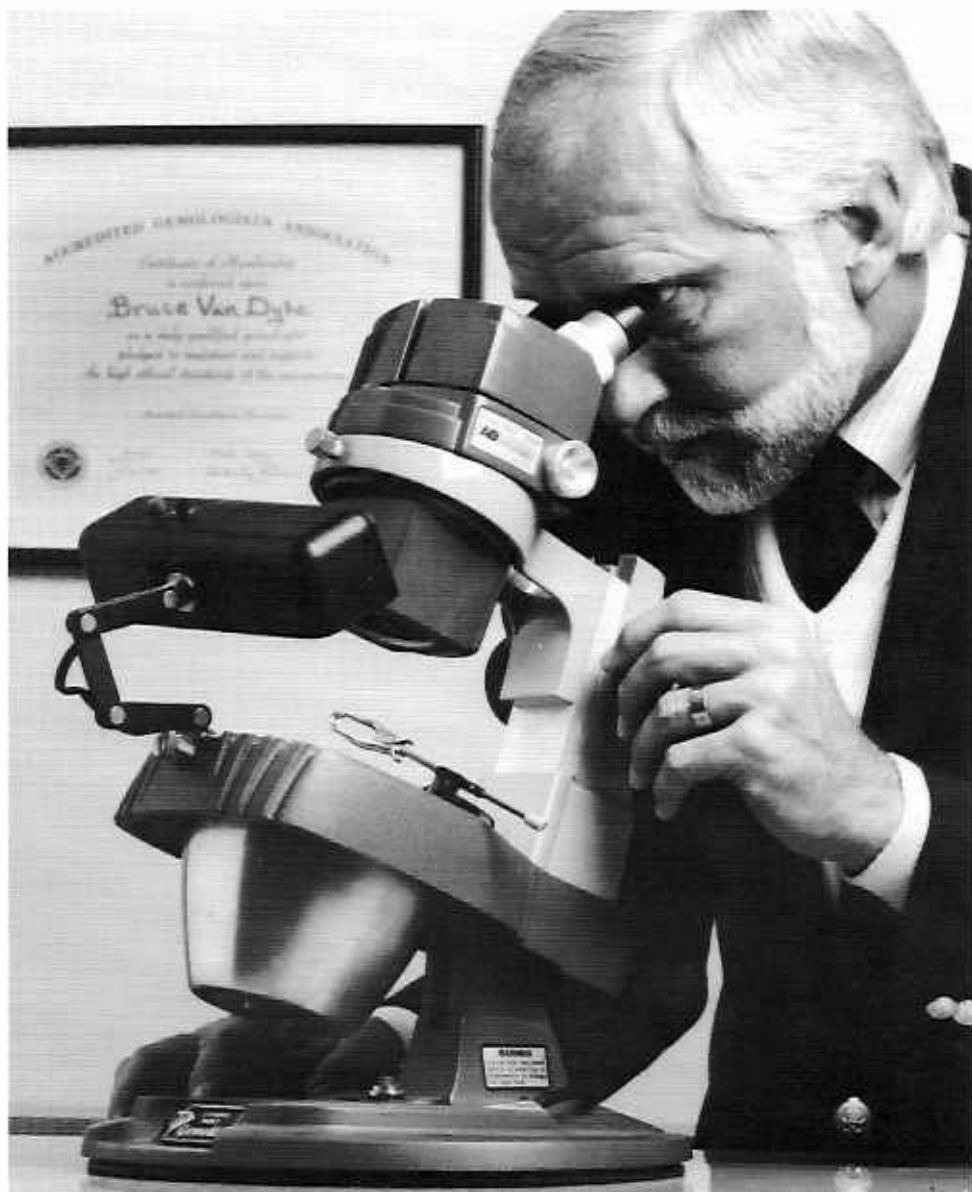


# TAKE A CLOSER LOOK



ACCREDITED GEMOLOGISTS ASSOCIATION

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## **An Introduction to the Accredited Gemologists Association**

Gold. Diamonds. Pearls. Mankind has always treasured gems and precious metals because of their beauty and mystery. But today, mystery isn't enough. When we buy, sell, or insure gemstones and jewelry, we need to know exactly what they are and how much they're worth. We often trust gemologists for this information.

Unfortunately, not all gemologists are worthy of this trust. For too long, private and commercial consumers have had to deal with the problems of fraudulent or unskilled gemological services. Many people's jewelry is under- or over-insured because of inaccurate appraisals. Unwary jewelry buyers are sometimes tricked by artificially inflated appraised values. Dishonest appraisals for tax shelter and investment scams are becoming routine.

