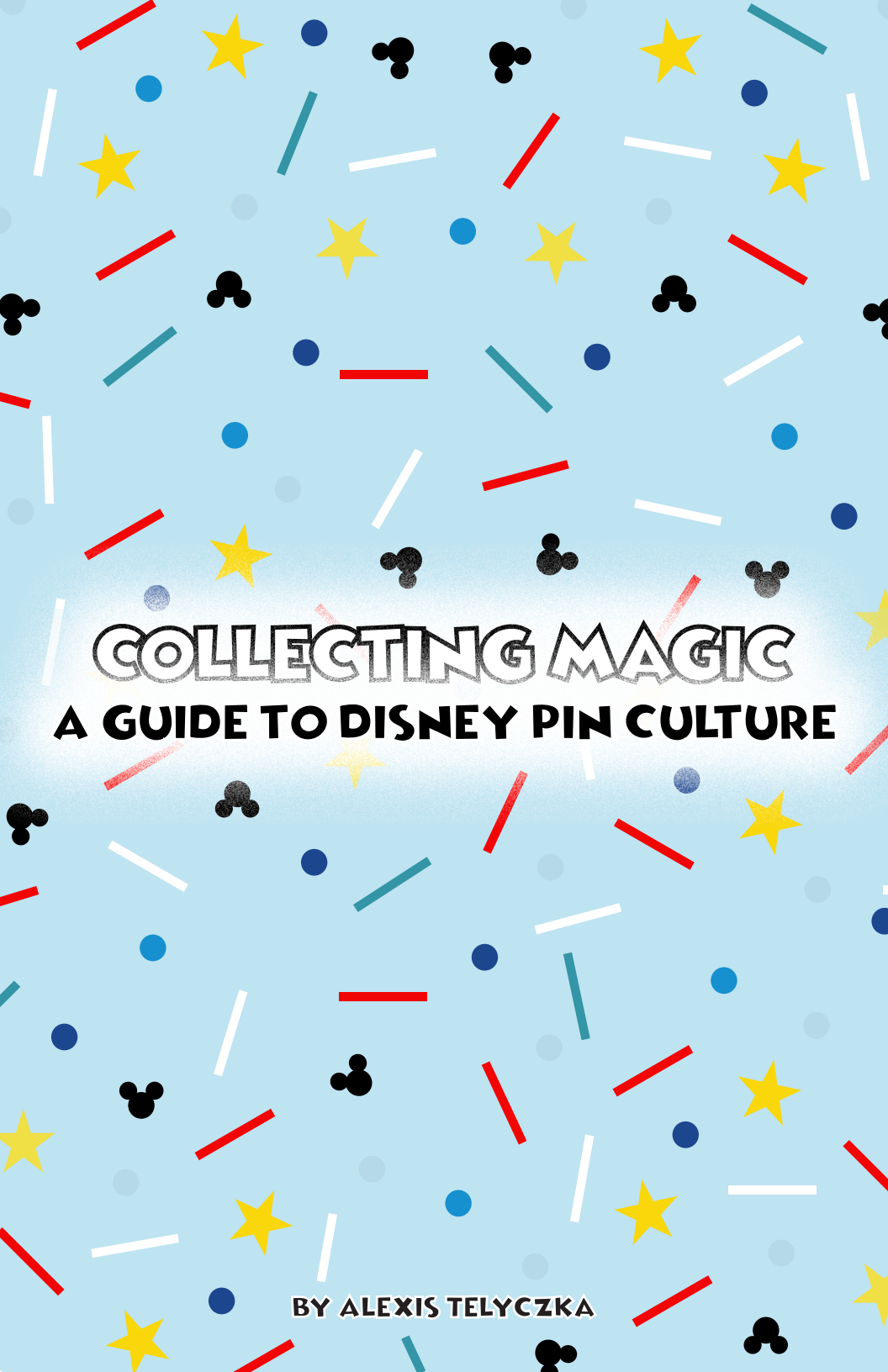




COLLECTING MAGIC

A GUIDE TO DISNEY PIN CULTURE

BY ALEXIS TELYCZKA



Fonts: Wicked Mouse, Helvetica, Helvetica Neue, mickey m tfb, Waltograph UI

Colors: 1c468e, 1a94d7, bee3F1 (taken from the Walt Disney World and Disneyland website headers)

Photos from Google Images, ebay.com, etsy.com, disneystore.com, pinpics.com, disneypinsblog.com, and the author's personal collection.

