



Stones

The most common stones used in American Indian jewelry include:

- **Carnelian** — a translucent reddish quartz stone.
- **Coral** — the hardened secretion of tiny sea creatures. Coral ranges in color from white and pale pink to deep reds and oranges.
- **Lapis Lazuli** — a rock composed chiefly of the minerals lazurite (deep blue), pyrite (metallic yellow), and calcite (white). The blue stone is commonly used in modern designs by contemporary Indian artists.
- **Onyx** — a translucent quartz stone which, in its natural state, is usually gray or pale blue. Onyx frequently is dyed black.
- **Shell** — the general term used for pieces of the outer hard surface of marine animals, particularly those of pearl oysters and abalones. Shell may be used in silver inlay work or may be shaped into flattened disks, drilled and strung into necklaces known as heishi.
- **Turquoise** — a copper mineral, often containing small brown or gray veins. Turquoise ranges in color from sky-blue to greenish-blue. The stone varies in hardness from soft/somewhat porous to hard. In the U.S., turquoise is found in the southwestern states. Use of turquoise from other countries is common.

Stone Treatments

Turquoise and other natural or mined stones used in jewelry may have been treated. Treating refers to any alteration of the properties or appearance of natural turquoise and other stones, with the exception of cutting and polishing. Under the FTC's Jewelry Guides, consumers should be told if a stone has been treated and the treatment is not permanent, the treatment creates special care requirements, or the treatment has a significant effect on the stone's value.

- **Dyeing** — adding blue dye to low-grade turquoise, and adding black to gray or pale blue onyx, to enhance the stone's appearance.
- **Reconstitution** — pulverizing fragments of turquoise, coral or lapis lazuli into powder. The powder is mixed with epoxy and worked into cakes or stones, which are used just like natural stones.
- **Stabilizing** — injecting clear, colorless acrylics into low- to medium-grade turquoise to toughen and harden the stone and enhance its color. Stabilizing is the most advanced and sophisticated method of treating turquoise. The majority of turquoise used today is stabilized. Natural gem-quality turquoise is usually only used by top artists and commands much higher prices than stabilized turquoise.

It's not always easy to spot a counterfeit item but price, materials, appearance, and the seller's guarantee of authenticity may help.

IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT

The FTC works to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint or get free information on consumer issues, visit ftc.gov or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. Watch a video, *How to File a Complaint*, at ftc.gov/video to learn more. The FTC enters consumer complaints into the Consumer Sentinel Network, a secure online database and investigative tool used by hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

The Indian Arts and Crafts Board receives and refers valid complaints about violations of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act to the FBI for investigation and to the Department of Justice for legal action. To file a complaint under the Act, or to get free information about the Act, call the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, U.S. Department of the Interior, toll-free at 1-888-ART-FAKE (1-888-278-3253), or use the online complaint form at www.iacb.doi.gov. You also may write to the Indian Arts and Crafts Board at 1849 C Street, N.W., MS 2058-M1B, Washington, D.C. 20240.

June 2012

Federal Trade Commission
Bureau of Consumer Protection

Produced in cooperation with
Indian Arts and Crafts Board
U.S. Department of the Interior



Whether you're drawn to the beauty of turquoise and silver jewelry or the earth tone colors of Indian pottery, having some knowledge about American Indian arts and crafts can help you get the most for your money. Be aware also that because Indian arts and crafts are prized and often command higher prices, a few unscrupulous sellers misrepresent imitation arts and crafts as genuine.



GETTING WHAT YOU PAY FOR

The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 helps ensure that buyers of Indian arts and crafts products get what they pay for by making it illegal to misrepresent that a product is made by an Indian. Under the Act, any item produced after 1935 that is marketed using terms such as “Indian,” “Native American” or “Alaska Native” must be made by a member of a State or federally-recognized tribe or by a certified Indian artisan. A certified Indian artisan is an individual who is certified by an Indian tribe as a nonmember Indian artisan.

In advertising or marketing a product, it is a violation of the Act to state or imply falsely that the product is made by an Indian or is the product of a particular tribe. For example, advertising or marketing a product as “Navajo Jewelry” that is not produced by members of the Navajo Nation is a violation of the law. Terms such as “Indian,” “Native American” or the name of a particular Indian tribe, accompanied by qualifiers such as “ancestry,” “descent” and “heritage” — for instance, “Native American heritage” or “Cherokee descent” — do not mean that the person is a member of an Indian tribe. These terms do mean that the person is of descent, heritage or ancestry of the tribe, and the terms should be used only if truthful.



BUYING TIPS

American Indian arts and crafts are sold through many outlets, including tourist stores, gift shops and art galleries. Here are some tips to help you shop wisely:

- Buy from an established dealer who will give you a written guarantee or written verification of authenticity.
- Get a receipt that includes all the vital information about the value of your purchase, including any verbal representations. For example, if the salesperson told you that the piece of jewelry you're buying is sterling silver and natural turquoise and was handmade by an American Indian artisan, insist that this information appear on your receipt.
- Before buying Indian arts and crafts at powwows, annual fairs, juried competitions, and other events, check the event requirements for information about the authenticity of the products being offered for sale. Many events list their requirements in newspaper ads, promotional flyers, and printed programs. If the event organizers make no statement about the authenticity of Indian arts and crafts being offered for sale, get written verification of authenticity for any item you purchase that claims to be authentic.

For an Indian art or craft object to be an “Indian product,” all work on the product must have been by an Indian or Indians. To learn more about the Indian Arts and Crafts Act and related state laws, visit the Indian Arts and Crafts Board at www.doi.gov/iacb/publications, or call the Board's toll-free number, **1-888-ART-FAKE**.

IDENTIFYING AUTHENTIC AMERICAN INDIAN JEWELRY

- **Price** — Although Indians may make and sell inexpensive souvenir-type items, authentic high-quality Indian jewelry can be expensive.
- **Appearance** — Well-crafted jewelry has no wavering lines or lopsided designs. If a design is stamped into silver — the most common metal used — the image should be clear. Images on imitations often are blurred. High-quality pieces use stones that are well-cut and uniform in size, and fit snugly into their settings. The stones on imitations may be poorly cut, leaving a large amount of metal-colored glue visible between the stone and the metal. Look for the artist's “hallmark” stamped on the jewelry. Many Indian artists use a hallmark — a symbol or signature — to identify their work.
- **Guarantee of Authenticity** — A reputable dealer will give you a written guarantee.



TYPE OF MATERIALS

Silver

Silver is the most common metal used in American Indian jewelry.

- **Sterling** describes metal containing 92.5 parts silver and 7.5 parts other metal. According to the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Jewelry Guides, any item marked “silver” must be sterling.
- **Coin Silver** describes metal containing 90 parts silver and 10 parts other metal. It is called “coin” because Indians melted down pre-1900 American and Mexican coins to make jewelry before they were able to obtain commercially made ingots and sheet silver.
- **German Silver** — also called Nickel Silver — refers to 60 parts copper, 20 parts zinc, and 20 parts nickel. Under the FTC's Jewelry Guides, no item should be called silver, even with a modifier such as “German” or “Nickel,” unless it contains at least 90 percent silver. Nevertheless, you may see or hear this term used in connection with Indian jewelry. In particular, some Sioux and Southern Plains Indian metalsmiths work in this metal because it is associated with their cultural heritage.
- **Drawn Silver** refers to the way sterling sheet silver is rolled and pulled through a drawplate to get a certain circumference. It is then cut into tiny segments, filed and strung into strands for necklaces. It is sometimes called “liquid silver.” A few artists make hand-pulled silver but the majority of liquid silver is manufactured, not handmade.

