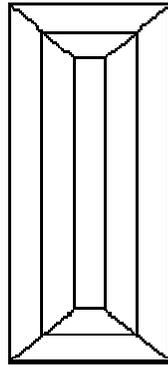


1. Cutting Style

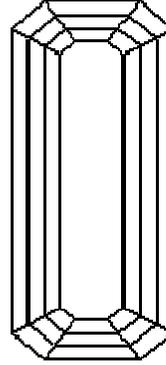
Diamonds, as crafted by nature, consist of translucent crystalline carbon. If the outer rough could be peeled away, the resulting stone would be as smooth as glass; unfortunately, it would be no more aesthetically pleasing than a piece of glass crystal. The art of the diamond-cutter is to transform that chunk of crystallized carbon into a beautiful piece of jewelry.

The diamond-cutter has two basic types of cuts in his arsenal: The **step cut** and the **brilliant cut**. You may also hear of hybrids of the two basic cuts, such as the **emerald cut**, or you may also encounter some of the older-style cuts, such as the **rose cut**, the **old European cut**, or the **old mine cut**. If you are planning to purchase a diamond for a modern engagement ring, you only need to concern yourself with the two basic cuts.

The **step cut** has parallel facets that usually span the length or width of the stone. Refer to the picture shown here, and notice the "steps" that lead from the outer edges to the top of the diamond. If a step-cut diamond has rounded-off facets in the corners, this is a variant of the step-cut called the **emerald cut**.

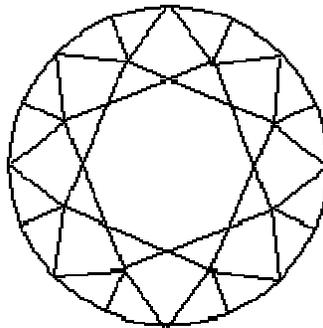


Step Cut

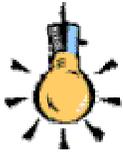


Emerald Cut

The **brilliant cut** has triangular facets that surround the stone and usually culminate on a flat top called a **table**. Again, refer to the picture shown here and notice how the triangles fit into each other. The modern and popular brilliant-cut round engagement diamond has 58 of these triangular facets -- 33 above the middle of the stone (or the **girdle**), and 25 below.



