In This Lesson:

• Key Components
• Gemstone Settings
• Jewelry Forms and Styles
• The Three Precious Metals
• Jewelry-Making Methods
• Designs and Inspirations
• Fine Jewelry Branding

KEY COMPONENTS

In jewelry, artists have the power to transform gems into expressions of personal feeling and identity. A fine sapphire, for example, is beautiful in its own right, yet set in an elegant platinum ring, it can become a symbol of love, success, or life’s enjoyment. The same is true of any gem, or any type of jewelry. This makes identifying customers’ messages and motives a crucial step in helping them select jewelry to own or to give. As part of the process, you also need to ensure that an item will suit the appearance, taste, and lifestyle of the person who will wear it.

Along with these concerns, there are two other key components that factor into any successful gemstone jewelry presentation:

• **Effective Description** – Use the right words to enhance the pleasure an item offers the senses of vision and touch. To create desire, you have to paint an appealing verbal picture, then translate that image into benefits which reflect the customer’s reasons for owning or giving the jewelry.

*Cover photo courtesy Barbara Westwood.*
Explaining Value – Since value involves meaning as well as money, both head and heart must be addressed. It’s obviously necessary to make the customer feel confident that an item is worth what it costs. Just as important, though, is showing that the item can communicate whatever the customer wishes to say by giving or wearing it.

In Lesson 14 you’ll examine the selling process, including the skill of profiling, which enables you to identify messages and motives and make appropriate suggestions. You’ll also learn more about articulating benefits and getting customers involved with the jewelry you present. In this lesson, however, you’ll get started with a survey of the various features that can provide a basis for creating desire and establishing value.

Lesson Objectives
When you have successfully completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe popular types and styles of gemstone jewelry.
- Discuss the materials and methods used to make jewelry.
- Highlight design as a key element of jewelry appeal.
- Integrate jewelry branding in your presentations.

JA® SPC SKILLS
If you’re participating in the JA® Sales Professional Certification Program™, this lesson presents information related to the following Skill Areas:

PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE
- Precious Metals
- Jewelry
- Colored Gemstones
- Pearls
- Disclosure
- History of Jewelry
- Designer & Brand Name Jewelry
- Custom-manufactured Items

SERVICE DEPARTMENT
CUSTOMER SERVICE
- Building Customer Relations

SELLING PROCESS
- Customer Needs
- Building the Sale
- Closing the Sale

OPERATIONS
- Merchandise Maintenance

RISK MANAGEMENT
- Security

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS
BUSINESS ETHICS
- FTC Guidelines
- Trade Practices

INVENTORY PROCEDURES
GEMSTONE SETTINGS

Though it might not be the first thing you point out to a customer, a logical place to begin your look at jewelry is with the part that holds the gems in place. This is commonly known as the setting.

Besides having a practical function, the setting can affect a gem’s appearance and add to the design’s appeal. It may also be a consideration in matching the jewelry with the wearer’s lifestyle.

Gemstone settings can be divided into two broad categories – those designed for individual gems and those designed for groups.

Individual Settings

- **Prong Setting** – In this setting style, slender metal claws hold the gem. A prong setting can raise the gem above the body of the jewelry, making it the center of attention. That dramatic effect makes the style a favorite for transparent gems in women’s jewelry. Some designs with prong settings may, however, expose sensitive gems to accidental bumps and scrapes. A ring with an emerald or tanzanite in a high prong setting, for example, would call for a bit more thoughtful wear.
Gemstone Jewelry

- **Bezel, Box, or Tube Setting** – A raised metal collar or rim surrounds the gem and wraps slightly over its edge. This protects the gem and makes the setting a prominent element of the design.

- **Gypsy Setting** – A metal rim formed from the body of the jewelry holds the gem. Like a bezel, this type of setting provides protection for the gem and a unique look. Gypsy settings are traditional for men’s rings. A similar style, called **flush setting**, is used for small gems in jewelry for both men and women. The gems are set deep into the jewelry metal, so the tops of their tables are even (or flush) with the jewelry’s surface.

- **Tension Setting** – Opposite ends of a circular jewelry form, such as a ring, hold the gem just by the force of tension. Through a special process the metal is repeatedly heated and cooled, making it exceptionally “springy.” This creates the tension that holds the gem, which appears to float within the design.

