

30 ANTIQUE PHOTO PERCENTAGE GRADING SYSTEM™ (PPGS) EXPLANATION & HOW IT RELATES TO VALUES

The Photo Percentage Grading System™ (PPGS) made its debut in the 11th Edition *Blue Book of Gun Values* published in 1991. It was a whopping 16-page un-numbered color insert in the 898 page book. It didn't seem like much of an accomplishment at the time, and the first paragraph explanation reads as follows:

Hopefully, this might be the end of an era. I'm glad! I can't remember the months I've spent (wasted?) through various telecommunication devices trying to figure out the condition of a wide array of firearms (i.e. could you hold it closer to the microphone so I can see it better?). Other related collectible fields have the same problem – try calling up a coin, car, stamp, baseball card, or antique furniture dealer and ask him what he will pay you in C-notes for your favorite collectible artifact. The answer is always the same: "Sir, I will have to see it before I can make that determination. You're described excellent condition may only be good to me." In other words, a collectible object's value is always determined by its unique condition factor. And most of the time it's original condition that counts.

Looking back, this was the start of the now universally accepted percentage grading system relying on percentages of original finish(es) to ascertain the correct grade of each gun's unique condition. Firearms grading had finally been standardized on modern guns.

For accurate antique grading, we've taken selected PPGS images that represent the four condition factors found in this book – Good (G), Fine (F), Very Fine/Extra Fine (VF/XF), and Excellent (Exc.). Because the NRA established a grading system for antiques a long time ago (see NRA Antique Condition Descriptions), we felt it was prudent to follow these condition guidelines with a few modifications (see BBP Antique Condition Factor Descriptions).

However, there are a few issues with the older NRA antique grading system. Maybe the biggest one is there are four separate condition factors for guns with 30% or less condition – Poor, Fair, Good, and Very Good. These two lower conditions (Poor and Fair) are used to differentiate guns with major problems – i.e., some parts not original or needed, operating mechanism is in fair working condition or inoperative, etc. Most antiques are undesirable as collector's items once the condition factor has been reduced to Poor.

While there are four condition factors for antiques with 30% or less condition, the next higher NRA grade is Fine, which covers condition factors between 30%-80%. In defining BBP's grading structure, Fine refers to 30%-60% condition.

As a result, many antique dealers and collectors have established another condition factor to address this gap. Very Fine/Extra Fine refers to those antiques in 60%-80% original condition. This grade is very important with antiques, as it helps establish

the rather sizeable value difference between Fine and Excellent.

NRA Excellent refers to 80%-90% original condition, and in many cases, especially with some of the rarer antiques, this condition factor is rarely encountered.

The *Blue Book of Antique American Firearms & Values* has chosen the following grades to best represent the value difference between these grades – Good, Fine, Very Fine/Extra Fine, and Excellent. However, it is important to understand our interpretation of these and how they relate to the values in this publication.


Good (G) condition includes antiques from 0%-20% condition that may have some minor replacement parts. The values represent guns in less than 20% condition (typically 10%), but with no major parts replaced and must be in working order. Values for NRA Fair and Poor conditions will be less than the value in Good condition (may also be the lowest value in a price range). See complete description in BBP's Antique Condition Factor Descriptions (pg. 29).

Fine (F) condition is defined as approximately 30%-60% of the original finish remaining. Values will typically represent the lower conditions (30% and 40%). See complete description in BBP's Antique Condition Factor Descriptions (pg. 29).

Very Fine/Extra Fine (VF/XF) condition refers to an antique in approximately 60%-80% original condition. See complete description in BBP's Antique Condition Factor Descriptions (pg. 29).

Excellent (Exc.) condition refers to those antiques in 80%-90% original condition. Values in this condition factor are NOT for guns in 95% or better, including mint condition (as these values can be a lot higher than those that are at 80%-90%). See complete description in BBP's Antique Condition Factor Descriptions (pg. 29).

We hope you agree with BBP's interpretation of these four grades as there are enough condition differences between them to make antique firearms grading easier, more reliable, and with more accuracy. Remember – if the grade isn't right, the value will be wrong.



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