This guide was created for
“Design and the Future of Publishing,”
a Fall 2024 course at The New School.

This project is for academic / personal purposes only.

COLLECTING MAGIC

A GUIDE TO DISNEY PIN CULTURE

BY ALEXIS TELYCZKA

This guide is dedicated to all the magic collectors, especially those who helped me by providing information for this project:

Grace K.
Meghan W.
Kenz C.
Ariana F.
Felix M.

Steven M.
North Jersey Pin Traders
Central Jersey Pin Traders

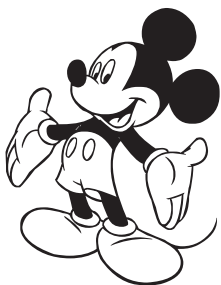
Tic Toc Croc Shop



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INTRODUCTION

If you've ever been to a Disney park or property, you've likely seen Disney trading pins— small, typically enamel lapel pins— being sold in a store, perhaps, or upon another guest's lanyard, or maybe at a pin trading station.

Spinning racks and clear cases display the current inventories of pins for sale; guests gather around them, some seeking just one as a souvenir, others looking for a pin of a character, ride, or story that they collect.

It's a hobby that reaches beyond the boundary of the parks, too. Online, people are able to buy, sell, and trade with each other across different states— even internationally. Pin trading groups abound on social media, while websites like pinpics.com allow fans to share their personal collections as well as their wishlists and what they're willing to trade.

Guides to Disney pin trading in the parks already exist— some officially distributed by the Walt Disney Company. A comprehensive

guide to pin collecting and trading online, or in spaces outside of Disney property, is harder to find. The purpose of this guide is to provide US-based pin enthusiasts with a basic introduction to all three types of spaces.

My parents bought me my first Disney pin during a family vacation in 2007— Scamp, from *Lady and the Tramp II*— as well as a hot pink lanyard, both of which I still have today. As a lifelong pin enthusiast, I hope this guide offers an informative peek into my world, and inspires others to discover the charm of these small souvenirs.



**WHAT
DO YOU
COLLECT?**



A BRIEF HISTORY

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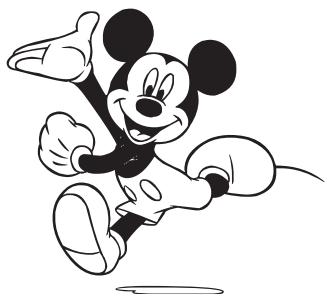
An excerpt from “The History Of Disney Pin Trading” by Erin Bonsall on DVCShop.com

Disney pins can remind you of your favorite characters, attractions, parks, and shows[,] and there is one that captures each magical moment! The colorful and unique pins we see cast members and Disney go’ers sporting have been around since the beginning of the parks. There have been thousands of pins that have been created over the years, and each one is available for only a limited time. Disney Pin Trading has a colorful and unique history that you may have not known about! So get your pin collection out and let’s learn about where it all started!

Disney pins have always been present in the parks since the opening, but not until the 1999 Millennium Celebration was pin trading introduced. During this fifteen month long celebration, there was an Odyssey of the Mind function at Epcot in which pins were being traded, which[—] you guessed it[—]

inspired the pin exchange! Within a year the pin trading craze hit at Disneyland Resort, which is now home of the most pin trading events. Since then, [...] pin trading has spread to Aulani, Disneyland Paris, Tokyo Disney Resort, Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, and even the Disney Cruise Lines. Each location has created their own pins and traditions, making each one unique and special!

Some may ask, “Why exactly did Disney start a pin trading movement at their parks?” Disney wanted to create a keepsake for all Disney lovers, and create a way to allow guests from all over the world to interact with one another. Before the Disney pin exchange became popular, Disney pins were not as popular and there were not nearly as many as there are today. The pin trading was initially meant to only last the 15 months for the Millennium Celebration, but after Disney saw how popular it was [and] how it exploded throughout the parks, they decided to keep it a tradition year after year! During the initial pin trading months, Disney was



producing new pins EVERY. SINGLE. DAY! A pin collector's dream!

Disney Pin Trading is still going strong today, and there [are] over 100,000 pin designs out there! Pins not only include pins guests can purchase online and in the parks, but limited edition pins, special cast member pins, event pins and more! If you search, there [are] designated websites for collectors to go to for collecting, trading and cataloguing the pins. There [are] also pin exchange meet ups, and not only at the parks! Collectors from around the world can unite to show off their pins, and trade one another.



