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WHAT THOSE STAMPS ON YOUR JEWELRY MEAN

"**KARAT**" (abbreviated "K") refers to the purity of gold.

Pure gold (100% fine) is 24 karats (24K), although it's generally referred to as ".999 fine". Therefore, each karat of gold purity is 1/24th, or .0417%. Here is a near-complete table (exceptions exist):

24K	24/24	99.9% pure	certified bullion, some coins
22K	22/24	91.67% pure	some coins, Asian jewelry
18K	18/24	75.00% pure	jewelry
16K	16/24	66.67% pure	older dental gold
14K	14/24	58.33% pure	jewelry ("plumb" gold)
14K	14/24	55.00% pure	jewelry ("commercial 14K)
12K	12/24	50.00% pure	jewelry (decorative rose or green top-work)
10K	10/24	41.67% pure	jewelry (lowest legal purity in U.S), newer dental gold
9K	9/24	37.50% pure	jewelry (British commonwealth)
8K	8/24	33.33% pure	jewelry (earlier German)

"1/20th 10K Gold Filled (or **GF**)" (or any similar figures), "Rolled Gold Plate (or **RGP**)", and "18K Heavy Gold Electroplate (**HGE**)" are various types of gold plating. The precious metal content of gold-plated articles is minimal. The same is true for silver-plated articles.

"**CARAT**" (abbreviated "ct") refers to the weight of a gemstone, usually a diamond.

A carat is 1/5 (20%) of a gram. A one-carat diamond weighs 0.2 grams. A five-carat diamond weighs 1.0 gram. A quarter-carat diamond weighs 0.05 grams. The cut, shape and dimensions of a gemstone are irrelevant to its carat weight.

One carat consists of 100 "points". The points are an expression of weight alone and have nothing to do with the points of the facets (faces) that result from cutting and polishing the gemstone. A quarter-carat diamond weighs 25 points, which is equal to 0.05 grams.

"**TOTAL WEIGHT**" (abbreviated "tw") refers to the total weight of all similar stones in a piece of jewelry. For example, a ring with 50 two-point diamonds and a ring with 2 fifty-point (half-carat) diamonds are both 1 ctw (one carat total weight), but the second ring is most likely worth quite a bit more than the first!

Most other stamps on your jewelry probably refer only to the designer, manufacturer or country of origin.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT...

A "**TROY**" ounce (abbreviated "T.O." or "O.T.") is different than an "**AVOIR DU POIR**" ("regular") ounce. While a regular ounce consists of 28.35 grams, a troy ounce consists of 31.103 grams, almost 10% heavier. In everyday usage, no one refers to "**TROY POUNDS**" of gold: 1,000 troy ounces is referred to as "1,000 ounces", and 10,000 ounces is referred to as "10,000 ounces."

A "**KILO**" is short for a "kilogram" which is 1,000 grams. Divide 1,000 grams by 31.103 grams to the troy ounce and you'll find that a "kilo" weighs ~32.15 troy ounces.

Fortunately, a "**GRAM**" is a gram is a gram.

By the way, a "**PENNYWEIGHT**" (abbreviated "DWT"... don't ask!) is 1/20th of a troy ounce... but, who cares? Usually, somebody talking about pennyweights is only trying to confuse you.