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Spot Fake Gold: The One-Page Checklist

Practical checks for UK buyers of gold coins and bars. Keep it next to your scales.

> **No single test proves gold is genuine.** Stack several checks, because each catches a different kind of fake. And remember: **the best test is where you bought it.**

1 Before you buy: the seller

- [ ] Buy from an **established, reputable dealer**, or a seller with a long, checkable track record.
- [ ] Be wary of new marketplace sellers, few reviews, or "make an offer" bargains on eBay or social media.
- [ ] Bars: buy only from known refiners, ideally **sealed**, with a serial number that matches the certificate.
- [ ] Paid for tracked, signed delivery but it came through the letterbox? Treat that as a warning sign.

Too good to be true? If the price is below the value of the gold inside, walk away.

2 Weigh and measure

- [ ] Use a **0.01 g scale** (checked with a calibration weight) and **digital calipers**.
- [ ] Compare with the mint's published spec for that exact coin and year:

Coin	Weight	Diameter	Thickness
Full Sovereign (22ct)	7.98 g	22.05 mm	1.52 mm
Krugerrand 1 oz (22ct)	33.93 g	32.77 mm	2.84 mm
Britannia 1 oz (999.9, current)	31.21 g	32.69 mm	see mint

- [ ] Right weight but too thick or too wide? That's a classic sign of a lighter base metal.
- [ ] **Tungsten weighs almost the same as gold**, so a well-made tungsten fake can pass on weight. Don't rely on the scale alone.

3 Magnet test

- [ ] Gold isn't magnetic. If it jumps to a strong **neodymium magnet**, it's fake.
- [ ] Passing proves little: **tungsten isn't magnetic either**.

4 Ping test

- [ ] Balance the coin on a fingertip and tap it with another coin. Genuine gold gives a **clear, lasting ring**; many fakes give a dull thud.
- [ ] Ping apps help. It's a filter, not a verdict, and less useful for bars or coins in capsules.

5 Look closely

- [ ] Use a **loupe**. Compare with the mint's high-resolution images for that year.
- [ ] Check the lettering, edge reeding, fine detail and colour. Look for mushy detail, bubbles, pits or a brassy colour.
- [ ] Learn the security features of modern coins (e.g. the Britannia's trident/padlock latent image).
- [ ] Packaging and certificates should match, but they can be faked too.

6 Professional-grade testing

- [ ] **Conductivity (Sigma-style) testers** read below the surface, some through plastic capsules. They're good at catching tungsten cores.
- [ ] **XRF** reads the surface very accurately, but only a thin outer layer, so plated tungsten can pass.
- [ ] Testing devices such as those from **Goldanalytix** (gold-analytix.de) measure inside the metal, not just the surface.
- [ ] Ultrasonic testing or assay can confirm large bars.

7 If in doubt

- [ ] **Film yourself** opening and weighing any second-hand purchase.
- [ ] Take it to a reputable dealer or assay office for testing, and **watch them test it**.
- [ ] Bought online? Raise an "item not as described" claim with the platform or payment provider promptly.

Want the full picture? The Physical Gold & Silver Buyer's Guide

Premiums, UK tax, sovereigns vs bars, storage and selling, all in plain English. 45 pages, written for UK buyers.
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