

All Set A Guide to Evaluating Gemstone Settings

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As I like to say, "Getting a stone set is luck; setting it correctly is skill." So how do you determine when a stone has been skillfully set? Below are some of the more important areas to consider.

STRUCTURE AND SECURITY

A universally accepted aspect of a good setting is that it should securely hold the gemstone. Equally important is that the stone shouldn't be damaged due to setting procedures or structural design. A little knowledge of setting techniques goes a long way here.

General Guidelines: Seats should be burred accurately. **Figure 1** shows a setting in which the prongs do not have seats to cradle this emerald-cut tourmaline; rather, the prongs are pushing the stone against the gallery of the ring. If one prong loosens, the stone will become loose and could fall out.

Stones with corners or points should have relief holes to prevent chipping. **Figure 2** shows a relief hole cut in a chevron-shaped prong for a marquise. The relief hole allows the point of the stone to "float" without contacting the metal, thus preventing chipping.

Prongs: Seats should be cut no deeper than half of the prong's thickness. The prongs should bend snugly against the stone with little or no gap between them. **Figure 3** shows a large gap between the prong and the stone; this could lead to the stone coming loose, or being damaged from the uneven setting pressure.

Bezel and Flush Setting: The bezel wall should be hammered or burnished evenly around the stone with no damaging pressure points.

Channel Setting: The channel wall should be hammered evenly on either side of the stone. The stones should be evenly spaced.

Bead and Pavé Setting: The beads should be carved and compressed on the edge of the stone with good contact.



Shared beads should contact all the stones they're securing. Corner and side beads should be sturdy enough to stand up to wear. The stones should be evenly spaced.



DETAILS AND FINISHING

The detailing and proper finishing give the setting a neat and accurate appearance. It also exhibits the skill of the setter, indicating that the structural portion of the setting is done well.

Symmetry: The symmetry of prongs and channel walls, the matching of beads in pavé, and the clean outline of a bezel all signify quality workmanship.

Metal Flashing: When burring a seat in prongs and bezels, or when forming beads in pavé, the bur usually leaves behind metal flakes; this is called flashing. The filing and shaping of prong tips or channel walls can also lead to flashing. A good setter will ensure the flakes are removed prior to detailing. **Figure 4** shows a diamond stud that has evenly spaced prongs with pleasantly shaped tops. The stud would have looked even better if the setter had taken time to remove the flashing (visible around the edges of the prongs).

Tool Marks: Leaving any evidence of the trauma a jewelry item goes through during its creation is a sign of rushed or sloppy workmanship. These marks should be removed. **Figure 5** shows a prong that is nicely rounded and exhibits no flashing, but does have tool marks down its side.

Uneven Setting or Tilted Stones: Leaving a prong bent or settling for an improperly tilted stone reflects poorly on the skill of the setter. In **Figure 6**, the small diamonds are tilted and touching each other near the corners. Such overlapping can cause chips. Ensuring a stone is level, straightening out a prong, or evening two channel walls all directly impact the quality of the setting. ♦

The National Association of Jewelry Appraisers

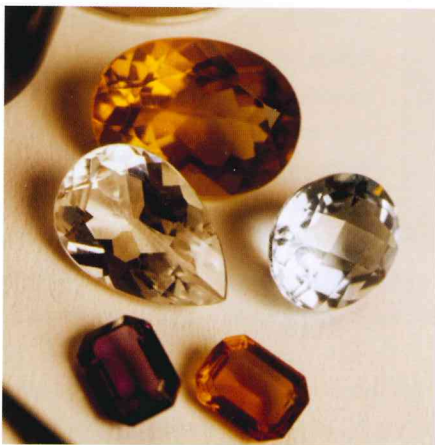
Serving the Professional Jewelry Appraiser with Pride®

In the Past

For generations, jewelers and manufacturers have given their customers an appraisal consisting of one page from a pad, purchased in a stationary store, which also contained a paragraph disclaiming any responsibility for any action taken on the basis of the values given in the appraisal. In fact, such appraisals have usually been complementary with an inflated value to give the impression that the customer was getting a bargain.

Who We Are: Present and Future

Times sure have changed. In the past twenty years, a number of appraisal organizations have established protocols that have taken the appraisal profession to new heights. We at The National Association of



Jewelry Appraisers (NAJA) are proud to have been one of those organizations. We are the largest appraisal organization devoted *solely* to the appraisal of gems and jewelry. Our members (now more than 700) sign on to observe a stringent Code of Ethics and we also request that they appraise to a minimum standard. We constantly try to make



them aware of legal problems which may be encountered by doing otherwise. That standard is taught in our appraisal course and is constantly updated so that they and their clients are protected with a properly researched valuation for the particular purpose needed. We feel we have made NAJA the place to achieve the knowledge necessary to make the gem and jewelry appraiser a true professional and help keep them updated on the latest techniques, equipment, and information within our constantly changing industry.

It's All about Education

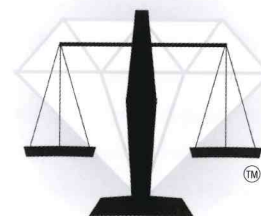
We do this through the home study appraisal course, quarterly newsletter, and discounts on books and equipment, as well as by serving as a sounding board for questions concerning our profession. The appraisal course also teaches sections of the government-sponsored Uniform Standard of Appraisal Practice as it relates to the appraisal of personal property. In addition, we hold two conferences each year with

diverse speakers who are experts in their fields and offer timely topics and information to help update the knowledge needed. At these conferences our members have the chance to network with their peers and find colleagues with whom they can share information and experiences.

Our Other Benefits

NAJA's website addresses the needs of the consumer as well as members of the jewelry industry with the "Find an Appraiser" function. Our appraisers are listed by city, state, phone, and membership status for people who need an appraiser. We also answer questions from the public and the trade to help them understand what an appraiser can offer. We have also served to help unravel problems between the appraiser and the client.

Today, the appraisal profession is a necessary part of the jewelry industry and we take great pride in the fact that we are a strong part of it.



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