

FREE CARE GUIDE

The Fine Jewelry Care Guide

Metal by metal and stone by stone: how to clean, wear, store, and travel with fine jewelry so it looks the way it did the day you brought it home.

Fine jewelry does not usually fail dramatically. It fails slowly, through hand cream in the gallery under a stone, chlorine on a gold clasp, a chain stored in a knot, a prong that has been thinning for a year unnoticed. Almost all of that is preventable with habits that take seconds. This guide covers the metals and stones you are most likely to own, what each one tolerates, what quietly damages it, and the small routine that keeps a collection wearable for decades.

THE ONE RULE THAT PREVENTS MOST DAMAGE

Jewelry goes on last and comes off first. Last after lotion, perfume, hairspray, and sunscreen have dried. First before cleaning, gardening, the gym, the pool, the shower, and sleep. If you adopt only one habit from this guide, adopt that one.

Know what you own before you clean it

Cleaning advice is only safe when it is matched to the material. A method that is perfect for a solid gold band with a diamond can permanently ruin a pearl strand or an opal. Before any cleaning, identify three things: the metal, the stone, and whether anything is glued rather than set. If a piece is antique, inherited, heavily engraved, enameled, or of unknown construction, treat it as delicate and let a jeweler handle it.

Metals, one at a time

Yellow and white gold (solid, karat marked)

- **What it tolerates**

Warm water, a drop of mild dish soap, a very soft toothbrush along the underside of settings, then a rinse and a lint-free cloth. Gold itself does not tarnish, so most dullness is film, not corrosion.

- **What damages it**

Chlorine and bleach are the real enemies. Repeated exposure attacks the alloy metals in gold and can leave it brittle enough to snap at a thin point. Pool, hot tub, and cleaning products all count.

- **White gold specifically**

Most white gold is plated with rhodium for its bright finish. That plating wears through over years and the piece begins to look slightly warmer or yellower, especially on ring shanks. This is normal wear, and a jeweler can re-plate it.

- **Storage**

Soft pouch or lined compartment, separately from harder stones that can scratch the metal.

Gold filled and gold plated

- **What it is**

A layer of gold over a base metal. Gold filled carries a much thicker layer than plating and lasts considerably longer, but neither is solid gold.

- **How to care for it**

Wipe with a soft dry or barely damp cloth after wearing. Avoid soaking, avoid brushes, and never use polishing compounds or tarnish removers, which abrade the layer away.

- **What shortens its life**

Perfume, sweat, chlorine, and friction. Rings and bracelets wear fastest because they rub against everything.

- **Realistic expectation**

Plating will eventually wear at high-contact points. That is the material behaving normally, not a defect.

Sterling silver

- **Why it darkens**

Silver tarnishes by reacting with sulfur compounds in air, and the process speeds up with humidity, rubber bands, wool, some papers, and certain foods such as eggs and onions.

- **Routine care**

Wear it. Regularly worn silver tarnishes far more slowly than silver in a drawer. Wipe with a soft cloth after each wear.

- **Cleaning**

A dedicated silver polishing cloth for light tarnish. Mild soap and warm water for grime. Save chemical dips for last resort and keep them away from stones, pearls, oxidized details, and any intentionally darkened recesses, which they will strip out.

- **Storage**

Anti-tarnish strips in a closed pouch or a lined box. Keep it out of humid bathrooms.

Platinum

- **How it ages**

Platinum does not tarnish and it does not lose metal the way softer metals do when scratched. Instead it develops a soft satin surface called a patina. Many owners prefer it. A jeweler can polish it back to high shine when you want.

- **Cleaning**

Warm water, mild soap, soft brush. Very forgiving.

- **Storage**

Store separately. Platinum is dense and hard enough to mark softer gold pieces sitting next to it.

Stainless steel, titanium, and tungsten

- **Durability**

Highly scratch resistant and unaffected by most everyday chemicals. Warm soapy water is essentially all they need.

