

FINDS CARE · FREE RESOURCE

Finds Identification Checklist

A step-by-step process for photographing, measuring, researching and recording an unknown find.

What's inside

- ✓ Clear, practical steps you can use straight away
- 📄 Written for real UK detecting, not theory
- 📄 Plain-English guidance, checked against official sources
- ★ Free to print, keep and share



**Written by
detectorists**



**Checked against
UK guidance**



**Free to print and
keep**

Use this checklist to take clear photos and record the clues. Better information usually leads to a better identification.

✓ The identification process

- ☐ **Do not clean it yet;** cleaning can destroy evidence and value
- ☐ Photograph the front (first side), back (second side) and edge in good, indirect light
- ☐ Include a ruler or scale in at least one photo
- ☐ Record measurements and weight
- ☐ Do not scratch, file, polish or use acid. If uncertain, record what you can see and ask a specialist
- ☐ Note the context (how and where it was found) privately, without exposing the exact location
- ☐ Identify the object category first (see below)
- ☐ Look for lettering, symbols and fixings (holes, loops, lugs, rivets, broken attachments)
- ☐ Record a confidence level rather than forcing an answer

Common object categories to recognise

🕒 Coins & tokens

Round, often worn; look for a bust, cross or lettering

☆ Buckles

Frame and pin; from belts, shoes or straps

🕒 Buttons

Domed or flat; check for a shank (back loop) or fixing

🔧 Mounts & fittings

Decorative plates with rivet holes or lugs (small tabs)

☆ Brooches

Dress fasteners of several periods

🔧 Weights & seals

Lead objects; some stamped with marks or letters

Words explained

Context how and where the object was found: depth, nearby objects, and the type of ground.

Shank the loop or projection on the back of a button used to attach it.

Lug a small projecting tab used to fix a mount or fitting.

📄 Golden rule

If it might be Treasure, or you are unsure, stop. Do not clean it, and report it through the route for your nation (see the Treasure Action Checklist).

Fill this in for each mystery find. A complete record makes identification far easier, now or later.

Find reference / site code		Photo filenames	
Object category		Material	
Shape		Dimensions & weight	
Decoration, lettering or marks			
Fixing / attachment		Possible period	
Similar examples & supporting evidence			
Most likely identification			
Confidence	Low ☐ Medium ☐ High ☐	Next step / reporting ref	
Sources used			

Where to research your find

PAS database

finds.org.uk, over 1.8 million recorded objects with images

Local FLO

Your regional Finds Liaison Officer records and advises on finds

Forums (with care)

Forums are community opinions; cross-check them against museum and official records

☆ **Record confidence, not certainty**

It is fine to write 'possibly medieval, low confidence'. Honest uncertainty is more useful than a wrong, confident guess, and lets you revisit it later.

This resource is provided for general information and personal record-keeping. Rules, official guidance and access arrangements can change. Check the current requirements for the place where you intend to detect.

Get more free metal detecting guides, templates and practical advice at [DetectoristWorld.com](https://www.DetectoristWorld.com).