

FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Division of Consumer & Business Education

Going Platinum: What to Look for When Buying Platinum Jewelry

Platinum ... the very word conjures up quality and luxury. When it comes to jewelry, platinum usually is mixed with similar metals or non-precious base metals. The value of a platinum piece of jewelry often depends on the percentage of platinum it contains: the higher the percentage of pure platinum, the higher the value. The Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency, says that knowing how marketers describe platinum and what questions to ask can help you make an informed choice when you're shopping.

No platinum jewelry is 100 percent pure platinum. Traditionally, platinum jewelry contained 85 to 95 percent pure platinum alloyed with other precious metals. In recent years, some platinum pieces have been alloyed with a larger percentage of non-precious base metals (like copper and cobalt).

Ask your jeweler about the attributes of any piece of platinum jewelry you're considering buying to give you an idea of the piece's quality and value for the cost. Find out if the item is hypoallergenic, durable, lustrous, dense, scratch and tarnish resistant, if it can be resized or repaired and if it retains the precious metal over time. Marketers should tell you if a platinum/base metal alloy item does *not* have these attributes.

Marketers describe or mark platinum in terms of the percentage of pure platinum in the piece. An item should be at least 50 percent pure platinum (or 500 "parts per thousand" platinum) to bear any kind of marking indicating its platinum content. It also will have other metals – either the precious platinum group metals that include iridium, palladium, ruthenium, rhodium and osmium – or non-precious base metals like copper and cobalt.

How To Interpret the Markings

When you're looking at a piece of platinum jewelry, you may see a variety of markings or descriptions indicating how much platinum it contains: Some marketers spell out the word platinum; others abbreviate it as Plat. or Pt. Here's how to read those marks so you can determine the platinum content of a piece of jewelry:

If an item is marked or described as **platinum** without any qualification, it has at least *95 percent pure platinum* (950 parts per thousand) or is nearly pure platinum. The seller does not need to disclose the percentage or parts per thousand.

Pieces that are *85 percent platinum* (850 parts per thousand) contain 15 percent other metals, either precious platinum group metals and/or base metals. You may see these pieces described as traditional platinum. This describes most platinum jewelry now sold in the U.S. For these items, look for **the amount of pure platinum** and the word “**platinum**” or an abbreviation for the word. For instance:

- **850Pt.** means an item is 85 percent pure platinum.
- **900Pt.** means an item is 90 percent pure platinum.

For items containing between *50 and 85 percent pure platinum* (from 500 to 850 parts per thousand) *combined with other platinum group metals*, marketers should **state the amount of pure platinum and the amount of other platinum group metals**. For example:

- **800 Pt. 200 Pd.** means an item is 80 percent pure platinum, 20 percent palladium.
- **750 Pt. 250 Rh.** means an item is 75 percent pure platinum, 25 percent rhodium.
- **600 Pt. 350 Ir.** means an item is 60 percent pure platinum, 35 percent iridium.

Platinum jewelry alloyed with 15 to 50 percent non-precious or base metals also may bear a “platinum” label. These platinum/base metal alloys contain from *50 to 85 percent pure platinum* (500 to 850 parts per thousand) *but the total of pure platinum and other platinum group metals is less than 95 percent* (950 parts per thousand) of the item. For these pieces, marketers should **state the amounts of pure platinum and other metals in the piece using the full name of each metal and the percentage of each metal** in the piece: No abbreviations or “parts per thousand” should be used in advertising. For example:

- **75% Platinum 25% Copper** means the piece has 75 percent pure platinum and 25 percent copper.
- **60% Platinum, 35% Cobalt, 5% Rhodium** has 60 percent pure platinum, 35 percent cobalt and 5 percent rhodium.

Any item that’s *less than 50 percent pure platinum* should **not** be marked or labeled as “platinum.”

The bottom line? You don’t need to be a jeweler to know what you’re buying. If you don’t see a mark or label with the percentage – or parts per thousand – of platinum, it doesn’t contain enough platinum to be called platinum, regardless of what a seller tells you.

Examples

If You See This on The Label	What It Means
Platinum	At least 95% pure platinum
850Plat.	85% pure platinum and 15% platinum group or base metals
800 Pt. 200 Pd.	80% pure platinum and 20% palladium; the product contains 100% platinum group metals
75% Platinum 25% Copper	75% pure platinum and 25% copper; the total of pure platinum and other platinum group metals is less than 95%
No platinum label	Less than 50% pure platinum

For More Information

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 new 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.

