

Engagement 101

THE MAGAZINE TO READ BEFORE YOU GET ENGAGED

MAGAZINE

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GUY'S GUIDE

How to tell if you're ready, get her the ring she wants & plan the perfect proposal

FIND THE RING INSIDE

THE ULTIMATE RING & DIAMOND BUYING GUIDE

INSPIRING REAL LOVE STORIES

TAKING THE PLUNGE
ARE YOU READY?

1000s OF RINGS
INSIDE & ON

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*Rock Her World
With the Most Romantic Proposal Ever*

2010

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DESIGNER SETTINGS + STONES

Bridal ring designers like Ritani have a very specific look and design aesthetic. They use special methods and materials to achieve their unique looks. Though another ring may look like a Ritani, it may not have the same quality or craftsmanship. If your intended bride likes a particular ring designer, it's a good idea to see one of its rings in person. Later, if you see an un-branded ring in a similar style, you can decide if it's of equal or lesser quality.

Many jewelers also have patented unique proprietary diamond cuts. These cuts may be beautiful, but make sure they have been shown to return light as well, or better, than a standard round brilliant cut. Also, inquire about the durability of the cut. Cuts with any points or sharp edges will not be as durable as those with rounded edges or corners.

OK, MEN, LET'S GET MOVING!

Now that you have the facts, it's time to apply them to your search. First, find a good jeweler or retailer to work with. Engagement ring purchases are the bread and butter of a jeweler's business. No matter how high-end or snooty an establishment may appear, it depends upon *your* business. Keep that in mind when you walk through the doors. Happily, some stores are designed to make you feel at ease.

Guys in Baltimore have it made. Stop by Samuelson's Diamonds, and you don't even have to miss a moment of the big game—if the Ravens are playing, rest assured the game will be on. Owner Ron Samuelson is a third-generation jeweler running his family's business, first established in 1922. With the business in his blood and decades of experience, he knows that guys don't need any additional pressure making their purchase decision. Samuelson believes that a buyer should "deal with real people they're confident in" and "buy from an established jeweler." If for some reason you need to buy online, he suggests that you "buy from an outlet that also has a brick-and-mortar presence. Work with a company that will still be around in five years." If you're nowhere near Baltimore, Samuelson can help you remotely; visit his website to contact him: www.samuelsonsdiamonds.com.

Search for Clues

Research shows that a woman in a serious relationship will drop a lot of hints, so pay attention to what she says. Has she commented about anyone else's ring? Shown you anything in a magazine? Pointed out something in a store window? If not, why not steer her toward a window or two and see what she admires?

If you are not aware of any hints, you can still figure out some of her style preferences. Look at her clothing and home decorating choices. If they are streamlined and fresh, alternative, or fashion-forward, she's a modern girl. Does she choose classic pieces and love retailers like Ann Taylor and Pottery Barn? If so, she's a traditional girl. Is she inclined to wear feminine clothing and fill her home with frilly ruffles and lace? You can bet she's a romantic. The modern girl may be attracted to a design that's fresh or features an unusual cut, metal or design. A classic solitaire's a fit for a traditional girl. The girly girl will probably swoon over an ornate pavé, Edwardian or Victorian setting. O'Connor wants men to understand that a wedding is a woman's one chance to be part of a fairy tale. If your girl is a romantic, give her an elaborate ring that's right for a fairy princess.

If you look at her other jewelry, you also should be able to determine if she favors white metals or yellow gold. If she doesn't wear any jewelry, go with a subtle white metal.

Still confused about style? Choose a classic round brilliant solitaire in a plain setting. If the diamond is of good quality, the ring will be beautiful and unlikely to be a disappointment to any bride. She can always place her diamond in another setting down the line.

You'll also need to discover her ring size. The simplest solution is to borrow one of her rings and take it with you to a jeweler. You also can trace the interior of one of her rings onto a piece of paper. Another method is to put one of her rings on your finger and note how it fits. If all else fails, go with the industry standard—a size 7—and make sure the ring can be sized.

What Should You Spend?

Traditionally, jewelers suggest that you spend the equivalent of one to three

months' salary on your ring purchase. Not to take the romance out of the situation, but if she says yes to your proposal, there will be additional expenses to consider, including a wedding and honeymoon. Will your families (traditionally hers) be able to help you pay for the wedding? If not, think about what your collective priorities will be. The average wedding costs approximately \$20,000. Will your love prefer a fancy ring, a designer dress, a huge family wedding or several stamps in her passport?

Is There Another Option?

There is! Ask your friends and family if anyone has a ring or diamond they might be willing to donate. It's possible that several of the women in your life have a ring they never wear or a diamond from an ex that they would be happy to give you. Your mom, aunt or grandmother might be delighted to be included in your engagement plans. If you are lucky enough to be given a ring, be sure to have it cleaned and sized if needed. If the ring isn't your love's style, ask the giver if you can change it or remove the diamonds from the setting. Remember the romance—don't say something like, "Aunt Hilda dated this jerk and he gave her this ring." Say, "Aunt Hilda loves you and wanted you to have something from the family."

Stay Flexible

An engagement ring is the symbol of what O'Connor calls "the greatest promise you will make in your life." In his experience, girls will almost always love your ring choice—even if it's not their style. When she says yes, a loving thing to do would be to let her know that you want to marry her, but you're not married to the ring you bought; if she would like to exchange it, that's just fine with you. Your seriousness about purchasing the right ring for your future bride, and your flexibility about your purchase, will demonstrate your commitment, maturity and readiness to become a great husband.

We hope this guide has been helpful to you. If you would like to find out more about all things engagement-related, visit us online at engagement101mag.com. Good luck!