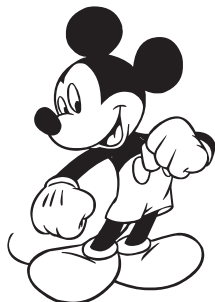


THE FAN COMMUNITY

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An excerpt from “The Pleasure in Paradox:
The Negotiation Between Agency and
Admiration in the Disney Fan Community”
by Alissa Butler

[...] Fans’ attempts at creating their Disney lives would not be complete without others sharing in their joy. They may come to their fandom individually, but by interacting with other fans and sharing their love for the company their enjoyment is enhanced and more than it could be alone (Duffett 23). In his study of fan communities that form specifically around brands, advertising strategist Douglas Atkin offers insight into why communities resonate so powerfully for fans:



A community of like people...is a vital ingredient of the sense of belonging that most crave when they say they are

looking somewhere to “feel at home.” It can create an uncritical and celebratory environment in which the individual can feel confident enough to find and express himself. There is a “safe space” ... where inhibitions normally felt among strangers are removed and the barriers to being you are broken with impunity. You may change the company you work for, your neighborhood, social club, and even your friends, to find a place where it is more possible to be yourself with people you consider to be more like yourself. (5)

As Atkins observes, fan communities are so much more than shared affinity and many fans do feel “at home” and refer to the community as their “home” or “family.” It is because the community “offer[s] their members a sense of belonging in an otherwise lonely world...[and] a sense of welcome and strength of common bonds” (Duffett 242). A fan’s experience as a member of the Disney fan community often is what solidifies their dedication and propels them towards making Disney a lifestyle.

Some fans meet in person at a Disney park or Disney related event, and many friendships are formed by the happenstance of waiting near each other in long lines or partaking in souvenir pin trading at one of Disney's designated stores. But, by and large, the fan community meets, interacts, and exists online through social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, through created media content shared on YouTube and podcast apps, and by Disney news blog sites written by fans for fans like The DIS and MiceChat. They commune mostly in Facebook community groups like *Disney Addicts Only*, *Crazy for Disney*, and *My Heart Belongs to Disney!* whose size can range from just a few people to over 200,000 members. They interact with one another on a daily, and sometimes hourly, basis because here fans find support, encouragement, refuge, and the joy of socializing with fellow fans. They share Disney facts, trip tips, personal stories, pictures, and they ask each other questions. The comments section for each post allows them to engage in conversation and make personal connections. As media scholar

Henry Jenkins observes, “a man with a television is alone, but a man with a computer can belong to a community” (Convergence Culture 256). The initial friendships and bonds that form here stem from mutual joy and a shared passion for the Disney brand. They continue and grow as fans bond through their interactions with many of the friendships becoming the center of fans’ social lives. These relationships can be extremely fulfilling because they share a love for Disney, its ideals of love and friendship, and they “get” each other. [Disney fan and host of *Disney Addicts Podcast*, Bryan] Francoeur explains:

This community of people is so accepting and so loving. I have never experienced that in my life.... This is a group of people that love Disney. They love what it’s bringing to their life and they’re not afraid to share it with other people. And they are so accepting of other people, no matter what the life you’re from, no matter how much money you have. No matter who you love, what you love, they accept you and they are just glad they have somebody

to talk to about this other passion...
It's an incredible group of people that I
have never experienced anything like.
(Francoeur)

His experience is exemplary of the most fulfilling parts of fandom in general: interpersonal interaction and community. Though discussion is centered on sharing information related to Disney, it is somewhat inconsequential because it is the process that provides meaning. Coming together and sharing thoughts, opinions, and questions creates a social process that reaffirms group ties and makes the interactions fulfilling (Jenkins *Convergence Culture* 54).

