

# Pin Trading at Disney: An Introduction

by Jennifer Shorey Arnold, PassPorter Guest Contributor

While visiting the parks, you can see cast members and guests wearing lanyards loaded with Disney pins and you can browse the park stores looking at the unique but somewhat pricey little items. Perhaps you or your little one has expressed an interest in pin trading but you are hesitant to make such a large investment.

How did this all begin? Disney's Official Pin Trading website explains that pin trading began as part of the Millennium Celebration in late 1999, although pins were available for purchase long before that and many Disney fans were already collecting. Pin trading has developed a life all its own in the realm of Disney and Disney enthusiasts since then.

Purchasing a Disney lanyard, pins to trade, or even the Disney starter pin set can quickly add up to big bucks. However, there is a secret to entering the world of pin trading without spending \$24.95 for a four pin and lanyard starter set at the park shop. If you are a savvy shopper, you can easily find Disney pins on eBay for a very reasonable price (though you will want to avoid suspicious bulk pin lots that just seem too good to be true). However, it is important to make sure that the eBay seller's description of the pins states that they are "official" Disney pins (see [picture](#) for an example). Having "official" pins with "© Disney" (or more) stamped on the back of the pin allows you to trade with any Disney Cast Member. (While you can certainly trade pins with your fellow guests, trading with Cast Members is a good way to get started trading, so that's what I'll focus on.)

Buying on eBay will mean you still need a lanyard to bear your pins. Instead of paying \$7.95 for a lanyard at the park, an easy alternative is to visit your local hardware store such as Home Depot or Lowes. I was able to purchase a pink pirate lanyard for \$1.95 to hold my pins. At that price you can buy two lanyards, which will enable you to use one to hold the pins you want to trade and a second to secure pins that you want to keep for your new collection. During my first trip to Disney participating in pin trading, I was able to trade with Disney Cast Members and compile a group of seven adorable Pirates of the Caribbean pins (pictured above). While on my trip, I discovered these very pins for sale as a box set in the Disney shops for \$29.95. On other trips, I've traded with Cast Members for pins that sell in the parks stores for as much as \$16.95 each. You just never know what pin you will find during your adventures!

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Perhaps it's not so much the price that's holding you back from jumping into pin trading. Are you or your little one a quiet person who just doesn't all together feel comfortable with the idea of approaching a stranger, Disney Cast Member or not, to look at their lanyard? That was me. However, I have found that pins allow even the shyest person a way to strike up a conversation. For your first trade, maybe try trading with a Cast Member working in one of the Disney park shops. All you need to do is approach a Cast Member and simply ask to see their pins. It's really that simple! Cast Members participating in pin trading are easy to spot, with their brightly colored lanyards. However, some wear a 5" x 5" hip lanyard (a black placard) that attaches to their belt, which can be a bit harder to spot. For my first few trades, I approached Cast Members that worked the cash register at park shops, when they didn't have any customers. They were more than happy to show their lanyards. Some asked what characters I was looking for and I've even had a few call over other Cast Members that they know may have a pin that I might like.

Asking questions about the pins is a great conversation starter. Ask them about the Hidden Mickey pins. These are pins with a Hidden Mickey placed on the front of each pin and come in what seems to be endless designs (see picture for an example). Even if I don't see a pin on a Cast Member's lanyard that I really want for my own, many times I will trade with a Cast Member simply to keep the pin trading going. For this reason, I bring a second lanyard with me to the park. If I find a pin I want to keep, I simply put that pin on the second lanyard. This way I don't become flustered during a pin trade and accidentally trade a pin that I really wanted to keep. A bonus for the little ones, some Cast Members have specially-colored lanyards (green at Walt Disney World and teal at Disneyland) just for trading with children ages 3-12. Be aware that they only trade with children and will not trade with adults.

The whole process is easy but there are a few courtesy rules you will want to follow and keep in mind when trading with Cast Members. When participating in a trade, always trade one pin at a time and don't touch a Cast Member's pins. Instead of pointing to the pin, simply tell them which pin you'd like to trade for on their lanyard. For the trade, you will need to remove the pin from your lanyard that you wish to trade. Make sure when you take off your pin to replace the rubber back before you hand it to the Cast Member, and they will do the same. Disney does state that a guest can only trade a maximum of two pins with a particular Cast Member per day. Also, they request that when trading you only give the Cast Member a pin that is not already on their lanyard. For more about pin trading and trading etiquette, please log onto the [Official Disney Pin Trading site](#). Each time you approach a Cast Member to see their pins and make a trade, it will become easier and easier, and soon you may be hooked!

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Pin trading is a great way to add a new layer of interaction and fun to your Disney trip and also to make the Disney magic last when you're back home. At home, you can display your favorite pins in a shadow box or maybe hang up a lanyard with pins in a prominent place until your next Disney trip. Have fun and happy trading!

*About The Author: Jennifer is a professional photographer and Disney enthusiast. She is currently working on a shadow box display of her favorite Disney pins and is looking forward to her next Disney vacation.*

Article last updated: 02-02-2011

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