



**BLOOMSBURY INTERNATIONAL**

# British Coins



When many people come to the UK, they find it very difficult to identify which coin is which. The system doesn't seem very logical because the 2p (and even the 1p) is bigger than the 5p piece, and the 20p is smaller than the 10p piece. When visitors first arrive, they spend a long time searching through change to find the correct one.



**British Coins**

Has this happened to you? Have you ever wondered why British money is seemingly so illogical? Is there a reason that justifies the varying sizes?



**Euro Coins**

If you look at euros for example, each coin is grouped with two other coins next to it in a group of three, so they place together the 1, 2 and 5 euro cent coins, the 10, 20 and 50 euro cent coins, and the 1 and 2 euro coins. This grouping causes some problems because the coins look very similar to each other because they are the same colour and only very slightly different in

size. So, in order for blind or partially-sighted people to distinguish the coins, each coin has a different edge. So the 10, 20 and 50 euro cent coins can be distinguished by rubbing your fingernail over the edge of the coin.

In the UK we take this a step further by putting our coins, not in groups of 3, but in pairs. So, we put 1p with 2p (small and large with a smooth edge, made with a copper coloured metal), 5p with 10p (small and large with a rough edge and made of nickel, a silver colour), 20p with 50p (small and large with an angular edge) and £1 with £2 (much thicker than the other coins). The sharp contrast in size between the two coins in each pair, as well as the different textures of the edges and the colours of the metals make it much easier for blind or partially-sighted people to identify the coins and much more easily identifiable when paying for things.



## The newest UK coins,

released in 2008 join together to make a picture, the image of a shield. But why do these new coins only have text to identify their value (FIVE PENCE) and not numbers (5 PENCE)? Well, the above system is judged to be so effective that it

was unnecessary. Most British people can identify coins from a large distance and by feeling the weight of the coin without looking at the number. Both of these are much more difficult to do with euro coins. Try it with a friend. Stand 15-20 metres away from a friend and try to identify the coin that they are holding up.

However, these new coins, although clever, admittedly do make it much more difficult for foreign visitors and tourists who may not speak English and who are not familiar with the British system.

Do you agree with the decision in 2008 to remove numbers from the coins? If you worked for the Royal Mint (the organisation that produces our money) what other changes would you make to British coins to make them easier for foreign visitors, while retaining their blind-friendly features?