

Selecting rings, settings and other bridal jewelry

By Debra Lee Baldwin
Copley News Service

A diamond may be forever, but the popularity of certain settings, cuts and colors comes and goes.

If your fiancé lovingly and proudly presents you with his grandmother's wedding ring but you don't care for the setting, gently suggest you have the stones reset. A new setting will symbolize the special union the two of you share.

The wise groom, in fact, doesn't shop for his bride's ring without her coming along — unless he knows without a doubt what will please her.

On average, engagement rings cost more than \$2,000; the International Gemological Institute suggests, as a rule of thumb, the groom budget two to three months' salary.

ASK BEFORE YOU BUY

Beware of prices that seem too good to be true. There's a wide variety in quality among stones that superficially seem the same.

Your best bet: Choose a reputable jeweler (check with the Better Business Bureau), one who is a member of the American Gem Society or a similar nationally recognized organization. Ask the jeweler for certification — your written proof of a diamond's quality.

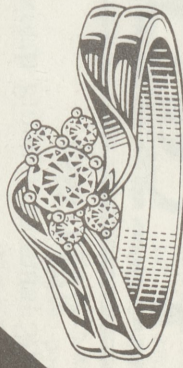
The traditional brilliant (round) cut is by no means the only one. You'll want to see if oval, marquise (oval pointed at each end), heart, emerald (rectangular) or pear shapes look better on the bride's hand and/or enhance the setting you select.

Color, graded by letter, varies from clear (white) to shades of yellow; the whiter the diamond, the higher its value.

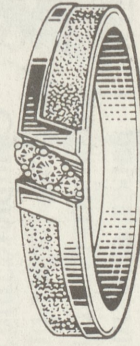
Larger stones are more expensive than smaller, unless, of course, they're flawed or yellow.

Gold should be 14 to 18 carat to be of good quality; colors range from yellow and white to rose. Textures include matte, polished, hammered and satin.

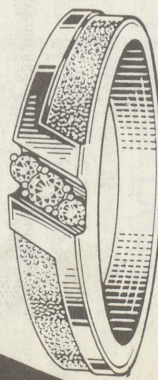
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