The First Step

1 The Diamond Course
In This Lesson:

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A STEP TOWARD SUCCESS

Welcome to the Diamond Council of America’s Diamond Course! By taking this course, you’re also taking an important step in your career. You’re going to increase your knowledge of diamonds and diamond jewelry, and build the confidence you need to sell them.

The DCA was established in 1944 to educate jewelry sales professionals about diamonds and other gems. Its members include some of the industry’s leading firms and individuals. Your store is among them and now you can be as well.

Education is the DCA’s top priority. This is because knowledge, skills, and ethics are absolutely essential to professional success in our industry. This course reflects the DCA’s commitment to affordable, premium quality education.

Regardless of where you work in the diamonds industry, the learning experience you’re beginning can be a giant step toward your success.

Cover photo courtesy Doug Rosa.
THE DCA’S MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Diamond Council of America is to provide quality, affordable distance education to enhance the ability of our members’ associates to sell fine jewelry with expertise, integrity, and professionalism and to fuel the passion of those looking to learn about our industry.

HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

This course was developed primarily for retail jewelry sales professionals and others who support them at a management or training level. The course is designed to meet adult learning needs and suit adult learning styles. To accomplish this, the lessons and exercises combine reading and thinking, listening and talking, observing and examining, acting and doing.

Over the years, this approach has worked for more than 100,000 students who have taken DCA courses. It will enable you to apply what you learn to the specifics of your store’s operations, the merchandise you have to offer, and the customers you serve.

Course Formats

This course comes in two formats – online and PDF download. All coursework must be completed online. You can use the download for study, reference, and review.

To access online course materials, it’s necessary to go through the DCA’s website: www.diamondcouncil.org. You’ll also need your username and password. These were listed on the Course Instruction Sheet that was emailed to you after you enrolled.

If you need your username and password and can’t find them, contact the DCA. You can phone 615-385-5301 / toll free 877-283-5669, or email studenthelp@diamondcouncil.org.
Course Objectives

After you have successfully completed this course, you will be able to:

• Explain the 4Cs of diamond value.
• Identify additional background information that can be shared with customers to help them appreciate diamond’s unique nature and full value.
• Describe diamond jewelry in terms of form, function, and style; quality, workmanship, and value.
• Discuss karat gold and platinum, the metals from which most diamond jewelry is made.

• Answer questions customers may ask about treated diamonds, lab-created diamonds, and diamond simulants.
• Follow FTC guidelines on representation and disclosure for diamonds and diamond jewelry.
• Describe how to clean and care for diamonds and diamond jewelry in the store, and how to teach customers to do the same for diamond jewelry they own or purchase.

That may sound like a lot – and it is! You’ll be surprised, however, at how much you can accomplish through this course, your own efforts, and the support of your store team. When you start seeing results – and that will be right away – you’ll feel truly motivated. Learning even more will then become easy and enjoyable.

You’ll be surprised at how much you can accomplish through your efforts in the course.
Course Organization

The upcoming lessons are divided into two sections that are likely to reflect your priorities in selling diamonds and diamond jewelry:

- **Section I “Need to Know”** (Lessons 2 through 8) - Fundamental product knowledge that you’ll use in most sales presentations, and that customers need in order to make informed purchase decisions. This section covers the 4Cs and diamond jewelry. It also includes diamond treatments, lab-created diamonds, and simulants.

- **Section II “Nice to Know”** (Lessons 9 through 15) – Background information that will boost your confidence and enthusiasm, help you build appreciation for your products, and supply answers to questions knowledgeable customers may ask. This section follows the story of diamonds from formation to the sales counter. It also covers diamond’s special mystique, plus caring for diamonds and diamond jewelry.

At the end of the course, Lesson 16 is a final review. It will help you prepare for and pass the Final Examination.

Lesson Components

Most of the lessons in this course have eight components that are designed to create a complete and personalized learning experience.

- **In This Lesson** – A short bullet list that provides an initial snapshot of what’s in the lesson. This will give you an idea of the information that’s coming.

- **Introduction** – Sets the stage by identifying the main lesson topic, explaining why the topic is important, and providing a little background or context.

- **Lesson Objectives** – Lists the knowledge and skills you’ll gain by completing the lesson and follow-up exercises.