Consumers, professionals, and reputable gemologists are up in arms over these increasing abuses. How can the public know who to trust?

When consumers see the certificate of the Accredited Gemologists Association, they know they've found an expert, trustworthy gemologist. That's because the AGA is an organization of competent gemologists dedicated to the highest ethical and professional standards.

The purpose of the Accredited Gemologists Association is to serve private and commercial clients by certifying that each Association member is a source of honest, expert gemological services. To accomplish this mission, Association members adhere to the industry's highest standards in three important areas: professional competence, gemological knowledge, and ethical practices.

The Association was founded in 1974 by a group of concerned gemologists. From the beginning, they expected rigorous membership requirements to keep enrollment small. But in little more than a decade the Association has spread to 14 countries, counting among its 300 members many of the world's foremost gemological authorities. Why has the AGA seal become so important?

The AGA certificate is a hallmark by which individuals and businesses can identify trustworthy, capable gemologists throughout the world. Insurance and investment professionals hail the Association's code as a long-overdue standard of reliability in the jewelry industry. Consumers rely on Association members for accurate gemological information, vital because of today's higher values, changing tax laws, and technological advances in gemstone treatment and synthetics.

**“Accredited Gemologists Association members adhere to the industry’s highest standards in three important areas:**

**Professional Competence**

**Gemological Knowledge**

**Ethical Practices.”**

# 1. Professional Competence

To insure that AGA members provide expert gemological services, the Association holds its members to high standards.

Members must satisfy educational requirements and follow strict guidelines in their practice of gemology.

## Membership Prerequisites

Candidates for full membership in the Association must hold a degree in gemology from specialized schools such as the Gemological Institute of America or the Gemmological Association of Great Britain, or have a PhD. in a related field. Associate memberships are available to students in these schools, providing many of the benefits of membership.

## Professional Practices

The Association's Code of Professional Conduct lists many specific criteria for gemological practices, all aimed at protecting the interest of clients by providing them with accurate, complete information.

Besides technical standards, the code stresses the importance of fully communicating to clients all qualitative and quantitative information that has a bearing on the value of their gems and jewelry. Gemologists are required to fully disclose the methods, tests and grading systems used to arrive at their conclusions, the range of value and increment for inflation, and any limitations affecting the accuracy of the report.

AGA gemologists are under obligation to be thoroughly familiar with each item before issuing any opinion regarding its identification or value. In each case, they are required to determine which type of valuation is appropriate (insurance value, resale value, gift value, etc.) and to discuss with owners the need for periodic reassessment because of fluctuating values.

The code requires that all reports be written in accurate, well-defined terminology. Any party, whether known to the gemologist or not, should be able to rely on the validity and objectivity of the report.

## Master Gemological Appraiser Program

The most prestigious designation within the appraisal industry is that of Master Gemologist Appraiser (MGA). MGA certification means a gemologist is on the leading edge of appraisal technology. The MGA program was the first in the industry to require its members to pass the Munsell 100-hue color discrimination test, use an approved colored stone grading system, and give full treatment disclosure. The MGA was also the first body of appraisers to actively police its members to ensure coherence to its ethical and professional standards.

To become an MGA, a member must complete a comprehensive training and testing process. Master Gemologist Appraisers must recertify every three years.

## Accredited Lab Program

A prerequisite for status as an MGA is the Accredited Laboratory, which requires master diamond sets, microscope, an AGA-approved colored stone grading system, and many other types of essential gemological testing equipment.



## 2. Gemological Knowledge

The Association sponsors activities and publications to inform members about the newest gemological and appraisal techniques. Members view these as the greatest advantages of AGA membership.

### Publications

**Cornerstone** is the official journal of the Accredited Gemologists Association. Published semi-annually, it features member's articles on the latest developments in gemology, including world-wide gem trends and discoveries, new instruments and synthetic techniques, and appraisal updates. It also carries transcripts of selected AGA convention presentations. Subscription to **Cornerstone** is included with AGA membership fees.

Each month, members receive a short bulletin that reports the latest lab developments, appraisal trends, and membership information.

To help members contact each other easily, the Association publishes a membership directory each year.

### Conventions and Conferences

Perhaps the highlight of AGA membership is the convention held each February in conjunction with the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show. Members hear from world-renowned gemologists and attend workshops on the latest gemological and appraisal techniques. The full AGA membership convenes to install new officers and vote on policy statements. The Master Gemologist Appraiser course and entrance examinations are also offered during the convention.

