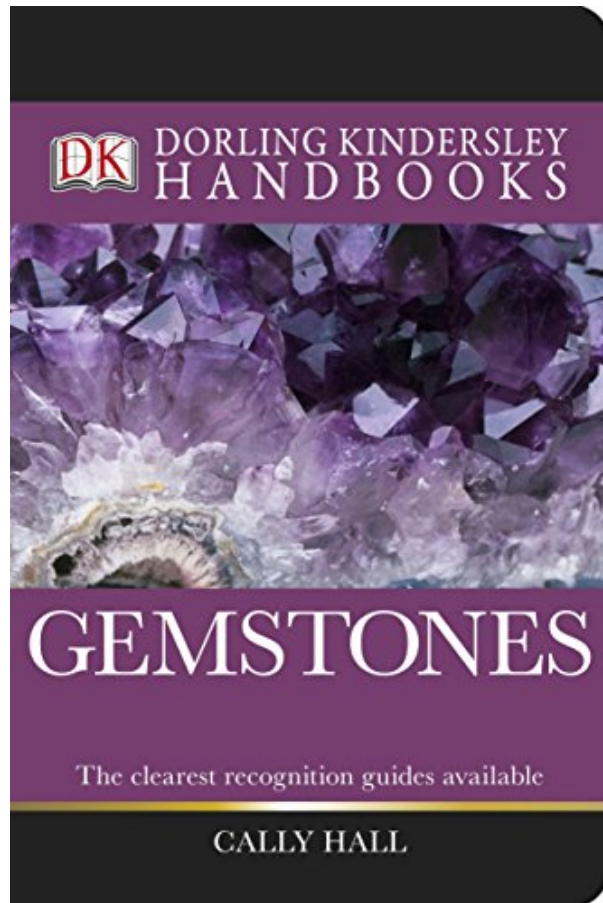


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This is a new edition of the clearest, most authoritative guide to gemstones you will find. From Amber to Rubellite, discover over 130 varieties of cut and uncut stones, organic gemstones and precious metals. 800 incredible photos, precise annotations and detailed descriptions, including everything from gemstone shapes to their composition, will help you to identify different stones quickly and easily. It covers everything from what a gemstone is and where they occur to the natural properties they have and how they have been fashioned and imitated through the ages. It is perfect for gemstone lovers - a comprehensive guide for collectors.

- Sales Rank: #3590929 in Books
- Published on: 2010-07-01
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- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.23" h x .43" w x 5.47" l, .63 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 160 pages

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142 of 145 people found the following review helpful.

A handy quick reference guide that is easy to use.

By Rebecca Huston

I fear that I am a bit of a magpie. I like shiny sparkly things, and the usual response is Ooooh! Shiny! And as a young one, when taken on various trips, I started to take an interest in rockhounding and geology. It was finding gemstones that were the real fun, seeing these little bits of glittery rock that turned out to be sapphires or amethysts or garnets. Life would take me in different directions, but the interest in pretty, glittery rocks has remained.

Smithsonian Handbooks: Gemstones is one of those lovely little books that is crammed full of information and pictures, along some folklore and bits of trivia that add to the mystique of gemstones. Compiled by Cally Hall, it's a very readable book, filled with more than 800 photographs, with a text that while it is slanted towards scientific terms, is very readable and accessible.

The first section of the book is an extended introduction to what makes a gemstone different than say, a mineral, although they might be composed of the same chemicals. A brief history of how gemstones and precious metals (silver, gold and platinum) have been shaped, worn and coveted. One section that I found very interesting was the explanation of the Mohs scale used to determine hardness -- it ranges from 1 to 10, with talc at the bottom, and diamond at the top, and how a stone is determined to fit in along the scale. Another fascinating section is how light and crystallization help to determine gemstones, and what part they play in how a stone is shaped and graded. There is also a section on synthetic gemstones and how they have been created over the centuries, and how the colour of stones can be changed by irradiation, heating and staining the stones. Finally, the section closes with a colour key, ranging various stones by their hues, with plenty of vivid pictures and the name of each stone underneath along with the page that goes into more detail

about it.

The next section deals with the gemstones and precious metals in particular. Each item is classified into Precious Metals, Cut Stones, and Organics -- and each item is given a page or two that goes into further detail. Stones are given their chemical composition, rating on the Mohs scale, crystal structure, some folklore and history, what sort of cuts that the stones are usually shaped into, and lots of photographs.

It here in the photographs that the book sells itself. They are unusually clear, and crisply printed, with each gemstone being shown in a variety of ways. There is jewelry, different colours that the stone can occur in, and a few shown in their 'matrix' or the surrounding stone and minerals that the gemstones are usually found in their natural state. One of the more intriguing sections is on what are known as Organic Gemstones -- stones that are created by natural, not chemical, occurrences, such as pearls, jet, coral, ivory, shell and amber.

The final sections include a table of properties, glossary, index, and some useful addresses to contact if you find that you want to find out more.

The binding is very sturdy, the printing very clean and crisp with the design well-thought out that flows easily from page to page. It is designed to stand up to quite a bit of use, with a spine that will not crack, and heavier than usual paper stock, and the quality is top notch.

Packed into less than a 160 pages, this is a wonderfully priced little book that gives a quick, informative and lively look at gemstones. While it's certainly not a perfect book, and is mostly designed to help the reader figure out what a stone may or may not be -- only a trained gemologist can tell you what it really is -- it's a fun way to start learning. The price was extremely reasonable, less than 10\$US, although the cover price is listed as 20\$US. It would make a perfect book for adding to a home library, or as a gift to the budding rockhound in your family.

Five solid stars. Recommended.

88 of 92 people found the following review helpful.

Gemstones (Smithsonian Handbooks) by Cally Hall

By Jo McGillem

A great book for beginners and experienced gemstone enthusiasts alike. Information ranges from simple descriptions for identification purposes (especially inclusions), to detailed terminology for the experienced rock hound.

I have purchased so called beginners books in the past (for identification purposes) and they require expert gemmologists to understand.

108 of 118 people found the following review helpful.

A great guide

By Rosey World Traveler

This is a clear, concise, easy to read guide to gems. Well photographed. A great primer for those unfamiliar with all the different types of stones, and a good reference for those who are more knowledgeable. Excellent for jewelers and designers to use with customers. Highly recommended.

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