Getting Your Gold Jewellery Ready for a Professional Valuation

Why a little preparation makes a difference

Having gold jewellery valued is a straightforward process, but a few minutes of careful preparation can help everything run smoothly. Whether you are considering selling a piece, updating your insurance or simply curious about what your items are worth, arriving with clean, well-organised jewellery gives the appraiser a clear view of what they are examining. This article walks through the practical steps to take before you hand over your pieces, with tips on what to watch for at each stage.

Step one: separate pieces by karat and condition

Gold jewellery is rarely all the same purity. A single jewellery box often contains 9-karat, 14-karat, 18-karat and sometimes 22-karat pieces. Before you visit a gold dealer Cape Town or any other valuator, sort your items by karat. Look for the small stamp inside rings, on clasps, or along the back of earrings. Common marks are 375 (9K), 585 (14K), 750 (18K) and 916 (22K). If a piece has no stamp, set it aside, the appraiser will test it, but knowing which items are unmarked helps you ask the right questions.

Also separate broken or damaged pieces from those in good wearable condition. A chain with a broken clasp still contains its gold weight, but the valuer will note the damage. If you have several similar items, grouping them saves time and helps the valuer give you a clear breakdown.

Step two: clean gently, but do not polish

A light clean removes dirt and oils that can hide details. Soak the pieces in warm water with a few drops of mild dish soap for ten minutes. Use a soft toothbrush to reach crevices, then rinse thoroughly and pat dry with a lint-free cloth. Do not use harsh chemicals, ultrasonic cleaners, or abrasive polishes. Harsh cleaning can remove a thin layer of metal, and polishing compounds can fill hallmarks and stamps, making them harder to read. The valuer needs to see the metal as it is, not as you have buffed it.

View the location on Google Maps

What to watch for: if a piece has gemstones, be extra careful. Some stones are porous or held in place with delicate settings. Stick to the soap-and-water method and avoid soaking anything with glued-in stones. When in doubt, just wipe the piece with a dry cloth and let the professional handle the rest.

Step three: gather any paperwork or original packaging

Receipts, certificates of authenticity, insurance appraisals and original boxes all add context. They do not change the gold content, but they can confirm the piece's history, brand or provenance. For example, a receipt showing the original purchase price and karat helps the valuer understand the item's background. If you have a valuation from years ago, bring it, it gives the appraiser a baseline to compare against current market conditions.

Do not worry if you have no paperwork. Most valuations are based on the physical inspection and testing of the metal itself. Paperwork is a bonus, not a requirement.

Step four: understand the basics of gold valuation

Before you walk in, it helps to know what the valuer will look at. The main factors are gold purity, weight, and the current market price for gold. Purity is measured in karats, with 24 karat being pure gold. Most jewellery is an alloy, meaning gold mixed with other metals for strength. The valuer will test each piece, often with an electronic tester or a touchstone and acid, to confirm the karat. They will then weigh the item on a precision scale. The weight is recorded in grams or troy ounces.

From there, the valuer calculates the fine gold content. For example, an 18-karat item is 75% gold, so they multiply the total weight by 0.75 to find the fine gold weight. That figure is then compared to the day's spot price for gold. What you watch for here is clarity: a reputable valuer will explain each step and show you the figures. If anything is unclear, ask. A good gold dealer Cape Town will be happy to walk you through the math.

Step five: check for non-gold components

Many jewellery pieces contain parts that are not gold. Clasps, posts, earring backs, and springs in bracelets are often made of a different metal, even on high-karat pieces. Some clasps are stamped with a karat mark, but many are not. The valuer will note these and may deduct their weight from the gold calculation. If you know a piece has a non-gold clasp, point it out. It shows you are attentive and helps the valuer give an accurate assessment.

Similarly, gemstones, pearls and enamel work are not gold. Their presence affects the weight used for the gold calculation. The valuer will assess the stones separately if they are significant, but for standard pieces, they simply note the stone weight and subtract it. Do not assume that a heavy ring is all gold, a large stone can account for much of the weight.

Step six: bring identification and be ready for questions

Most professional buyers require identity verification before they can proceed with a purchase. A valid South African ID book, passport or driver's licence is standard. If you are selling on behalf of someone else, you may need a letter of authority. Call ahead to confirm what the gold dealer Cape Town you plan to visit requires. Being prepared avoids a wasted trip.

The valuer may also ask where you acquired the piece, how long you have owned it, and whether it has been modified. Answer honestly. These questions are part of standard due diligence, not a judgment on your character. A straightforward conversation builds trust and helps the valuer give you a fair assessment.

For those looking for a reliable option in the city, Anthony Alan Gold Buyers Watches and Jewellery is a Cape Town gold buyer offering evaluations and purchases of gold, diamonds, jewellery, luxury watches and Krugerrands. Their team works with a wide range of items and follows standard industry practices for testing and pricing.

What to expect during the valuation itself

The valuer will examine each piece under a loupe or microscope, looking for stamps, signs of wear, repairs, and any hidden damage. They will test the metal on a discreet area, then weigh the item. You should be present for the entire process. A transparent valuation means you see every step. If the valuer takes the item to a back room without explanation, ask to watch. Most reputable dealers have no problem with this.

After testing, the valuer will give you a figure based on the fine gold weight and the current market price. They may also offer a purchase price if you are selling. You are under no obligation to accept on the spot. Take the information, think it over, and compare with other offers if you wish. A professional valuation is a service, and you are entitled to a clear breakdown in writing.

Final checks before you go

Before you leave home, do a quick inventory. List each piece with its karat, weight (if you know it), and any distinguishing features. This list becomes your reference when the valuer gives you their numbers. Keep your items in a secure pouch or small box, not loose in a bag where they can tangle or get scratched. If you are carrying multiple pieces, separate them with soft cloth or tissue paper.

A little preparation turns what could feel like a nerve-wracking appointment into a straightforward exchange of information. You walk in knowing your items, you understand the basics of how they will be tested, and you leave with a clear picture of their value. Whether your goal is to sell, insure, or simply satisfy your curiosity, those few steps make the whole experience easier for everyone.

If you are based in or visiting the Cape Town area and need a professional valuation, Anthony Alan Gold Buyers Watches and Jewellery at Ste 801, The Studios, 4 Loop St, Cape Town City Centre, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa, can be reached at +27 79 480 6137. They are a Cape Town gold buyer offering evaluations and purchases of gold, diamonds, jewellery, luxury watches and Krugerrands.