

Cut: The way diamonds make us smile



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I am often asked what I look for when I buy diamonds. Do I look for premium color or flawless diamonds? Or do I simply try to get as big of a diamond as I can find for the least amount of money? While color, clarity, and carat weight all play an important part in my decision making (because they all can dramatically affect price) the answer is: none of the above. I am always looking for a nice value, but what matters the most to me is the way a diamond is cut.

If you have been following my articles for the last few months, you have most likely figured out by now that I consider CUT to be the absolute most important of the 4 Cs. The reason is really as simple as the answer to this question: What do

we love most about diamonds? In other words: Historically, what is it that diamonds do that has made mankind love them so deeply and for so long? Its how much they sparkle, right? Most consumers are surprised that the way a diamond dazzles and sparkles has almost nothing to do with color or clarity. It has everything to do with how much care and skill went into cutting that diamond.

I have literally seen thousands of diamonds through the course of my career and it never ceases to amaze me how much a perfectly proportioned diamond will take my breath away. They just have a certain "IT" factor that diamonds of a lesser cut quality do not possess. The difference between a poorly cut diamond and one that is an ideal cut is this. One you will notice from across a dimly lit restaurant and the other will be dead right under your nose. It REALLY is that dramatic. Ideal cut diamonds (which applies mostly to round diamonds) take whatever light is around them and send it screaming around the room. A poorly cut stone gathers what it can and eeks it back out.

Therefore, it is logical to expect that a really well proportioned diamond will perform better under everyday lighting conditions (not the glare of jewelry store lights-I am talking about sunlight and the light in your kitchen) than the average diamond. It is the factor that will make people ask you why your diamond is so pretty. And guess what else. When a diamond is cut properly it becomes MUCH more difficult to identify a low color grade and to spot certain inclusions that might be much more visible in a lower cut quality. So upgrading the cut may mean you can actually get a larger diamond too since it will be less noticeable to take a drop in color and clarity.

The industry has a complicated set of percentages that help us to directly measure how one diamond performs over another diamond, but beware of using these percentages as a method to buy your diamond. You see, they can get rather overwhelming and it takes many years of working with diamonds to truly understand how each number affects the overall beauty of the stone. I also see many consumers incorrectly focus on just one or two of these percentages and use this as a basis to justify one diamond over another. Table percentage and depth percentage are the two areas that I see clients focus on. While these are both very important there are two main problems with this philosophy. The first, is that this is like taking one or two chapters from a Harry Potter book and then forming an opinion of whether or not Rowling wrote another terrific book. The second problem with this method is that most gemologists would probably agree that table and depth percentages are two of the least important factors in determining a diamonds beauty.

So, take a break from the numbers. I tell my clients that if you ever want some good reading material right before bed, start studying all the percentages that go into grading a diamond. It will put you right to sleep! And, most importantly it takes the romance and the fun out of buying something that you will enjoy for the rest of your life (and most likely your children will too)!

So it all comes down to this: While the way a diamond is cut is the most important factor in determining how beautiful that diamond will be, it is also the most difficult of the four Cs to fully understand. Chances are, you do not have the time it takes to become an expert on cut, so keep it simple! Just look at it!! How does the diamond look a foot away from you? How does it look across the room? How does it look when it doesn't have jewelry store lights glaring down on it? How does it look in sunlight?

We get so wrapped up in our search for the perfect diamond that is easy to forget the basics. At the end of the day, diamonds are sexy and romantic. True, they can be expensive but when was the last time you looked at a truly gorgeous diamond that did not make you smile?

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