**Group Settings**

- **Cluster Setting** – A number of gems set close together in a symmetrical pattern. The gems are secured by small prongs or bezels. This style can offer a combination of visual impact and affordability, especially with gems whose per-carat prices rise sharply with increases in carat weight. For example, a cluster setting with five tsavorite garnets weighing 1/5 carat apiece may be less expensive but more impressive than a solitaire with a single tsavorite that weighs one carat.

A favorite design for dark red pyrope or “Bohemian” garnets is the cluster setting.

Photo courtesy Bischoff.

Colored Gemstones 7
• **Channel Setting** – A row of carefully calibrated, small gems set side-by-side between parallel ridges of metal. The gems form bands or ribbons of sparkling color that contrast with the metal’s gleam. Gems in a channel setting must be very similar to each other in dimension and proportions in order for the metal to hold them all securely. The style can be adapted for single gems and cluster-like arrangements.

• **Pavé Setting** – Small gems (usually round) set next to each other across the jewelry’s surface. The term is pronounced pa-VAY. It means “paved” in French, and the appearance is like a glittering veneer of gemstone color.

• **Invisible Setting** – Small square gems set side-by-side within a wire-like framework. The filaments of the frame fit into grooves that have been cut into the gems’ girdles so the metal holding the gems doesn’t show from above.
JEWELRY FORMS AND STYLES

The basic jewelry forms – rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and pins – are familiar to consumers as well as professionals. There are numerous styles, however, and using the special names for these can help you describe them more effectively.

Rings

- **Solitaire Ring** – A band of precious metal set with a single gemstone. The diamond solitaire is a popular choice for engagements, but there are variations for gems of all kinds. Closely related styles feature small diamonds or other gems as accents.

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

- **Ballerina Ring** – A ring with a large center gem surrounded by tapered baguette-cut diamonds. 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 are completed with pavé or channel set gems. Others have larger gems set on or between the ends.
Earrings

• **Studs** – Single gems 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 gems are especially striking in this style.

• **Dangles, Drops, or Pendants** – Earrings with gems or other decorative elements that dangle. Variations range from dainty gemstone drops to long chandeliers.

Necklaces

• **Pendant** – One or more gems in a setting that’s suspended from a neck chain.

• **Drop or Lavalier (lah-vuh-LEER)** – A pendant that’s suspended from the neck chain by another short chain or decorative element.

• **Slide** – A large pendant with slotted sides, made to slide on a heavy neck chain.

Colored Gemstones 7
• **Lariat** – An open-ended necklace that’s held together by an ornamental clasp in front, usually with drops at each end.

  The dangling motion of a lariat makes it both dramatic and playful.

• **Neckwire** – A rigid necklace of heavy-gauge precious metal wire with a central gemstone setting.

  Neckwires emphasize the contour of the neck and hold gem pendants as focal points at the base of the throat.

**Bracelets**

• **Link Bracelet** – A bracelet made of chain-like links or small hinged panels. This is the most popular style for this form and there are many versions.

• **Bangle** – A solid circle that slips over the hand. Variations include designs with hinged half-circle segments, and those with narrow gaps between the ends. Another is the **hololith**, which is a complete circle carved from one solid piece of a strong gem material like jade. (There are also hololith rings.)

A hololith bangle of lavender jade.

• **Torsade** – A multi-strand twist of small pearls or gemstone beads.

  A torsade of pearls is evocative of both nature and fashion.

  Photo courtesy Modern Jeweler.

• **Collar or Choker** – A wide necklace that fits snugly against the throat. Gems can be set within the framework or hang as pendants.

  Ruby and Pearl Choker
  Photo courtesy Gumuchian Fils.

Rodolfo’s Colored Gem Link Bracelets Reward the Wearer with Constant Colorful Flashes from the Wrist.

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

*Photo courtesy Paola Ferro.*

**Pins**

With most jewelry, form equals function. For example, rings go on fingers and necklaces around necks. In contrast, pins – sometimes called brooches or broaches – offer a high degree of versatility. A gemstone pin can be worn on the upper part of a dress, on a jacket lapel, at the neck of a blouse, to fasten a scarf, on a hat or cap, or even at the waist – in other words, almost anywhere on a garment where the beauty of a gemstone accent is desired.

