

# Murphy's Law

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Murphy's Law says that if something can go wrong, it will. So, it is no surprise that the coins in your wallet or purse probably show evidence of some mistake, error, or flaw in production. In fact, the study of errors in a fascinating aspect of coin collecting.

When America was a young country, most work was done by hand. Early American coins often show repunched dates and over-punched mottos. Back then, there was no room in the budget for scrap. If a die-maker did something wrong, any fix or patch was accepted and production went on.

Even in the late 1800s, silver dollars were hastily struck with little concern for more than normal quality. For the year 1878, there are five major varieties of silver dollar and perhaps as many as 200 minor variations. The US Mint was scrambling to produce 20 million silver dollars per year and little errors didn't seem so important.

Today, the US government strikes over 12 billion coins a year. The US Mint relies on a full range of quality control measures. Even so, mistakes happen.

As a defective die cracks, the resulting coins will show a raised line across one face. A small drop of grease on a die will cause a weak strike with a mushy appearance. If a coin gets stuck in a die, its image will be driven onto the next coin. Coins can be struck on the wrong blanks. If a coin doesn't sit square when it is struck, it will be clipped by the die.

Most examples of production run errors can be bought for a couple of dollars. Collecting these mistakes is an intriguing study for anyone who appreciates industrial production methods.