

Diamonds are for everyone

When it comes to holiday gift-giving, nothing beats this dazzling jewel's immediate impact—or its lasting effects.

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IN THE THEME SONG for the James Bond movie *Diamonds are Forever*, Shirley Bassey sang about gems “Sparkling round my little finger. Unlike men, the diamonds linger.” Cynical? Maybe. But in the real world, these jewels—whether set in an engagement ring or a 60th-anniversary present—symbolize enduring commitment more than fleeting romance. No wonder. Forged by geological forces deep beneath the earth's crust and carried to the surface by volcanic eruptions, diamonds are the hardest substance found in nature: they can truly last forever. Here's what to look for.

The Four Cs

Cut refers to a diamond's reflective quality. Grades of cut range from premium to poor.

Clarity takes surface blemishes into account, as well as bubbles and non-diamond minerals inside, called inclusions. The fewer the flaws, the higher the clarity.

Colour includes everything from yellow and green to blue and black. But the purest diamonds are valued for the extent of their whiteness, or colourlessness.

Carat is a measurement of weight, written as “ctw.” One carat equals 200 mg. Needless to say, larger diamonds are rarer and more desirable than smaller ones.

Good to Know

Canada was instrumental in the development of the Kimberley Process (KP), an initiative launched in 2003 to help curtail international trade of “conflict diamonds” originating in war-torn African nations, including Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Along with 47 other countries, plus the European Union, Canada prohibits the import of non-KP-certified diamonds. For extra peace of mind, look for ones mined here in Canada. With four major mines operating within our borders, we're the world's third-largest producer of diamonds—conflict-free, guaranteed.

Diamond rings on this page, top to bottom:

- 0.15 ctw pavé double band, \$449
- 0.5 ctw solitaire, \$2,299
- 0.25 ctw three-stone, \$749



COME OVER TO THE DARK SIDE
Natural black diamonds are the result of highly concentrated inclusions, usually graphite. While alluring, these stones are more brittle than their clearer counterparts, making them more difficult to cut. The black diamonds pictured here were originally white and then radiation-enhanced to produce a darker effect. They're really a very deep shade of green that looks especially dramatic when set against clear diamonds.





EXPERT OPINION

Irene Leslie, buyer, fine jewellery, dashes some diamond myths.

- Diamonds are tough, but contrary to popular belief, **they're not indestructible**. They're not fragile either, but their crystal structure makes them vulnerable along hidden fault lines. That's why diamond cutters can cleave these gemstones so precisely, using a steel wedge and a mallet. Likewise, **your diamond can crack, chip, split or shatter** if struck with sufficient force in a given direction. (Tip: don't wear your diamond ring when doing rough manual labour, including yard work and anything involving a hammer.)
- **Bleach, abrasive cleansers and toothpaste are not recommended** for cleaning diamonds, especially those set in jewellery. These substances can erode settings, loosen prongs or even dissolve metals. Instead, have your diamond jewellery **cleaned professionally** and the **settings checked** once a year.

Diamond rings on this page, top to bottom:

- 0.25 ctw **solitaire**, \$849
- 0.2 ctw **ornate band**, \$499
- 0.5 ctw **black and white**, \$499
- 0.25 ctw **three-stone**, \$849
- 0.2 ctw **black and white**, \$499

PHOTOGRAPHY: GEOFFREY ROSS; DANIEL HARRISON (EXPERT)

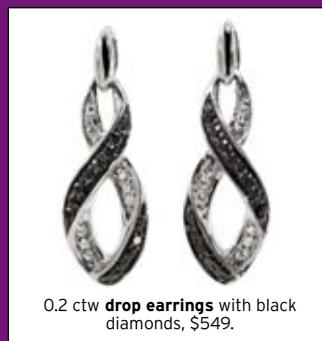
LOOKING FOR A NEW BEST FRIEND?



0.5 ctw pavé **hoop earrings**, \$749.



0.14 ctw key **pendant necklace**, \$299.



0.2 ctw **drop earrings** with black diamonds, \$549.