Fan experience within the Disney fan community is especially fulfilling due to the loving, inclusive, and accepting nature of the Disney fan community, which strives to recreate the “Disney Magic” by imbuing their interactions with the Disney Company’s marketed ideologies of love, friendship, and acceptance. Fans achieve this through purposeful curation of the online fan spaces. [...] They highly value these spaces and make concerted effort to protect them. Little

effort is needed to do this due to Facebook's programming which allows moderators complete control of the group. Moderators set the group[']s rules of what [are] acceptable discussion topics and behaviors, and they have the power to block and evict any user they see fit. "Trolls," naysayers, discontents, and the like can be weeded out quickly and efficiently keeping the group milieu intact. Generally, this results in conversations centered on Disney and Disney alone; other potentially divisive topics such as politics and religion rarely, if ever, come into the conversation or are shared on the page. [...A]voidance of divisive topics is common in nearly all fan interactions, and control by the group moderators ensures the atmosphere will remain positive, happy, and safe.

[...] Between club membership, Facebook groups, and a fan-created Disney dating website (www.mousemingle.com), fans need not look beyond their own fan community for friendship, family, romance, and the kinds of social fulfillment that many of us generally crave.

TYPES OF PINS

.....

Adapted in part from the page on “Pin Trading Terminology” on disneycanuck.com

Open Edition: Official pins that are available for purchase directly from Disney, either online or at a Disney park. Once a pin of this type is released, it will remain in circulation until it is retired.



Limited Edition: Official pins that differ from Open Edition pins in that there are a limited quantity of them— once sold out, they will not remain in circulation. In other words— once they're gone, they're gone.



Limited Release: Official pins that differ from Limited Edition pins in that they will only be sold during a specific time frame— such as during a festival or event— but can be reproduced in unlimited quantities within that time frame.



Cast Lanyard Pins / Hidden Mickey Pins:

Pins that are not available for purchase through official Disney outlets; they can only be initially obtained through trading with a Cast Member on Disney property. These pins are identifiable by a small tri-circle “Mickey” silhouette somewhere within the design. New designs / series are released frequently. Not all pins on a Cast Member’s lanyard or pin board will be a “Hidden Mickey” pin.



Artist Proof / Pre-Production: Pins created as part of the production process. Artist Proof pins are manufactured first, as a way to verify that the pin's design appears as intended. Pre-Production pins are then created as prototypes before proceeding with mass production of a design. These pins may vary in materials, colors, or other features from the final design, which makes them rarities.



Disney Studio Store Hollywood / Ghirardelli Soda Fountain and Chocolate Shop Pins:

Official pins that are only available at the Disney Studio Store Hollywood / Ghirardelli Soda Fountain shop next to the El Capitan Theater in Hollywood. Open Edition pins are available for purchase, and Limited Edition pins are available for purchase via a lottery system on scheduled release days. A “Pin Trader’s Delight” pin (a pin of a Disney character enjoying an ice cream) is only obtainable with the purchase of a Pin Trader’s Delight sundae, dependent on in-store availability. New designs for the Pin Trader’s Delight pin are regularly announced.



Walt Disney Imagineering (WDI): Official pins exclusive to Mickey's of Glendale, the Walt Disney Imagineering campus store. This store (and its website) is only accessible to employees of The Walt Disney Company.



Disney Employee Center (TWDC): Official pins exclusive to employees of The Walt Disney Company. They can be purchased on the Disney's employee website, or on disneystore.com after verifying the purchaser's employment with The Walt Disney Company.



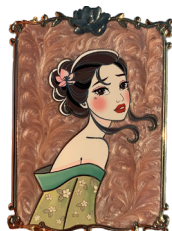
D23 Exclusive: Official pins only available for purchase by D23 members, either online or at D23 conventions; D23 is “The Official Disney Fan Club.”



Hot Topic / Loungefly / Other: Licensed Disney pins sold by external companies, such as Hot Topic, Loungefly, Pink a la Mode, and others. As long as these pins have the Disney copyright logo on the back, they are able to be traded in the parks; however, be aware that some traders might not be interested in pins without an “Authentic Disney Pin” logo stamped on its back.



Fantasy Pins: Unofficial, fan-designed pins. These types of pins are typically not traded, but are instead purchased directly from the artist. These pins cannot be traded at pin trading locations on Disney property.



Scrappers: Unauthorized, low-quality pins that often look similar to authentic pin designs. They are commonly believed to be either official Disney pins that did not pass quality control checks, or (more often) pins made from the stolen molds once used to make official Disney pins.

WARNING!
AVOID SCRAPPERS!
DO NOT PURCHASE
BULK PINS OFF OF
AMAZON OR EBAY.





Pin trading guidelines at Walt Disney World and Disneyland Resort, from their official websites.

