BACKGROUND ON BANKNOTES

A banknote is a promissory note issued by a central bank and is a common and general method of transacting in various goods and services.

The technical definition is a promissory note drawn on the bank of issue promising to pay its face value to bearer on demand. A more common definition would be paper money issued by the legal authority with the intent to be used as legal tender in a particular country or region.

Cash, especially banknotes, have been and always will be in high demand as it remains the most accepted and popular method of payment.

During the nineteenth century and early twentieth century the Government of South Africa and various commercial banks issued banknotes in the Republic of South Africa as legal tender.

As the volumes of banknotes in circulation and its use in transacting increased, the need for uniformity in banknotes increased and the South African Reserve Bank was mandated by the Government of South Africa in 1921 to issue banknotes.

Today, the South African Reserve Bank is still the sole supplier of banknotes in the Republic of South Africa.

To deter illegal reproduction/counterfeiting of banknotes, the Bank makes use of various security features embedded in the banknote paper and/or printed on each banknote. Each banknote can be verified as a secure instrument by feel and visual examination as well as by other machine-readable features.

SECURITY FEATURES ON SOUTH AFRICAN BANKNOTES

The issuers, designers and manufacturers of banknotes, combat and deter counterfeiting by drawing on the expertise of technologists, printers, banknote paper manufacturers and security feature manufacturers and suppliers.

Although rapid advances in technology since the 1990’s have resulted in more instances of banknote counterfeiting, lawful issuers have largely been able to minimise counterfeiting by following the advances in technology closely and introducing new security features proactively.

The South African Reserve Bank continuously investigates new security and technical feature developments.

The latest design features and technologies are constantly monitored and applied where applicable.
The current “big five” banknote series representing the wild life animals of Southern Africa, has been created using the world’s most advanced technology when it was introduced in 1992. The security features contained in these banknotes continue to be effective in ensuring that the broader public is able to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit notes as these features are difficult to be imitated by counterfeiters. In addition, the “big five” series is regarded internationally as a well-designed, aesthetically pleasing and politically neutral series.

Despite technological safeguards, identification of counterfeit notes by members of the public and/or businesses still remains the most important step in the process of preventing any loss through counterfeit fraud.

The visual security features built into banknotes are the most important aid for use by members of the public in guarding against counterfeiting. There are also characteristics built into banknotes that enable the public to identify genuine banknotes by the feel of the banknote.

The public should be on the lookout for “banknotes” which do not contain these security features, and report any occurrence immediately to the South African Police Services.

Whilst the South African Reserve Bank has certainly created “money we can be proud of”, it’s up to us, the public, to protect ourselves and the integrity of our country’s currency against the heartless greed of counterfeiters.

**Know your money:**

Study the various security features built into our banknotes;

Make a habit of checking the banknotes you receive for these features; and

Don’t hesitate or feel embarrassed about holding a banknote up to the light, feeling for intaglio printing or flicking the banknote and listening for the characteristic sound.

**Security features to look for in MONEY you can be proud of:**

- The feel of the paper
- Characteristic sound
- Print quality
- Intaglio printing
- Micro Lettering
- Unique numbering
- Fluorescent feature
- Window security thread
- Watermark
- Perfect registration
- Main motifs
- Themes
- Sizes
**The feel of the paper**

The special quality paper of banknotes offers an exceptional texture, which is distinctly different in texture to other paper, as the substrate is cotton-based as opposed to wood pulp paper, in respect of commercial paper.

**Characteristic sound**

Unlike normal paper (i.e. wood pulp paper), banknotes have a distinct cracking sound when handled.

**Print quality**

Banknotes are printed on a special cotton fibre paper with special high quality inks.

The fineness of the print quality on a genuine banknote is difficult for current scanning equipment to resolve properly.

**Intaglio printing**

Intaglio or raised printing is a printing technique, which gives the banknote a “rough feel” as apposed to normal printing, which gives a smooth feel.

Intaglio printing is applied on the different denomination banknotes as follows:

- R10  Front
- R20  Front
- R50  Front and back
- R100 Front and back
- R200 Front and back

Front – all denominations:

- The words “South African Reserve Bank” and “Suid-Afrikaanse Reserwe Bank”;
- The main motif; and
- The dots for the visually disabled on the left-hand bottom corner.

Back – R50, R100 and R200:

- The theme of each denomination

Intaglio printing is difficult to reproduce cheaply due to very sophisticated machinery requirements.

The “raised” texture of the printing helps amongst others, to establish the authenticity of the note.
Main motifs

Each denomination banknote has a different main motif resembling one of the “big five” distinctive South African animals depicted on the front:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Main motif</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R10</td>
<td>Rhinoceros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20</td>
<td>Elephant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R50</td>
<td>Lion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R100</td>
<td>Buffalo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R200</td>
<td>Leopard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The buffalo appears on the R100 denomination banknote as below:

Themes

Each denomination banknote has a different theme distinctive of the South African economy as depicted on the back:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R10</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20</td>
<td>Mining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R50</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R100</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R200</td>
<td>Transport and Communications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Micro Lettering**

On the top right corner of each banknote micro lettering is used for further identification and is not visible to the naked eye as seen here on the R100 denomination banknote. When viewed through a magnifying glass, the words “South African Reserve Bank” / “Suid Afrikaanse-Reserve Bank” can be seen.

![Image of micro lettering]

**Unique serial number**

Each banknote is characterised by an exclusive serial number, which is situated on the top left-hand and bottom right-hand corner. The number on the top left-hand corner consists of letters and numbers of the same height and colour. The number on the bottom right-hand corner consists of letters and numbers of different heights (conical numbering) of the same colour, as indicated below:

![Image of serial numbers]

**Fluorescent feature**

When a banknote is held under a fluorescent light source, various areas of the banknote illuminate. The following is applicable:

1. Serial numbers
2. Interpolated strip at the bottom of the note (as illustrated below)
3. In the R100 and R200 denominations, the denomination is depicted in the watermark area, which is invisible to the naked eye.
**Windowed security thread**

A special security thread is woven into the paper. On the front it appears as a silvery stripe with “windows” or spaces in between but when held up to direct light, it appears as a continuous line on which the letters “SARB” can be seen.

![Windowed security thread](image)

**Watermark**

With the main motif facing you, the watermark is on the left. To improve its visibility, very little is printed over it. The watermark is the same size as the main motif, and appears as its mirror image. It becomes visible when the note is held against direct light. The image will not reproduce on colour copiers.

**Perfect registration**

Banknote printing represents the highest form of precision printing. Two parts of an image are printed in perfect registration on the front and back of a banknote, but only when the banknote is held against direct light, is the full image visible. Below is the perfect registration extracted from the front of a R100 denomination banknote. When held against light an “R” is visible in the bottom left-hand corner of all denominations.

![Perfect registration](image)
**Sizes**

All banknotes are 70 mm in height, but differ in length by 6mm from denomination to denomination. This ensures that it is difficult for a counterfeiter to cut notes accurately to size.

The following sizes are characteristic of each banknote denomination:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R10</td>
<td>70 mm</td>
<td>128 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20</td>
<td>70 mm</td>
<td>134 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R50</td>
<td>70 mm</td>
<td>140 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R100</td>
<td>70 mm</td>
<td>146 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R200</td>
<td>70 mm</td>
<td>152 mm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>