Gold, pyrite or mica?

Follow a single fleck. Compare its face and edge under diffuse light.

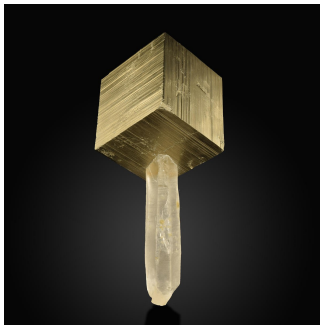


Native gold in quartz

La Gardette, France

Trace the irregular outline of the yellow metal against the quartz. An isolated grain of gold dents under pressure.

Photo: Marie-Lan Taÿ Pamart CC BY 4.0



Pyrite on quartz

Spruce Claim, Washington, USA

Follow the straight edges of the cube and parallel grooves on its faces. A loose grain can leave a dark streak.

Photo: Carlin Green, USGS Public domain



Muscovite mica

A single flexible sheet

Look at a flake edge-on to see how thin it is. Common micas give a pale streak and split into thin sheets.

Photo: James St. John CC BY 2.0

Your specimen

Fleck shape face-on and edge-on

Behavior of an already loose grain, if available

Working identification and remaining uncertainty