

Rare pennies can fetch high prices

How to tell when it’s worth more than a cent

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USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Penny production in the United States is grinding to a stop. More than 3 billion U.S. pennies were minted last year, but according to the U.S. Mint’s annual report from 2024, they’re now more expensive to make than the one cent that they’re worth.

In February, President Donald Trump said he would order the Treasury Department to stop minting pennies to save money. And as of May, the Mint placed its final order of penny blanks. Once those blanks run out some time in 2026, no more new pennies will be made.

The old pennies you have will still be acceptable to use as payment, but any rare pennies you might have lying around could be worth more than the one cent that they represent.

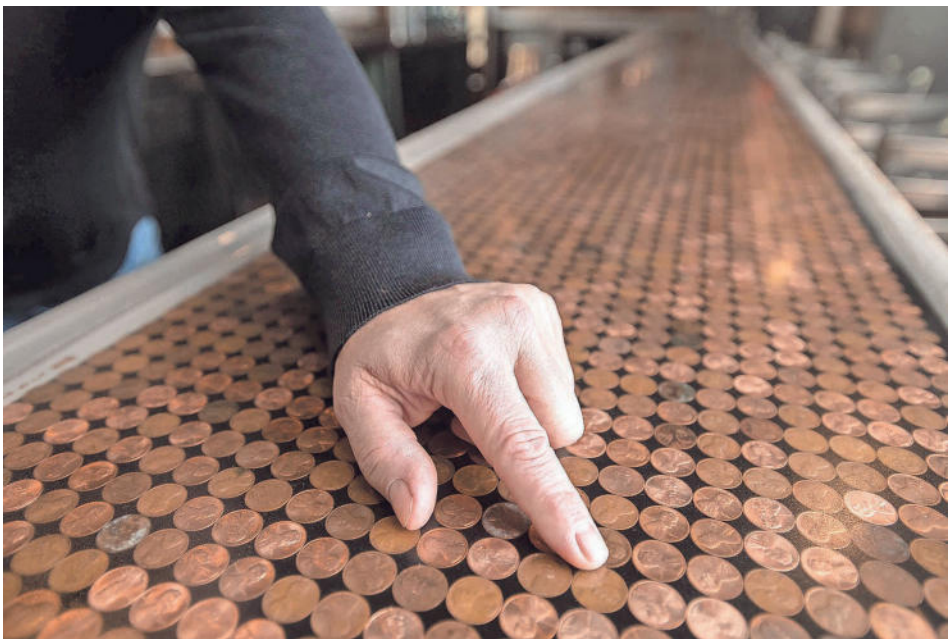
According to American Bullion, an investment service that specializes in precious metal IRAs, most pennies are only worth one cent, but there are certain minting years that can dramatically increase their value.

“Penny collectors, also known as numismatists, value pennies based on their minting year, rarity, condition, and production errors,” American Bullion says. “Some rare pennies can be worth far more than their face value, reaching the thousands.”

What is a wheat penny?

A “wheat penny,” sometimes also called a “Lincoln wheat cent” or a “Lincoln penny,” is a penny that has President Abraham Lincoln’s portrait on one side and two ears of wheat on the other. These pennies were minted from 1909 through 1958 and can be worth thousands of dollars, depending on the year they were made.

“Most Lincoln wheat pennies are generally valued at a few cents. If they are found in good condition, they can be worth up to \$20 or \$30 on average,” according to Bullion Exchanges. “Howev-



Any rare pennies you might have lying around could be worth more than the one cent that they represent. GREGG PACHKOWSKI/PENSACOLA NEWS JOURNAL FILE

er, Lincoln Pennies with certain dates, low mintages, or errors can be worth a significant amount of money.”

John Feigenbaum, publisher of rare coin price guide Greysheet, told USA TODAY that while the odds of having an incredibly rare wheat penny worth thousands are similar to the odds of winning the lottery, there are some that could be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

For example, during World War II, copper was crucial for the war effort, leading the U.S. Mint to produce pennies from zinc-coated steel. However, a few copper pennies from 1943 were mistakenly minted, making them rare and highly valued.

“Depending on their condition, those 1943 Lincoln wheat pennies would be worth at most between \$100,000 and \$250,000,” Feigenbaum told USA TODAY.

Check your pockets

Here are some other rare pennies worth more than one cent, from American Bullion’s website.

- **1909-S VDB:** One of the most coveted pennies among collectors, only



As of May, the U.S. Mint placed its final order of penny blanks. KEN RUINARD/ANDERSON INDEPENDENT MAIL FILE

484,000 were minted. The initials VDB come from the designer Victor David Brenner.

- **1914-D:** The Denver Mint produced fewer pennies this year, which increased their value significantly.
- **1922 No D:** The Denver Mint was the only one to produce pennies this year, but some were mistakenly minted without the “D” mint mark. Collectors seek after these.
- **1931 S:** With just 866,000 produced, these pennies are worth quite a bit. However, many were hoarded, so

Get your penny’s worth

Here’s how to tell if your penny is rare and worth more than one cent, according to American Bullion.

Check the year: The minting year can tell much about a penny’s value. Look for the years mentioned above.

Inspect for errors: Errors, like double dies or wrong metal use, can significantly increase a penny’s value. Examine the coin closely for any inconsistencies.

Look at the Mint Mark: The Mint Mark shows where a coin was minted. Some mints produced fewer pennies in specific years, increasing their rarity and value. As a result, the mint mark is usually located below the date.

Assess the condition: The better a coin’s condition, the more valuable it is. A penny in “mint” or “near-mint” condition will fetch a higher price than one worn or damaged.

they’re not as rare in uncirculated conditions.

- **1955 Doubled-Die Penny:** These pennies were minted with an error that makes the “Liberty” and “In God, We Trust” inscriptions appear doubled. The coin’s date also appears twice. Because of the doubled text, these pennies are worth more than one cent. While their value can vary depending on their condition, some have sold for over \$1,000.
 - **1969-S Doubled-Die Penny:** Mistakenly minted with a doubled die, making the image and text appear slightly doubled, these pennies are rare and highly sought after by collectors. In pristine condition, they can be worth up to \$70,000.
 - **1970-S Small Date:** This variation has a smaller and higher date than regular 1970 pennies, making it rare and valuable.
 - **1972:** This year also saw a batch of doubled-die pennies, which, although not as rare as the 1955 or 1969-S, are still worth significantly more than face value.
- Contributing: Mike Snider and George Petras, USA TODAY

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