Diamond Jewelry

7 The Diamond Course
Diamond Jewelry

In This Lesson:
The Setting for Beauty
Diamond Moments
Diamond Settings
Jewelry Forms and Styles
Design and Manufacture
Quality and Value
Gold and Platinum
Branded Jewelry
The Right Choice
Diamond Wardrobing

THE SETTING FOR BEAUTY

A diamond is made to be worn, admired, and enjoyed. This fact alone makes the jewelry in which a diamond is set important. Jewelry can contribute to a diamond’s appeal in other ways as well.

Like a crystal vase holding a rose, a setting of fine jewelry enhances the beauty a diamond creates and the pleasure it gives. To the diamond’s optical performance, jewelry adds the dimensions of visual artistry and the sense of touch.

The setting can also be part of a diamond’s meaning. In modern American culture, few events represent more than giving or receiving a diamond. The full meaning often depends on the jewelry that’s involved. Given as a gift, a diamond set in a ring will probably carry a very different message than one set in a pendant.

The setting’s style has significance, too. Diamond jewelry designs can be simple and classic, elegant and sophisticated, or bold and provocative (to give just a few examples). The designs may be inspired by a variety of sources. In a deep and profound way, they can reflect the identities and personalities of those who wear the jewelry.
Beyond aesthetics and symbolism, diamond jewelry embodies value. It combines artistic talent and skilled labor with rare gems and precious metal. In previous lessons, you learned how the 4Cs affect a diamond’s price. In much the same way, the artistry, workmanship, and materials that make up a piece of fine jewelry determine both its quality and cost.

When you present diamond jewelry, each of these factors demands and deserves proper attention. You need to describe appeal, identify meaning, interpret design, and explain quality. If you do these things successfully, you’ll help customers select jewelry that provides a perfect setting for diamond’s beauty – and the perfect way to express their messages.

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson you will be able to:

- Connect diamond jewelry with important occasions.
- Describe the types and styles of today’s diamond jewelry.
- Explain the appeal, quality, and value of diamond jewelry.
- Present branded diamond jewelry effectively.
- Assist customers in making diamond jewelry selections.
- Introduce customers to the concept of diamond jewelry wardrobing.
Diamond Jewelry

DIAMOND MOMENTS

Jewelry is an art form that evolved with the human desire to create beauty and command nature. The oldest jewelry yet found was made around 80,000 years ago. That was when early cultures were also beginning to decorate their tools, utensils, and dwellings.

Diamond jewelry first appeared in Europe during the Roman Empire, about 2,000 years ago. Experts believe that it was probably worn in India, the most ancient source of diamonds, long before then.

Some jewelry is purely ornamental, but diamond jewelry has always held great symbolic meaning. From primitive amulets to glorious crowns, objects adorned with diamonds have signified the highest powers and rarest achievements. They’ve marked turning points for individuals, and sometimes entire civilizations.

In Lesson 14 you’ll look at the magic and romance that have surrounded diamonds over the centuries. For now, it’s important to recognize that today – as it has been throughout history – diamond jewelry is closely linked to outstanding moments in your customers’ lives.

Engagement

Engagement signals the decision to share life with one special person. In the US, more than 2 million couples make this commitment every year, and 8 out of 10 commemorate it with a diamond engagement ring. These statistics make engagement the most significant diamond moment for consumers and jewelry professionals alike.

Many couples select their ring together, and you often have to deal with differing priorities in engagement presentations. The man might concentrate on the diamond’s 4Cs, while the woman may focus on the ring’s appearance and style. You need to address each partner’s concerns. Keep the spotlight on romance and the diamond’s symbolism, and you’ll be more likely to meet everyone’s needs.

Diamond Jewelry is inextricably linked to outstanding moments in your customers’ lives.
You can tell the couple they’re sharing a custom that’s thousands of years old. It began with gold betrothal rings in Roman times. Placing the ring on the fourth finger of the left hand also comes from the Romans. They believed there’s a direct connection between that finger and the heart.

History first records a diamond engagement ring in the 1400s. An Austrian prince named Maximilian gave one to the French princess Mary of Burgundy as a symbol of his love and their betrothal. For centuries after, diamond engagement rings belonged to royal courtship. They became a mainstream American tradition in the 1900s.

Today a popular engagement ring choice is the diamond solitaire. This is a band of precious metal set with a single sparkling diamond. Other designs feature various arrangements of smaller accent diamonds that dramatize the larger center gem. To interpret these styles, you might tell customers that a solitaire expresses the love of a lifetime, while a center diamond represents the importance of the relationship amid all of life’s activities.

**Wedding**

A wedding symbolizes the union of two lives, and the exchange of rings is usually a focal point of the ceremony. This is the moment when women most often express their feelings with the gift of diamonds (set in the groom’s wedding band). Many men also give diamonds at this time. These may adorn the bride’s wedding band, or pieces given as gifts before, after, or on the wedding day.

There are numerous diamond wedding ring designs from which to choose. Many couples prefer different styles for bride and groom. Some select a wedding duo of matching rings. Others decide on a wedding trio – two bands that coordinate with the design of the bride’s engagement ring.

Whatever the choice, you can say the ring’s circular form is an age-old symbol of eternal love. You might add that diamond’s beauty, purity, and strength reflect qualities of lasting affection.
**Anniversary**

An anniversary is the time when two people mark a milepost of their marriage and celebrate what they share. Apart from engagements and weddings, anniversaries are the most frequent occasions for giving diamond jewelry.

Husbands typically shop for and purchase anniversary jewelry alone. The message they usually want to send is: “I’d gladly marry you all over again.”

For decades, a favorite for this affirmation has been the **diamond anniversary band**, with a row of diamonds across the top. Another version is the **eternity ring**, which features a complete circle of diamonds.

