How to Spot Counterfeit Dollars

Counterfeit U.S. currency is not always easy to spot. To make sure you don't accidentally pay with counterfeit bills or receive them as payment yourself, here are a few tips to help you spot the fakes.

Find the watermark

On new $10, $20, $50, and $100 bills, the watermark is a replica of the portrait and is located to the right of the printed image.

See the colors shift

Modern $10, $20, $50, and $100 bills feature a color-shifting ink that lists the denomination in the right-hand corner. Tilt the bill 45 degrees to see the number change from copper to green. $100 bills have an additional color-shifting measure to the right of Benjamin Franklin’s portrait.

Match the security thread (preferably with UV)

Hold the bill up to the light and make sure you see a security thread listing the correct denomination. It is located to the right of the portrait on $5, $10, and $50 bills and to the left of the portrait on $20 and $100 bills. However, this thread text can be faked, which is why we recommend using an ultraviolet light to also see the correct color listed on the currency note:

- $5 bill: Blue
- $10 bill: Orange
- $20 bill: Green
- $50 bill: Yellow
- $100 bill : Pink

Check the paper and feel the material

The paper used by the Federal Reserve for printing currency contains blue and red security fibers woven throughout the material; not just on the surface level. Additionally, you can feel the raised texture of print on legitimate currency, particularly on the shoulders of the portraits in the center.

See more details of legitimate currency from the Secret Service.

Read this blog online.