- **Circle Pin** – A gem pin with an open circular design.
- **Bar Pin** – A pin with gems and other elements in an overall design that’s straight and elongated.
- **Design or Element Pin** – An animal, symbol, or some other recognizable motif with gemstone accents or pavé work.
- **Spray Pin** – A free-form pin designed in an open outward flow.
- **Stickpin** – A straight pin with a gemstone setting at the top.

*Photo courtesy Scavia.*

*Modern day barpins resemble old barpins only in that they’re straight and long.*

By William Richey of William Richey Designs, Camden, Maine. Product shot by John Parrish. Photo courtesy of AGTA.
MEN’S GEMSTONE JEWELRY

For most of history, men wore as much jewelry as women – and sometimes more. Things changed in modern times, though. Men’s items occupy a fairly small niche in today’s market, particularly when it comes to gemstone jewelry. Meeting the demand in that niche can be an important and profitable adventure, however.

Some of the forms and styles for men are permanent favorites – rings with bezel- or gypsy-set gems like hematite, jade, and onyx, for example. Others come and go with fashion cycles in office and casual attire, or broader trends in popular culture. These include earrings, necklaces, cufflinks, tie tacks, and lapel pins.

Compared to diamonds, which tend to be understated in men’s jewelry, colored gems often stand out. At the same time, the designs themselves are usually on the conservative side. You could describe most as strong and bold or tailored and businesslike.

If your store carries a selection of men’s gemstone jewelry, include it in your “homework” for presentations. Every product you show deserves your best professional effort.

THE THREE PRECIOUS METALS

Gold, platinum, and silver are the metals from which most fine jewelry is made. While there are big differences in their costs, all three are valuable even in raw form. That’s why they’re traditionally considered “precious” metals, in contrast to “base” metals such as copper, iron, and tin.

Precious metals can contribute to jewelry’s appeal in several ways. Whichever it may be – gold, platinum, or silver – the metal accounts for almost all of an item’s weight. This is significant because many customers equate weight with value. The color of the metal can also compliment or contrast the gems it surrounds, making the metal an important element of design. For many customers, the choice of metal involves personal meaning or preference as well. All these things make it essential to know something about metals in order to present gemstone jewelry effectively.
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, and some cultures still do. Pure gold, however, is soft, bendable, and costly. To produce jewelry that’s wearable and affordable, modern manufacturers combine gold with other metals in alloys known as karat gold.

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

Instead of karats, most international jewelry manufacturers use a metric-type fineness system based on parts per thousand. Under this system 750 means the same as 18K. (750/1000 and 18/24 both equal 3/4, or 75%.) Most other metric markings also match up with standard karat ratings.

This table shows karat ratings, percentages of gold by weight, and metric equivalents for different 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>

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

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 seven parts per thousand. This means a 14K 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 three parts per thousand.)
Most gold jewelry sold in the US ranges from 10K to 18K. Some designers use 22K or even 24K for its rich look, but usually as an accent, not for the entire piece. That’s because pure gold and most ultra-high karat alloys are too scratchable and bendable to withstand what most customers consider normal wear.

Generally speaking, the lower the karat rating, the harder and stronger the alloy will be. (The less expensive, too.) Explaining this can help customers make the best selections for their needs. For those who are experienced in wearing and caring for fine jewelry, 18K is an elegant option. A more durable choice for others is likely to be 14K, especially in rings and bracelets. You can still recommend a high-karat pendant or earrings for special occasions, though.

In addition to improving wearability, alloying can impart a white, pink, or green tint to gold. Other colors are produced by special manufacturing techniques not tied directly to karat ratings. While 24K is always yellow, most other karat gold can be almost any color depending on the other metals in the alloy and the processes it has undergone.

Platinum is the most modern of the three precious metals. A few early civilizations occasionally used it to make small ornaments. Large ore deposits and effective ways of fashioning it weren’t discovered until the 1800s, however.