Rings with fewer but larger diamonds are also high on the list of anniversary selections. These include the **Three-Diamond Anniversary Ring**. This style is distinguished by three fine diamonds that symbolize the past, present, and future of the relationship.

While rings are most popular, anniversary diamonds can deliver their messages in other forms too. A good example is the **diamond solitaire necklace**, with a single diamond shining in isolated beauty. Or there’s the **diamond anniversary necklace**, which has a row of diamonds attached to a collar-length chain. The “past, present, future” theme can also be expressed by a **three-diamond pendant**.

Another great option for anniversaries is **Journey Diamond Jewelry**. Available in earring and pendant designs, this concept features diamonds of graduated sizes that symbolize how love grows over time.

Other selections are appropriate as well. A diamond bracelet can signify the circle of a life together. Diamond earrings can represent the beauty of two people acting in harmony. In fact, any type of diamond jewelry makes a good choice for an anniversary – as long as its quality befits the occasion.
Any anniversary is also right for the gift of diamonds. Some anniversaries are traditionally more significant than others. In the US, the 10th and 60th anniversaries have long been marked by diamond gifts. Today the 25th anniversary is an important diamond moment.

You should never underestimate the importance of any anniversary. The 6th, 8th, 17th – or any other year – may be a memorable one in your customer’s marriage.

Diamond earrings are a shining representation of the beauty of a pair acting in harmony.

**Special Events**

Other diamond moments are less predictable than those associated with courtship and marriage, but they can be just as meaningful. These include special events like birthdays, job promotions, and the births of children or grandchildren.

Purchases for such events can vary in nature. In many cases the customer is selecting diamond jewelry as a gift. In others, the jewelry is a self-purchase intended to symbolize achievement, pride, or some other emotion.

In recent decades, women have been buying more and more diamond jewelry for themselves. This trend reflects their growing success in business, professional fields, and other endeavors. It’s fueled by women’s increasing desire and willingness to reward themselves – plus an increasing sense of personal style and a determination to have jewelry they like and enjoy. This trend is also certain to continue into the future.
Self-purchases by women can involve a number of factors. Diamond jewelry may mark a professional achievement or personal milestone. It can make a statement or become an element of individual style. It’s an essential component of every wardrobe, and a terrific way to celebrate “just being me.”

Many kinds of diamond jewelry can be appropriate for a self-purchase or a special event gift. Earrings, necklaces, and bracelets are frequent choices.

The right hand ring is popular, too. This style is adapted from traditional designs, but its message is distinct. While left hand rings symbolize engagement and marriage, right hand rings represent self-expression and individuality.

When you add them together, special events and other diamond moments encompass many of life’s happiest times and feelings. To identify the occasions and reasons for diamond purchases, simply engage customers in sincere conversations about their needs and interests. Then focus your presentations on the choices, features, and benefits that are best suited to each moment and message.
DIAMOND SETTINGS

Most customers think of the setting as the entire piece of jewelry. Professionals often use the term this way as well. In a more a technical sense, the setting is the way in which a diamond is held.

There are two basic categories of settings – those designed for individual diamonds and those for groups of diamonds.

Individual Settings

• Prong setting – In this setting style, slender metal claws hold the diamond. A prong setting can raise the diamond above the main body of the jewelry, accentuating it and allowing light to strike it from all directions. The Tiffany setting for rings is a familiar type of prong setting. It usually has four prongs (or perhaps six) with V-shape openings between them. Originally introduced in the 1800s by Tiffany & Co., this style is still a favorite today. Another prong style that’s sometimes used for earrings and pendants is the buttercup setting. This has prongs extending from a scalloped base. The point prong setting is used for fancy shapes with points, such as the pear and marquise.

• Bezel, Box, or Tube setting – In this type of setting a metal collar or rim wraps around the diamond and slightly over its edge. This protects the diamond and makes the setting a prominent element of the jewelry’s design.
• **Gypsy setting** – In a gypsy setting, a metal rim formed from the body of the jewelry holds the diamond. Like a bezel it provides protection. This is a traditional and popular setting style for men’s rings. A similar style, called **flush setting**, is used for small diamonds. The diamonds are set deep into the jewelry metal, so the tops of their tables are even (or flush) with the jewelry’s surface.

• **Tension setting** – With this style, opposite ends of a circular jewelry form, such as a ring, hold the gem by the force of tension alone. Through a special process the jewelry metal is repeatedly heated and cooled, making it “springy.” This creates the tension that holds the diamond, which appears to float within the design.

• **Illusion setting or Miracle top** – In illusion and miracle top settings, tiny prongs or metal beads hold a diamond that’s surrounded by a bright metal rim of white. The reflective framing can make the diamond appear larger.
Group Settings

- **Cluster setting** – In cluster settings, a number of diamonds are set close together (with prongs) in a symmetrical pattern. A typical version is the seven-diamond cluster, with six small diamonds circling a larger center diamond. This style can create the appearance of a single large diamond.

- **Bead Setting** – In bead settings, the diamond is fitted into a recessed seat that’s drilled and formed in the metal. A special tool is used to force in the upper rim of the seat, usually at four points equally spaced around the diamond. The pushed-in rim holds the diamond in place. The technique also raises small amounts of metal that are formed into decorative beads. This setting style is most often used for diamond that weigh less than about 1/4 ct.

- **Channel setting** – Channel settings typically feature rows of small diamonds set side-by-side between parallel ridges of metal. The diamonds form bands or ribbons of brilliance and scintillation. To be channel set, the diamonds must be cut to very similar dimensions. This style can also be adapted to single diamonds and cluster-like arrangements.