- **Main Text** – Presents the lesson’s core content.
• **Sidebars** – Contain information that expands or supports the lesson discussion. (Sidebars are printed on a colored background to set them off from the Main Text.)

• **Recap of Key Points** – Summarizes important ideas and facts from the lesson.

• **Lesson Follow-Up Checklist** – Directs additional steps to help you apply what you learn to your own real-life work situation.

• **Self-Test** – Multiple choice questions that allow you to gauge your comprehension of the lesson material.

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**Extra Aids**

Besides the lessons, the course includes two extra learning aids that can help you find or use information – the *Table of Contents* and the *Course Compendium*.

• **Table of Contents** – This is an outline that lists lessons and their main sections in order. It can serve as a road map, so you know where you are and where you’re headed as you work through the course. It also allows you to find your way back to topics you want to review later on.

• **Course Compendium** – A recap of key course information for a number of areas, including the 4Cs, treatments, lab-created diamonds, sources, history, folklore, and care. In addition to being a learning aid, you can use the Compendium for review, as a permanent reference, or a selling tool.
TIPS FOR STUDY SUCCESS

Two keys to success with distance education are consistency and self-motivation. It’s important to work through this course steadily, without putting it aside and letting it get cold. A lesson a week is a good pace. At that rate, you’ll complete your studies in about four months. Some people take longer, and some finish sooner. Regardless of speed, here are several strategies to keep in mind:

- **Scheduling** – Set a schedule and stick to it. Designate at least a couple hours a week as your DCA Study Time. Mark the dates and times on your calendar, and be sure to keep these appointments with yourself. You’ll probably retain more if you have two or three short sessions, rather than one long study “marathon.”

- **Setting** – Pick a quiet, comfortable, distraction-free place to do your studying. Soon you’ll associate the setting with your coursework, and your mind will automatically shift into learning mode.

- **Approach** – Begin each lesson by scanning through it. This will give you an idea of what you’re expected to learn. Then read the lesson thoroughly from beginning to end.

- **Pacing** – Treat yourself well when you study. If your attention begins to lag, take a short break, stand up and move around, maybe have a light snack. Keep the learning process enjoyable.

- **Engagement** – Study the lesson actively. If you’re working with the PDF download of a lesson, add sticky notes to mark information that seems interesting or important.

- **Practice** – Apply what you learn as soon as possible. Most lessons include a Follow-Up Checklist with practice exercises for turning knowledge into skill. Be sure to complete the checklists. They’re essential for a full learning experience. Also discuss what you’ve learned with your coworkers, and look for opportunities to use it in sales presentations and other work activities. Remember: Practice makes perfect!

A lesson a week is a good pace.
Progress Evaluations

This course includes three Progress Evaluations. The first one comes after Lesson 2, and is intended to make sure you get off to a good start. The others are at the ends of the two course sections – after Lessons 8 and 15.

Progress Evaluations allow the DCA to measure what you’ve learned at logical points in your coursework. They also let you offer input on the course and how it’s administered.

Each Progress Evaluation has three parts – a Learning Evaluation, a Training Evaluation, and a Satisfaction Evaluation:

• **Learning Evaluation** – This is the section test. It has 20 to 25 multiple-choice questions covering all the lessons in the section.

• **Training Evaluation** – This ensures that you can apply new knowledge and skills. It contains items based on the Follow-Up Checklists in the section, and also some short-answer questions.

• **Satisfaction Evaluation** – This gives you a chance to rate and comment on the objectives, content, presentation, and service for that section of the course.

You can complete all three parts online. Detailed instructions for Learning Evaluations are in the Testing Center section of the DCA’s website. Instructions for Training and Satisfaction Evaluations are in the Evaluations section.

Learning Evaluations and Training Evaluations are **required** coursework. Satisfaction Evaluations are **optional**, but the DCA would like very much to know what you think and how you feel about your educational experience.
Evaluation Servicing

The DCA grades Learning Evaluations and provides appropriate feedback on them. With online testing, you get your results immediately.

- **Grading** – Grades for Learning Evaluations are percentages based on the number of correct answers compared to the total number of questions. For example, if you correctly answer 20 out of 25 questions on a test, your grade is 80%.

