

# Focus On: Diamonds

## A Brief History

The word diamond alone invokes countless images of importance and value: rare, precious, beautiful, striking, sparkling, fiery, tokens of love and countless others. Created deep within the earth more than 3 billion years ago and brought to the surface by volcanic activity, the majority of diamonds seen sparkling on fingers today are more than 100 million years old. Each stone's complex characteristics cannot be duplicated, and no two diamonds can ever be the same. Each diamond, like its eventual owner, is endowed with a personality and character uniquely its own. With such a combination of rarity, beauty and age – is it any wonder we value them as much today, monetarily and emotionally, as we did when they were first discovered almost four thousand years ago?



Rare and fascinating, mysterious and magical, the diamond has ignited romantic passion throughout history. The Romans thought they were splinters from falling stars. The Greeks regarded the sparkling gems as tears of the gods. It is from the Greek word "adamas," meaning unconquerable, from which the diamond derived its name. The diamond claimed its place as the primary token of love toward the end of the 15th century, when Austrian Archduke Maximilian gave the first diamond engagement ring to his betrothed. It was placed on the fourth finger of her left hand, because that finger was believed to course with the vein of love that passed directly to the heart. Five centuries later, the diamond remains one of the most luxurious and desirable gifts for any romantic and celebratory occasion, a gem whose purity and brilliance symbolizes lasting love.

## The Four Cs

The most basic information needed to evaluate a diamond properly is the 4 Cs – Cut, Color, Clarity and Carat. While countless other particulars are used to determine the exact value of a diamond, the 4 Cs will provide sufficient knowledge to buy with confidence.

### Cut

Many people confuse cut with the shape of a diamond, whether round or square or pear-shaped. Though this is an important personal and aesthetic decision, it is not the most important aspect of Cut. Most diamonds are cut round with a full 58 facets divided among its crown (top), girdle (widest part) and pavilion (base). Light must be able to enter through one of the facets, bounce off another and shine out again. Too shallow and light passes right through to the base. Too deep and light reflects out the sides. It is the work of a master cutter that allows the diamond to be cut in such a way as to permit the maximum amount of light to be reflected through the diamond, giving the stone its sparkle and fire. It is the cut that enables a diamond to make the best use of light.

### Color

The absence of color gives a diamond its great value. If any color is detected, even slight, the diamonds value is depreciated. Though, some of the "fancy" diamonds can be valued for their color (i.e. a fancy yellow diamond). There are two categories of diamonds in respect to color: White Diamonds and Fancy Natural Colored Diamonds.

White Diamonds are those falling within GIA's D to Z color grading scale, traditionally used for engagement rings and fine jewelry. White Diamonds graded D through F (Colorless Class) are naturally the most valuable and desirable because of their rarity. If there is a budget in place, diamonds graded G through J (Near Colorless Class), do not have any color that can be detected by the untrained eye. Diamonds graded K through M (Faint Yellow Class), have a slight yellow color that can often be minimized or almost completely hidden by carefully selecting the right setting or mounting style and color.

Fancy Natural Colored Diamonds are those with faint to vivid saturations of hues such as blue, yellow or pink, frequently used for fashion jewelry.

Yellow is the most commonly occurring fancy color. Red and green diamonds are extremely rare to find. The price of fancy colored diamonds is dependent on several factors: the particular hue, or spectral color, of the diamond (the rarer the color, the greater the cost); the richness or saturation of the color (ranging from very light to light to intense to vivid); and the purity of the color (i.e. whether the color is bright and clear, or 'muddied' by the presence of other color-causing trace elements).

### Clarity

This refers to the presence of any identifying characteristics on and within the stone. Some of these occur naturally and some occur because of the stress put upon the stone during the mining process. All diamonds are graded based on their appearance, the presence or absence of blemishes and inclusions, under 10X magnification. They are graded on a scale that ranges from Flawless to Imperfect.

Flawless diamonds have no internal markings or inclusions. Internally Flawless (IF) stones have extremely, extremely slight inclusions that are almost imperceptible. The Slight Inclusion category ranges from Very, Very Slightly Included (VVS1 and 2) to Very Slightly Included (VS1 and 2) to Slightly Included (SI1 and 2). The Imperfect category ranges from I1 to I3 and includes stones with easily noticeable inclusions under magnification and to the naked eye.

### Carat

The word carat is taken from the perfectly matched carob seeds that were once used in ancient times to balance scales by merchants. So uniform and symmetrical in shape and weight are these little seeds that even today's sophisticated and complicated devices cannot detect more than three one-thousandths of a difference between them.

Today one carat is equal to 200 milligrams, or 0.2 grams. 142 carats adds up to one ounce. Carats are further divided into points, with 100 points equaling a carat.



The price of a diamond will constantly rise proportionately to the size of the stone. The larger diamonds are very rare and have a greater value per carat. For example, when discussing points, remember that a one-carat diamond will cost much more (about 75% more) than a 95 pointer.



### Care of Your Diamond

Periodic cleaning is a must to enhance your diamonds natural beauty. In general, the more you wear your jewelry, the more

often you should clean it. For example, rings tend to collect more build-up than necklaces or earrings. Diamonds are the hardest substance found in nature, but it is still important to avoid harsh cleansers and vigorous scrubbing.

When selecting jewelry cleaner, pay particular attention that the solution is recommended for diamonds, other precious stones, and for gold or platinum jewelry. You will find that silver jewelry requires its own type of cleaning solution - one that eliminates tarnishing.

Once you've located a cleaning solution, be sure to follow all labeled instructions carefully. If you are unsure of what cleaner to use, the following is a general purpose home alternative:

Soak your diamond ring in a warm solution of mild liquid detergent and water. Ivory dishwashing liquid is a good choice, but any other mild detergent is fine. Use a soft brush if necessary to remove dirt. Do not use a brush with bristles that are stiff enough to scratch the ring's metal setting. While brushing, ensure that no stones are loose or prongs bent. Soak the ring in the solution, and then rinse it thoroughly in warm water. It is highly recommended to use a closed drain or strainer. Dry the ring with a lint-free cloth. If your ring contains other gemstones, research the best method to use (or ask us). Any cleaning technique for jewelry must protect the weakest element.