- **Bar setting** – With a bar setting, the diamonds are held in place by short metal ridges (bars). For a ring, the bars are perpendicular to the band. This creates a bold modern linear look that shows off each diamond individually. Bar settings can be used for solitaire designs as well.

- **Pavé setting** – In pavé settings small diamonds (usually round) are prong-set next to each other across the jewelry’s surface. The term, pronounced pa-VAY, means “paved” in French, and the appearance is like a glittering diamond veneer.
**Invisible setting** – With invisible settings, small square diamonds (usually princess cut) are set side-by-side into a wire-like framework. The filaments of the frame fit into grooves that have been cut in the diamonds’ girdles, so the metal that holds the diamonds doesn’t show from above. This striking style demands the combined skills of both cutter and jewelry maker.

---

**JEWELRY FORMS AND STYLES**

For men’s diamond jewelry, top-selling items include rings, cufflinks, tie tacks, and lapel pins. Bracelets and earrings sell well in some markets. Diamond studs (single or in pairs) make both a fashion and success statement for many professional athletes and musicians, as well as the men who emulate them.

You might describe most men’s diamond jewelry styles as strong and bold or tailored and businesslike. Instead of standing out alone, most often the diamonds are integrated within the jewelry’s overall design.

Women’s diamond jewelry comes in an almost endless variety, and the diamonds are usually the center of attention. Top-selling categories are rings, earrings, necklaces, and bracelets. There are special names for many forms and styles. Using these helps customers appreciate the jewelry and adds flavor to your presentations.
Rings

In addition to rings that are specifically designed for engagements, weddings, and anniversaries, other choices include:

- **Cocktail or Dinner ring** – An ornate diamond ring that’s appropriate for dressy evening events. Cluster settings are traditional, but almost any dramatic design can go in this category.

- **Ballerina ring** – A cocktail or dinner ring with a large center gem surrounded by tapered baguettes. The baguettes are arranged in a radial pattern that resembles a dancer’s flaring skirt.

- **Crossover or Bypass ring** – A ring that coils around the finger, with the ends of the band passing each other on top. In some designs, the ends have pavé or channel set diamonds. Others have larger diamonds set on or between the ends.

- **Halo Ring** – An adaptation of the solitaire, with a large central diamond circled by a row of smaller accent diamonds.

- **Right hand ring** – A non-bridal ring (that is, not for an engagement or wedding) that’s worn on the right hand. This style usually features at least one fairly large diamond, but there are many design variations.
Earrings

- **Studs** – Single diamonds or small clusters in simple settings for pierced ears.

- **Buttons** – Disk-shape or slightly domed earrings, often with cluster or pavé settings.

- **Hoops** – Earrings in the form of rigid metal loops. Channel and tension set diamonds are especially striking in this style.

- **Dangles, Drops, and Pendants** – Earrings with diamonds or decorative elements that dangle. These range from dainty drops to long and elaborate styles often called *chandeliers.*

Diamond Hoop Variations

Photo courtesy Breuning.

Chandelier Dangles

Photo courtesy J.R. Gold Designs Ltd.

Ornate Studs

Photo courtesy KC Designs.

Buttons

Photo courtesy Elite.

Triangular Diamond Studs

Photo courtesy LF Industries.

Diamond Drop Earrings

Winners of “Diamonds Today” Design Contest.
Bracelets

- **Link bracelet** – A flexible bracelet made of chain-like links or small hinged panels. A modern classic is the *straight line bracelet*, which consists of diamond-studded links that completely circle the wrist. This is sometimes called a *tennis bracelet*. (The term originated when tennis star Chris Evert was seen wearing a straight line diamond bracelet during the 1987 US Open tournament.)

- **Bangle** – A solid circle of precious metal that slips over the hand. This style also includes designs with hinged half-circle segments, and those with narrow gaps between the ends. Diamonds might be channel or pavé set, or individually set in prongs.

- **Cuff** – A wide oval-shape bracelet. It may have a hinge and clasp, or encircle about 3/4 of the wrist with open ends that allow it to be slipped on. The diamonds can be set in almost any style or arrangement.
Necklaces

- **Pendant** – One or more diamonds in a setting that’s suspended from a chain.

- **Drop or Lavaliere** – A pendant that’s suspended from the neck chain by another short chain or decorative element. (Lavaliere is pronounced la-va-LEER.) If the pendant is suspended by a longer chain, the style is often called a *Y-necklace*.

- **Lariat** – An open-ended necklace that’s held together by an ornamental clasp in front, usually with diamond drops at each end.

- **Rivière** – Diamonds in individual settings that entirely circle the neck. The term is pronounced ri-vee-ER.

- **Collar or Choker** – A necklace that fits snugly against the throat. Diamonds may be set within the framework, or hang as pendants.

- **Neckwire** – A rigid necklace of heavy-gauge precious metal wire with a central diamond setting.
Design Inspirations

Inspirations for jewelry designs come from many sources. A single item may combine a variety of elements or concepts, but you can usually identify one or two that define its “look” and “spirit.”

Four sources of design inspiration for today’s diamond jewelry are **natural forms, historic periods, modern life, and symbols of faith or affection.**

- **Natural Forms** – Many diamond jewelry designs incorporate flowers, vines, or leaves, either as an overall theme or in decorative details. Animals and insects (like bees and butterflies) are frequently seen, too. Celestial bodies – the sun, moon, and stars – also feature prominently. Natural forms appear in jewelry from the earliest civilizations all the way up to the present, offering wide variety and timeless appeal.
• **Historic Periods** – Some diamond designs draw consciously on the past. Favorite periods include the Victorian, Art Nouveau, Edwardian, and Art Deco. Each of these has its own look and characteristic motifs, but they all link the meaning of the present moment with the romance of long ago.