Official Disney Pins: Only official Disney pins may be traded. The main criteria when judging whether a pin is tradable or not (although other factors may be considered) is that the metal pin bears a “©Disney” mark on the back—representing an official Disney event, place, location, character or icon. A Cast Member may determine not to trade a pin at their discretion.

Safety: For a safe trading experience, please trade one pin at a time.

Ask First: Please refrain from touching the pin or lanyard of a Cast Member or Guest. If you need a closer look, kindly ask the Cast Member or Guest wearing the pin or lanyard to bring it into clearer view for you.

Pin Condition: Pins should be in good, undamaged, tradable condition with the pin backing attached.

Trading Maximum: Guests may trade a maximum of 2 pins per Cast Member or trading board, per day.

Not Exchangeable for Trade

- ❖ Monies, gifts, vouchers or receipts may not be exchanged or used to trade for a pin.

Okay to Trade

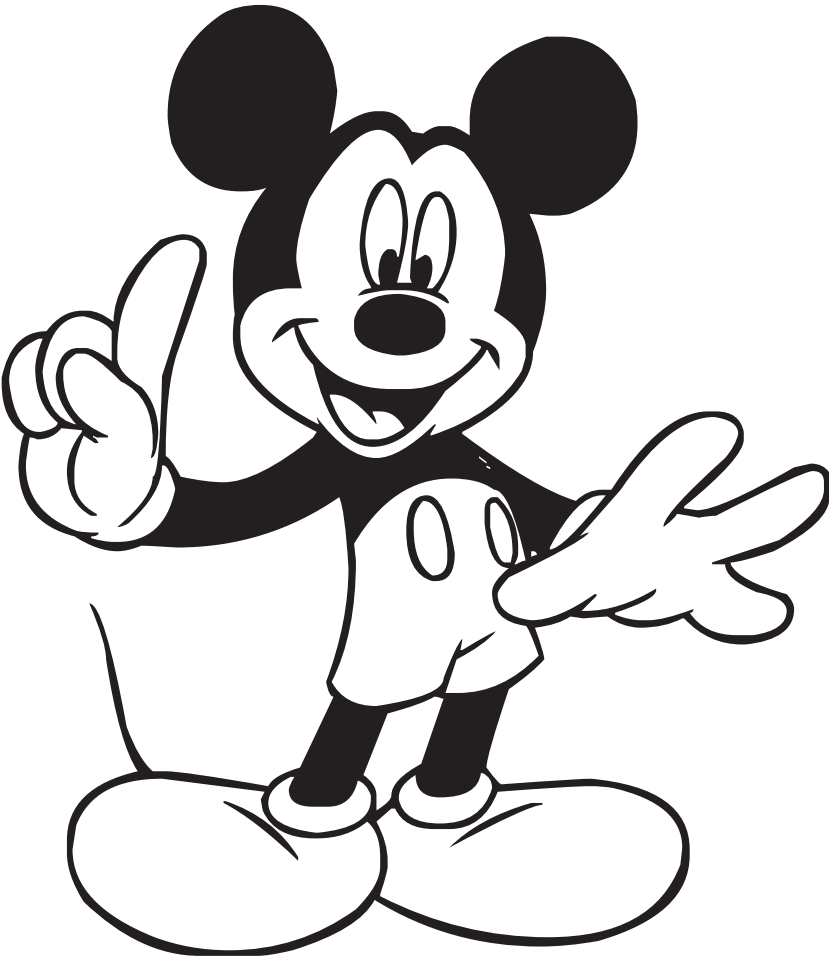
- ❖ When trading with a Cast Member, Guests should offer a pin that is not currently displayed on the Cast Member’s lanyard or trading board.
- ❖ Pins from other business units of The Walt Disney Company (e.g., ABC, ESPN) may be traded, as determined by the Cast Member.
- ❖ Operating participant pins that show a Disney, Disneyland Resort or Walt Disney World Resort affiliation are generally accepted for trading.