Brilliant Round Cut

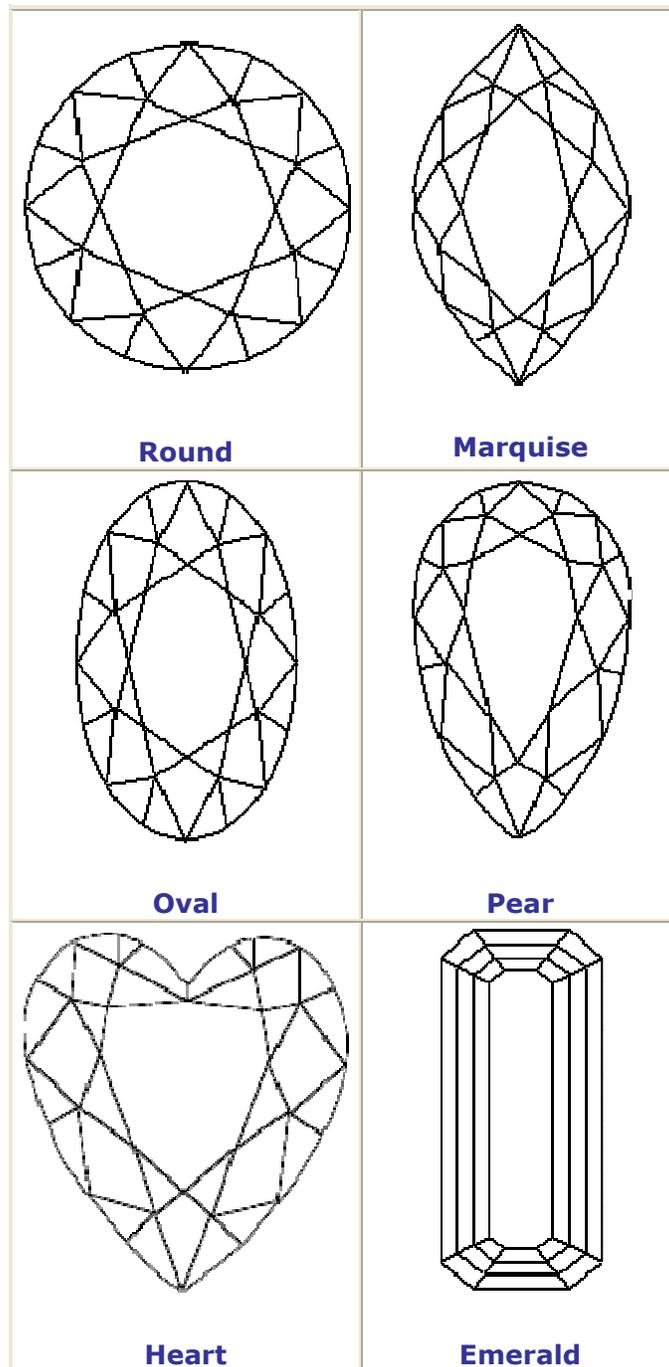


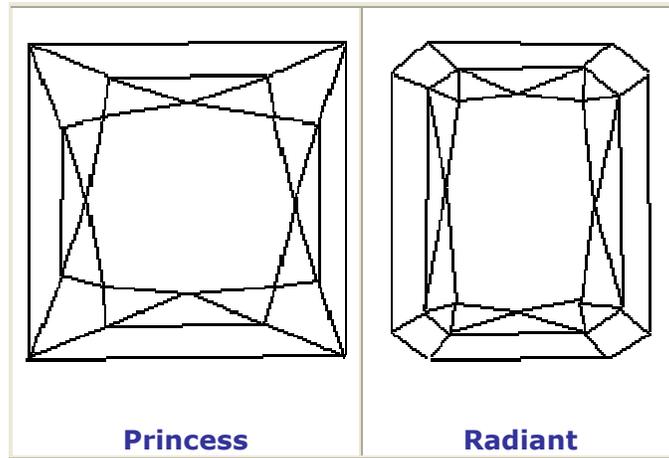
The choice between a brilliant-cut or step-cut stone is simple: If you want the shiniest diamond possible, select a brilliant cut. If you prefer a more glassy, elegant stone, the step cut is for you.

One point of clarification is that you cannot just go to the jewelry store and purchase a generic step-cut or brilliant-cut diamond -- you must select a stone with a given shape, that will in turn be created using step-cuts, brilliant-cuts, or a mix of the two. Continue with the tutorial to learn more about diamond **shapes**.

2. Shape

As the name suggests, **shape** is nothing more than the intrinsic shape of the diamond. As viewed from the top, the most common shapes are:





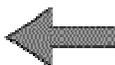
With the exception of the emerald cut, today's most popular shapes are brilliant cuts or hybrid cuts (as opposed to strict step cuts). In terms of cost, the round brilliant tops the list, while the square cuts typically cost about 10% less for a diamond of the same weight and quality.

Unless you're purchasing a diamond as an investment (in which case you should strongly consider a round brilliant), you should choose the shape which pleases you most. Saul Spero, a New York diamond appraiser, spent 25 years interviewing over 50,000 people to determine if there was any correlation between personality and preference of diamond shapes. In his book [Diamonds, Love, and Compatibility](#), he states that if a woman has a strong preference for any of these shapes, she can be characterized as follows:

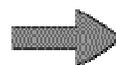
Shape	Spero's Personality Traits
Round	Family-centered, dependable, unaggressive.
Oval	Individualistic, creative, well-organized, willing to take chances.
Heart	Sentimental, feminine, sensitive, trusting.
Rectangle/Square	Disciplined, conservative, efficient, honest.
Pear	Conforming, considerate, adaptable.
Marquise	Extroverted, aggressive, innovative, career-centered.



*Unless you're buying a diamond as an investment, choose a shape that you like, regardless of its relative value or the correlation between the bride-to-be's personality and Spero's study. Other than personal preference, the only characteristic that you should trade off if you choose one diamond shape over another is in **brilliance** and **fire**. Continue with the tutorial to learn more.*



