

SYLVANIA DOT DATING GUIDE

Sylvania fluorescent lamps made in UK, Germany and the US deployed a dot-based dating system from the 1950s until 2008 in Europe, and the 1990s in the US. It refreshes every ten years, although during the 1950s a simplified five-year version was used in the States.

The months are the easiest part of this code to explain so I will begin with these.

A pattern of six dots is used, usually the first row before a forward slash separating them from the year dots.

Example - ●●●●●/

Notice the dash at the beginning – this indicates the first six months of the year.

JAN: Dash 6 dots

FEB: Dash 5 dots

MAR: Dash 4 dots

APR: Dash 3 dots

MAY: Dash 2 dots

JUN: Dash 1 dot

The second six months of the year are given by removing the dash and repeating the pattern:

JUL: 6 dots

AUG: 5 dots

SEP: 4 dots

OCT: 3 dots

NOV: 2 dots

DEC: 1 dot

Years are a little trickier for the novice, but once you know what to look for and where you'll get the hang of them.

Year dots are the second row after the forward slash. I must add that this forward slash applies mainly to European etches – American types deployed an etch divided into four, with the year and month dots separated by the oblique partition, but essentially the code is the same.

Example: /●●●●

The ten-year refreshing code starts when the year ends with a 1, e.g. 1961. I will explain the fifties in subsequent paragraphs:

1961/71/81/91: 5 dots

1962/72/82/92: 4 dots

1963/73/83/93: 3 dots

1964/74/84/94: 2 dots

1965/75/85/95: 1 dot

The second half of each decade is given by a YEAR DASH. This will always appear above the rows of dots, and is often located by the “S” in Sylvania. There is one deviation from this in Europe and China where the year and month dashes appear together at the beginning of the month dots creating an “equals” sign.

Example:

SYLVANIA

So in order to get the year correct you must check for a year dash. Again the cycle is repeated in the same way as for the first half of the decade:

1966/76/86/96: 5 dots

1967/77/87/97: 4 dots

1968/78/88/98: 3 dots

1969/79/89/99: 2 dots

1960/70/80/90: 1 dot

No year dashes were used in the 1950s so the dot pattern on a 1951 fluorescent lamp would be the same as a 1956 model; the actual year would then be worked out by etch history.

VARIATIONS

On US T5s (ie F8T5, F6T5) and on all sizes made in the 1950s or earlier, the month dots appear above the year dots – there is no divider slash.