

Straight razors and ivory.

Since ancient times, ivory was valued highly by a pleasant cream color and density, ease of processing and the relative durability. Although if not properly stored (humidity, moisture), it may turn yellow. Today ivory valued particularly highly, but for many household purposes, such as knife handles and piano keyboard, using of celluloid is cheaper. And since 1869-70, celluloid is widely used for ivory imitation.

The razor with ivory handle with silver inlay, the middle of the 19th century:



Ivory is best identified by an expert, but there are some indicators of true ivory. Ivory has a visual "depth" not seen in bone.

A visual inspection of ivory under strong light will usually reveal some of the tusk structure. The most definitive pattern is described as looking like "stacked chevrons" or a "cross-hatch" pattern somewhere in the tile (often at the edges), barely seen as the tile is turned in strong light. Other patterns are wavy (indicating the layers of the tusk).

Two-razor set by Walker & Hall, Sheffield, ivory handles, the second half of the 19th century:



The George Wostenholm & Son razor with ivory handle in the catalog of 1917:



The similar razor:



Not only the handles were made of ivory. Some expensive razors have scaled tangs or tails made of ivory.

The Joseph Westby, Sheffield razor with ivory handle and ivory tail:



The ultimate test for ivory is the hot needle point test. When touched in an obscure place with a hot needle, celluloid will melt and ivory will not. Note, this test doesn't give a warranty of ivory; other natural bone has similar properties. Ivory handles are usually about half as thick as those of a celluloid look-alike.

The R. Hoveden & Sons, London razor with ivory handle, the beginning of the 20th century:



Finally, I want to remind you that in 1989, the UN imposed a moratorium on the ivory trade.

However, in 2002 the UN partially lifted its ban on the ivory trade, allowing some countries to export a certain amount of ivory.

Sources: "Standard Guide to Razors", Roy Ritchie & Ron Stewart

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