- **Grade Target** – The minimum grade target for Learning Evaluations is 75%.

- **Retakes** – If your grade for a Learning Evaluation is less than 75%, you must retake the test. You may retake a Learning Evaluation as many times as you need to. When you score 75% or higher, that grade will be averaged with the other(s) to determine an overall grade for the test.

- **Feedback** – On every Learning Evaluation you’ll receive feedback. If you score less than 75%, the Learning Feedback will list the questions you missed and give section references, helpful hints, and additional explanations. If you score over 75%, you’ll be notified of any questions you answered incorrectly. The Learning Feedback also will list correct responses and page references, and supply further information.

**SELF-TESTS vs LEARNING EVALUATIONS**

As you’re doing the work for this course, keep in mind that Self-Tests and Learning Evaluations are different. Self-Tests cover individual lessons; they allow you to gauge your own comprehension of the lesson material, and they don’t count toward your course grade. On the other hand, Learning Evaluations cover whole sections of related lessons; they allow the DCA to measure what you have learned at logical points in your coursework, and they do count in calculating your final course grade.
Completing the Course

When you’ve completed the three Progress Evaluations, you’ll be eligible to take the Final Examination. You can find details about the exam in Lesson 16 (Final Review) or the FAQs section of the DCA’s online Student Testing Center.

There are two limits on course completion that you need to keep in mind:

- **Academic Limit** – The minimum grade target for the Final Examination is 75%. As with Learning Evaluations, the grade is a percentage based on correct versus total answers. If your grade is less than 75%, you may retake the exam only once. If you do not reach or exceed the target on the second attempt, you must re-enroll in order to complete the course.

- **Time Limit** – All your coursework, including Progress Evaluations and the Final Examination, must be completed within 12 consecutive months from your date of enrollment. If you do not meet this time limit, you must re-enroll in order to complete the course. Your deadline is noted on the Course Instruction Sheet that was emailed to you after you enrolled, and on the "Welcome" page of the online Student Testing Center. You can also obtain the date from the DCA.

After you’ve completed all course requirements – the Progress Evaluations and Final Examination – you will receive formal recognition from the Diamond Council of America, marking your achievement.
If you ever have questions or concerns about this course – its objectives, design, content, presentation, administration, service, or anything else – please contact the Diamond Council. You’ll receive a prompt and full response. The DCA is 100% committed to your satisfaction and success!

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START LEARNING NOW!

Now that you know about the course, it’s time to start learning things you might use on the job.

To begin with, diamond is a mineral created by Nature. It formed around 100 miles beneath Earth’s surface, under conditions of extreme heat and pressure. It was carried to the surface by a volcanic eruption of awesome power. All this occurred millions – in some cases, billions – of years ago.

A diamond is a mineral created by Nature.

Diamond is almost pure carbon, and the arrangement of atoms within a diamond crystal is almost perfectly symmetrical. The combination of chemistry and structure is the inner source of a diamond’s beauty, durability, and other characteristics.
The exact conditions surrounding diamond’s formation are critical. Only a fraction of diamonds are gem quality. The rest are used for industrial or technical purposes – as abrasives, for example. Slight variations in chemistry, structure, or the conditions of formation determine whether a diamond becomes a dazzling gem or a functional drill bit.

Due to these complex variables, every diamond is truly unique. At the same time, all diamonds share certain types of features. Four of these are primary factors in determining diamond value. They’re known as the 4Cs and they are: **carat weight, clarity, color, and cut**.

In coming lessons you’ll examine each of these factors in detail. In the second part of the course you’ll learn more about how diamonds form – and what that means to your customers.

For now, here are a few points about each C that you can use to answer basic questions from customers:
Carat Weight

The standard unit of weight for diamonds is the metric carat. One carat equals 0.200 gram. That’s about 0.007 ounce in common US measurements. Diamonds are weighed to an accuracy of 0.005 carat – or 35 millionths of an ounce! You can impress many customers by emphasizing that the standards for diamond weight are stricter than those for almost any other consumer product.

Carat weight’s effect on value is based on natural rarity. Consumers are used to buying items such as meat and produce by weight. As a result, some people expect a 1-carat diamond, for example, to cost twice as much as a 1/2-carat diamond of comparable quality. You may need to explain that, because of its greater rarity, the larger diamond will cost considerably more than twice as much as the smaller one.