• **Modern Life** – Bold geometric shapes, sleek lines, and dynamic curves are the visual hallmarks of today’s technological culture. Mirrored in jewelry designs that range from contemporary to cutting edge, these elements capture the feeling of here and now – energetic, dramatic, intelligent, confident, and sophisticated.

• **Symbols of Faith or Affection** – Designs that reflect religious belief are always popular, as are those that have sentimental connotations – for example, hearts and teddy bears. In an uncertain world, these serve as cherished reminders of the things that really count.

When you present diamond jewelry, you need to help customers connect with designs that “speak” to them. You might say that a ring’s antique look has classic elegance, a bracelet’s sculptural curves are high-tech and high-style, or a heart-shape pendant means “You’re special to me.” In addition to identifying design components and their inspiration, statements like these should relate to the customer’s needs and desires in making the purchase.

### Jewelry-Making Methods

If you know how an item of jewelry was made, describing the process can help customers appreciate its quality and value. Dozens of specialized techniques are used today, but most involve one of four basic methods – **die-striking**, **electroforming**, **casting**, or **hand fabrication**.

#### Die-Striking

With die-striking – also known as **stamping** – items are mass-produced by shaping solid metal with a mold, or die, made from hardened steel. The mold has two parts and the form of the finished piece is defined by the interior space that’s created when the parts are joined. (The principle is similar to making Play-Doh shapes with a toy mold.)

During production, sheets of precious metal alloy are placed in the mold and machine-stamped. The tremendous pressure – many tons per square inch – actually forces the metal’s atoms closer together, increasing its density and strength.
Coins are familiar die-struck objects from everyday life. Entire items of jewelry, such as wedding bands, can be manufactured this way. More often, die-struck pieces are made as components which are later assembled.

Hollow jewelry can be made by stamping two separate pieces and then soldering them together. The individual panels of some link-style bracelets are also stamped.

Because of the strength this process gives the metal, die-striking is a good way to make ring shanks and diamond settings (specifically, the parts called setting heads).

**Electroforming**

In this process, particles of precious metal alloy are electrodeposited on a model. The model is usually made from wax and then coated with graphite so it will conduct electricity. It’s then connected to the negative terminal of a power source and placed in a chemical solution, or bath, which contains positively charged atoms of the alloy metals. Another conductor attached to the positive terminal also goes in the bath.

When the power is turned on, the model attracts the metal atoms. Metal accumulates on the model and builds a shell. After the shell is thick enough, the piece is removed, a tiny hole is drilled, and the piece is heated, causing the wax to melt and run out.

The resulting jewelry is hollow and lightweight, but strong. For this reason, electroforming is a common method for manufacturing large earrings and necklaces.

**Casting**

With casting, jewelry is made by pouring or injecting molten metal into a mold and allowing it to cool. The process begins with carving a model from wax and imbedding it in a liquid plaster-like material called investment. After the investment solidifies, it’s heated in a high-temperature furnace to vaporize the wax. This
leaves a hollow mold. (Because the wax disappears, the method is known as *lost-wax casting*.) The mold is then filled with melted metal that hardens into the form of the original model.

Casting is the most popular way to create custom-made jewelry, and it can be adapted for large-scale production as well. Models can also be duplicated by making a rubber mold of a metal prototype, and then using that mold to generate wax copies.

To produce multiple castings, a number of models can be attached to a central wax rod (or *sprue*), forming a *tree*. The tree is then cast like an individual piece.

**Hand Fabrication**

Using this process, each item is made completely by hand labor and manually controlled methods. Hand fabrication starts with precious metal that has undergone minimal processing. It may have been alloyed and made into bulk stock such as sheets, strips, tubes, or wire, but otherwise it is raw material. The jewelry maker then beats, bends, draws, drills, files, or saws the entire piece or separate components into the desired shapes and, if necessary, solders components together.

Hand fabrication is the oldest jewelry-making method, and many of its tools and processes originated with the earliest civilizations. It can produce almost any form or style of jewelry, but each piece is one-of-a-kind. Even if a piece copies an existing design, there will be slight differences that make it unique. Under FTC guidelines, to be called “hand-made” or “handwrought,” jewelry must be manufactured in this way.

**Mixing and Matching**

Many jewelry items are assembled from components made by different methods. For instance, a ring might have a die-struck head attached to a cast shank. You can tell customers that the purpose of this “mixing and matching” is to achieve the best combination of beauty, durability, and value.

You may also need to explain that the individual labor which goes into the piece is a significant cost factor. Diamond setting is a prime example. Although quality setting is always critical, styles like pavé,
channel, and invisible setting are very labor-intensive. Dozens of diamonds may have to be matched for size and appearance, and each one must be set with skilled attention. Tension setting demands extra time and care as well.

Different production methods also represent differing amounts of individual work. Die-striking along with large-scale electroforming and casting are industrial in nature. That’s not necessarily a negative. Mass production requires creativity, expertise, and effort, but it spreads the expense of these over a large number of items, reducing the cost of each unit.

Custom-designed cast or hand-fabricated jewelry offers uniqueness, but each piece must bear the entire cost of the design and manufacturing process. For this reason, custom-made jewelry is normally more expensive than comparable mass-produced items.

For most customers, any jewelry-making method can produce excellent results. What counts is the skill and care with which it’s done.

DECORATIVE FINISHES

Decorative finishes add visual texture and contrast to jewelry. They can be created in a number of ways – with polishing wheels, wire brushes, files, engraving tools, punches, grindstones, and even sandblasting.

