



Tumbled agate: Agate is a popular rock used to make tumbled stones. There are many different types of agate. In this photo you can see Botswana agate, apricot agate, carnelian agate, tree agate, blue lace agate, dendritic blue agate, green moss agate and others.

Tumbled Stones

Rough rocks transformed into smooth, shiny, colorful works of natural art!

What Are Tumbled Stones?

Tumbled stones are small, rounded, brightly polished pieces of rocks and minerals. They are made by placing rough rocks in a machine known as a rock tumbler, which tumbles them until their edges and surfaces are smooth and polished. They are also known as "polished stones," "tumbled gems," "baroque gems," "polished rocks," and a variety of other names. Many people enjoy tumbled stones because they are beautiful natural materials that have been given a pleasing shape and a bright polish. They are popular in jewelry, craft, souvenir, awards, collectibles, and New Age markets. Tumbled stones can be purchased by the pound at prices that just about everyone can afford. Their colorful appearance and interesting shapes have inspired many people to learn more about rocks, minerals, and gems.

What Materials Are Used to Make Tumbled Stones?

The most popular materials used for making tumbled stones are attractive and colorful rocks and minerals that have a Mohs hardness between 5 and 8. These materials are generally durable and accept a good polish. Some of the most commonly tumbled materials are listed below.

Varieties of Chalcedony

- Agate (a translucent, banded variety of microcrystalline quartz)
- Bloodstone (a green jasper with bright red markings that resemble blood spatter)
- Jasper (an opaque variety of microcrystalline quartz with abundant mineral inclusions)



Varieties of Crystalline Quartz

- Amethyst (a transparent purple quartz that sometimes has color-zoning or banding)
- Aventurine (a translucent quartz with abundant reflective mineral inclusions)
- Citrine (a transparent yellow to orange quartz)
- Orange Quartz
- Rock Crystal (transparent quartz)
- Rose Quartz (pink quartz)
- Smoky Quartz (a transparent brown quartz)
- Tiger's-Eye (crystalline quartz that has replaced crocidolite)
- Yellow Quartz

Tumbled eye agate: Some pieces of agate display concentric circles known as "eyes." These round markings are actually small hemispheres within the outer husk of the agate nodule. Most pieces of agate do not have "eyes," so stones that do have them are especially prized by collectors.

Natural glasses: Obsidian is a natural glass formed during an eruption of silica-rich magma. Shown here are Apache tears, mahogany obsidian, and snowflake obsidian.

Minerals

- Amazonite (a green variety of microcline feldspar)
- Beryl (the mineral of aquamarine, emerald, and heliodor)
- Chrysocolla (a blue to green copper mineral usually in quartz)
- Fluorite (a colorful mineral composed of calcium and fluorine)
- Garnet (a popular gem mineral that occurs in a variety of colors)
- Hematite (a silver metallic ore of iron)
- Labradorite (a variety of plagioclase feldspar with an iridescent luster)
- Malachite (a green banded mineral composed of copper carbonate)
- Moonstone (a variety of feldspar that displays adularescence)
- Nephrite (a variety of jade)
- Orthoclase (a white to pink to gray feldspar mineral)
- Rhodonite (a pink magnesium mineral)
- Sodalite (a blue silicate mineral)
- Sunstone (specimens of labradorite feldspar with reflective mineral inclusions)
- Turquoise (a greenish blue copper mineral)



Tumbled igneous and metamorphic rocks: Some rocks will take a nice polish. Shown here are granite, basalt, gabbro, gneiss, and other types of rock collected from Ohio River sediments and sold as landscape stone.

Rocks

- Basalt (a black, fine-grained igneous rock)
 - Granite (a coarse-grained igneous rock of quartz and feldspar)
 - Lapis lazuli (a blue metamorphic rock)
 - Obsidian (a volcanic glass)
 - Picasso Stone (a dolomite with markings that resemble the paintings of Picasso)
 - Quartzite (a metamorphic rock composed of quartz)
 - Rhyolite (a fine-grained volcanic rock)
 - Unakite (a granitic igneous rock containing pink orthoclase and green epidote)
- Petrified wood: Pieces of petrified wood can be tumble-polished to reveal wood grain and interesting patterns.

Fossil Materials

- Mookaite (a colorful radiolarite)
- Petrified Wood (fossil wood, preserved by replacement and infilling by chalcedony)
- Silicified Coral (a coral preserved by replacement and infilling by chalcedony)
- Turritella (a brown agate that contains abundant gastropod fossils)



Dyed tumbled stones: These stones have been dyed to impart vivid colors. Clockwise from top left: Banded agate, agate, howlite, granite, feldspar, and dalmatian stone.