

CHESS - FDC – CATALOGUE

2026

MANUAL FOR THE 2ND EDITION



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The illustrations in this catalogue are used exclusively for documentary and philatelic purposes.

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2. FOREWORD/PERMISSION FOR USE

With this second edition of the Chess FDC Catalogue, this free reference guide (User Handbook) is offered to every collector. It is recommended to read this manual before using the catalogue.

The catalogue is NOT intended to provide the collector with a complete list of all philatelic items featuring a chess stamp and a matching date stamp. In particular, items containing neither an illustration nor a chess-themed postmark have—with a few historical exceptions—not been included in the catalogue.

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3. INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILATELIC FIELD OF FIRST DAY COVERS

3.1. WHAT CHARACTERIZES A CHESS FIRST DAY COVER?

A First Day Cover (FDC) ideally consists of three components:

1. A chess stamp (an absolute must!)
2. A postmark dated the day of the chess stamp's issuance (an absolute must!)
3. An illustration on the envelope, ideally featuring a reference to the occasion of the chess stamp(s) issuance.

Note:

Other chess-related philatelic items with a postmark date that does not correspond to the issue date of the stamp in question are not listed in this catalogue, but rather in the chess postmark catalogue.

3.2. ADDITIONAL NOTES

3.2.1. GENERAL

The aforementioned components are present on all "good" First Day Covers (FDCs)—but certainly not on all of them. This occasional significant discrepancy has raised the question of which FDCs should be included in this Catalogue and which should not. It is often difficult to determine whether FDCs are of an official nature or are privately produced.

Is the Catalogue complete? Certainly not! Given the sheer volume of material, it is virtually impossible to register every single FDC. However, the present Catalogue has been coordinated with experienced collectors and is based—among other things—on a nearly daily review of all listings available on the internet.

3.2.2. STAMPS

It does not always make sense to display every issued stamp on a First Day Cover (FDC). If the same stamp exists in both perforated and imperforate versions on otherwise identical envelopes, listing both would amount to a waste of catalogue space. Wherever possible, this practice was avoided; instead, a note was added indicating that FDCs featuring both types of the stamp exist.

Then there are issues where multiple stamps were released side-by-side (e.g.,



Laos, April 13, 1984). In such cases, it makes no sense to depict each stamp individually on a separate, identical envelope; instead, this feature is highlighted by showing all the stamps belonging to the set.

However, there are certainly issues where such "duplicate" illustrations help the collector navigate the maze of issued First Day Sheets (ETBs).

In this context, mention must also be made of so-called "agent stamps," which are rightly regarded as "semi-official" and "abusive." Their representation in the catalogue is limited.

3.2.3. POSTAL STATIONERY (PS)

Chess postal stationery items meet the criteria for inclusion in the catalogue on the same basis. The imprinted stamps are treated as equivalent to adhesive stamps, as they also possess a specific postage value.

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However, one rule does not apply in every instance: since the date of issue for a postal stationery item cannot always be determined precisely, a (slight) discrepancy with the postmark may occur.

3.2.4. MAXIMUM CARDS (MAX)

Even from a historical perspective, MAXs are not "genuine" FDCs. The majority are issued privately and without official oversight.

According to our research, most of the items produced do not meet the necessary criteria to be considered MAXs at all.

Sources:

“SPECIAL REGULATIONS FOR THE EVALUATION OF MAXIMAPHILY EXHIBITS AT FIP EXHIBITIONS” (August 28, 2019).

“Arbeitsgemeinschaft Maximaphilie & Philokratie (AMPh) im Bund Deutscher Philatelisten e. V.” <http://www.maximaphilie.de/>

However, so as not to leave the interested collector entirely on their own, we have included those maximum cards as "FDCs" that meet all the criteria for a high-quality maximum card.

How did we make our selection?

In maximaphily, a maximum card must meet specific criteria. We distilled these rather complex requirements into 10 facts that a maximum card must satisfy to qualify for inclusion in the catalogue. All 10 conditions must be met.

- 1.1. The card must feature an official chess-themed postage stamp recognized by the Universal Postal Union.
- 1.2. The stamp must be affixed to the picture side of the card.
- 1.3. Only a single stamp may be affixed.
- 2.1. The card must feature an illustration that thematically reflects the image on the stamp.
- 2.2. The card may contain only one illustration.

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- 2.3. The standard format for maximum cards must be adhered to.
- 3.1. The postmark must be official.
- 3.2. The postmark must feature a chess motif.
- 3.3. The postmark must be temporally close to the occasion of the stamp's issue.
- 3.4. There may be only one postmark on the card.

Out of 244 collectible items, only 55 met these 10 criteria. Consequently, nearly 200 items marketed as maximum cards were excluded from the catalogue.

3.2.5. COUNTERFEITS

Forgeries are a vexing issue. We classify as such any FDCs that were privately produced after the stamp's date of issue. Whenever we are aware of such items, they are not listed in our Catalogue.

An exception to this rule involves FDCs from Bulgaria dated September 29, 1947. It is a known fact that no official FDCs were issued on that date; consequently, all such FDCs currently on the market are of a private nature—and were often produced years later. In the case of these specific "FDCs," we explicitly draw attention to this circumstance in order to protect collectors from making erroneous purchases.

3.2.6. POSTMARKS

Featured here are:

- (1) special postmarks containing references to the specific chess-related occasion of the issue;
- (2) special postmarks relating to other occasions, but bearing the corresponding issue date of the stamp(s); and
- (3) standard daily postmarks. These are listed only when, in conjunction with an illustration, they serve a specific philatelic purpose. In other words: A cover