional, postal history and postal stationery exhibits with a significant portion of (or the entire) exhibit devoted to the study of the FDCs themselves including the dates of issue and the cachets preferably by the postal authority where present.

Article 2: Definitions

2.1 An FDC is defined as

- a. an envelope, post card or other postal item, etc. to which a stamp or stamps have been affixed and postmarked by the issuing Postal Authority on the date of issue of the stamp(s). In cases where no first day use is recorded, the earliest known dates of use (EKU) can be shown but such statements of EKU should be fully documented based on a published census or other verifiable information
- b. a postal stationery item, postmarked by the issuing Postal Authority on the date of issue. In cases where no first day use is recorded, the EKU can be shown but such statements of EKU should be documented based on a published census or other verifiable information
- c. FDCs may come in various, sizes, shapes and formats and they may or may not have a cachet. There are no restrictions in connection with this.

2.2 Postmarks

Postmarks should be a primary focus of an FDC exhibit including those exhibits detailing EKUs but such statements of EKU should be fully documented based on a published census or other verifiable information. Early FDCs in most cases do not have a special cancellation or postmark and such postal items will typically have a generic town postmark to deface the stamps or printed indicia. Where available, different postmarks including those which are inscribed first day of issue, and special or pictorial postmarks with or without graphic elements should be shown and these should indicate where possible the type of machine used to apply the postmark and the geographic location of cancellation.

2.3 Cachets

It is noted that first day cachets only came into use from circa. 1900 onwards. The date of introduction varies by country.

Cachets where present can be a focus of an FDC exhibit. Envelopes or other postal items included in an FDC exhibit may have a cachet applied by different production methods including but not limited to lithography, photogravure, thermal printing, intaglio, paste-on cachets (including parts thereof), original contemporary art or manuscript. Such cachets may comprise lettering or may also include illustrations.

An FDC exhibit can identify production details for the cachets shown, the number printed / produced if known and information about the scope of the subject and the coverage of it shown i.e. how many different cachets exist and how many are shown. Where relevant, cachets prepared by the Postal Authority should be emphasised. The scarcer cachets should be so indicated.

Ideally there should be a concordance between the stamp(s) affixed to the cover or the postal item, the cachet where present and the postmark. Such concordance is taken to mean the aspects share a related topic or subject matter.

Article 3: Principles of Exhibit Composition

Different principles of exhibit composition are encouraged.

3.1 Exhibits may include materials used by the Postal Authority in the design, production and development of the stamp(s) on the FDCs that is part of the story of the stamp(s) being shown but such material should comprise only a small part of the exhibit and should not dominate the exhibit.

3.2 FDC exhibits may include design drafts, proofs and samples produced during the production process for the cover or postal item.

3.3 Exhibits may also include design drafts and proof impressions by the Postal Authority for commemorative or special postmarks directly related to the subject of the FDC.

3.4 Exhibits may include stamps related to the FDCs showing production errors or varieties, and FDCs showing production errors or varieties affecting the postmarks or the cachets, preferably by the Postal Authority.

3.5 Limited para-philatelic material including publicity or press materials, official announcements and programs directly relevant to and supporting the subject of the FDC exhibit may be included.

3.6 FDCs exhibited may be addressed or unaddressed, although FDCs which have been through the mail are preferable.

3.7 Where possible, FDCs to a variety of domestic and overseas destinations should be included as well as FDCs showing auxiliary markings. Maximum cards should only be shown where they show a cancellation of the first day of issue or of the documented EKU.

3.8 In studies of a single stamp or a single stamp issue, contemporary commercial uses may be included to show the appropriate postal services for which the stamp(s) were produced.

3.9 A key feature of the postmark of any type is a legible date.

3.10 The postmarks on FDCs must be valid postal date stamps of the Postal Authority, such as regular postal date stamps, pictorial date stamps or commemorative postmarks.

3.11 FDCs with signatures of a person or persons with a direct connection to the issued stamp(s), FDC or the postmark of the Postal Authority may be shown.

3.12 A study comprising solely postmark types and/or postmarking techniques applied on the first day of use of the postal marking or technique would comprise a postal history exhibit and not an FDC exhibit.

3.13 Studies of souvenir covers / illustrated mail with a stamp or stamps used on the first day of issue can be shown.

Article 4: Methods of Organizing Exhibits

4.1 By a specific stamp or stamp issue.

4.2 By a specific country, group of countries with geographical, historical or cultural links, or a region.

4.3 By a specific time-period.

4.4 By a specific event, theme or topic.

4.5 FDCs as postal history including studies of the various cancellation marks, auxiliary markings, different mail services such as registration, foreign destinations and underpaid uses.

4.6 Study of FDCs by type of postal item such as stamped covers, postal stationery including postal cards, stamped envelopes, postal cards or air letter sheets.

4.7 Any method of organization deemed appropriate by the exhibitor including two or more of the above organizational methods.

Exhibits should have a precise and accurate descriptive title.

Exhibits should start with a detailed introductory title page giving the relevant information for a proper interpretation of the subject shown. A plan explaining the structure of the exhibit and a short bibliography giving the significant sources of information used should also be included on the introductory title page. It is optional whether to include a philatelic item on the introductory title page.

Article 5: Number of frames for an Exhibit

Each exhibit should consist of 5 (five) standard frames, it could be shown in 8 (eight) frames if the exhibit has received a mark of 85 points or greater at an FIP exhibition.

Exhibits will be accepted in a single frame, two or three frame exhibit class under the rules specified in the FIP GREX.

Exhibits must have received a minimum of 75 points or a Vermeil medal at a national level exhibition within the five years prior to the first application for entry to a World Exhibition. In cases where an FIP member country either does not have a national exhibition or does not accept FDC exhibits in their national exhibition, exhibits may be accepted for an FIP exhibition on the recommendation of the FIP member President or Secretary General.

