

July 31, 2010



Kids are naturally interested in money – because we are, of course! And money is a great vehicle for all kinds of exploration, both concrete and conceptual: Does a quarter stick to a refrigerator magnet? (No.) Is it worth the very high price to build hotels on Boardwalk and Park Place in our favorite Monopoly board game? (Yes.) Should I pass up the chocolate-flavored lip balm to save for a pet rock? (Maybe.) The choices, as we know, can go on forever.

Coin collecting is a fun way to cultivate interest in history and geography as well as math and thrift. Since the states began issuing their own commemorative quarters, getting change at the supermarket or fast-food joint can be turned into a fascinating and suspenseful metallic scavenger hunt.



## When To Do It

Over a one-month period, each time you go shopping

## What To Do

To prepare, if you're used to paying for purchases with a debit or credit card or check, plan to either stock up on cash at the ATM or get cash back at the supermarket so you can make more cash purchases when you're out with the kids – and get change back.

1. Go to [usmint.gov](http://usmint.gov) for information about collector's maps and basic information about the state coin program.
2. Get a map of the United States you can post on the refrigerator or other gathering place in your home for all to see.
3. As you make cash purchases, let your kids go through all the change for state quarters.
4. Have the kids keep track of their progress by coloring in the states as they find the quarters; they can keep their growing collection in a special container.
5. Talk with your kids about the special features each state chose to appear on its quarter.
6. Set aside all of the remaining change (duplicate state quarters, as well as dimes, nickels, and pennies) in a jar as a stash of cash for celebrating at the end of the month. Your kids may want to also spend the collected set of state quarters, or they may want to hang onto that hard-won collection.
7. See what your kids do to try to get all of the state quarters within the month:
  - a. Will they go to a bank to ask for help?
  - b. Will they ask their friends to trade coins?
  - c. Will they trade with their siblings, grandparents, and other relatives?
8. When you get to the end of the month, use the jar of coins to treat your kids to something special. Have them count the coins to see how many of each kind they collected in the month. If they still need more quarters to complete the set, keep gathering change to hunt through.

**Bonus Play:** If your kids take a close look at their nickels, they will find some special designs among them, too. See if they can collect them all.

## What You Will Need

- Time to shop
- Map of the United States that can be colored in
- Pencils and crayons
- Jars or containers for coins
- Patience

## Talk About It

When you reach the end of the month, ask your kids what they liked about collecting the quarters. Was it hard to find them all? What was their favorite technique for locating hard-to-find quarters? Did they learn anything new about the 50 states? Would they like to collect other coins?