



opal glossary

What's in a name? Here are some of the terms you may come across when people talk about opals, though there are a great many more.

by Noël Yovovich

agate or banded opal Banded variety of opal; also opal alternating with bands of agate.

amatite Opal in the form of thick mounds, formed from hot silica-rich springs. See also geysерite.

bandfire opal Precious opal with play of color in wavy bands.

black opal Precious opal with a black, dark blue, dark green, dark gray or similar dark-colored background or base color; the most valuable form of opal.

blue bottle blue jelly opal (transparent without play of color) found in Australia; also called blue bottle potch.

bone opal Opal pseudomorph of bone. (Pseudomorph means that the opal has replaced the original material, taking on its form.)

boulder opal Precious opal from Queensland, Australia, found in the cracks of, or as coatings on, ironstone or sandstone boulders.

Cachalong opal Opaque, highly porous type of common opal from the Cachalong area of Australia.

cherry opal Orange-red to bright red variety of fire opal.

chrysopal Common opal similar to prase opal, but with a golden-green color.

clarо opal Transparent precious opal from Mexico with an intense red, green, blue, and yellow play of color.

common opal Any opal lacking play of color.

contra luz opal Precious opal in which the play

of color is visible only when a light source is behind the stone.

crystal opal Transparent to translucent precious opal where play of color is visible on the surface and in the interior of the stone.

fire opal Transparent to translucent Mexican opal with an orange to red color. If the fire opal shows play of color, it is termed precious fire opal.

flame opal Precious opal where the play of color consists of red streaks or bands that flicker like a flame when the stone is rotated.

flash opal Precious opal with large schillers (flashes of color) that abruptly appear and disappear as the stone is rotated.

fossil opal Opal pseudomorph of organic matter such as shell, bone, or wood.

geyserite Opal formed from deposits by hot-water springs. Also called amatite, perlite, fiorite, or geyser opal.

Gilson opal A type of synthetic (man-made) opal.

glass opal Colorless, misty-blue, or sky-blue transparent variety of common opal. Also called hyalite.



harlequin opal Precious opal in which the play of color is arranged in a consistent diamond-shaped or rectangular-shaped pattern that is very vivid. Harlequin opal is one of the rarest and most prized forms of opal.

Hungarian opal Any precious opal from Europe.

hyalite Synonym of glass opal.

hydrophane White, opaque, highly porous opal; when placed in water, allows the water to seep into it, causing the stone to become transparent and almost invisible while in the water.

jelly opal A transparent precious opal with a gelatinous appearance and a bluish sheen. Jelly opal may also refer to a colorless, transparent common opal.

lechosos opal Precious opal with a milky-white background color displaying a strong play of color. May also refer to opal with a strong green schiller.

Lightning Ridge opal Opal from Lightning Ridge, New South Wales Australia. Although different forms of opal are found there, this term usually represents the high quality black opal found there.

matrix opal Thin layers of precious opal in host rock (matrix). In cut stones, refers to cabochons in which matrix is visible on the front.

Mexican fire opal Form of transparent opal from Mexico, usually with orange or red colors. Although scientifically considered a common opal, it is rather rare and much sought after. If it exhibits a play of color, it is known as precious fire opal.

milk opal Opal with a milky-white base color.

moss opal Common opal containing inclusions resembling moss.

mountain opal Opal from igneous environments. Also called volcanic opal.

neslite Common opal, dark gray in color. It was once a popular material for sword handles.

night stone Opal with such intense fire that it appears to give off light under dim conditions, so that it looks spectacular even at night.

opaline Synonymous with matrix opal, but was also an old term used to describe opal from Australia.

pearl opal Synonym of tabasheer

Peruvian opal Translucent to opaque common opal from the Andes, usually pale blue or pink.

pinfire opal Precious opal with very small, pinhead-sized color flashes, the most common type.

pipe opal Opal formed as a filling of long, cylindrical cavities in rock. Pipe opals range in size from several inches to many feet.

potch Australian term for common opal.

prase opal Green to dark green form of common opal.

precious fire opal Fire opal displaying play of

color.

precious opal Any opal exhibiting a play of color.

quinzite opal Rose- to pink-colored opal. It is usually without play of color, but a few examples displaying play of color are known. Quinzite opal is synonymous with quinzite, quincite, quincite opal, and rose opal.

rainbow opal Precious opal where the play of color is seen in curved bands, somewhat resembling a rainbow.

red flash opal Precious opal with red color flashes that swiftly appear and disappear as the stone is rotated.


seam opal Opal found in the seams or large cracks of rock. May also specifically refer to masses of white common opal containing bands of precious white opal.

slocum stone A glass-based opal simulant. Also called slocum opal.

tabasheer Opal occurring as an organic byproduct. It forms by the hardening of a secretion from some bamboo species, forming a porous, rounded mass of opal. Widely used as a folk remedy.

white opal Precious opal with a light body color (white, yellow, cream, etc.).

wood opal Any opal that formed a pseudomorph of wood, retaining the original shape and appearance of the wood. Wood opal may refer to both common opal and precious opal, but the term usually refers to large pieces of common opal. See also fossil opal.

Yowah Nut Small, rounded form of boulder opal from Yowah (Queensland), Australia found as nodules embedded in ironstone. Similar to boulder opal, it occurs most often as walnut-sized ironstone nodules containing pockets, veins, or sprinklings of vivid precious opal. 



Make jewelry that makes a statement . . . your statement

Looking for projects that use different materials such as metalwork, wirework, stone, glass, polymer, and enamel? Then **Art Jewelry** is the magazine for you! Discover the secrets you need to create breathtaking pieces that express your own distinctive style like never before! Whether you want to learn a new technique, try a different material, or get ideas for your own jewelry projects, there's something for you in **Art Jewelry**!

ART Jewelry
magazine



Subscribe Today!

Order online at
www.artjewelrymag.com/promo

Enter code: I4XZ1

or call 800-533-6644

Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Central Time.
Outside the U.S. and Canada, call 262-796-8776, ext. 661.