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White Gold or Platinum?

Which precious metal do I choose?



Ekta H.



White gold and platinum are amongst the most popular precious metals for setting fine jewellery and [diamond engagement rings](#), so the question we often get asked is –

“Which one should I choose?”

Though they may look identical from afar, sharing a polished silvery hue, there are in fact various attributes which set white gold and platinum apart.

To make the right choice, let's take a look at how the two metals compare in terms of appearance, durability and cost.

Appearance & Composition

As previously mentioned, white gold and platinum tend to look similar in colour and feel, but are actually quite different. While platinum is naturally greyish-white in tone, white gold is brighter and whiter.

White gold is a lovely metal and often the more popular choice for diamond jewellery but it is to be noted that white gold is an alloy of pure 'yellow' gold with some white base metals.

It is usually offered in 14 Karat (58.5 % pure gold) or 18 Karat (75% pure gold) versions and consists of yellow gold combined with other white metals such as palladium, silver or nickel before finally being electroplated with hard wearing rhodium to give it that shiny 'whiter' finish. It is this look that gives white gold jewellery that bright shiny look (unlike platinum) when they are brand new.

Platinum for jewellery or PT950, on the other hand, is considered one of the purest and most stable metals with a 95% platinum content. PT 950 is about 25% denser (hence heavier) than white gold and results in finished jewellery that looks and feels more luxurious. On the downside, it is a heavier metal to wear, so this is something to consider when deciding between the two. We suggest trying on both white gold and platinum models to compare and see if you are comfortable with the weight.



Notice the yellowish base colour of the unplated white gold and the silvery-grey tone of the platinum as compared to the rhodium plated white gold ring in the middle.

Durability & Maintenance

It is a common belief that being 'precious metals' and because they look similar, white gold and platinum will also perform the same over time. It is important to understand that they both age and handle surface abrasion in different ways.

In comparison to platinum, white gold is harder, less malleable and less prone to bending but could be more prone to surface damage due to abrasion and metal stress sometimes due to incorrect alloying. When white gold jewellery gets heavily scratched, the surface polish is etched away and the underlying metal becomes visible. In the long run and with constant use, the white rhodium plating can fade away to lay bare the underlying yellow toned metal which is predominantly yellow gold.

In the case of platinum, surface or slightly deeper scratches merely move the metal from one spot to an adjoining area, overtime resulting in something called a *patina* (antique look) which also visually dulls its original shiny appearance. Some people prefer this well worn look as it brings out the comparative sparkle of the diamond(s) in the jewellery.

Platinum is also a denser and heavier metal (25% heavier than 18K white gold), hence it loses very little surface material due to daily wear and tear. In theory, it should last many years longer than white or yellow gold without the need for repair or refurbishing. The durability aspect of platinum is one of its strongest advantages.

White gold is more easily worked and fabricated than platinum, having a lower melting point and a less dense structure. Platinum fabrication requires experienced jewellers and higher working temperatures (1700°C). In addition, platinum craftsmen need more skill with resizing, re-polishing and repairing of such pieces.

14K or 18K gold is preferred for use in intricate well defined jewellery designs where structural strength, high polish, hardness or springiness is required (eg: earring backings or locking clasps)

Having said that, a well-made piece of jewellery should last for generations,

whether fabricated in white gold or platinum.

Cost

A big factor in determining one's choice of metal when creating jewellery, is price. In the context of the present, it is a bit of a toss-up between the two metals as to which is the more affordable option.

White gold has traditionally had a price advantage over platinum as gold has all along trailed platinum on price, being anywhere between 30-50% cheaper than platinum. That no longer hold true.

In the past 5-6 years, the tables have turned and now gold leads platinum in price by anywhere between 70 to 100%, making platinum the front runner choice (if the preference is for precious white metal jewellery and weight is not a concern).

However, higher labour and fabrication costs for platinum, and the denser nature of this metal means the use of 25% more weight for the same piece made in white gold. This sort of minimizes the advantages of a cheaper base price for the platinum.

Craftsmen and fabricators of platinum jewellery are far less in number worldwide than are gold jewellery fabricators, making platinum jewellery generally scarcer than white gold. Gold being more widely available and socially preferred over platinum, is also a reason for the popularity of white gold over platinum.

Overall, platinum is still considered a 'premium' metal and is perceived to be significantly more expensive due to historical reasons. The cost at present is no longer a disadvantage, in fact quite the opposite. The factors working in favour of platinum are:

- Platinum is harder to work with and has traditionally been considered a superior and more exclusive metal to gold (remember Platinum jubilee comes after Gold jubilee)
- Platinum alloys used in jewellery are purer
- It is 30 times rarer and the annual mined output is a fraction that of gold

In summary, white gold is considered more “budget-friendly” and ubiquitous. Platinum may appear as a bigger outlay initially, but its enduring nature makes it worthwhile in the long run. If it’s a white look that you are after and convenience is a consideration, I suggest going with white gold. If exclusivity and durability is a desire, then platinum is the obvious choice.

Facets is one among a handful of jewellers in Singapore that offer bespoke platinum jewellery fabrication. Send us a [message](#) and we will respond to you quickly.

Allergic Reactions

When comparing and considering metals to choose from, it is good to bear in mind the likelihood of encountering allergic reactions or minor skin irritations.

Platinum used in jewellery or PT 950 is a very inert metal being 95% pure. It is the only hypoallergenic precious metal besides pure 24K gold suitable for jewellery use.

Since white gold is made from a combination of metals, and some folks may likely develop allergies to nickel (for instance), it is best to opt for platinum if you know that you are particularly sensitive.

Other Metal Options

The ‘white’ look is not for everyone and so luckily in such cases, there are the options of making your jewellery using yellow gold or rose gold.

Yellow Gold

Pure gold is a relatively soft metal. For jewellery use, it almost always needs to be alloyed with moderator metals that give it the workability and strength for daily wear. Yellow gold is pure gold



alloyed with metals such as zinc, silver and copper.

The base yellow colour changes with the proportion of alloy metals used. Among all the gold varieties, it is more hypoallergenic than white gold and the easiest to maintain.

Yellow gold settings look great on tanned/darker skin tones and match well with diamonds of a lower colour grade as well.

Rose / Pink Gold

Rose gold is made of pure gold mixed with copper and silver alloys. The mix of these metals is what gives it its pinkish/rosy colour – the more copper mixed in, the more rose it becomes.

Cost wise, rose gold is marginally more affordable than white because copper as an alloy metal, costs less. It is also more durable than the other two colours of gold because of the inherent strength of the copper but it does take on a surface tarnish over time, if the copper content is not well controlled.

However, rose gold is not considered hypoallergenic and isn't as popular as white or yellow gold when it comes to fine jewellery.

Final Thoughts

Ultimately, the metal you choose is largely based on your personal preference, style, skin tone, budget etc... but it is always prudent to be equipped with the knowledge to make that decision yourself.

Platinum is naturally white, hypoallergenic, more durable and heavier - giving it a greater perceived value. White gold has a naturally yellow base, needs regular replating, is bright and shinier, and presently a bit more expensive than platinum. But it is the more popular and socially desired metal choice.

With 14K or 18K gold options, should you change your mind later as to colour, a simple replating can completely change the look and enable the wearer to follow the fashion trends of the future – i.e. white gold can be plated into yellow or rose

and vice-versa.

Book an appointment with us to get started on your journey towards creating that perfect piece of jewellery!

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