Platinum’s popularity soared in the early 1900s, but during World War II (1939-1945) the US government declared it a strategic material and removed it from the market. That action was taken because platinum has many scientific, technological, and industrial uses that were important to
the war effort. White gold was developed during that time to serve as a substitute in jewelry products.

Even after platinum was made available again, it remained a rarity in jewelry for several decades. Then, in the 1990s, platinum’s popularity boomed once more.

Despite the vogue, most customers still consider platinum different and distinctive. Many like platinum’s neutral gray-white color. Compared to white gold and silver, which are highly reflective (or “shiny”), platinum has a subdued, sophisticated glow.

Platinum is exceptionally strong, too. Platinum jewelry can be delicate yet wearable, and a platinum setting can hold a gem securely for decades.

You may need to explain that an item of platinum jewelry will be more expensive than the same design done in karat gold. There are three main reasons why:

- **Greater Rarity** – Platinum is naturally much rarer than gold. Every year the world produces more than 2,000 tons of gold, but only about 150 tons of platinum. Science, technology, and industry compete with jewelry for this limited supply, so the economic law of supply and demand makes platinum more valuable to begin with.

- **Greater Purity** – Platinum is used in purer form than gold. As you’ve seen, karat gold is normally about 42% to 75% pure. Platinum’s fineness is measured in parts per thousand, and most platinum jewelry manufactured in the US is 900 or 950 platinum. That means it’s 90% or 95% pure. (Jewelry from other countries may be 850 platinum or less.) The additional metal in the alloy is usually iridium, palladium, or ruthenium. These are closely related to platinum — in fact, they’re known as **platinum group metals** — and they’re all expensive as well.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Mark</th>
<th>Platinum %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platinum, Plat, Pt1000, 1000Pt, 1000Plat</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platinum, Plat, Pt999, 999Pt, 999Plat</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platinum, Plat, Pt950, 950Pt, 950Plat</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pt900, 900Pt, 900Plat</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pt850, 850Pt, 850Plat</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRIDPLAT, 10%IridPlat</td>
<td>90% with 10% iridium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Platinum is heavier for its size – than gold.

FTC guidelines say the term “platinum” may be used alone (without qualification) if the fineness is 950 or higher. For 900 or 850 platinum, the fineness must be specified.

If the fineness is less than 850, other metals in the alloy must belong to the platinum group. Together with the platinum, they must total at least 950 parts per thousand. They also must be individually identified, and their relative amounts must be specified.

These guidelines apply to statements made during sales presentations as well as to the quality marks on jewelry. In most cases, however, they’re easy to follow. The platinum jewelry you sell will probably be 850Pt to 1000Pt. If you’re showing an item that’s 1000Pt or 950Pt, you can just say “platinum.” If you’re showing an item that’s 900Pt or 850Pt, you need to specify the fineness and explain what it means. For example, you might say, “This ring is nine zero zero platinum. That means it’s nine hundred parts out of a thousand – or ninety percent – pure platinum.” Check the fineness markings on the platinum jewelry in your store to be sure you know with certainty exactly what you’re showing.

**Silver**

Because silver is relatively inexpensive, it isn’t used for jewelry that features large diamonds or the most expensive colored gems. It is, however, an option for just about everything else.

To the ancient Egyptians, silver was actually rarer and more valuable than gold. For centuries, silver was the only “white” precious metal, and in older antique
jewelry it provides a setting for gems of all kinds. After platinum and white gold became available, silver suffered an eclipse that lasted for decades. Though it remained the top-seller in terms of volume, it was mostly relegated to “fashion” status. Today silver still dominates that booming market segment, and it has returned to fine jewelry, too.

Silver’s cool crisp color is one of its chief attractions. Because of its hardness, it can take the brightest polish of any metal (not just the precious ones). Most of silver’s working characteristics are similar to gold’s, which makes it easy to fashion.

In addition, silver offers two more outstanding features:

- **Wearability** – Silver is much less dense than either gold or platinum. While “weight” is a selling point for the other metals, “lightness” makes silver perfect for big solid designs that would otherwise be too heavy to wear comfortably.

- **Affordability** – Silver is much less expensive than gold and platinum. This is partly due to natural abundance. Annual mine production of silver is about 19,000 tons. Recycling and sales from government and private stockpiles add another 11,000 tons. Though strong global demand absorbs the entire supply – with the US consuming more than 1,300 tons just in the form of jewelry each year – silver’s commodity price is only a fraction of gold or platinum’s.