The finishes you’re most likely to see on today’s diamond jewelry are:

- **Bright polish** – Smooth, shiny, mirror-like.
- **Matte finish** – Grainy and non-reflective.
- **Brushed finish** – Tiny parallel grooves scratched into the surface. A finely textured version with soft sheen is called **satin finish**.
- **Florentine finish** – A crosshatch pattern of lines tooled onto the surface.
- **Stipple finish** – Tiny indentations and ridges.
- **Hammer finish** – Small indentations covering the surface.
- **Bark finish** - Coarse texturing that resembles tree bark.

When you’re showing jewelry, be sure to highlight the decorative finish as part of the design and workmanship.
QUALITY AND VALUE

To present diamond jewelry effectively, you need to learn all you can about the items in your showcases. Your manager and jewelry buyer are excellent sources of information. If you have a qualified bench jeweler on staff, he or she also can give you expert input.

When you’re developing a presentation for an important item, try to arrange a short tutorial session. Go over the piece and discuss aspects of design and craftsmanship.

Features to look for – and point out to customers – include:

- **Quality Marks** – The item is stamped with the manufacturer’s name or trademark and an indication of the metal content. US law requires this, and it assures a certain level of quality.
- **Overall Design** – The design is attractively proportioned. The various elements are harmonious and properly aligned.
- **Technical Details** – All the parts fit together smoothly. Details are sharp and well defined. There are no cracks, bumps, or weak spots.
- **Surface Finishing** – The surface is entirely polished or textured. Finish patterns are distinct, evenly executed, and clearly demarcated. There are no rough areas or pits. The inside or back of the piece is as wellfinished as the top or front.
- **Diamond Setting** – This is precise and secure. It provides the diamond with adequate protection. In group settings, all the diamonds are even and properly aligned.

Specific details and the amount of time you devote to them will depend on the jewelry and the customer. You can emphasize that quality costs more, but it ensures lasting enjoyment and value.
GOLD AND PLATINUM

Gold and platinum are the primary structural materials for today’s diamond jewelry. Rarity makes both metals intrinsically “precious.” Even in the form of unworked ingots or bars, they cost well over a thousand dollars per ounce. The labor of transforming them into jewelry adds to their value.

Diamond jewelry’s appeal can depend on the metal from which it’s made in several ways:

- **Weight** – The metal accounts for almost all of an item’s weight. This is significant because many customers subconsciously equate weight (or “heft”) with value.

- **Color** – The metal’s color contributes to both beauty and symbolism. To many customers yellow gold is warm and inviting. Others associate the color of platinum or white gold with purity and strength.

- **Visual Effect** – The metal’s color can also affect the diamond’s appearance. As you learned in Lesson 4, yellow gold masks traces of yellow or brown, but makes darker tints of these hues stand out attractively. White metals accentuate colorless diamonds as well as most fancy colors.

Each metal also has specific facts and features that can help you guide customers toward the best choice for their jewelry.

**Gold**

For thousands of years, gold’s easy workability, luxurious feel, and lasting beauty have made it the world’s most treasured metal. Ancient civilizations used gold in pure form. Some cultures still do.

Pure gold is expensive, however. It’s also soft and bendable. To produce jewelry that’s affordable and wearable, modern manufacturers combine it with other metals in alloys called **karat gold**.

(Customers occasionally confuse the terms “carat” and “karat.” You may need to explain that carat is the unit of weight for diamonds, while karat means the amount of gold in an alloy. In some countries both terms are actually spelled with a “c.”)

**The Karat System**

The karat system comes from old metal-making recipes based on 24 parts, or equal units, of weight. Pure gold is 24 parts – or 24/24ths – gold, and it’s designated 24 karat. (This may be abbreviated 24K or 24Kt.) An alloy of 18 parts gold and 6 parts other metals is 18K, and so forth.

Photo courtesy Jean Designs.
Instead of karats, most international jewelry manufacturers use a metric-type system based on parts per thousand. 18K (18/24ths or 3/4) is 750 parts gold out of 1000, so it is referred to as 750. 14 karat is 585.

This table shows karat ratings, percentages of gold by weight, and metric equivalents for various jewelry alloys:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Karat</th>
<th>Gold %</th>
<th>Metric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18K</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14K</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12K</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10K</td>
<td>41.60%</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Guidelines and Laws**

Under FTC guidelines, the karat rating of gold jewelry must be specified unless it’s 24K. This means that, in a sales presentation, you shouldn’t just say, “This is solid gold.” Instead, be clear and specific by saying, “This is solid 14-karat gold.”

You can also point out that US law requires the actual gold content to be extremely close to the content indicated by the quality mark. Most jewelry items must be within 7/10 of 1%, or 7 parts per thousand. This means that a 14K diamond ring, for example, has to be at least 57.8% gold. (If the item has no soldered parts, like a plain gold wedding band, the tolerance is even less – only 3/10 of 1%, or 3 parts per thousand.)

**Karat Gold Alloys**

Most gold jewelry sold in the US ranges from 10 to 18K. Some designers use 22K or 24K for its rich look, but usually as an accent, not for the entire piece. This is because pure gold and most ultra-high karat alloys are too scratchable and bendable to withstand what most customers would consider normal wear.

Generally speaking, the lower the karat rating, the harder and stronger the alloy will be. The less expensive, too.

You may need to explain this when you’re helping customers make selections. For those who are experienced in wearing fine jewelry, 18K is an
Platinum might be called a modern jewelry metal. A few early civilizations occasionally used it to make small ornaments. Large ore deposits and effective ways of fashioning platinum weren’t discovered until the 1800s.

**Waves of Popularity**

Platinum’s popularity soared in the early 1900s, but during World War II (1939-1945) the US government declared it a strategic metal and removed it from the jewelry market. That action was taken because platinum has many scientific, technological, and industrial uses.