Those Members who have not organised a national exhibition in the previous five years, may certify the qualification of the exhibit. Such certification must be signed by the President or Secretary General of the Member.

Article 6: Evaluation of the Exhibit

6.1 Judging of Exhibits

Given the requirement that the point scores for exhibition categories should follow the FIP GREV, the following point scores are applicable to all FDC exhibits irrespective of the method of organizing the exhibit.

Treatment and Philatelic Importance	30
Philatelic and related Knowledge, Personal Study and Research	35
Condition and Rarity	30
Presentation	5
Total	100

6.2 Treatment and Philatelic Importance

Treatment – 20 Points

Philatelic Importance – 10 Points

Treatment refers to the clarity of the plan and organization of the material shown in the exhibit, and the defined scope or depth of the subject. The plan should be appropriate for the method of organizing the exhibit, and the sections of the exhibit should be appropriately balanced, logically developed and fully and accurately explained and should comprise a succession of chapters or sections that tell a complete story. Studies of the work of a specific cachet maker or makers should be arranged chronologically.

An appropriate treatment for an FDC exhibit will be dependent on the available material for specific countries, periods or topics. The use of materials should be appropriate and complete within the scope of the subject.

Exhibits should have an introductory title page which includes a clear purpose statement, an explanation of the treatment adopted for the exhibit and a plan / table of contents. A brief list of the main research sources and literature references used by the exhibitor should be given to aid the judges in their preparation.

Exhibits based on thematic or topical based methods of organization should be judged as such taking cognizance of the SREV for FIP thematic exhibits and consideration of thematic and philatelic knowledge.

Although these Guidelines are intended to guide both exhibitors and judges, the judges will apply their experience, knowledge and judgement in assessing each exhibit. Appropriate creativity, innovation and originality should receive credit.

Philatelic Importance requires an evaluation of the philatelic significance of the subject chosen by the exhibitor, in terms of its scope, degree of complexity of the subject, and the philatelic interest of the exhibit.

6.3 Philatelic and related Knowledge, Personal Study and Research

Philatelic and related Knowledge – 25 Points

Personal Study and Research – 10 Points

Exhibitors are encouraged to display and highlight their own new research findings or particularly significant discoveries which they have made in respect to their exhibit.

The criteria of “Philatelic and related Knowledge, Personal Study and Research” require the following evaluations:

- Knowledge is the degree of knowledge of the exhibitor as expressed by the items chosen for display and their related description
- Personal Study is the proper analysis of the items chosen for display
- Research is the presentation of new facts related to the chosen subject, or the items shown

Philatelic and related Knowledge, Personal Study and Research is demonstrated by:

- a. the exhibit demonstrating a full and accurate understanding of the material and subject chosen, including stamps, cachets, and postmarks of the FDCs
- b. the selection of items shown reflecting knowledge of the chosen area
- c. accurate, brief and detailed descriptions for the items shown
- d. the inclusion unusual uses or unusual postal markings that are properly identified and described

- e. where relevant the details of proper rates for covers or postal items showing different destinations or postal services are given e.g. for domestic, international, air mail, registration, etc.
- f. existing literature within the area has been used and cited.

Personal Study and Research are documented by:

- a. analysis and research of the design, production, issue, and usage of the FDCs shown
- b. the study of the postmarks which should be consistent with the first day of issue by the Postal Authority, except for
 - i. pre-dated postal items improperly used before the first day of issue
 - ii. delayed issuance due to local policies or holidays
 - iii. non-arrival of stamps in the region on the first day of issue
 - iv. postmarks incorporating an error in the date shown
 - v. for stamps without a clear date of issue, the earliest documented ECU can be shown.

6.4 Condition and Rarity

Condition – 10 Points

Rarity – 20 Points

All items should be in the best possible condition for the chosen subject and time-period:

- a. covers, stamps and other postal items should be intact and undamaged
- b. cancellations and postal markings should be clear, legible and complete
- c. stamps should be tied by the cancellation to the cover or other postal item
- d. covers shown may be addressed or unaddressed covers but should be appropriate for the context on which they are shown.

Rarity should be considered from a multi-dimensional perspective embracing the stamps, the cachets and the postal markings.

Consideration should be given to the difficulty of acquisition which may reflect a combination of such factors as the time-period in which the stamp(s) were issued or by the numbers of stamps or cachets produced. Rarity does not equate only to the monetary

value of the stamps on the covers or other postal items nor to the monetary value of the FDC.

Rarity statements made by the exhibitor should be specifically quantified with citation of census sources and not be a simple qualitative comment such as “rare” or “scarce”.

6.5 Presentation – 5 Points

The method of presentation should show the material to its best effect.

Presentation is considered based on:

- a. placement of items on each page, in each frame and throughout the whole exhibit
- b. overlapping of covers or postal items is acceptable provided no significant aspects of the FDCs are covered up
- c. not too much white space on the pages
- d. the write-up is clear, concise and relevant to the material chosen and to the subject of the exhibit
- e. sufficient write up – but not too much text
- f. the fonts used are appropriate and clearly legible
- g. illustrations of postal markings are not too dominating, and photocopies or scans of complete items must be a minimum of 25% different in size from the original. Other illustrations may be shown actual size but must be properly cited with the source properly identified
- h. brightly coloured inks and coloured album pages should be avoided.

Article 7:

7.1 Postal items made in violation of postal regulations, and those items which cannot be directly used for postal service should not be used in FDC exhibits except in cases where they have been sent through the mails.

7.2 The right to interpret these rules belongs to the FIP and in the event of any discrepancies in the text from translation, the English text shall prevail.