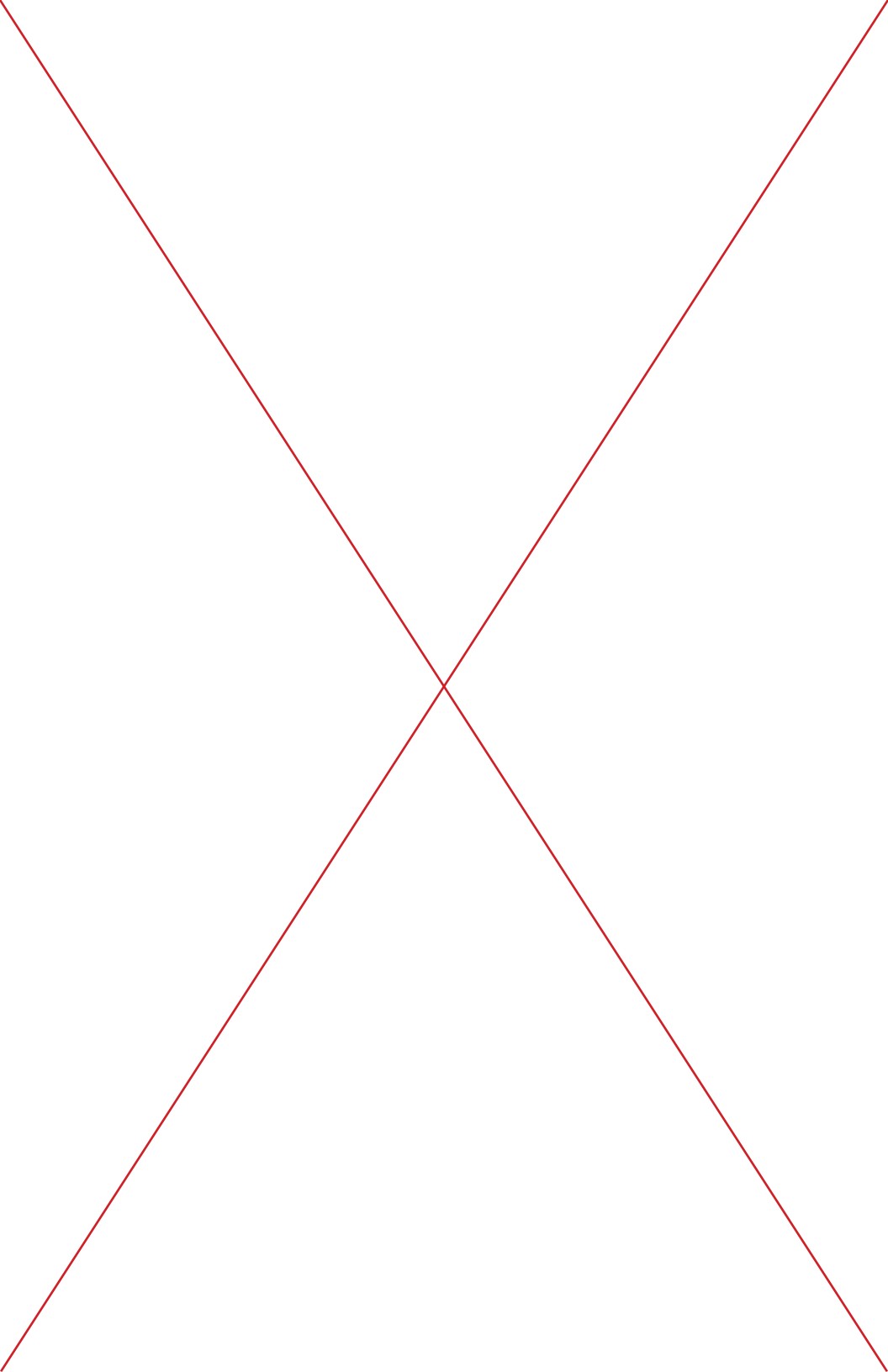
Not Okay to Trade

- ❖ Unauthorized pins, plastic pins, rubber pins or other nonmetal pins.
- ❖ Personalized name pins
- ❖ Brooch-style or clasp pins
- ❖ Disney Service Award pins, Disney Legacy Award pins, Spirit of Disneyland Resort pins, Partners in Excellence pins or Cast Member costume pins (i.e., VIP Tour Guide, Coordinator, Host/Hostess Badges, Disney Trainer)

OFFICIAL GUIDELINES

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ONLINE GUIDELINES

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Adapted in part from a YouTube video:
“Disney Pin Trading 101 | How to Pin Trade Online” by The Leffersons

To find a trustworthy online pin trading group, do a quick Google or YouTube search to see what groups other pin traders in your area are a part of. Make sure to read each group’s guidelines / expectations carefully before asking to join!