Together with its beauty and workability, silver’s wearability and affordability encourage designers and manufacturers to “experiment” with it. The results are innovative and appealing, and they’re getting a very positive reception from consumers.

Like the other precious metals, silver is alloyed for jewelry purposes. Most US manufacturers use **sterling silver**, which is 92.5% silver and 7.5% copper. The recipe was developed in England during the 1300s, and it’s harder and tougher than pure silver. Under FTC guidelines, it’s the minimum fineness for products marked and sold as silver or solid silver. You might see sterling silver stamped “sterling,” “ster,” or “925.” The fineness of other silver alloys is usually indicated in parts per thousand.

The jewelry metal known as **vermeil** (ver-MAY) is sterling silver coated or plated with gold.
ALTERNATIVE METALS

In recent years, designers and manufacturers have started using metals other than karat gold, platinum, and silver to make gemstone jewelry. These “alternative” metals produce fresh and different looks or price points that appeal to certain customers. They represent a growing share of the fashion market, and you should be able to answer questions about them, or present them if you have the opportunity. The ones you’re most likely to encounter are titanium and stainless steel.

• **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 during 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 designs have a high-tech look, which makes them 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 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 gemstone 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 website:

The Stainless Steel Information Center – www.ssina.com. This site focuses on the building and construction industries, but contains interesting background information.
JEWELRY-MAKING METHODS

Regardless of its form, style, or materials, fine jewelry is the result of skilled labor. If you know how an item was produced, describing the process can help customers appreciate that labor and the value it creates.

There are dozens of specialized ways to make jewelry, but most involve one of four basic methods: casting, die-striking, electroforming or hand fabrication.

- **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 and leave a hollow mold. (Because the wax disappears, this method is often referred to as **lost-wax casting**.) The mold is then filled with melted metal that hardens into the form of the original model.

Images and text courtesy Dave Jones, Engraver/Designer.
Casting is a popular method for creating custom-made jewelry, and it can be adapted for large-scale production as well. Models can be duplicated by making a **rubber mold** of a metal prototype, and then using that to generate wax copies. To produce multiple castings, a number of models can be attached to a central wax rod (or sprue). This forms a “**tree**,” which is cast like an individual piece.

**Die-striking or 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 the production run, 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 and charms, can be manufactured this way. More often, however, die struck pieces are made as components which are later assembled. Hollow jewelry is frequently made by stamping two pieces and then soldering them together. The 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 gem settings (specifically, the parts called setting heads).

**Electroforming** – In this process, particles of precious metal alloy are deposited on a model. The model is usually made from wax and then coated with graphite so it conducts electricity. Next, it’s connected to the negative terminal of a power source and placed in a chemical solution, or bath. The bath 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. When 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, necklaces, and pins.

**Hand Fabrication** – 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’s raw material. The jewelry maker then beats, bends, draws, drills, files, or saws the entire piece or separate components into the desired shape, and, if necessary, solders components together.

Custom made and hand fabricated jewelry will always be more expensive than comparable mass produced items.

Photo courtesy Hubert.

The jeweler might beat, bend, draw, drill, file or saw raw metal to make a hand fabricated item. Hand fabrication compliments exquisite one-of-a kind gemstones.
Hand fabrication is the oldest of the jewelry-making methods. 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 is copied from an existing design, there are bound to be slight differences that make it unique. Under FTC guidelines, to be called “handmade” or “hand-wrought”, jewelry must be manufactured in this way.

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 goal of this “mixing and matching” is to achieve the best combination of beauty, durability, and value.

You may also need to explain that the amount of individual labor that goes into the piece is a significant factor in its cost and value. Gem setting is a prime example. Though quality setting is always critical, styles like pavé, channel, and invisible setting are very labor-intensive. Dozens of gems 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 and large-scale electroforming and casting are industrial in nature. That’s not necessarily a negative, though. Mass production requires creativity, expertise, and effort, but it spreads the cost of these over a large number of items, reducing the cost of each unit. In contrast, custom-designed cast or hand-fabricated jewelry offers uniqueness, but each piece must bear the entire cost of the process. As a result, custom-made jewelry will always be more expensive than comparable mass-produced items.

