

DIAMOND COLOR

GIA	D E F	G H I J	K L M	N O P Q R	S T U V W X Y Z
color grading scale	colorless	nearly colorless	faint yellow	very light yellow	light yellow to strong yellow



Unlike Cut, Color is a relatively simple category. Or is it?

What is color...? Color is the presence of body color in a diamond. This is normally a yellowish body color that most often is not even seen unless compared against a truly colorless stone. This color is judged by grading a stone from the side against a stone of known quality.

The color grading scale runs from "D" or perfectly without color of any type on through Z, where the color is so bright that it is again considered to be desirable.

To make our lives as diamond graders easier, we are allowed to buy color master stones and have them graded by GIA or AGS (If you are an AGS member) and be told what color grade they are compared to the master sets kept by GIA. Then we keep these stones as our own master set to use when grading stones of unknown color.

That all sounds fairly easy, but...It isn't!

- ✦ First - Not all stones are varying shades of yellow. Sometimes the stones are colored by brown, or gray. Browns are considered less attractive than yellows, so the prices may tend to be slightly lower. Often the really cheap total carat weight rings and tennis bracelets that you see are set with what we call "top light browns" that look very white from the table, but that are quite brown from the side.

- Second -When a stone gets far enough "down" the scale, it starts looking attractive again and is called a "fancy". A fancy red diamond might cost as much as \$1,000,000 per carat, hardly what I would refer to as "down" the scale.

- Third - There is a common misconception that color is bad. It is NOT bad, it simply is. Many times it can be bad if the color is unattractive, but there are people who actually prefer a little color in their diamonds, since the warmer color of a J-K-L might actually look better against their skin than the hard perfect white of a D color diamond. There are simply more diamonds with color in them than without, usually a few atoms of nitrogen mixed in with the carbon. Since color in light shades is more common, they cost less than those with no color at all. Plus with the advent of diamond grading certificates, many people want to buy the paper since that is easier to understand than the beauty. This increased both the desire for and the cost of the colorless stones.

- Fourth - The cut of the diamond greatly affects how the color will show. An Eight-Star cut diamond for example will often look one to three color grades higher than a traditionally cut diamond of the same color. In the picture below, look at the picture and see which stone looks larger and which looks whiter. Then read the caption.



Lets discuss for a moment what it is that we are looking for in color. We are looking for a stone that has great light and beauty. If it is to be put into platinum it is probably more important for you that the stone be of a high color, G or better so that the color of the stone does not contrast with the color of the metal.

If you are going to mount the stone in white gold it is much less important to have a very high color, as white gold is itself a yellowish white rather than a true white color. That is because you have allowed nickel and silver with the yellow gold to give us the whitish color. With platinum, you have alloyed a white metal such as iridium with the white platinum.

If you are going to mount the stone in yellow metal and it is well made then you can use a much lower color and it will still look white by comparison. However, many people like to use a D color in yellow metal, it is totally a personal preference!

I just want to go on the record stating that many people actually like the warmer tint of yellow in their stones, and especially the slightly warmer dispersion that comes out of a K-L-M colored stone than the harder colder dispersion that comes out of a colorless stone in the D-E-F color range. If you are not sure where you stand on this, be sure to ask to see stones of both the higher colors and the lower colors. If you find yourself liking the "lower" colors, you will also find yourself saving a LOT of money.

Oh, If you have not read the cut section yet, dispersion is the colored light that comes out of a diamond along with the brilliance or white light. One of the things that makes a diamond beautiful is the way it breaks white light into its component parts.