While platinum was off the market, white gold gained favor as an alternative – especially for women’s engagement and wedding rings.

After the war, platinum once more became available for jewelry, but it remained relatively rare for several decades. In the 1990s, platinum’s popularity boomed again, and it has stayed strong ever since.

**Design and Cost Factors**

Despite the vogue, most consumers consider platinum “different” because of its unique features and distinctions. Many like platinum’s neutral gray-white color. Compared to white gold, which is highly reflective, platinum also has a more subdued and sophisticated glow.

Platinum is exceptionally strong, too. Platinum jewelry can be delicate yet wearable. A platinum setting can hold a diamond securely for decades.
In sales presentations, you may need to explain that platinum jewelry tends to be more costly than similar designs done in karat gold. This may involve two factors – **greater purity** and **greater density**.

- **Purity** – Platinum is often used in purer form than gold. As you’ve seen, karat gold normally ranges from about 42% pure (with 10K) to 75% pure (with 18K). Platinum’s fineness is measured in parts per thousand, and most of the platinum jewelry manufactured in the US is 900 or 950 platinum. This means it’s 90% or 95% pure.

- **Density** – Platinum is also denser, or heavier for its size, than gold. This enhances platinum’s feeling of value, but it also means that an item made of platinum will weigh more than a karat gold item of the same dimensions, and precious metals are priced by weight, not volume.

### Platinum Alloys

High purity is traditionally one of the factors that makes platinum jewelry comparatively expensive. In addition, the other metal in the alloy – if there is one – is usually iridium, palladium, or ruthenium. These are known as **platinum group metals**, and they too are relatively expensive.

In recent years, manufacturers have started producing jewelry with less platinum – down to 50% pure platinum. These **non-traditional alloys** often contain non-precious (or base) metals like copper and cobalt.

The goal in making this change has been to offer platinum jewelry that’s more affordable. It has also made the job of presenting platinum to customers more complicated.

### Platinum Markings and Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Mark</th>
<th>Platinum and Other Metal(s)</th>
<th>% Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plat, 1000Pt, 1000Plat</td>
<td>............................................................100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plat, 999Pt, 999Plat</td>
<td>...............................................................99.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plat, 950Pt, 950Plat</td>
<td>..............................................................95%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pt900, 900Pt, 900Plat</td>
<td>..............................................................90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pt850, 850Pt, 850Plat</td>
<td>...............................................................85%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800Pt.200Pd</td>
<td>........................................80% Platinum and 20% Palladium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750Pt.250Rh</td>
<td>........................................75% Platinum and 25% Rhodium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600Pt.350Ir</td>
<td>.........................................60% Platinum and 35% Iridium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>550Pt.350Pd.50Ir</td>
<td>55% Platinum, 35% Palladium, and 5% Iridium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750Pt.250Cu</td>
<td>........................................75% Platinum and 25% Copper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600Pt.350Co.050Rh</td>
<td>60% Platinum, 35% Cobalt, and 5% Rhodium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Today’s diamond jewelry offers a constantly changing and expanding galaxy of beauty offering continuous opportunities for wardrobing.

Photo courtesy Penny Preville.
FTC Guidelines

The FTC guidelines for representing platinum are complex, and can be confusing. Here are some simple rules you can follow in sales presentations:

• **950Pt, 999Pt, or 1000Pt** – If an item of jewelry is at least 95% pure platinum, you can simply call it “platinum” without any further qualification or explanation.

• **850Pt or 900 Pt** – If the item is 85% or 90% pure platinum, you can call it “platinum” or “traditional platinum.” However, you need to offer a little explanation. For example, if the quality mark is 900Pt, you might add, “The alloy is 90% pure platinum.”

• **Other Alloys** – If the item is less than 85% pure platinum, you can still call it “platinum,” but you must be careful to inform the customer that there are other metals in the alloy. You also need to identify those metals and state the percentage of weight each one makes up. For example, if the quality mark is 600Pt.350Co.050Rh., you need to say something like, “This ring is made of a platinum alloy. The metal is sixty percent platinum, plus thirty-five percent cobalt and five percent rhodium.”

If an item is less than 50% (500 parts per thousand) pure platinum, FTC guidelines state that it cannot be labeled, described, or presented as platinum – no matter how much qualification or explanation is provided.

In some cases, added disclosures need to be made with a non-traditional platinum alloy. For example, it may not have the same strength as pure platinum or alloys with high platinum content.

Specific characteristics vary from one alloy to another. You need to work closely with your store’s management to determine what you should say about non-traditional platinum products you offer, and how best to present them to your customers.
ALTERNATIVE METALS

In recent years, designers and manufacturers have started using metals other than karat gold and platinum to make diamond jewelry. These “alternative” metals produce fresh and different looks or price points that appeal to some customers.

Alternative metals represent a growing and important share of the fashion market. You should be able to answer questions about them and find out when they suit a particular customer’s need.

The ones you’re most likely to encounter are silver, palladium, titanium, and stainless steel.

• **Silver** – This is an ancient metal with current style. Its cool, crisp color is a chief attraction. Compared to karat gold or platinum, it’s also very affordable. Most diamond-set pieces are made of **sterling silver**, an alloy that’s 92.5% silver and 7.5% copper. This is harder and more wearable than pure silver. Silver-and-diamond designs tend to be “fashion forward.” They’re often aimed at young women who are buying for themselves. (Of course, you can suggest them to other customers, too.)

