

The Four C's Diamond Grading System 1. Cut 2. Carat 3. Clarity 4. Color
This weeks focus - **Diamond's clarity**



The Centenary Diamond
273.85 carats - D Color, Flawless Clarity

A diamond's clarity refers to the presence of identifying characteristics on and within the diamond. While most of these clarity characteristics are inherent qualities of the rough diamond and have been present since the earliest stages of the diamond crystal's growth below ground, a few clarity flaws are actually a result of the harsh stress that a diamond undergoes during the cutting process itself.

If you think about the incredible amount of pressure it takes to create a diamond, it's no surprise that many diamonds have clarity inclusions -- scratches, blemishes, air bubbles or non-diamond mineral material -- on their surface or inside. Diamonds with no or few inclusions and blemishes are more highly valued than those with less clarity, not just because they are more pleasing to the eye, but also because they are very rare.

Diamonds are graded for clarity under 10x loupe magnification. Clarity grades range from Internally Flawless, diamonds which are completely free of blemishes and inclusions even under 10x magnification, to Imperfect 3, diamonds which possess large, heavy blemishes and inclusions that are visible to the naked eye.

Diamond Clarity Designations

FL - "Flawless" no inclusions at 10 x magnification

IF - "Internally Flawless" no inclusions at 10 x mag. - small blemishes

VVS-1 - "Very Very Small" inclusions hard to see at 10 x magnification

VVS-2 - "Very Very Small" inclusions. VVS1 better than VVS2

VS-1 - "Very Small" inclusions visible at 10 x mag. - not naked eye






VS-2 - "Very Small" inclusions VS1 is better grade than VS2

SI-1 - "Small" or "Slight" Inclusions or "Imperfections" may be "eye clean"

SI-2 - "Small" or "Slight" Inclusions or "Imperfections" visible to naked eye

SI-3 - Inclusions large and obvious, little or no brilliance

I1 to I3 - Imperfect, with large Inclusions, fractures, and flaws

GIA	FL - IF	VVS 1	VVS 2	VS 1	VS 2	SI 1	SI 2	I 1	I 2	I 3
clarity grading scale	Internally Flawless	Very Very Slight inclusions		Very Slight inclusions		Slight inclusions		Imperfect		
										

REMEMBER: For grades IF through SI, a diamond's clarity grade has an impact on the diamond's value, not on the unmagnified diamond's appearance.

While Flawless diamonds are the rarest, a diamond does not have to be flawless to be stunning. Diamonds with VVS and VS grades are excellent choices for both value and appearance. More affordable (and still a great choice) are those diamonds which gemologists call "eye-clean" - diamonds with no inclusions visible to the naked eye. These diamonds are SI1 and SI2 and unless the recipient carries a 10X loupe (a strong jewelry magnifying glass), she won't see the inclusions. *Canada Diamonds recommends diamonds with clarity grades of VS2 and higher to ensure a eye clean diamond.*

There are many different types of flaws. The best way to become acquainted with them is to look at lots of diamonds. The more common ones are as follows:

Pinpoint: A very small white dot on the surface of the stone. By far, the most common flaw

Carbons: A very small black dot on the surface of the stone. Less common than pinpoints

Feathers: Small cracks within the stone, similar in look to broken glass. Small internal feathers are harmless (other than lowering the clarity rating of the diamond), but large feathers can become a problem because the crack can grow as the diamond ages

Clouds: Hazy areas within the diamond, actually made up of many small crystals that are impossible to see individually

Crystal Growth: A small crystalline growth within the diamond. Looks like a small diamond within the big diamond

Unfortunately, clarity is very difficult to judge accurately by an inexperienced consumer, so your best bet is to gain an education first by looking at lots of diamonds before making a purchase. Any good jeweler will spend the time you need to get comfortable judging the clarity of your stone -- ask different jewelers to point out the flaws in several stones until you can detect pinpoints and other flaws by yourself.

Many people make clarity the least "important" of the 4 Cs when purchasing their diamonds. The rationale is obvious -- when your partner shows the ring to all her friends, the likelihood that one of them will pull out a 10X microscope to examine the flaws on her diamond are very slim. Given that, why spend a lot of money on a VVS1 diamond when an SI2 will look exactly the same to the naked eye?

If you're purchasing an **emerald cut** (or any other **step cut**), consider purchasing a diamond with clarity greater than SI1. Clarity flaws are much more readily visible in step cuts than in brilliant cuts.