

# Portrait Stamp Set

**Design a set of five postage stamps to represent a prominent person of your choice.**

Choose a subject for this project: someone known for his or her contributions to science, government, culture, sports, etc. The subject may be historical or contemporary.

## Attribute List (30)

**Research your subject and list 30 of his/her attributes.** This is different from a biography or timeline of events. You're looking for the characteristics that make this person special and that have the potential to be visually communicated ("telegraphed"). An attributes list for Tiger Woods, for example, might include:

- golfer
- admitted infidelity
- divorced
- youngest Masters champion ever
- called himself "Cablinasian": mix of Caucasian, black, American Indian and Asian
- Stanford University graduate
- publicity storm over split with wife
- first golfer in the modern era to hold all four major tournament titles at once
- has won all of pro golf's major tournaments at least three times
- career earnings exceed \$111,000,000
- dad to 2
- has a company that creates custom golf course designs

The list needn't follow an order. It's a brainstorming tool and will be most helpful if it ranges widely, including physical attributes, personality, background, profession etc. Anything that characterizes and distinguishes your subject is relevant. Keep going until you have **at least 30 attributes**; it will get more interesting as you go along, pushing beyond the obvious.

## Sketches (50)

**Develop 50 sketches communicate specific attributes of your subject.** Work your way down your attributes list, looking for the ones that lend themselves to visual ideas. You can have multiple sketches for a single attribute and do not need to use every attribute from your list. The goal is to develop an enormous visual brainstorm of potential imagery that refers to your subject, which you can then use to make the stamps.

Experiment with icon, index and symbol options and aim for as many visual ideas as possible for each attribute. From reading David Crow's *Visible Signs*, you know that **icon** (descriptive, illustrative; resembles the thing; we can see it) **index** (a trace or result; is caused by the thing; we can figure it out using logic) **symbol** (arbitrary; non-intuitive; we learn its meaning)

## Versions (21)

**Render your 7 strongest visual ideas in 3 different ways, using various media/styles for a total of 21 images.** Consider photography, illustration, objects placed directly on the scanner, pattern and texture. Push yourself to find new techniques; avoid the obvious stock photos. **The particular visualization of an idea should enhance its meaning and/or make it distinctive.** Strive to make your images not only visually exciting but also conceptually strong. They should express ideas in an unexpected or provocative way.

## Stamp Design

Use your versions as a springboard to create a group of postage stamps about your subject. Choose the strongest, most meaningful and provocative images, and continue to experiment with form to tell a visual story about your subject in 5 stamps.

You can combine attributes/imagery on a single stamp if it adds meaning and visual interest.

A stamp is at once an official document and an artifact for visual enjoyment. The currency of communication, stamps identify a country's postal system, which supports not only commerce but also the flow of ideas and information. The stamp operates in a similar way to the poster, in that there is one unified visual statement that the viewer takes in immediately. On the other hand, of course, the stamp is severely limited in scale; the imagery needs to be read and have impact at a very small size.

Your stamp concept and design can be as experimental as you like; you needn't tailor it to the goals or preferences of the USPS. However, it should be legible at a small scale and you should be able to defend why it might hold significance for the general public.

Your stamps can be useful, inspiring, critical, celebratory or poetic. For background and inspiration, visit:  
the United States Postal Service at [usps.com](http://usps.com)  
the Postal Museum at [si.edu/postal](http://si.edu/postal)

## Specifications

Each stamp is 1 x 1<sup>9/16</sup> inch, horizontal or vertical (use one orientation for all 5 stamps).

Include the name of your subject (first or last or both). You may add other text if you like.

Add the words "USA" and "44" to identify the value of the each stamp.

Compose stamps in Illustrator, importing any imagery you've scanned and/or modified in Photoshop. All type should be set in Illustrator (unless done with a technique that can only be done in Photoshop).

No stock photos (unless manipulated beyond recognition from the original).

Arrange 5 unique stamps into a sheet of 15, horizontal or vertical. Consider the repeat pattern of the sheet (random, rows, etc.)

Make the sheet look convincing by creating a rippled edge to each stamp (use scan provided as a template).

Position the block of stamps centered on an 8.5 x 11 vertical inch sheet. Put your name in the lower right corner, close to the bottom of the page, set in Helvetica 5 pt all caps.

## Schedule

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Thurs 09.09	Pin-up Self Presentation Lecture on icon/index/symbol; assign stamp project Research, attributes list, sketch visual ideas in class
Tues 09.14	Desk crits: show attributes list, sketches and versions for stamp imagery (30 attributes, 50 sketches, 21 images) Studio time
Thurs 09.16	Desk crits: first draft of stamp layouts, show 3 sets of 5 stamps, printed in color, pinned up in lab Studio time
Tues 09.21	Pin-up: show 3 sets of 5 stamps, printed in color, pinned up in classroom Studio time
Thurs 09.23	Stamp Critique Self Presentation Critique

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