

# HOW TO MAKE YOUR COLOURED STONE DEALER

fall in love with you!

*Kerry Gregory FGS DGA of Gemmology Rocks explains how gemstone buyer and dealer can work better together.*

I'd better explain what I mean by 'fall in love'. I'm not an agony aunt; I cannot help you with unrequited love! What I mean is how to work with stone dealers in such a way that they love doing business with you. How to make it easy for both of you to be efficient, get it right first time and make more money. You know the phrase: "My job would be so easy if it wasn't for the customers" – sometimes, we're those customers!

I have bought, sold, swapped and identified countless gemstones in my time, and spent hours in stone dealers' offices. Occasionally they comment on things that make their job frustrating and difficult; many of these frustrations are relatively simple to solve, so I've talked to a few dealers to find out what impacts them, and how we can work together better.

Something that arises constantly is: coloured stones are **not diamonds**. Pretty obvious! But many of the main issues surface when people try to treat coloured stones like diamonds. Take shape and cut for instance. Coloured stones are rarely cut the same as diamonds. Generally, you don't get round brilliants, princess, or other 'diamond' cuts – usually coloured stones are cut as mixed cuts, or native cuts to maximise colour and yield. Cuts are commonly determined by the crystal or rough that the stone is cut from. Tourmalines grow as long thin crystals, so you frequently get tourmalines cut as long octagons for example.

Also, remember, **carat is not a size... it's a weight**. If you are asking for a 1.00ct stone, coloured stones are different densities to diamonds, so in the same shape a coloured stone will be a different size – a 1.00ct sapphire will be smaller than a diamond, a 1.00ct amethyst larger. Bear in mind too if you are using standard mounts calibrated for diamonds, the big belly of your coloured stone might not fit in there. It's worth getting familiar with what shapes, cuts and sizes the stones you commonly use are readily available in, or maybe more importantly, what they are not available in. For instance, it's rare to get large round or square stones in ruby, sapphire and emerald, so if your customer wants a 12mm round ruby, you'll have a search on your hands.

**Describing colour and clarity** of coloured stones is considerably more complicated than in diamonds; there are not standardised grading systems, or internationally-recognised nomenclature for them. While there are many colour systems out there, most dealers don't use them, and even if they do they'll have to use the same one you do. With regards to clarity, this differs across different gem species and even varieties – what is classed as a good quality in emerald would be considered low quality in aquamarine for instance. So a lot comes down to experience and familiarity with the different materials.

So, how to overcome issues and become better customers? The first step, according to Jason Williams of GF Williams, is making sure you carry out an effective 'triage' with your customer. Have a really in-depth conversation so you can understand their needs; ask the right questions. Do they really want an emerald, or do they simply want a vibrant green stone? Is £2,000 their budget for the stone or for the entire piece of jewellery? Amanda Good, his right hand woman, suggests: "don't make promises you don't know you can keep until you speak to your dealer". The last thing you want is to have to disappoint a customer later on because you can't source the stone or it's not in budget.

Jason Holt, of Holts, recommends **building a relationship** with your dealer. Talk to them, visit them, spend time with them, so you get to know each other, and they can guide you through the things you need to know so you get the right stone. By getting familiar with each other, you will build a rapport, they will get to know your preferences and your business, and that way when you call they will understand what you need and get you the right stone first time.

When **communicating colour** sometimes the old ways are the best. If you need a colour match for a stone, the most effective solution is still to send the stone to the dealer. However, everyone I spoke to said photographs, images or other means of conveying the colour you want are really useful, so do email these over with, or in addition to, your order if you have them.





**Be structured and strategic** in your ordering. Schedule time to go through stone orders on a set day or days. Be efficient by doing all the orders in one go, saving time and postage costs. Try and stick to a few trusted dealers for your main ordering – the more you buy from one dealer the bigger your buying power, and you become a more valuable customer.

**Planning is key** when coming to place the order. One of the most frustrating and time-wasting behaviours for stone dealers, are customers who call without knowing what they want, talking through their jobs on the phone, measuring mounts as they go. Marcus McCallum suggests putting together a list before you call. Make sure you know: what type of stones, sizes, shape, cut, colour and quality. Do they need to be a pair or a set? Match something else? Absolutely key is giving a budget, or if you don't know the cost of the material you are looking for, the information needed to give you a price.

What was clear talking to dealers is they appreciate that we don't always know what we need or want! They are there to help, and are more than willing to talk you through options, prices and availability and help you learn what you need to know. None of us know it all, we only learn through asking, and if you are doing business with someone not willing to be patient and help you learn, then maybe you should change who you do business with.

#### **So, to be better stone buyers...**

**Communicate** with our customers so we really know what they want, and with our stone dealers, to build relationships.

**Plan** when and what we buy, and make sure we have the information we need to hand, to either get the stones or the answers we need.

**Educate** ourselves and our staff about coloured stones. Learn what is available and what is not, learn the differences between different coloured stones as well as between diamonds, learn what exciting and beautiful stones are out there for our customers. Then, educate and excite our customers; not only will they love it, they will love us for it, and in turn buy more coloured stones.

*Download a stone order template from [gemmologyrocks.com](http://gemmologyrocks.com)*



**1** The 'Big Three' gemstones – ruby, sapphire, emerald – are difficult to find in larger rounds or squares. They're more commonly cut in longer shapes like ovals, cushions or octagons. [gfwilliams.co.uk](http://gfwilliams.co.uk)

**2** More unusual cuts are perfect for creating hand-made bespoke designs. Be aware though, they won't fit in 'off the shelf' mounts, and due to their unique nature are difficult to replace or replicate. [gfwilliams.co.uk](http://gfwilliams.co.uk)

**3** Cut stones are dictated by the shape and qualities of the rough material. Aquamarine is commonly cut as long deep stones to maximise yield and colour. [marcusmccallum.com](http://marcusmccallum.com)

**4** Coloured stones are not cut to the same styles and proportions as diamonds. Sapphire is cut to beautifully display its colour, but may not fit in a mount calibrated for a diamond. [holtsgems.com](http://holtsgems.com)

**5** As a smaller business it's much more cost and time efficient to buy from dealers that can supply most of your needs, from small jobbing stones up to quality single stones. [holtsgems.com](http://holtsgems.com)