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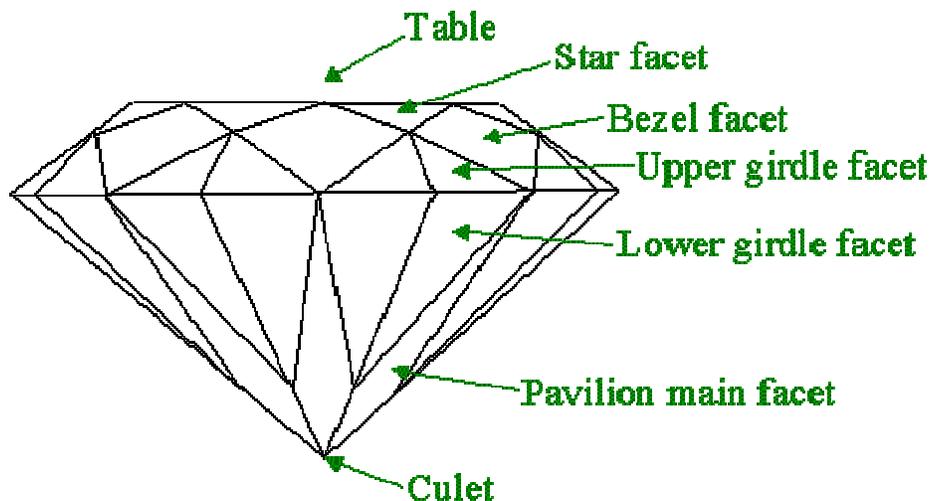
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4. General Workmanship

Aside from the right overall proportions and a shape that suits its owner, a diamond's value and intrinsic beauty are governed by additional aspects of the workmanship of the diamond cutter.

Facets

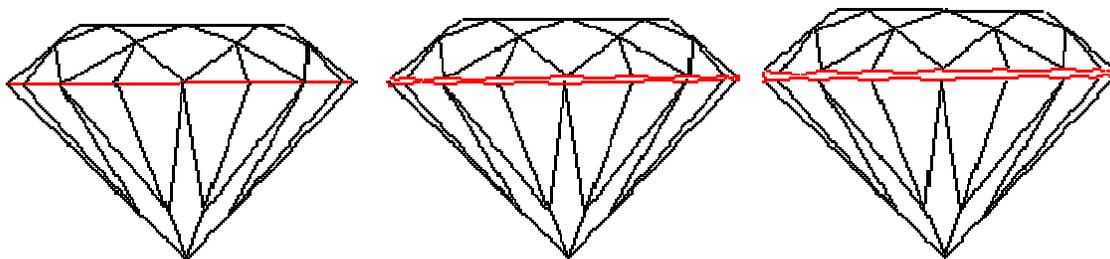
When looking at diamonds under a microscope, compare the form of each facet with the ideal forms presented here. For example, a round diamond has exactly 58 facets -- 33 above the girdle, and 25 below.



When looking at actual stones, refer to the diagram above and try to identify and rate each of the facets. Extra, absent, or deformed facets decrease the value of the stone. Refer to the diagrams in [Tutorial - \[Cut 2\]](#) for top views of different diamond shapes.

Girdle

The girdle of a diamond is the middle, or fattest part, of the diamond, and is measured from "extremely thin" to "extremely thick":



Thin Girdle

Medium Girdle

Thick Girdle

Thin girdles are prone to chipping. Extremely thick girdles hide a lot of weight, so you end up paying for a heavier diamond that doesn't look that big. The ideal is an even, medium girdle; this applies to all shapes EXCEPT for the tip of the **pear shape**, in which a thick girdle is preferred to make it less prone to damage. When examining the girdle, make sure that it is well-faceted and polished, since some diamond cutters will omit this step to save time and to avoid removing weight from the stone.

Culet

The culet is the bottom part of the diamond, where the pavilion comes together in a point (refer to the diagram shown above, under "facets"). Culets are rated as "none", "small", "medium", and "large." The ideal is "none," but if an otherwise perfect stone has a medium or large culet, it may still be a worthwhile purchase.

Symmetry

Check the following aspects of the stone to make sure it is completely symmetrical:

- Make sure the culet is precisely in the middle of the stone when viewing it from the bottom
- Verify that the pavilion and crown have the same angle all the way around the stone, and are not bowed out or concave
- If you're purchasing a **heart shape** or any other fancy shape, be sure there are no deformities. For example, some heart-shaped diamonds will have unsightly asymmetrical lobes. Some **princess shape** or **radiants** are not *quite* square. Refer to the diagrams in [Tutorial - \[Cut 2\]](#) to verify the correct proportions.
- Inspect the **table** to make sure it is flat and symmetrical

Finish

There's no hard and fast rule to judge the finish of a stone. However, understand that the more a diamond cutter polishes a stone, the more carat weight it loses (and therefore its value), so the cutter's goal will be to polish *just enough* to satisfy the potential customer. Polishing will also remove any surface flaws relating to clarity, so that potentially an IF diamond could be turned into an FL simply by polishing it.