Bigger doesn’t always mean better, though. You may need to point out that, while weight plays a major role in diamond value, clarity, color, and cut must also be considered.

Clarity

You can define clarity as a diamond’s freedom from features known as blemishes or inclusions. Blemishes are surface irregularities such as scratches. Inclusions are internal – for example, tiny crystals of other minerals that were trapped inside the diamond as it grew.

You can refer to both types of features as “clarity characteristics” or “identifying characteristics.” Be careful to avoid negative sounding terms like “imperfection” or “flaw.” Even the technical terms “inclusion” and “blemish” can create negative impressions. Using positive terminology lets customers know that the features are an acceptable part of a diamond’s natural makeup.
To assess clarity, a skilled grader systematically examines the diamond under magnification. After finding all the characteristics, the grader assigns a clarity grade that reflects their visibility and any influence they might have on appearance and perhaps durability. Inclusions normally affect the grade more than blemishes. A simple description like this is another way to increase a customer’s appreciation for diamond quality standards.

Like carat weight, clarity’s effect on value mainly relates to natural rarity. Almost all diamonds have clarity characteristics. The fewer or less prominent these are, the higher the clarity grade will be. The higher the clarity grade, the greater the rarity and the more expensive the diamond will be. In most cases, however, clarity characteristics may have little or no effect on beauty. Explaining this puts clarity into a perspective that customers can understand and accept.

Almost all diamonds have clarity characteristics.

**Color**

Although many consumers are not aware of it, diamonds occur naturally in a wide variety of colors. Most diamonds used in jewelry range from near colorless to light yellow, brown, or gray. Very, very few diamonds show no trace of color at all. Despite this rarity, colorless diamonds are considered part of the normal market color range.

Diamonds with natural tints of other hues – plus deeper shades of yellow, brown, or gray – are classified as fancy colors. Artificial treatments can add or subtract color from a diamond. Since most people think of diamonds as being colorless, sharing this kind of information can enhance a customer’s confidence in your product knowledge and professional qualifications.
Within the normal market range, the less color a diamond has, the higher its color grade. Distinctions between color grades can be very subtle, but they’re apparent to the expert eye. You might say this is one reason why it’s important to do business with a firm that offers reliable expertise and high ethical standards.

As with carat weight and clarity, the relationship between color and value is linked to rarity. The higher the color grade, the greater the rarity and, therefore, the higher the price. A tint of color doesn’t necessarily make a diamond less beautiful or desirable.

**Cut**

Among diamond professionals, the term “cut” is used in two different ways. This is another thing many consumers are not aware of.

Used descriptively, the term refers to a polished diamond’s shape and faceting style. In this context, the most popular cut is the round brilliant. All others are classified as fancy shapes or fancy cuts. The choice of cut shape often depends on personal preference. To reinforce this point, you could say that the “best” shape is the one the wearer of the diamond prefers or the one that best suits his or her personality.

When it comes to quality, cut refers to a diamond’s design and craftsmanship. Cut quality is determined by proportions, symmetry, and polish. Proportions are the relative sizes and angles of the diamond’s parts and facets. Symmetry is the precision of the cut design’s execution. Polish is the smoothness and luster of the diamond’s surfaces. To build appreciation for cut quality, stress that every facet and every angle helps to create or maintain the diamond’s beauty. Good symmetry and polish are critical as well.

While the other Cs are largely determined by Nature, cut is the human contribution to diamond value. It’s almost always the most important factor in beauty. You can tell customers that a well-cut diamond gathers and concentrates light from many directions, then radiates it outward to dazzle the eyes of beholders. Ultimately, cut is the C that reveals a diamond’s visual magic.
THE FTC AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

In 1914 the US Congress created the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to monitor federal laws dealing with illegal or deceptive practices in commerce. The FTC’s official jurisdiction is limited, but its rulings form the basis for many state and local laws. In the absence of other precedents, courts also tend to rely on FTC opinions in settling lawsuits.

Since 1957, the FTC has set guidelines for the jewelry industry. These are now known as *Guides for the Jewelry, Precious Metals, and Pewter Industries*. You can obtain a complete copy of the guides from the FTC’s website. Go to www.ftc.gov and search for “jewelry guides.”