Any jewelry-making method can produce excellent results. What counts is the skill and care with which it’s done. This shows in details of workmanship. In well-made jewelry, all the parts fit together precisely. Lines are straight, angles are sharp, and curves are smooth. There are no cracks, bumps, or weak spots. All the surfaces are completely polished or textured. Any finish pattern is distinct, evenly executed, and clearly demarcated. There are no rough areas or pits and the inside or back is just as well made and finished as the top or front. This level of quality costs more, but it ensures lasting beauty, enjoyment, and value.
DECORATIVE FINISHES

Decorative finishes add visual texture to jewelry. You can highlight them as aspects of workmanship and design.

Finishes seen in today’s gemstone jewelry include:

- **Bright Polish** – smooth, shiny, and 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.

DESIGNS AND INSPIRATIONS

Design is often the deciding factor in jewelry selection. When a customer walks in your door, she may have definite ideas about what she wants – the form, the metal, the gems, the look. These decisions may also evolve with your help during the buying process. In either case, it’s likely to be the manner in which individual features come together that makes a particular piece the perfect choice. That’s the magic of design.

It’s important to remember that each item you present began in the imagination of a talented design artist. No matter how simple it appears, good design also reflects technical know-how. Beauty might be easy to conceive, but capturing it – even in gems and precious metals – takes great skill. Today’s computer-aided design programs make the process user-friendly, but they don’t change its fundamentals or its importance to the final outcome.
Designers draw their inspirations from many sources, and being aware of these makes it easier to interpret jewelry’s appeal. An item may combine elements from several different sources, but you can usually identify one or two that define its “spirit.” Among the possibilities are:

- **Nature’s Forms** – These are universal and timeless. The sun and moon and stars; symbols of earth, air, fire, and water; plants and animals; the human body and its parts – face, eyes, lips, and hands. All of these evoke the beauty and wonder of the natural world in which we live. They’ve been represented in jewelry and other art by every culture throughout time, yet each generation discovers them anew.

- **Historic Periods** – You might call these echoes of the past. They begin with ancient Egypt and extend through the Middle Ages and Renaissance to the Victorian, Art Nouveau, and Art Deco eras of recent history. Each period has its own color palette, motifs, and other characteristics. Adapted by modern designers – often with gems the Pharaohs would have envied – these distinctive features link the meaning of the present moment with the romance of long ago.

- **World Culture** – The celebration of cultural identity gives some jewelry an exotic flavor. While historic influences span time, ethnic inspirations bridge distance. They conjure the allure of
places that are physically or spiritually far away. These include Africa, the Orient, the Middle East, and the regional cultures of Europe – Celtic, Mediterranean, Scandinavian – even our own Native America. Pick a spot on a world map and you’ll probably pinpoint an artistic tradition that’s mirrored in today’s gemstone jewelry designs.

- **Modern Life** – This is the pulse of here and now. It comes from the geometry of urban architecture, the sleek lines of the cars we drive, and the ergonomic details of gadgets we use in our homes and offices. Its images stream across TV screens and computer monitors, reflecting the technology that shapes the way we live. Sometimes familiar and at other times provocative, it runs from contemporary to cutting-edge.

Becoming a real expert on design sources would be a major challenge, and it’s usually not necessary. Unless your store deals in estate pieces, you don’t need to be able to explain the technical differences between Victorian, Nouveau, and Deco – and for the most part, more contemporary design inspirations are a matter of observation and personal interpretation.

What’s important is helping customers appreciate designs that “speak” to them. This might mean suggesting that a ring’s antique look conveys a feeling of classic elegance, or pointing out that a bracelet’s sculptural swirls make it high-tech as well as high-style. The specifics of statements like these must be based on the design and what you learn about the customer. If you prepare, however, by giving advance thought to designs and their inspirations, you’ll be ready to address this decisive factor when your customer is.
FINE JEWELRY BRANDING

In simplest terms, a brand is a product that’s strongly identified by name with its maker. Coca-Cola, Nike, BMW, and Rolex are good examples, and you can probably think of dozens more. A true brand, however, is defined by certain features or components that are readily identifiable and consistently present. It’s this consistency that gives a brand its identity, not the marketing that goes into building a name.

