

DESIGNING THE PERFECT ENGAGEMENT RING

1. Choose a Ring Style

This first step may be the hardest part of your engagement ring process. To start, think about the styles of clothing and jewelry your partner usually wears, or gravitates to. Discuss this with your jeweler and this will help you decide on what style she would like; Classic, Modern, Antique, Glamorous, Nature Inspires, or a combination there of. Think back to any hints that your partner may have dropped, or check out their Pinterest for any images they may have pinned.

2. Choose a Gemstone

While diamonds may still be the 'rule' when it comes to engagement rings, there are more exceptions to this rule today than ever before. While the most classic ring style features a center diamond, your partner may crave something more unique or in line with her personality. She may prefer a ring with no stone at all. Again, think back to conversations the two of you have had or any hints she may have dropped for you over your relationship. Sapphires are the second most common gemstone for engagement rings, so if you don't think a diamond would suit her, maybe this popular stone does. Did you know that sapphires come in a variety of other colors than deep blue? Ask your jeweler to show you what other gemstones are available.

3. The 4 Cs

You may have heard this term before, but what does it really mean and how important are they when selecting a diamond? Each diamond is graded according to these four Cs: Carat, Cut, Clarity, and Color. Finding the perfect balance between these 4 characteristics will ensure you get the best diamond for your partner (and your budget)

Cut

A diamond's cut is directly related to its overall beauty. When a diamond has been correctly cut, the diamond's ability to reflect and refract light is greatly enhanced. By understanding the way that light moves through diamond crystals, modern diamond cutters have established a specific set of proportions and angles that are known to harness the diamond's internal brilliance and to show it in its best light. Learn more about diamond cuts.

Color

All diamonds have some degree of color. A diamond's color is caused by natural trace elements of nitrogen that were present when the diamond formed under the Earth's crust. A diamond with less color will exhibit greater brilliance and fire, be considered rarer, and therefore be of more value. Learn more about diamond color.

Clarity

The presence of natural inclusions and blemishes on and within a diamond impacts its appearance and value. Inclusions may be crystals of a foreign material or structural imperfections such as tiny cracks, known as feathers, which can appear whitish or cloudy. The

quantity, size, color, location, orientation, and visibility of inclusions all affect the final clarity grade of a diamond. Diamonds with no or few inclusions are considered particularly rare and highly valued.

Carat

Carat size is a personal preference and the most visually apparent factor when comparing diamonds.

4. Choose a Precious Metal

You are creating a ring that your partner will be wearing forever and the type of metal and color is as big of a part in this ring as the stone is. In addition to the different looks and colors of each of these options, they each come with their own characteristics, performance, and, of course, price tags. Here is some information to get your started:

Platinum

Characteristics

Enduring, strong, and lasts a lifetime Composed of 95% platinum and 5% other pure alloys

Price

A rare and expensive precious metal

Performance

- Strongest precious metal
- Resistant to damage
- Does not wear away
- Develops a satin finish
- Platinum is hypoallergenic
- Highest level of purity

18k Gold

Characteristics

A classic metal with high gold purity Composed of 75% gold and 25% pure alloys

Price

Less expensive than platinum, yet highly valued

Performance

- Softer, malleable metal
- Easy to polish and repair
- Resistant to rust and tarnishing
- 18k yellow gold is rich in color
- Has a distinct heritage

14k Gold

Characteristics

A strong metal that is popular in fine jewelry Composed of 58.3% gold and 41.7% pure alloys

Price

Less expensive than 18k gold, yet offers great value

Performance

- Known for strength
- Longer wear due to hardness
- Easy to polish and repair
- Resistant to rust and tarnishing
- Moderate in color compared to 18k yellow gold

Palladium

Characteristics

A rare metal with the highest purity Composed of 95% palladium and 5% other pure alloys

Price

Less expensive than platinum, yet offers great value

Performance

- Known for strength, yet lighter than platinum
- Has a natural and permanent whiteness
- Easy to polish and repair
- Resistant to corrosion, oxidation, and tarnishing
- Palladium is hypoallergenic
- It is scratch-resistant

5. Choose a Setting

You've already chosen the perfect stone (or stones) for her, now it's time to ensure it's showcased to its best advantage. The setting defines the look, so when you are shopping, be sure to look at a wide variety of rings, even the ones you aren't a huge fan of, to see the difference a setting can make on its overall style.

Prong

- Permits the most light exposure from all angles and therefore maximizes a diamond's brilliance and "lightens up" richly colored gems.
- Less metal means less time and money is required than other setting styles.
- Allows easy cleaning of the stone.
- Holds even the most fragile (soft) gems securely.

Tension

- Allows a lot of light into the stone.

Bezel

- Protects a stone's girdle from being nicked or chipped.
- Conceals existing nicks or chips on a stone's girdle.
- Secures a stone well.
- The ring surface is completely smooth.
- Metal can be molded to fit any stone shape snugly.
- A white metal encircling a white stone can make the stone appear larger.
- A yellow gold bezel setting can enhance the color of red or green gemstones.

Channel

- Protects the girdle of the stones.
- Provides better security for small stones than a prong or pave setting.
- The surface is completely smooth and unobtrusive.

Bar

- Protects the sides of each stone's girdle.
- The surface is relatively smooth and unobtrusive.
- Puts a contemporary spin on a classic look.

Pave

- Gives the illusion of more and bigger diamonds than they really are.
- Allows an uninterrupted design flow of varying width.

Gypsy

- Protects a stone's girdle from being nicked or chipped.
- Conceals existing nicks or chips on a stone's girdle.
- Secures a stone well.
- The ring surface is completely smooth.

6. Don't Forget Her Ring Size!

Determining your partner's ring size can be tricky, but there are ways to figure it out without coming straight out and asking her. You can sneak one of her rings and take it with you to the jeweler. If it's a ring she would notice missing, you can trace it on a sheet of paper and take that in instead. The most common women's ring size is 6-6.5. You will want to err on the large side if you are unsure. Remember that most people rarely take off their engagement ring, meaning

they will be wearing through summer, winter, exercise and pregnancy when fingers swell and contract. Most rings can be resized, so talk with your jeweler about their policy.