

UK hallmark identification chart

Gold, silver, platinum and palladium. Checked against GOV.UK hallmarking guidance, the Hallmarking Act 1973, the British Hallmarking Council and the UK assay offices on 11 September 2026.

1. A UK HALLMARK HAS THREE COMPULSORY MARKS

1

Sponsor's mark
At least two letters inside a surround. It shows who sent the item for hallmarking, which is not always the maker. [2, 5]

2

Fineness mark
The precious metal content in parts per thousand. The shape around the number shows the metal. [1, 2, 4]

3

Assay office mark
Shows which UK assay office tested and marked the item: London, Birmingham, Sheffield or Edinburgh. [1, 3]

Optional extras: a traditional symbol for the metal, a date letter, a commemorative mark and a Convention mark (a pair of scales). The date letter and the traditional symbols have been optional since January 1999. [1, 2, 7]

2. FINENESS MARKS: THE NUMBER IS PARTS PER THOUSAND, THE SHAPE IS THE METAL

METAL	SHAPE AROUND THE NUMBER	UK FINENESS MARKS (CARAT OR NAME, PURITY)						OPTIONAL TRADITIONAL SYMBOL
Gold Hallmark needed from 1 g	A rectangle with its corners cut off		375 9ct 37.5%		585 14ct 58.5%		750 18ct 75%	A crown, at every standard
			916 22ct 91.66%		990 99%		999 24ct 99.9%	
Silver Hallmark needed from 7.78 g	An oval		800 80%		925 sterling 92.5%		958 Britannia 95.84%	A lion passant on 925 (a lion rampant if marked in Edinburgh); Britannia or a lion on 958 and 999
			999 fine silver 99.9%					
Platinum Hallmark needed from 0.5 g	A house shape, pointed at the top		850 85%		900 90%		950 95%	An orb with a cross, on 950 and 999
							999 99.9%	
Palladium Hallmark needed from 1 g	Three joined circles, one digit in each (a trapezium on marks struck in 2009)		500 50%		950 95%		999 99.9%	The head of Pallas Athene
							2009 style (trapezium)	

Carat measures gold purity in 24ths, so 9ct is 9 parts in 24, which is 375 parts in 1,000, and 24ct is pure gold. A UK assay office cannot hallmark gold below 375, silver below 800, platinum below 850 or palladium below 500, so a lower number is not a UK hallmark. The legal standards behind the 916 and 958 marks are 916.6 and 958.4. Shapes drawn as plain outlines. [2, 3, 4]

3. ASSAY OFFICE MARKS (DESCRIBED, NOT REPRODUCED)

- London: a leopard's head.** Marking with the leopard's head dates from a statute of 1300. Goldsmiths' Hall has housed a permanent assay office since 1478. [3, 5]
- Birmingham: an anchor.** Opened in 1773 under the Act of Parliament that also created the Sheffield office. [3, 5, 6]
- Sheffield: a rose.** Opened in 1773. Until 1975 its town mark on silver was a crown, so a crown on older Sheffield silver is the town mark, not a gold mark. The rose was used on gold from 1904 and on silver too from 1975. [3, 7, 5]
- Edinburgh: a castle.** The Edinburgh Assay Office dates its hallmarking to 1457. [3, 8]

Older pieces can carry the mark of a British assay office that has since closed, such as Chester, which closed in 1962. Check those against a specialist chart. [7]

5. SOLID, PLATED, OR NOT A HALLMARK AT ALL?

- "Rolled gold" and "gold plated" describe a layer of gold over another metal, not solid gold. Under the Hallmarking Act 1973, an item that needs a hallmark and has none may be described as gold only with the word "plated" or "rolled", lettered at least as large as the rest of the description. [3]
- GF (gold filled), RGP (rolled gold plate), GP (gold plate), GEP (gold electroplate) and HGEP (heavy gold electroplate) describe a gold layer over another metal, and RG stands for rolled gold. None is a hallmark, and gold-plated or rolled gold base metal cannot be hallmarked in the UK. [9, 2]
- EPNS (electroplated nickel silver), EPBM and "silver plate" mark silver-plated items, not solid silver. [6]
- A number stamped on its own, such as 925 or 14K, is not a full UK hallmark. A Convention hallmark from a member country, which includes a pair of scales, is legally recognised in the UK. [1, 6, 4]
- No hallmark does not always mean no precious metal. Items under the weights above, current or former coins, dental work, and items made before 1950 that meet the minimum standard can all be unmarked. [2, 3]

4. READING A DATE LETTER

- Find the single letter inside a shield, usually in the same row as the other marks.
- Note the letter, whether it is a capital, its typeface and the shape of the shield. All four change, so together they point to one year.
- Before 1975 each assay office ran its own sequence, so use the chart for the office whose mark is on the piece.
- Since 1975 all four UK offices have used the same letter, which changes on 1 January.
- The date letter has been optional since 1999, so a modern piece may not have one.

w 2021	x 2022	y 2023	z 2024	A 2025	B 2026
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UK date letters, 2021 to 2026. w, x, y and z are small letters. A new sequence in capitals began in 2025. [2, 5, 6, 7]

Optional commemorative marks have included the Silver Jubilee (1934 to 1935), the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (1953 to 1954), the Silver Jubilee (1977), the Millennium (1999 to 2000), the Golden Jubilee (2002), the Diamond Jubilee (2012), the Platinum Jubilee (November 2021 to December 2022) and the Coronation of King Charles III (March 2023 to December 2024). The Platinum Jubilee mark is an orb and could be struck on any metal, so an orb on its own does not prove platinum. [5, 6]

Look up any mark: goldpaid.co.uk/hallmark-lookup. Unsure? Photograph the marks in good light and ask an assay office, a registered valuer or a jeweller.

[1] GOV.UK, Hallmarking: practical guidance, summary (updated 30 December 2022).

gov.uk/government/publications/hallmarking-guidance-notes

[2] GOV.UK, from the Assay Offices of Great Britain, Hallmarking guidance notes (November 2022). gov.uk/government/publications/hallmarking-guidance-notes

[3] legislation.gov.uk, Hallmarking Act 1973, Schedules 1 and 2. legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1973/43

[4] British Hallmarking Council, Dealer's notice B, "Look for the Hallmark, It's Your Guarantee". assayofficelondon.co.uk/downloads

[5] The Goldsmiths' Company Assay Office, London, What is a hallmark; History of hallmarking;

Platinum Jubilee and Coronation commemorative marks. assayofficelondon.co.uk

[6] Birmingham Assay Office, Gold, silver, platinum and palladium hallmarking: date letters. theassayoffice.co.uk

[7] Sheffield Assay Office, History; date letter A for 2025; the Chester mark. assayoffice.co.uk

[8] Edinburgh Assay Office, Home page. edinburghassayoffice.co.uk

[9] US Federal Trade Commission, Guides for the Jewelry, Precious Metals, and Pewter Industries, 16 CFR 23.3 (gold plating terms). ecfr.gov, 16 CFR 23.3