

Swarovski Crystal Beads

(reprinted from "Beads & Jewelry" Newsletter #3, August 2005 © Laura Bracken)

The actual Swarovski (pronounced: swore-off-ski) website (www.Swarovski.com) focuses primarily on the collectible Swarovski figurines and on Swarovski jewelry.

However we, bead and jewelry-making people, are more often interested in the Swarovski crystal beads and beading components. BTW, these beads are also often referred to as "Austrian crystal" since the Swarovski company is in Austria. AND... "crystal" is an actual thing... an entity. It is man-made, but it is not entirely glass. It is glass with the addition of "lead" or more technically correct "lead oxide".

So brief history of Swarovski... the company that makes the beads we love.

At the end of the 19th century, Daniel Swarovski invented the automatic cutting machine. According to the Swarovski website, "The philosophy of founder Daniel Swarovski was *to constantly improve on what is good*". Sounds good to me!

Did you know, also, that there is now a Swarovski "theme park"?

Swarovski crystal beads are the finest in the world. But please don't confuse the use of the word "crystal" here with things like "crystal Quartz". Swarovski crystals are 100% man-made.

Part of the reason they sparkle more than, say, fire-polished Czech glass (which is NOT crystal... it is glass) is they are "fully leaded" (usually 32%).

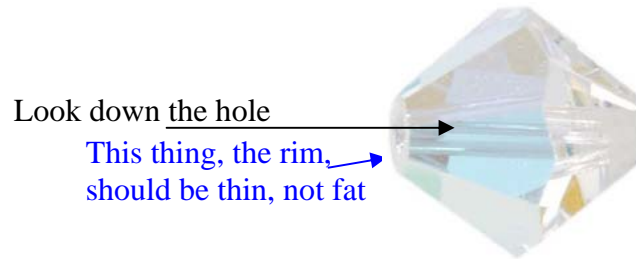
The British Standard for crystal is as follows:
Fine crystal must contain 6% to 10% lead oxide
Lead crystal must contain 10% to 24% lead oxide
Fully leaded crystal must contain 24% or more lead oxide

The huge array of Swarovski colors is another thing that keeps them in the forefront of the market. Their colors are achieved, btw, with chemicals, not dyes.

Since I'm including genuine and imitation Swarovski crystals in this newsletter, one of the things I want to go over is the different ways to try to determine fake from real.

- The facet edges (corners... where the points meet) *SHOULD* line up perfectly
- I have never purchased genuine Swarovski as a strung strand of beads; look closely if you are purchasing Swarovski crystals already strung
- There should be no variation in size or shape from bead to bead; they are machine cut
- No other crystal sparkles as much as a genuine Swarovski crystal; compare, compare, compare... you will get used to the difference, but the easiest way to be sure is to hold a genuine and a fake together
- If buying AB (aurora borealis) finish crystals, the sheen will be uniform with no imperfections... and you should not see "oil slick" type swirls in the finish
- Beware if your seller is displaying the Swarovski "swan" logo... that logo is to be used *ONLY* for Swarovski created jewelry, not for beads and components
- No visible bubbles (you can also use a simple 10x jeweler's loupe)

- Take a genuine and a fake, go to a bright light, and hold them both so you are looking down on them (you can see the hole at the top); the genuine Swarovski crystal bead will have a thinner rim... AND the genuine will be infinitely more translucent in the bicone (fatter) area



By the way... know who supplied all those "mood rings" back in the day? ;-)

If you're familiar with Swarovski beads, then you're probably also familiar with the main 4-digit numbers that identify the shapes.



5301, for example, is your typical bicone shape



5000 are the rounds



5601 are the cubes

There are a couple of good places on the internet to see the different shapes of Swarovski beads:
<http://www.jsbeads.com/Swarovski-Crystal/Swarovski-Shapes.asp>
<http://www.beadwarehouse.com/> (follow the links, the URLs are way too long on this site... ugh!)

And to see the different color choices:

<http://www.crystal-beads.co.uk/colour-chart.html>
<http://www.jsbeads.com/Swarovski-crystal/Swarovski-Color-Chart.asp>
<http://www.rainbowsoflight.com/Colorchart.html>
<http://www.beads.tv/Catalogues/Swarovoski/colourchart.htm>

And different coatings:

<http://www.jsbeads.com/Swarovski-crystal/SwarovskiCoatings.asp>
<http://www.2bead.com/2Bead2/addtlInfo/SWColorCht.asp>

Now, about those "coatings"... Here's an explanation of some of the basic coating possibilities for Swarovski crystal beads:

Ordinary coatings

AB (aka "aurora borealis" or "aurora boreale") = very light rainbow effect, applied to PART of the bead or ALL of the bead, but normally to half of the bead

AB 2X = aurora borealis finish applied to two sides (or the whole) of a bead

Comet Argent Light (aka CAL) (also available as 2X on clear crystal, making it look like an untarnishable silver bead) = bright silvery finish

Satin (aka Hematite) (also available as 2X) = somewhat transparent, but gives bead extra sheen

Special coatings

Aurum (also available as 2X) = real gold (more expensive too) finish

Bermuda Blue (also available as 2X) = opaque finish of deep blue tones

Dorado = opaque bronze finish

Heliotrope = intense purple/green finish when looked at *through* the crystal; to the outside appears dull brown/gray

Glacier Blue (also available as 2X) = cobalt blue finish

Meridian Blue = silvery with overtones of light blue

Sahara = light yellow shiny finish

Tabac = dark coppery/gold finish

Transmission = similar to aurora boreale

Vitrail Light = opaque finish that reflects different colors when held at different angles; used mainly on clear crystals

Vitrail Medium = same as above, but with more intensity

Volcano = silver on the outside, but purple/red when seen *through* the crystal

BTW, Swarovski are no longer producing the coatings of "Cathedral" or "Mink" because they were found to be damaging to the environment. You can, however, still find these beads for sale, even though they are no longer in production.

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