

DIAMOND COLOR: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE YOU BUY



Written by

Long's
Fine Jewelers Since 1878

YOU WANT TO BUY A DIAMOND, BUT YOU DON'T KNOW HOW? LET US HELP

Diamonds are complex. They come from the ground, and no two diamonds will be exactly alike. Even if it seems like there really isn't an obvious difference between two stones, small subtle differences can make a huge impact on the value and price of a diamond.

You've probably heard about the all-important Four Cs of diamonds somewhere along the way. These include cut, clarity, carat and – last but not least - color.

All of the Cs will affect the value of a stone in different ways. For now, let's focus on color. Color can make a significant impact on the price of a diamond.

A diamond's color can be undesirable, making it less expensive. Or, some forms of color in a diamond can be a great thing and will make the diamond significantly more expensive.

There is a huge difference between undesirable traces of yellow in a standard white stone and the rare occurrence of natural fancy yellow diamonds. What are the differences between the two and why is color so important?

Let's explore how diamonds get their color and what distinguishes a desirable vs undesirable form of color in a diamond.

Chapter 1:

Let's Start With the Basics

If you want a white diamond, you'll want a "colorless" or "near colorless" diamond, or one that doesn't have any trace of color in it, such as yellow or brown. It'll look beautiful, but it's rare and expensive.

A diamond's color, or lack thereof, is one of the biggest factors affecting the price of that stone.



Above you can see two diamonds. The one on the left is perfectly colorless, the one on the right contains traces of yellow.

WHERE DOES THE COLOR COME FROM AND WHY YOU DON'T WANT IT IN A DIAMOND?

Let's talk science. A diamond's color is determined during its formation, when the carbon molecules are forming their bonds and structure. During this process, it's common for the carbon molecules to bind with nitrogen, which will give the diamond a yellow hue.

Depending on how many nitrogen molecules are present in a diamond, the yellow color can be very prominent (lots of nitrogen) or unnoticeable (minimal nitrogen).



To the left you can see a diamond in the rough.

Based on the diamond's color, it looks like there isn't a whole lot of nitrogen in there.

So, why wouldn't you want yellow in your diamond? The short answer is, the color is often undesirable depending on how strong it appears from the top of the stone. Traditionally in the United States, a white or "colorless" diamond is the most popular. A strong yellow color just makes the stone look a little...off. This is why many people want something as close to "colorless" as possible.

Diamonds can have a little bit of yellow and still look like fantastic stones from the top. The easiest way to understand the yellow color of a diamond is by looking at a lab grading so that you can see how the color stacks up against all other diamonds.

Chapter 2:

What Is A Color Grade?

To determine the color grade of a diamond, it is sent to a lab where they analyze the stone and send it back with a customized report.



At Long's, we choose to have diamonds graded by the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) and the American Gem Society (AGS).

These two organizations are regarded as the industry leaders in gemological grading and research. Both the GIA and AGS grade diamonds using the same scales, so we'll focus on the grading methods of the GIA.



GIA®



HOW IS COLOR GRADED BY A LAB?

Diamond color is judged on a 23 grade scale, ranging from D (perfectly colorless) to Z (light yellow). Although it's called the color grading scale, this is actually a measure of the absence of color with the best grade containing no color at all.

GIA COLOR GRADING SCALE



The image shows five diamonds of increasing color from left to right, labeled D, H, L, P, and Z. Below the diamonds is a table representing the GIA color grading scale.

D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
<i>Colorless</i>			<i>Near Colorless</i>				<i>Faint Yellow</i>			<i>Very Light Yellow</i>				<i>Light Yellow</i>								

Having a 23 grade scale makes it really difficult to see a difference from one color grade to the next. To ensure that the grading is done accurately, gemologists at GIA rely on a set of master diamonds to use as their grading scale. These diamonds are a consistent carat weight and cut and have been tested to be the least amount of color possible for their respective grades.

This means that if a diamond is being compared to a master stone for grade G and it is found to contain less color, it will automatically be considered a grade F or better. Now if that same stone is found to contain more color than the G master stone, it will receive a grade of G or worse.

Chapter 3:

Why Does Metal Matter When Choosing A Diamond's Color?

Think about how wearing certain colors can bring out colors in your hair or eyes. The same can be said with diamonds and the color of the metal that the diamonds are placed in.

The color of the diamond may be permanent, but the mounting that you choose to set your stone in can have an effect on how this color is perceived. This is because the color of the metal is picked up by the diamond and reflected.

This is especially important to keep in mind when shopping for a diamond and engagement ring setting separately because the diamond may look different alone than it will in a complete ring.

For example, if you have a platinum or white gold band, the diamond will reflect the white color and might appear to have a better color grade than it actually has. If you mount the same diamond in a gold setting, it will reflect the gold and appear to have more color.

This is a subtle but important factor to consider that is hard to illustrate with photos. Your best bet is to go into a store and see the diamond and ring metal together to see how they play off one another. You may be surprised how much of a difference it can make!

Chapter 4:

Looking At Color In Person Is Essential

Sometimes color can be a personal preference. One person might not easily perceive a small tint of yellow while another person might not like it at all. When people come to our stores to shop for a diamond, we tell them to “trust their eyes”.

Like we’ve mentioned, it’s really hard to notice a difference from one color grade to the next. This is especially true to an untrained eye. You’ll want to determine what color grade you feel should be your cut off.

To start comparing colors against one another, a tool that we like to use and recommend is the Lazare 4 C’s app. This app will allow you to compare two diamonds of different grades side by side so that you can see the real difference between them.

To download the app from the app store click the link below: <https://appsto.re/us/s1bCz.i>



Chapter 5:

Is It Possible For Yellow Color To Be Desirable In Diamonds?

So far we've made it very clear that some yellow color in a diamond will detract from the value. But, that's not always the case.

There are what we call "natural fancy color yellow diamonds" that are completely different than your standard white diamond. The yellow color in a natural fancy diamond will appear much richer and more vivid. It's quite a beautiful stone and shouldn't be compared to a less desirable yellow stone.

Natural fancy yellow diamonds get their vivid colors from rare occurrences during the diamond formation process and are very valuable. As you can see in the pictures below, there is a noticeable difference in the beauty of a non-desirable yellow diamond (with a GIA grade of S-Z) and a vivid yellow natural fancy color diamond.



It is also possible for carbon to bind with other molecules like boron which gives the resulting diamond a blue color; or to have defects in the crystal lattice structure, which can give the diamond pink, red, brown, and even green hues. Since these natural fancy color diamonds are so rare, they are graded using a report made specifically for natural fancy color diamonds. The GIA color grading scale is only used for colorless diamonds that poses a tint no greater than the lowest score (Z)

FEEL LIKE YOU'RE READY TO LOOK AT DIAMONDS?

We just threw a lot of diamond information at you.
But we think you are ready.

Long's diamond specialists will help continue your diamond education, encourage you to view many diamonds and will teach you how to trust your eyes.

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