- **The sizing caveat**

Tungsten in particular generally cannot be resized, and some of these metals cannot be cut off in the same way as gold in an emergency. Consider that before choosing one for a ring you plan to wear for decades.

Vermeil and brass

- **Vermeil**

Gold over sterling silver. Treat it as plated gold: dry cloth only, no polishing compounds, no soaking.

- **Brass**

Will develop a darker patina and can leave a temporary green mark on skin, which is a harmless reaction between the metal and skin acidity, not a sign of poor quality. A dry cloth and dry storage slow it down.

Stones, one at a time

Hardness tells you how easily a stone scratches. Toughness tells you how it handles a knock. Porosity tells you how it handles liquids. A stone can be very hard and still chip, which is why hardness alone is a poor guide to how carefully to treat something.

CARE BY STONE TYPE

Stone	Handles	Avoid	Cleaning method
Diamond	Daily wear, warm soapy water, most household exposure	Hard knocks against a hard edge, which can chip a girdle; storing loose with other diamonds	Warm water, mild soap, soft brush behind the stone where film collects
Sapphire and ruby	Daily wear, soapy water, an everyday ring	Sharp impacts; harsh chemicals on any treated or fracture-filled stone	Warm soapy water and a soft brush; ask before using ultrasonic if the stone is treated
Emerald	Gentle wear, occasional pieces	Ultrasonic and steam cleaners, hot water, solvents, detergents; emeralds are commonly oiled and included	Barely damp soft cloth, cool water only, dry immediately
Opal	Light, careful wear	Soaking, ultrasonic cleaners, sudden temperature change, very dry storage, chemicals	Damp soft cloth and nothing more; never soak a doublet or triplet
Pearl (and mother of pearl)	Being worn against skin	Perfume, hairspray, vinegar, alcohol, ultrasonic cleaners, soaking; the drill hole and silk thread are the weak points	Wipe with a soft damp cloth after each wear, lay flat to dry, restring periodically if worn often
Turquoise, coral, amber, malachite	Dry, gentle handling	Water, oils, lotion, perfume, heat, most cleaners; these are porous or soft and absorb what they touch	Dry soft cloth only
Tanzanite and topaz	Careful everyday wear in protective settings	Knocks, ultrasonic cleaners, sudden temperature change	Warm soapy water, soft brush, dry gently
Peridot, amethyst, citrine, garnet	Regular wear with reasonable care	Prolonged strong light and heat for amethyst and some citrine, which can fade color; harsh chemicals	Warm soapy water, soft brush, rinse well
Moissanite and lab grown diamond	Daily wear, same as their natural counterparts	The same hard knocks that trouble any faceted stone	Warm soapy water; film behind the stone is the usual cause of dullness

ABOUT ULTRASONIC AND STEAM CLEANERS

Home ultrasonic units are safe for a narrow set of pieces: solid metal, no glued components, and hard untreated stones securely set. They are not safe for emeralds, opals, pearls, turquoise, coral, amber, antique or fracture-filled stones, or anything with a loose setting, because the vibration can knock a loose stone right out of its prongs. When in doubt, use warm soapy water and a soft brush, which is safe for nearly everything except the porous and organic materials above.

The five minute cleaning routine that covers most pieces

1 Check the setting first

Hold the piece near your ear and tap it gently. A faint rattle means a loose stone. Stop and take it to a jeweler rather than cleaning it.

2 Plug the sink

Always. This step has saved more rings than any other advice in this guide.

3 Warm, not hot, water with a drop of mild dish soap

Soak hard-stone gold and platinum pieces for a few minutes. Skip the soak entirely for pearls, opals, emeralds, and porous stones.

4 Brush the underside

A soft baby toothbrush, working the back of the setting where lotion and skin oils collect. That film under the stone, not the surface, is what makes a diamond look tired.

5 Rinse and dry fully

Rinse in a strainer, dry with a lint-free cloth, and let the piece air dry completely before it goes back in a closed box. Trapped moisture is how a lined box starts to smell and how silver tarnishes faster.

