

You really got more of a feel for the differences between your coins when you handled them. The sizes of the coins still help you to tell a quarter from a dime — but a dime and a penny are so similar in size, they're not so easy to tell apart by feel. But check out the edges of each coin. Quarters and dimes have tiny ridges all around the edge.

You can easily feel those tiny ridges and tell the coins apart.

Blind people learn to tell coins apart by feel, but paper money all feels pretty much the same. In some countries, bills of different values come in different sizes, like coins do here. That helps blind people identify them.

Ask Professor Exploratorium

Dear Professor E:

The vending machine at my school won't take Canadian quarters. It spits them right out. How can the machine tell a Canadian quarter from an American one?

Signed,
Coinfused

Dear Coinfused:

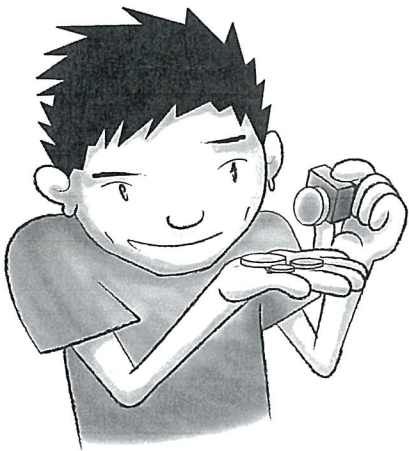
You are right. The vending machine won't accept a Canadian quarter. The vending machine can tell the difference between the two coins.

To figure out how the machine knows the difference, try the "Smart Vending Machines" activity on this page.

Cointentedly yours,
Professor E

Smart Vending Machines

Learn how a vending machine figures out which coins are American and which aren't.



Here's What You Need

- ✓ Some American coins, some Canadian coins, and some coins from other countries
- ✓ A magnet