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## Diamond Clarity Grading - What is SI-3 and why should we care?

Prior to the introduction of the SI-3 clarity grade, diamonds were clarity graded, in a face-up position (through the table facet) to determine whether or not they contained eye visible inclusions. If they did, they were further categorized into three clarity grades: I-1, I-2 or I-3. If they contained no eye visible inclusions they were assigned one of eight clarity grades ranging from flawless to SI-2 depending on the size, location and nature of the inclusions.

The SI-3 clarity grade was introduced to address diamonds that contained eye visible inclusions but were considered less invasive. Some saw it as a sell-out by Rapaport (a leading diamond publication and pricelist), giving into pressure from the diamond industry, while others accepted it, reasoning that there were indeed some diamonds that did not deserve the stigma of an I-1 clarity grade. Regardless, it created an opportunity for dealers to have their I-1 diamonds re-certified in the hope that they would receive a higher clarity grade and potentially make more money.



Currently, of the five major laboratories (The American Gem Society - [AGS](#), The Gemological Institute of America - [GIA](#), The European Gemological Laboratory - [EGL](#), The International Gemological Institute - [IGI](#) and Hoge Raad Voor Diamant – [HRD](#)), only EGL and IGI use the SI-3 clarity grade. This automatically gives EGL & IGI a competitive edge by creating the possibility that an I-1 diamond, graded by AGS, GIA or HRD could receive an SI-3 grading. At the same token, it is also possible to have a borderline EGL or IGI SI-2/SI-3 diamond graded as an SI-2 by AGS, GIA or HRD because they do not use the SI-3 clarity grade.

What does this mean in terms of value?

If we look at the differences in price between SI-2 and I-1 diamonds colour graded D, E, F, G and H, it is not hard to see why the SI-3 clarity grade was introduced. With an average of 33%, the financial ramifications of clarity grading a diamond I-1 as opposed to SI-2 are immense, and it is no wonder diamond dealers and jewellers will send a diamond to a number of labs to try to get a higher clarity grade. It is also understandable why some labs use the SI-3 clarity grade and why certain people gravitate towards them.

<b>Colour</b>	<b>% Difference Between SI-2 and I-1</b>
D	34%
E	34%
F	34%
G	32%
H	32%

Based on 1.00ct diamonds, Round Brilliant Cut, Rappaport Diamond Report December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 Volume 36, No. 46

Of course, this creates an equally perplexing problem for the clarity grader who is required to assign an SI-3 clarity grade. Not only must he now determine if the inclusions are eye visible but to what extent. In terms of overall value, his determination will be crucial and is perhaps one more reason why it is important to ensure that there is more consistency when it comes to clarity grading diamonds.

This is a guest post by Geoffrey Dominy, author of [Handbook of Gemmology](#)

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