Storage that prevents scratches, tangles, and breakage

● Separate everything

Harder stones scratch softer stones and all of them scratch gold. Individual soft pouches or a lined box with dividers are the two workable options.

● Hang or lay chains flat

Necklaces knot because they are stored in a heap. Hang them, or fasten the clasp and lay each one flat in its own channel.

● Pearls lie flat

Hanging a strand over time stresses the thread. Store flat, in a soft pouch, never in an airtight bag, because pearls do better with a little ambient humidity.

● Keep it dark and dry

Sunlight fades some stones and dries out organic materials. A bathroom is the worst room in the house for jewelry storage. A bedroom drawer is the best.

● Earring backs

Replace stretched or loose backs before they cost you an earring. They are inexpensive, and a back that slides off easily has already told you what it plans to do.

Travel

Before you pack

- ☐ Fine pieces go in a carry-on, never a checked bag
 - ☐ Each piece in its own pouch or slot, not loose together in one case
 - ☐ Chains fastened and laid flat, or threaded through a drinking straw to prevent knots
 - ☐ Photograph every piece you are bringing, laid flat, before you leave
 - ☐ Bring only what you will genuinely wear, not the full collection
 - ☐ Take rings off before hotel pools, hot tubs, and beach swims, where cold water and lotion loosen them
 - ☐ Use the room safe, and check it a second time on checkout day
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The yearly checkup, and the warning signs between checkups

Pieces worn daily, particularly engagement rings and everyday chains, benefit from a professional inspection roughly once a year. A jeweler checks prong wear, clasp integrity, chain links, and stone security under magnification, which is the only reliable way to catch a thinning prong before it gives way. Between visits, watch for these signs and act on them promptly.

- **A faint rattle or click when you tap the piece**

A stone has movement. Stop wearing it until it is checked.

- **A stone that snags on fabric**

Usually a bent or worn prong tip catching threads. This is the last warning before a loss.

- **A clasp that opens on its own**

Spring rings and lobster clasps wear out. Replacing one costs far less than replacing a chain.

- **A ring that has become noticeably out of round**

Common on thin bands and a sign the shank is thinning. It can be rebuilt before it cracks.

- **Chain that has developed stretch or a kink**

A kinked link is a weak link. Have it repaired rather than straightening it yourself.

- **Earring posts that bend easily**

Metal fatigue. A jeweler can replace posts without touching the front of the earring.

Habits worth building

WHEN TO TAKE IT OFF

Activity	Why it matters
Showering and bathing	Soap film dulls stones and cold water can loosen a ring enough to slip
Swimming pools and hot tubs	Chlorine degrades the alloys in gold over repeated exposure
Cleaning the house	Bleach and ammonia based cleaners are hard on metal and on some stones
The gym and weight training	Bars and dumbbells bend and gouge rings and bracelets more than anything else people do
Gardening and any manual work	Grit, impacts, and snags on gloves
Applying lotion, perfume, or sunscreen	The single biggest source of the film that makes stones look dull
Sleeping in delicate chains and studs	Overnight is when chains kink and earring backs disappear
Cold weather and the beach	Fingers shrink in cold water, which is where rings are most often lost

GIVE THE GOOD PIECES GOOD COMPANY

Build a collection worth caring for

The care routine is the easy part once you own pieces that are made to last: solid metals, secure settings, and stones set to be worn rather than admired in a box. Explore fine jewelry at Perella, chosen for everyday wear and made to be maintained rather than replaced.

[Shop the collection at perellajewelry.com](https://perellajewelry.com)

Important. This guide offers general care information for jewelry. Materials, treatments, and construction vary widely from piece to piece, and any cleaning method carries some risk. Test cautiously, follow any care instructions supplied with your piece, and consult a professional jeweler before cleaning antique, inherited, treated, enameled, or otherwise delicate items. Results vary, and Perella Jewelry is not responsible for damage resulting from at-home cleaning.