Once accepted into a group, take pictures of the pins you have that you want to trade and post them. Along with this post, you can include your ISOs— pins you are “in search of.” Your ISOs can include pictures of specific pins, or you can state what types of pins you collect in general.

If you are in a larger group that has members from various countries, be clear on if you’re open to trading internationally.

If someone is interested in one of your pins, they may comment on your post or

message you to ask to see a close-up picture of the pin's front and back. This is standard practice— it is so they can examine the pin for any flaws or defects, and to ensure that it is not a scrapper. You can ask to see a front and back picture of the pins you are interested in, as well! It is generally frowned upon to try to offer scrappers up for trade in online groups; in many groups, it is even against their policies, so do your best to ensure your trading pins are authentic!

Once you confirm a trade with another person, be sure to package the pins with bubble wrap to keep them protected, and provide your pin partner with the tracking information.

Some online groups / individuals will resell pins. There are trustworthy resellers out there who can be found with a bit of research. Check the original price point of each pin you buy to make sure you aren't being significantly overcharged.



THESE LETTERS, GENERATED BY CHATGPT AND META AI, ARE BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH ACTIVE DISNEY PIN TRADERS AND HAVE BEEN EDITED FOR BREVITY AND CLARITY.



A LETTER TO RESELLERS

Dear Resellers,

As Disney pin collectors, we want to share our thoughts on the current state of pin trading and the role of resellers. We believe we can work together to preserve the magic of pin trading for everyone.

Pin trading isn't just a transaction; it's a shared experience between traders, whether they're completing sets or trading pins, with a deep emotional connection to Disney. Resellers often purchase large quantities of pins and then inflate prices, making it difficult for others to access certain items at fair prices. This has transformed the experience of trading, especially when valuable pins are being flipped for profits rather than shared as part of the collector's journey.

To be clear, reselling isn't inherently bad. There is a place for resellers, especially when they're offering items that collectors might have missed. But it's those who understand

the importance of authenticity and fair pricing who help keep this culture alive. We urge resellers to remember:

- ❧ Excessive price gouging hurts the community. Fair pricing ensures everyone can participate.
- ❧ Pin trading is about connections and kindness. Approach every interaction with respect and integrity.
- ❧ Trading pins should be joyful, not transactional. The spirit of pin trading can remain intact when we prioritize the experience over profit.

Pin trading, at its core, is about sharing joy and creating a community of collectors who value the true spirit of Disney. Together, we can make sure the hobby stays fun, inclusive, and respectful for everyone involved; together, we can keep the magic alive.

With faith, trust, and pixie dust,
Disney Pin Traders and Enthusiasts

A LETTER TO CAST MEMBERS

Dear Cast Members,

Pin trading has been a beloved tradition at Disney for years, creating connections between guests and allowing us to share in the magic of Disney.

As cast members, you are at the heart of this experience. Often the first point of contact for guests learning about pin trading, your role is vital in maintaining a positive and magical experience. However, when cast members are not well-versed in pin trading, it can feel like the magic has been lost. We want to ensure that pin trading remains a magical, fair, and welcoming experience for all guests.

A key role cast members can play is in regulating the pin boards and cast member trading lanyards to ensure that the pins offered are authentic and in good condition. A well-curated selection with high-quality, authentic pins will create a fairer trading environment and encourage new collectors

to participate with confidence. Some guests new to pin trading may unknowingly purchase counterfeit pins from eBay or Amazon. Cast members should be equipped to educate guests on how to identify real pins. Stronger enforcement of official pin trading rules— maintaining consistency and accuracy in this enforcement across cast members and trading locations— will also help discourage the circulation of low-quality scrappers.

Pin trading should be about joy, community, and memories. Cast members can guide guests toward appreciating the memories attached to a pin; with better training and a focus on integrity, we can bring the true magic back to trading.