A regional conference is held every year in a different area of the country. These are condensed versions of the main convention and give members additional opportunities to learn and participate.

Besides these major events, each local chapter of the AGA meets regularly to allow members to share information and maintain professional standards. Part of the membership fee is specifically designated to support local chapters.

### Gemological Research

Through its Research and Development Committee, the AGA sponsors studies of gem identification, treatment, and appraisal techniques. The Committee releases its findings to members regularly to keep them informed of the latest developments in gemology.

### Issues and Advocacy

The Standards and Disclosure Committee gathers member input to formulate Association policy on issues facing the industry. Members are able to vote on these policy statements at the annual convention. This way, the AGA adapts to the current environment while it remains rooted in its high standards.

Officers of the Association contact public officials to advocate policies that benefit the gemological, jewelry and appraisal industries.



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### 3. Ethical Practices

The Accredited Gemologists Association was founded because of the need to identify trustworthy gemologists. Standards of competence and continuing education would mean nothing without the Association's absolute commitment to the highest level of ethical conduct. When the AGA emblem is affixed to a gemologist's report, consumers can be sure that the appraisal was honestly and objectively conducted.

#### Code of Ethics

The Association's code of ethics is comprehensive. It specifically outlaws all practices that have ever been used to mislead consumers, bias court cases or defraud insurance settlements. Candidates are required to sign this code before they are admitted to the Association.

The AGA believes that all principles of appraisal ethics stem from one central fact: the numerical result of an appraisal must be completely objective and unrelated from the desires of the client or the gemologist. The code is designed to make sure that appraised values are based on accurate gemological data and current market conditions, not on the interest of the client or appraiser.

Members are forbidden to do work for a percentage of the appraised value or a commission on sales. They are not allowed to suppress or emphasize any facts in order to aid a client in reaching any objectives. The code also declares it unethical for members to accept engagements in which their compensation is contingent upon the amount of a court settlement or tax reduction.

The code contains requirements regarding confidentiality, disclosure, fee quotations, advertising, statement of qualifications, knowledge of appraised items, signatures on reports, and protection of professional reputations of fellow gemologists.

#### Ethics and Grievance Committee

The Association is comprised of professional gemologists who are seeking to protect their profession. In that effort, members report any suspected unethical conduct to the Ethics and Grievance Committee. This committee investigates all allegations and looks for violations in any of four categories: deviations from good appraisal practices, failure to fulfill obligations and responsibilities, unprofessional conduct, and unethical conduct.

If the committee finds that violations have occurred, they can take action in the form of suggestion, censure, suspension or expulsion. Those suspended or expelled are denied further rights to display any AGA emblems or claim Association membership. These actions are taken to protect the Association's purpose: to identify honest, expert gemologists.

While it is unfortunate that a few members have been disciplined and even expelled, this fact further solidifies the Association's credibility as an actively self-policing group of trustworthy professionals.



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## **Membership in the Accredited Gemologists Association**

AGA membership makes you a part of the world's leading gemological organization. The Association is breaking new ground in the areas of gem research, appraisal practices, and the ethical and legal issues surrounding the industry.

If the Association's standards of excellence match yours, consider one of the levels of membership listed below.

### **Associate Membership**

Anyone with an interest in gemology may apply for associate membership in the AGA. Associate members enjoy the basic benefits of full membership but have no voting privileges and may not claim membership in any business advertising. Membership dues are half the full member fees.

### **Full Membership**

Candidates must have a degree from a recognized gemological school such as the GIA, the Gemmological Association of Great Britain, the Canadian Gemmological Association, etc., or hold a PhD. in an approved, related field.

### **Master Gemologist Appraiser**

Full members with five years of appraisal experience and access to an Accredited Laboratory can apply for the MGA program. The designation is awarded after candidates pass practical and written examinations prepared by the GIA. MGAs must recertify every three years.

### **For More Information**

For further information or membership application forms, fill out and mail the reply card within this brochure, or write:

Accredited Gemologist Association  
Office of Admission/Membership  
c/o Robert Rosenblatt  
1703 Laird Avenue  
Salt Lake City, UT 84108



## ACCREDITED GEMOLOGISTS ASSOCIATION

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- I am interested in joining the Accredited Gemologists Association. Please send me a complete membership application including Association requirements, code of ethics, and membership fees. I am interested in  Association membership
- Full membership.
- Please send me more information about the Master Gemologist Appraiser (MGA) program.
- Please contact me. I have further questions about the AGA.

Name .....

Company .....

Address .....

..... Zip .....