The concept of branding is as old as commerce, but over the past fifty years it has been transformed from common sense to science. Major corporations now devote much of their energy to brand management, and universities offer programs in the subject. For many consumers, brands have gone from being assurances of value to symbols of personal identity.

Except for watches and the creations of firms like Tiffany & Co and Cartier, branding is a fairly recent development in fine jewelry. Most experts say it began with growing recognition of designers in the 1970s. Several factors have added momentum since then.

Inside the industry, promotion by trade organizations, manufacturers and designers have made professionals more aware of brands and their potential. Outside, there’s been a convergence between jewelry and the world of fashion. Today, popular magazines like Vogue cover jewelry trends along with those in apparel. Some of the biggest names in couture – Chanel, Dior, Gucci, Versace – have launched their own jewelry lines.
If your store offers branded jewelry, you need to identify its “signature” in order to present it effectively. This is more than the name of the designer or collection. It can include all the features you’ve examined in this lesson – the inspirational themes, the way the jewelry is made, the metals that go into it, its form and style, even the gems and how they’re set.

Going further, you can explore the personal history, artistic philosophy, and working methods that lie behind a particular line. Many designers make this easy by furnishing promotional literature or maintaining websites that include information you can share with customers. Be sure to make the most of such resources.

For most of your customers, your store – its name, its professional team, and all the other unique things it represents – is the brand that counts most of all.

It’s also important to find the right balance. A brand’s degree of “visibility” in your presentations can depend on your company’s approach to merchandising in general. Some stores highlight branded lines to set themselves apart from competitors. Others focus on establishing and communicating their own images. This underscores the fact that for most of your customers, your store – its name, its professional team, and all the other unique things it represents – is the brand that counts most of all.
RECAP OF KEY POINTS

- When you present gemstone jewelry, you need to describe it effectively and explain its value.

- The jewelry component that holds the gems in place is the setting. Besides having a practical function, it affects the gems’ appearance. It can also add to the design’s appeal, and it may be a consideration when suiting a design to the wearer’s lifestyle.

- Gemstone jewelry comes in many forms and styles. The primary categories are rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and pins. There are numerous stylistic variations. Using special names for these can help you describe them effectively.

- Most gemstone jewelry is made from gold, platinum, or silver. These metals contribute to jewelry’s appeal. Gold has been a favorite since ancient times. In recent years, platinum has become popular. Silver was once relegated to fashion status, but now has a place in fine jewelry, too.

- New entries into the ‘jewelry metals’ arena include titanium and stainless steel. These have become increasingly popular in recent years, particularly in men’s jewelry. They offer lightweight styles that are highly durable and remarkably cost effective. Several prominent and popular designers have built entire lines around the use of these metals.

- Fine jewelry is the result of skilled craftsmanship. Most jewelry is made by casting, die-striking, electroforming, or hand fabrication. Each method can produce excellent quality. What counts is the skill and care with which the item is produced and finished.

- Design is often the deciding factor in jewelry selection. Good design reflects artistic talent and technical know-how. Designers draw inspiration from many sources. These include nature’s forms, historic periods, world culture, and modern life. Being aware of design inspirations makes it easier to interpret jewelry’s appeal.

- Branding is a growing trend in fine jewelry. To present branded jewelry you need to identify the signature. It’s also important to find the right balance in your presentations. For most customers, your store is the brand that counts most of all.
LESSON 7 FOLLOW-UP CHECKLIST

- Develop a jewelry feature checklist to use when you’re doing your “homework” for presentations. Include all the points you’ve covered in this lesson. (You may not always discuss the entire list, but you need to be ready to provide any information the customer needs.)

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

- Over the next week select one item of gemstone jewelry each day and develop a list of selling points related to design and craftsmanship. Work with your manager, jewelry buyer, or bench jeweler on the first two or three pieces.

- Read the promotional literature and checkout the websites for any branded lines your store carries. Identify each brand’s signature and build presentations for your customers. Also talk to your manager about how these lines fit into your overall marketing strategy.
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 "Take 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. But 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.