

FINDS CARE · FREE RESOURCE

Finds Identification Quick Reference

Compare the basic features of coins, buttons, buckles, seals, mounts and other common detecting finds.

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

Before you match a category, could it be dangerous or reportable?

Ammunition, shells, grenades or weapons: **do not touch, move away and contact the police.** If a find may be Treasure or archaeologically significant, stop, record the findspot privately and seek advice before handling further.

Place a find into a broad category first, then research within it. For each: photograph the important views, measure it, and note any lettering or fixings.

Common categories

Coins

Round, often worn; look for a bust, cross, shield or lettering. Photograph both faces and the edge.

Tokens & jettons

Coin-like but not currency; a jetton is a reckoning counter. Often lettered.

Buttons

Domed or flat discs; check the back for a shank (loop) or fixing. Common in all periods.

Buckles & strap fittings

Frames, pins and plates from belts, shoes and horse harness.

Lead weights & seals

Heavy for size; cloth seals and weights often carry stamps or marks.

Mounts & fittings

Decorative plates with rivet holes or lugs (small projecting tabs); from furniture, books or harness.

Brooches & dress items

Fasteners and dress accessories from several periods.

Spindle whorls

Perforated discs of stone, lead or pottery, used to weight a spindle when spinning thread.

Keys & lock furniture

Barrel and other keys; padlocks and lock plates.

Military objects

Buttons, badges and musket balls. Ammunition, shells, grenades and weapons may be dangerous.

Trade & agricultural

Tools, fittings, harness parts and weights from rural life and work.

Modern & machine parts

Ring pulls, foil, aluminium and machine fragments; learn to recognise and remove safely.

Whatever the object, the same approach helps you identify it.

Views to photograph

- ☐ Front (first side) and back (second side)
- ☐ Edge or side profile
- ☐ Any lettering, mark or fixing
- ☐ Include a scale in one shot

Evidence to record

- ☐ Material and dimensions
- ☐ Weight
- ☐ Fixing type (holes, loops, lugs, rivets, breaks)
- ☐ Any marks, letters or decoration

When to get specialist help

- ☐ Anything that might be Treasure: stop and follow the reporting route for your nation
- ☐ Fragile, gilded, plated or inscribed objects
- ☐ Grouped or undisturbed finds
- ☐ Anything you cannot place after research

Words explained

Token a coin-like object used for trade or advertising, not official currency.

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 in place.

★ Cross-check, do not guess

Forums are community opinions; cross-check them against museum and official records such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme research database. An honest 'not sure yet' beats a confident wrong answer.

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).