Information about FTC guidelines on diamonds and diamond jewelry is included at appropriate points in this course. The guidelines provide a basic set of rules concerning what you can and cannot say or do in sales presentations. They can also help you answer customer questions.

Remember that ethical behavior is more than simply observing the letter of the law. It’s a reflection of the way you think of yourself and deal with the world in which you live. This includes your working world – your customers, employer, colleagues, and the various suppliers and service companies that do business with your firm.

The DCA is committed to the very highest ethical standards. Issues that may arise in selling diamonds and diamond jewelry will be addressed throughout this course. These discussions are intended to suggest a general perspective for your thinking on the issues. Developing this perspective is one of the most important factors in your professional growth.
RECAP OF KEY POINTS

• Today’s diamond customers have plenty of facts, but they often need help to understand what these facts mean. To provide the help, it’s essential to know your products, present those products accurately and effectively, identify and respond to customers’ needs and desires, and exceed your customers’ expectations.

• Diamond is a natural mineral composed of almost pure carbon. The arrangement of carbon atoms within a diamond crystal is almost perfectly symmetrical. The combination of chemistry and structure is the inner source of diamond’s beauty and durability.

• Diamonds form around 100 miles beneath Earth’s surface. The exact conditions surrounding formation are critical. Only a fraction of diamonds are gem quality.

• Each diamond is unique, but all diamonds share certain types of features. Those that normally determine value are the 4Cs – Carat Weight, Clarity, Color, and Cut.

• The standard unit of weight for diamonds is the metric carat, which equals 0.200 gram. Diamonds are weighed to an accuracy of 0.005 carat.

• Clarity is a diamond’s freedom from external blemishes and internal inclusions. A diamond’s clarity grade is normally based on the visibility of clarity characteristics under magnification. In most cases, the characteristics have little effect on visual beauty.

• Diamonds occur in many colors, but the normal market range includes colorless to light tints of yellow, brown, or gray. Within this range, the less color the higher the grade. Diamonds of other natural hues, as well as deeper shades of yellow, brown, or gray, are classified as fancy colors. Artificial treatments can add or subtract color.

• Cut has two different meanings. One refers to a diamond’s shape and faceting style. In this sense, the round brilliant is the most popular diamond cut. All others are classified as fancy shapes or fancy cuts. Cut quality includes design and craftsmanship. It’s determined by the diamond’s proportions, symmetry, and polish. Cut quality is almost always the top factor in a diamond’s beauty.

• The effects of carat weight, clarity, and color on value depend largely on natural rarity. Cut is the human contribution to value.
JA SALES PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

Jewelers of America (JA) is one of the foremost US jewelry trade organizations. With a mission to increase consumer confidence in the jewelry industry, JA advocates professionalism and adherence to high ethical, social, and environmental standards. It works to enhance its members’ profitability by offering education, certification, marketing, and cost-saving programs.

JA created the Sales Professional Certification (SPC) program to establish, maintain, and recognize superior standards of knowledge and skill among jewelry sales professionals. For more than a decade, JA’s certification programs have validated the talent and proficiency of jewelry industry professionals to national standards. JA certification can advance your career, differentiate your store, and improve your reputation with fine jewelry customers.

The SPC program has two levels:

- **JA Certified Sales Professional (CSP)** – This level reflects knowledge and skills generally expected of trained entry-level jewelry sales personnel with about one year’s experience.

- **JA Certified Senior Sales Professional (CSSP)** – This level reflects moderate to advanced sales knowledge and skills, and includes some areas not tested at the first level.

To qualify for either designation you must be employed by a JA member store, have at least one year of retail jewelry sales experience, and pass the SPC written exam(s). For complete program information contact:

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The DCA and JA share the goal of increasing professionalism throughout the jewelry industry, and both organizations believe education is essential. For these reasons, the DCA curriculum is designed to educate students and offer support to individuals who elect to pursue the goal of professional certification through Jewelers of America.
Congratulations!
You’re on your way to becoming Diamond Certified by the DCA! There’s no Self-Test for this lesson, so you can go ahead to Lesson 2. Enjoy!