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Classic diamond solitaire is a bridal favorite



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You're getting engaged! As one of the biggest steps you'll take in life, engagement represents the commitment of two people to share their lives together. It is a time of transition that prepares you for your change in roles from boyfriend to husband, girlfriend to wife.

Receiving a diamond engagement ring symbolizes this growth in your relationship and, if you're like most young couples today, you probably won't announce your engagement until you make it official with a ring.

Results of study

In a March, 1982, research study of 200 young women conducted by Karl E. Tietjen Research Associates, 92 percent agree that an engagement ring symbolizes their fiance's love will be with them at all times. They perceive engagement as a public pledge for a lasting relationship and want a diamond engagement ring to symbolize this stage of commitment.

The first question most bride's ask is how much an engagement ring should cost and how much should be spent. As a rule of thumb, bridal experts favor a guideline of two months' salary because it allows most young couples the opportunity to afford a good quality diamond that they'll be proud of in years to come.

Comparison-shop

Before buying a diamond engagement ring, do some comparison shopping. Diamonds can vary drastically in quality and price. Ask questions — that's the quickest way to learn and

study up on the 4 C's: cut, color, clarity and carat weight. These are the standards jewelers use to evaluate the quality of a diamond. Here are a few pointers that will explain why one diamond can be more expensive than another:

• **Cut:** The beauty of a diamond relies on the precision of the cutter and the expert placement of the facets or planes on a stone. These tiny angles capture and refract light to give a diamond its fire and brilliance.

Most diamonds have 58 facets. Cut also refers to the shape of a diamond — round, oval, marquise pear, heart and emerald.

• **Color:** People usually think of diamonds as colorless, but most are tinged with yellow or brown. The icy white diamond, which has an absence of color, is the most valuable.

A light on color

Variations in color are often so slight that they can be detected only by an expert under special lights. The best way to see the true color of a diamond is to

look at the stone through its side against a white background.

There are also fancy-colored diamonds available in royal blue, cranberry red and canary yellow. These diamonds are very rare and can be quite costly.

• **Clarity:** In the process of crystallizing diamonds out of carbon millions of years ago, nature left miniscule birthmarks — specks, bubbles and feathers—in most diamonds. These specks are called inclusions and are not defects or weaknesses.

inclusions when viewed under 10-power magnification. There are very few flawless diamonds, therefore such diamonds are expensive.

• **Carat weight:** A diamond is measured in carats and there are 100 points in a carat, like the cents in a dollar. A carat is equal to 1/4 of a gram and there are 142 carats to the ounce.

Consider the 4 C's

The larger the diamond, the scarcer it is and the higher the value per carat but, remember that size alone does not determine value. Cut, color and clarity must also be taken into account.

Flawless diamonds rare

The term flawless refers to a diamond that has no



THE DIAMOND SOLITAIRE in every shape and size is the overwhelming favorite with 69 percent of those lucky brides who receive a diamond engagement ring. Clockwise from top: Bold Art Deco styling accents the oval diamond by Dennis Lampert Designs. The open shank design by D'Annunzio & Co. emphasizes the pear diamond shape while the knife-edge design by Unigem International has a clean, contemporary look that is well-mated to marquise-cut diamonds. The sculptured mounting from Orange Blossom with its raised six-prong setting focuses attention on the round-cut diamond. The emerald cut diamond in a simple, traditional mounting from Baumgold Bros. has classic appeal. Unigem International set the sentimental heart shape diamond in a unique handmade wire basket mounting.



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