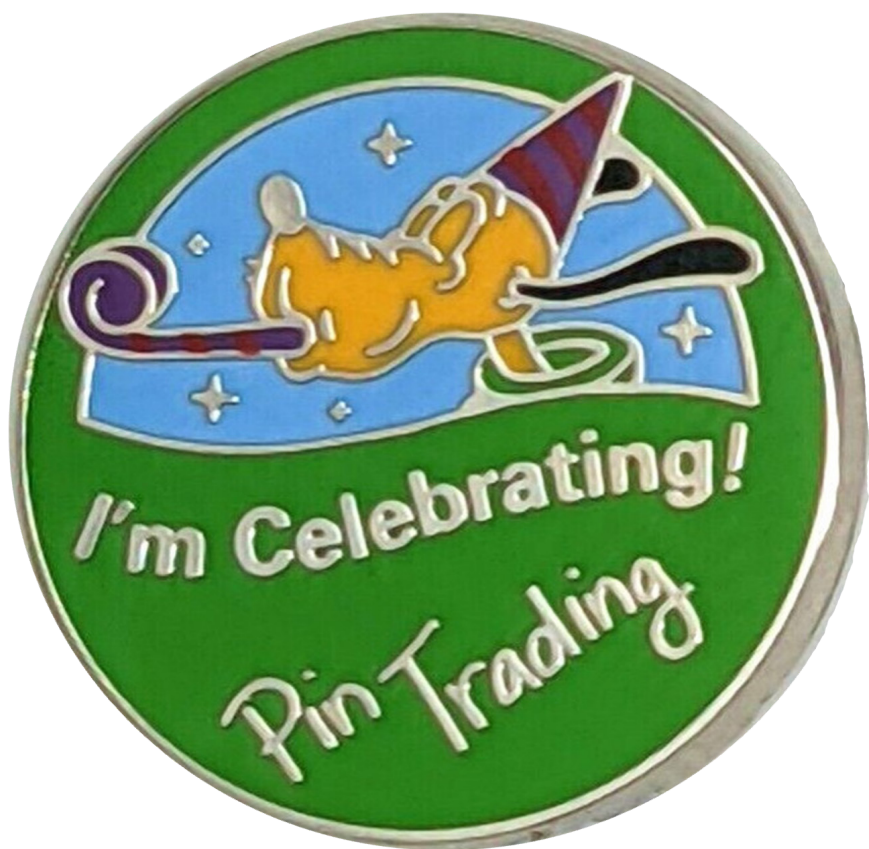
Thank you for your continued dedication to creating magic. Let's work together to make pin trading a magical experience for all.

With appreciation,
Disney Pin Traders and Enthusiasts

OPEN

LETTERS





**WHAT
ADVICE
WOULD
YOU GIVE
TO FIRST-
TIME PIN
TRADERS?**

SPEND THE EXTRA MONEY TO GET AUTHENTIC DISNEY PINS. IT WILL MAKE THE TRADE FEEL BETTER IF YOU'RE ALSO PUTTING GOOD PINS OUT THERE THAT PEOPLE WILL WANT TO TRADE FOR ON THE BOARDS. 🐭 YOUR PIN COLLECTION IS YOURS. DON'T LET ANYONE TELL YOU YOUR COLLECTION IS BAD OR NOT WORTH ANYTHING. JUST HAVE FUN AND TRADE PINS IMPORTANT TO YOU! 🐭 PICK A FEW THINGS YOU REALLY WANT TO COLLECT. OTHERWISE YOU'LL GO CRAZY. 🐭 THERE WILL BE A LOT OF FAKES TRADED BACK AND FORTH AS YOU GET TO KNOW WHAT'S REAL AND WHAT'S NOT. LOOK FOR TRUSTED SELLERS TO PURCHASE CHEAP, AUTHENTIC TRADER PINS FROM FIRST. 🐭 IT'S DISNEY PIN TRADING. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE FUN! PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO TRADE THE PINS THEY SPENT MONEY ON FOR A SCRAPPER. 🐭 IT CAN GET PRICEY. JUST KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR WALLET. 🐭 IF YOU GET DENIED FROM TRADING WITH TRADERS, IT HAPPENS. IT'S JUST THE PIN CYCLE. 🐭 YOU CAN CHECK THE VALUE OF PINS BY SEARCHING ONLINE, USUALLY ON EBAY. 🐭 THE MICKEY HEAD BLACK PIN BACKS TEND TO FALL OFF EASILY AND YOU'LL LOSE YOUR PINS, SO KEEPING THEM WITH A MORE SECURE BACK IS SAFER. 🐭 A PIN BAG WILL MAKE YOU LOOK MORE LIKE AN ADVANCED TRADER. GET ONE TO KEEP YOUR PINS SAFE WHILE ALSO PROUDLY DISPLAYING. 🐭 IT'S SO MUCH MORE THAN PINS, IN THE LONG RUN.

**IT'S SO MUCH
MORE THAN PINS, IN
THE LONG RUN.**

