

Proof That Coins Are A Bad Investment

by [Michael E. Marotta](#)

What follows is a brief table of coin prices from 1973, 1992, and 1997. First and foremost, it is equally possible to scour the Red Books and construct a chart of winners. (Perhaps you might want to do that and post it to this newsgroup or website.) However, there is nothing special about these coins, except that they are popular and typical.

There is one surprise: the Five Dollar Gold 1909-O in Unc has proved to be a strong performer. On the other hand, there is always a difference between the reported retail price and the actual buying price. "Red Book" and "Trends" and "Greysheet" do not buy or sell coins, they just report what some people say they buy and sell for.

If you have good charisma, you can outdo the statistics. If you are a dealer -- even on weekends -- you know that you can beat the statistics, not by selling coins, but by buying them. If you buy below wholesale, you can sell below retail and make money.

The charts also prove that hindsight is 20-20: if you wanted to make the most money, selling in 1992 was better than selling in 1997. It is a fact of life that people sell into their misery. People generally sell when they have to and they take the price they can get at that moment. Remember that John Pittman never made a single cent of profit on his coins -- his estate did.

Description	1973 Redbk	1992 Redbk	%APR 73-92	1997 Ads	%APR 92-97	%NetAPR 73-97
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Columb Expo						
50c 92 Unc60	14.00	100.00	10.0	32.00	-20.0	3.5
50c 93 Unc60	14.00	100.00	10.0	32.00	-20.0	3.5
25c 93 Unc60	90.00	475.00	9.0	300.00	-8.7	3.7
Stone Mt Unc60	17.50	40.00	4.0	42.00	1.0	3.9
▪						
\$5 Gold						
1908-S Unc60	350.00	2000.00	9.0	1150.00	-10.0	5.0
1909-O Unc60	400.00	6000.00	15.0	6500.00	1.6	12.0

1915-P Unc60	70.00	350.00	9.0	335.00	-0.9	6.7
▪						
50c						
1892-P XF	42.00	180.00	8.0	145.00	-4.2	5.2
1898-S VG	6.00	45.00	5.0	17.00	-2.5	4.4
1899-S XF	45.00	185.00	7.7	149.00	-4.4	5.1
1919-S XF	160.00	500.00	6.2	575.00	2.8	5.5
1944-D XF	2.00	7.00	6.8	9.00	5.1	6.5
▪						
1c						
1909-S VBD VG8	100.00	300.00	6.0	370.00	4.3	5.6
1909-S VBD Unc60	200.00	450.00	4.4	720.00	9.8	5.3
1914-D Fine	45.00	110.00	4.8	125.00	4.3	5.4
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My Income	6000.00	40000.00	10.5	60000.00	8.8	10.0

However, the bottom line is that the best investment is yourself. In 1973, I was a stockboy at Montgomery Ward, enrolled in a two- year curriculum in transportation management. By working and going to school, I changed careers twice -- though I still work in and around transportation: next week I will be training a group of machine operators at the plant that makes Corvette V-8s in the operation of Zeiss programmable gages.

And there is a footnote to the bottom line. If you are patient over decades and watch the market before you dump them, your coins will serve you as well as a passbook savings account.

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