

The Diamond Cutter's Corner

by Glenn Lovelady

Clean Diamonds Make Clean Profits

What does "clean" mean? With diamonds, "clean" typically relates to clarity, but many dealers overlook the importance of a clean surface of a diamond. Have you ever found an unclean car at the dealer's lot when buying a car? The dealer knows the significance of a first impression and understands that in order to make a sale he has to present his merchandise in its best possible appearance. The same concept applies to diamonds and diamond jewelry.

Part of the problem with diamonds is that they attract oil, and oil is something that gives diamonds a soiled appearance upon contact. In fact, when searching for diamonds, miners slide the diamond-bearing gravel across a "grease belt" to see what sticks. Of course much of the jewelry that comes in off the street hasn't been cleaned since its original purchase so it will be encrusted with a myriad of substances (including oils, lotions, food, etc.).

What if you're buying a diamond? Should it be clean to make an accurate assessment? I've talked to more than a few buyers that say they prefer buying dirty diamonds because the dirt makes them look imperfect and allows the dealer to buy them at a lower price. I strongly disagree with this since it also leaves the buyer in the dark about the true quality of the stone. You may get the estimated size right, but grading color and clarity is something that can't be done accurately when dealing with a grimy diamond. Grading a "clean" diamond is challenging enough!

Pawnbrokers and buyers with jewelry repair shops already know the importance of clean diamonds and jewelry, but for those who have not placed diamond cleanliness on their priority list, let me give you a few important cleaning methods:

The Ultrasonic & Steam Method

#1 - The Ultrasonic Cleaner:

An essential device that "shakes" the caked dirt and grunge from the surface of jewelry. Find a unit with a heater and be sure to change the water (with ammonia detergent) regularly. To speed up the cleaning process, use a soft brush to get behind the diamond, particularly between the stone and the metal backing (prongs, etc.).

Alternative cleaning method: scrub diamonds with a soft brush in a bowl filled with detergent-water. This



method is not as effective, but is still better than trying to grade a dirty diamond.

#2 – Steaming the stone: An excellent second step that removes any remaining grunge and soap left behind from the ultrasonic machine. The steamer is a machine that shoots a powerful jet of compressed hot water to blast dirt off jewelry. If you have the



space, I would recommend the three-gallon unit which requires less frequent re-filling.

Alternative cleaning method: After cleaning the diamond jewelry item using the ultrasonic cleaner, blow the residue off with a can of compressed air (such as Dust-Off). This compressed gas will remove most of the loosened grime and soap from the jewelry item.

A Quick-Clean Method for Loose Diamonds



An old diamond-cutter's trick for removing dirt from a loose diamond is the use of table salt to "rub" the gunk from the diamond. Put a half teaspoon of table salt in the palm of your hand and rub the diamond with force in the salt.

Rub the diamond between your thumb and index finger, but be careful not to cut or puncture yourself in the process! This method is extremely effective in getting the majority of gunk off of the diamond's surface. After the salt treatment, rub the diamond with a lint-free cloth.

The Acid Bath

USE EXTREME CAUTION IN EMPLOYING THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE!

The following acid-resistant protective gear is highly recommended: rubber coated splash apron, gloves, safety glasses and an acid storage cabinet.

The ideal method for cleaning diamonds is the use of the acid bath. An acid mixture in a small beaker over heat will clean diamonds thoroughly. Even the smallest particles of metal shaving and dirt will be removed in an acid bath. The bath will even improve the color of a diamond! The color of a stone with a pitted girdle that has collected grime over years of wear, or a stone

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that was never properly cleaned by the cutter after the final polishing process will dramatically improve after an acid bath.

The following instructions should be carried out under an exhaust fan or outdoors:

Mix a small solution of 1 part nitric acid to 2 parts sulfuric acid in a heat-resistant beaker. You can purchase an ideal boiling beaker

directly from Lovelady Diamond.

Drop the diamonds in the beaker, and place the beaker on a heating device, such as a hot plate. Bring the solution to a boil and let the diamonds “cook” for up to 3 minutes depending on the quantity of diamonds and the amount of dirt on the stones. Allow the solution to cool down to room temperature and place the diamonds in cool water using corrosive-resistant tweezers.

Carefully rinse the diamonds with clear water to make sure the acid has been removed.

For more buying/selling tips and diamond education, contact Lovelady Diamond about the **Mastering Diamonds** self-instructional course.

Glenn Lovelady graduated from the American School of Diamond Cutting in 1980 and has been active in buying and selling diamonds ever since. He has authored the self-instructional course Mastering Diamonds and speaks at national and state conventions. Please feel free to call or email with comments, suggestions, and input or for your free subscription of the “Lovelady diamond Cash Offer Guide”. Call (800) 854-0014, email diamonds@gemgate.com and visit us on the web at www.gemgate.com.



Convention 2005 pictures we did not have room for in the August 2005 issue. Clockwise from upper left, registration, the vendor party, Dave Newman tracks auction bids, the Texas Association of Pawnbrokers booth, the Government Relations seminar and the Rolex seminar.