• **Palladium** – Palladium is one of the platinum group metals. It has a “true-white” color with subdued luster, and shares many of platinum’s technical characteristics. It’s much lighter and less expensive than platinum. As a result of these “pluses,” many jewelry designers and manufacturers are working now with palladium, and a growing number of retailers are carrying it. Much of what’s being used is 950 palladium, an alloy of 95% palladium with 5% ruthenium.
• **Titanium** – Light as aluminum but strong as steel, this is truly a Space Age metal. (In fact, it’s a structural material for jet planes.) Titanium first appeared in fashion jewelry in the 1980s, and in the 1990s it became popular for men’s watches. Today it’s moving into the fine jewelry mainstream. Jewelry-grade titanium is 99% pure, and has a natural color that’s comparable to platinum or silver. Alloying produces black, while other colors come from special manufacturing techniques. Most titanium-and-diamond designs have a high-tech look. They’re perfect for customers with ultramodern taste.

• **Stainless Steel** – This is another metal that first moved from technology and industry into watches, and has now entered the world of fine jewelry. It combines the cool gray-white color of platinum and silver with exceptional hardness and strength. Stainless steel is an alloy composed mostly of iron and chromium, and jewelry is made from the highest grade available. Many steel-and-diamond designs can be described as sleek and contemporary. They’re available in women’s styles, but steel’s appearance and masculine connotations make it a natural choice for men’s jewelry.

If your store carries diamond jewelry made from alternative metals, be sure to do your homework on it. The designer or manufacturer can probably supply useful information. For additional facts and ideas, try the following websites:

**Silver Institute and Silver Promotion Service** – www.silverinstitute.org and www.savorsilver.com

**Palladium Alliance International** – www.luxurypalladium.com

**Stainless Steel Information Center** – www.ssina.com. This site focuses on building and construction, but contains interesting background information.
BRANDED JEWELRY

In Lesson 5 you learned that branded diamond cuts are an important part of today’s market. The same is true of branded diamond jewelry.

Except for the creations of firms like Bulgari, Cartier, Tiffany, and Van Cleef & Arpels, fine jewelry once lacked widespread name recognition. That began to change in the 1970s. Since then, several factors have given the trend momentum:

- **Promotion** – Active promotional efforts by industry organizations, as well as designers and manufacturers, have made all jewelry professionals more aware of brands and their benefits.
- **Fashion** – There’s been a convergence between jewelry and fashion. Popular magazines like *InStyle, Cosmopolitan, Elle, Vogue,* and *W* now cover jewelry along with apparel. Some of the biggest names in fashion – including Chanel, Dior, Gucci, Vera Wang, and Versace – have launched their own jewelry lines.
- **Women** – Consumers have become more brand conscious – especially young professional women. Members of this emerging demographic group see a link between fashion, jewelry, and self-expression. They grew up with favorite labels in cosmetics, clothing, footwear, and other accessories. They naturally seek the same in jewelry.

As a result of this combination, names like Robert Lee Morris, Judith Ripka, and David Yurman are increasingly familiar to jewelry consumers. As with branded cuts, however, a true jewelry brand is more than just a name. It has consistent and distinctive characteristics that are easy to recognize.

To present branded jewelry you need to identify its *signature*. This the “total package” of features and benefits that make the brand unique and give it special appeal.

Branded jewelry’s signature can include design motifs, inspirational themes, the way the jewelry is made, the metals that go into it, its form and style, even the diamonds or other gems and how they’re set. Since most brands are built around individual designers, there are also the human personality, artistic vision, and working methodology that lie behind the jewelry. Designers’ promotional literature and websites are usually good sources for this kind of information.

After you have the facts – or features – at your fingertips, you’re ready to work on translating them into benefits that are meaningful to your customers. This means honing the ability to characterize a brand’s look, articulate the image it conveys, and make the connection with fashion, individuality, status, or other motives that may drive a purchase.
It’s also important to find the proper balance. Any brand’s degree of prominence in your presentations is likely to depend on your company’s general approach to merchandising. Some stores spotlight branded lines in order to set themselves and their merchandise apart from competitors. Others focus on establishing and communicating their own images.

Whatever the strategy might be, remember: For the majority of customers, your store – its name, its professional team, and all the other great things it represents – is the brand that will always count most of all.

**THE RIGHT CHOICE**

In previous lessons you’ve learned how to assist customers with choices concerning a diamond’s 4Cs. It’s just as important to help them select the jewelry that meets their needs and desires.

When you’re making presentations for self-purchases, this can be fairly straightforward. Customers shopping for themselves are typically interested in style, quality, and individuality. Once they express a preference for a particular piece, you need to explain its design, workmanship, and value in a way that reinforces the impulse to buy.

For gift purchases, the message of the moment often determines the type of jewelry that’s appropriate. Since most diamond jewelry is bought as a gift of love, you may find yourself acting as product specialist, fashion consultant, and romance counselor – all at the same time.

While there are no firm rules for playing this challenging role, there are several points to keep in mind:

- The jewelry should compliment the wearer’s features and physique. An item might be truly spectacular, but it won’t be worn if it isn’t flattering.
- The jewelry should also be compatible with the wearer’s lifestyle. Comfort and practicality should never be sacrificed for the sake of looks.
• The jewelry should suit the wearer’s personal taste. If the purchaser seems unsure, ask about other items the receiver wears. Has she expressed interest in pieces she’s seen in magazines or media advertising? Has she admired jewelry worn by her friends? Has she posted photos of jewelry she likes on her Facebook page or other social media sites? Any or all of these can provide valuable clues.

• The jewelry should make the purchaser proud to give it. Your customer wants to express an important emotion, but he also wants the deep satisfaction he’ll receive when the woman to whom he gives it responds with delight.

**DIAMOND WARDROBING**

Today’s diamond jewelry offers a constantly changing and expanding selection of beauty. To open your customers to its potential, you need to awaken them to the concept of wardrobing.

