

GIFT CARD CODES EXPLAINED

by John Merrick #905

An interesting situation has arisen recently with collecting CTC gift cards and I will take this opportunity to address it and offer my opinion. There have been gift cards found with identical batch numbers/date codes with an “extra” number on them so let’s take a look at all the numbers and codes and explain exactly what they are.

The easiest set of numbers to identify is the date code which is exactly that, the date of manufacture. It comprises of a numerical representation for the month and then the last two digits of the year, separated by a forward slash. Date codes may be accompanied by the letter “L”, “H” or no letter at all.

The next number to identify is the docket number which usually precedes the date code as seen below. This number is assigned by the card manufacturer, however, there has been the exception of the CTC upc code instead of the docket number.

The number that is located after the date code (if applicable) is the batch number and again, is assigned by the card

manufacturer. Usually the manufacturer’s name or logo is also located on the card and examples include Metaca, cpi-ca and GD..

Older gift cards did not use bar codes, whereas newer ones do. Bar codes have also varied in size from small to large, have been both vertical and horizontally positioned and in very unusual cases have been added to the card in the form of a sticker and one card even has two separate and different bar codes. The actual type of bar codes used include UPC-A, type 39 and type 128.

Cards that contain a bar code also have a unique number located just above the magnetic stripe. The only exception is the GD manufactured card that has the unique number located below the magnetic stripe. The magnetic stripe is 5/16” width and contains three tracks for encoding information on.

There can be an additional number located under the magnetic strip and usually located on the right side but separate from the other numbers listed so far. This is a proxy or network number which is

specifically used by third party vendors. Third party vendors would include any “gift card mall” ie. a drug store or grocery store set up in a location outside of the actual store that honors the card, and would include cards from multiple merchants. An example of a third party vendor distributing gift cards would be Blackhawk Network or Innovative Commerce.

I personally do not believe that this third party vendor number constitutes a variety or should be listed as a different card for the purpose of collecting. We collect different card designs, issues, errors and varieties based on the manufacture of the card. All gift cards have a unique number located above the magnetic stripe and we do not consider them as different cards.

In conclusion, if an outside source adds something to the original card I don’t think that it constitutes a variety. That being said, I strongly believe that the only person that decides what is collectible is the collector.



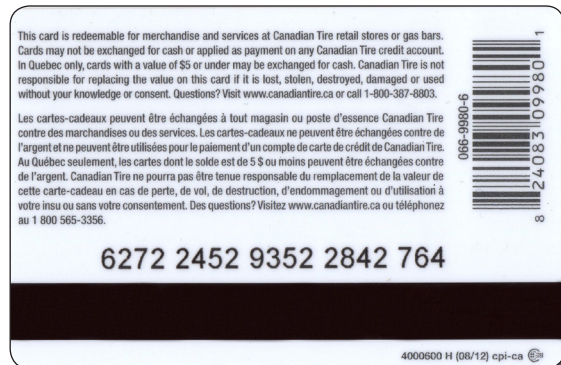
Docket number, date code, batch and manufacturer



Third party vendor number - bottom right



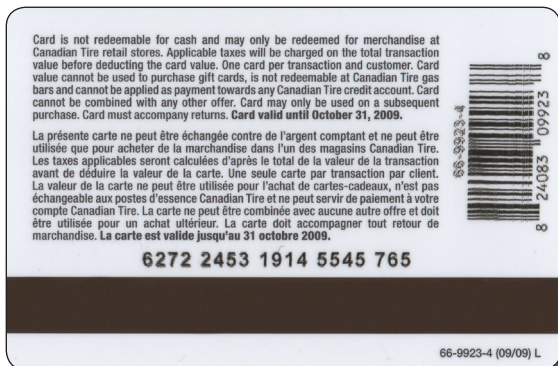
Error card with no docket number or date



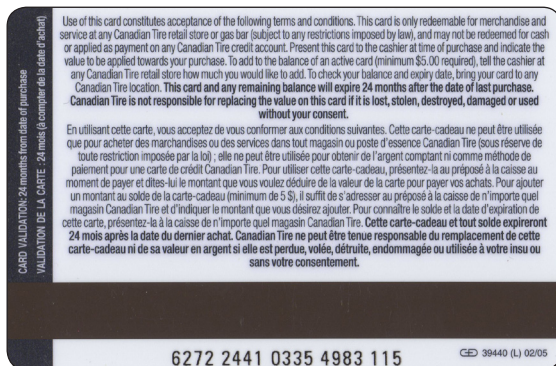
Normal version of card shown left

GIFT CARD CODES EXPLAINED - continued

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No docket or batch number. CTC code and date only.



Unique number below magnetic stripe



Bar code

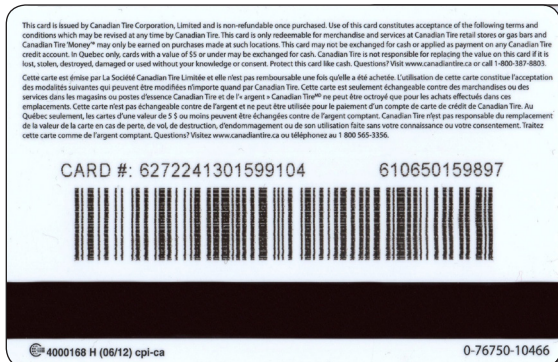


Three variations of the same card

Large digits



Small digits



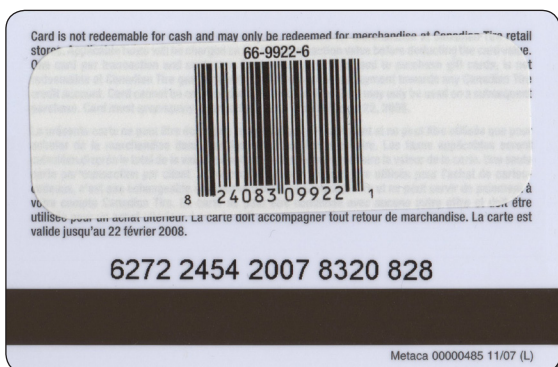
Large horizontal bar code



Medium bar code



Small bar code



Sticker applied bar code



Dual bar codes