The idea is simple and intuitive: start with basics, then add items for special occasions. A ring, stud earrings, and a solitaire pendant or necklace form the foundation for any diamond wardrobe. Versatile yet elegant, these are appropriate for wear any time or place. Possibilities for additional wardrobe items are as varied as the moments they celebrate.

As a sales professional, it’s important for you to recognize that wardrobing isn’t a single-presentation event. Instead, it’s an ongoing – perhaps life-long – process. The key to wardrobing is establishing and maintaining close relationships with your customers. (In many companies, this is called clienteling.)

One of client-development’s main components is a detailed personal profile that includes:

• The customer’s name and complete contact information.

• Personal “red-letter” dates such as the customer’s birthday and anniversary.

• Names and personal dates for family members, close friends, and colleagues.
• Preferences in metals, gems, colors, styles, and so forth.
• Key jewelry fittings like ring sizes and necklace and bracelet lengths.
• A complete purchase history, including dates, item descriptions, stock numbers, sketches or photos, amounts, and reasons for purchases.
• Items of interest that you or others on your team have shown, but the customer has not yet purchased. (In other words, a “wish list.”)

Ultimately, wardrobing and client development provide effective ways to create deeper and richer relationships with customers – and that’s the true secret to success in your profession.

FTC GUIDES
Jewelry and Precious Metals

Several sections of the FTC Guides address issues related to diamond jewelry. The most important of these are:

§23.3 Misuse of terms “hand-made,” “hand-polished,” etc.
§23.4 Misrepresentation as to gold content.
§23.6 Misrepresentation as to silver content.
§23.7 Misuse of words “platinum,” “iridium,” “palladium,” “ruthenium,” “rhodium,” and “osmium.”
§23.9 Additional guidance for use of quality marks.

The main points of these sections are covered in the lesson. You can find the full, official versions on the FTC website. Go to www.ftc.gov and search for “jewelry guides.”
RECAP OF KEY POINTS

• A setting of fine jewelry contributes to a diamond’s beauty, meaning, and value.

• Diamond jewelry carries great symbolism and is linked to important moments in customers’ lives. The most significant diamond moment is engagement. Others include weddings, anniversaries, and special events such as birthdays and job promotions.

• Diamond jewelry comes in a wide variety of forms and styles. Top-selling items for men are rings, cufflinks, tie tacks, and lapel pins. Primary categories for women are rings, earrings, necklaces, and bracelets. Using special names for different forms and styles helps customers appreciate them.

• Diamond jewelry represents artistic creativity and technical skill. These qualities should be considered in any jewelry purchase. Describing design inspirations can help customers connect with jewelry at an emotional level. There are a number of ways to make jewelry. What counts most is the skill and care with which it’s done.

• To present diamond jewelry you need to learn about the items in your inventory. Colleagues are good sources of information. Take time to identify the outstanding features of items you might show.

• Gold and platinum are the primary structural materials for today’s diamond jewelry. Karat gold has been most popular for many years. Platinum now has a special and secure place in the market.

• Branded jewelry is part of the product mix for many stores. To present branded jewelry effectively, you must be able to articulate its signature and link features to customers’ purchase motives.

• When you’re helping a customer select a gift, remember that diamond jewelry should suit the wearer’s features, lifestyle, and personal taste. It should also make the purchaser proud to give it or to own it.

• Wardrobing and systematic client development can help you create long-term relationships with your customers.
LESSON 7 FOLLOW-UP CHECKLIST

____ Brainstorm reasons for selecting various items in your showcases to commemorate different diamond moments. For example, why would a solitaire pendant make a good choice as a gift for a sixteenth birthday? Why would the same piece be appropriate as a self-purchase to celebrate a job promotion?

____ Identify the setting styles used for diamond jewelry in your inventory. Learn the names for all the different forms and styles of diamond jewelry you present.

____ Select items of diamond jewelry from your inventory and try to find out how each was manufactured. Develop short descriptions of the processes to use in presentations.

____ Read the promotional literature and/or check out the websites for any branded lines your store carries.

____ Over the next week, select one item of important diamond jewelry each day and develop a short list of selling points concerning design and craftsmanship. Work with your manager, jewelry buyer, or bench jeweler on the first few pieces.

____ Work out short explanations of quality and purity for the precious metals used in the diamond jewelry you sell. Identify features that make the metal effective as both a design and structural material.

____ With coworkers, role-play helping customers make decisions about diamond jewelry gift purchases.

____ Find out if your store has a client registry or some other formal system for obtaining customer information. If it does, learn the procedures and role-play inviting customers to fill out any documents that are involved.
Lesson 7 Self-Test

This lesson also includes a Self-Test that’s designed to help you gauge your comprehension of the lesson material. The test is an important part of the learning process, so be sure to complete it.

When you’re ready to take the test, go to the Course Materials page (the one that lists all the lessons) and click on “Self-Test.” Make certain you select the test for this lesson.

All questions in the test are based on Lesson 7. More than one answer for a question might seem correct, but you should select the one best answer based on the lesson discussion.

As you take the test, you may refer to the lesson. To do this, you’ll need to have the lesson loaded in a separate window of your browser.

If you feel certain about a question, try answering it without looking at the lesson. If you’re not sure, check the lesson before answering.

After you answer a question, you’ll receive immediate results and feedback. You’ll find out whether you answered correctly, what the correct answer was (in case you missed it), and also the page number in the lesson where the information can be found. Take time to review any material you’re not completely clear on.

At the end of the test, you’ll receive your overall results. Then you’ll be able to continue to the next step in your coursework.

If you have questions or need help, please contact us. You can use this website – just click on “Help.” You can also email studenthelp@diamondcouncil.org or phone 615-385-5301 / toll free 877-283-5669.