

WHATDOYOUWANTTOGETDONE?

**THE
ENGAGEMENT RING
HANDBOOK**

A MAN'S GUIDE TO GETTING IT RIGHT

BY

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CHAPTER 1

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO GET DONE?

If you were buying a new car or bike, digital device or piece of sports equipment, you would know what you were looking for in appearance, performance, design, materials, comfort/ ergonomics, build quality, expected life, envy factor, price, etc. You would know what you wanted it to do for you.

You are probably already thinking about proposing and may have started researching or looking for that engagement ring. I would hazard a guess that what you want to do is find the perfect ring that will (1) be special and unique to her, which she'll love; (2) show her how much you love her and think of her; (3) do the job and last forever; (4) be beautifully designed and made; and (5) fit within your budget without breaking the bank.

Summary

- You want this ring to be the most special piece of jewellery you ever give, but the engagement ring market is flooded with mass produced designs, and the same rings are given to hundreds of women the world over
 - People want more personalisation, not standardisation. New technology has put that within your reach
 - You are in control of all the decisions and this makes personalisation potentially the best value option of all
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First, set your criteria

The first thing to do is to identify what you already know you want from this ring. This ring must...

Make a note of at least five important things you want this ring to be – what it should do, the key things you want to get right. You may find a lot more than five. Even if it is just a general statement of principle, it's good to get the list out there in the open. It'll start you thinking, and you can test it against new facts and ideas as you come across them.

This is just a start. As you go through the book you'll discover things you didn't know which may introduce a whole new set of possibilities.

Outside the box?

Once you have come up with some general criteria, where do you start your search for this perfect ring? If you've done any research at all you will know there is a lot of information out there, a lot to think about, and plenty of places to look for inspiration.

If you want something original, personal to you both and unique to her then you should think about whether you expect to find it 'off-the-shelf' or hope to have a ring 'designed-for-her'. It may not have been the first question you asked yourself, but it is one you should be open to right at the beginning as your thoughts on that will determine how you go about your search.

Most of my clients start by looking around their local High Street jewellers, Googling 'engagement rings' or visiting the well-known 'jewellery quarters' in Birmingham, London and elsewhere – I examine each of these in Chapter 5. They usually find the options all start to look the same, and that is not what they want. They want something different and personal, but can't find it in these places. They also feel slightly nervous about not taking the 'safe option',

so they want to feel comfortable that whatever they choose will be the right thing.

In the past, few people had the opportunity to commission a design just for them. It was too costly and took too long, and the idea still persists that it's an expensive route taking months to complete. Luckily for you, things have changed.

Before we launch into all the other things you might want to know before you buy your engagement ring, let's first examine the idea of a unique design.

Bespoke, Customised and Off-The-Shelf – what is the difference?

The terms 'Bespoke' and 'Custom-made' are often used interchangeably for personalised designs, but there is a difference.

Bespoke. A bespoke ring is designed from scratch and made exclusively for you to a unique design. Like a bespoke suit, it is completely personal and fits your priorities exactly.

The design is created in principle precisely to your specifications, then the diamonds or gemstones are sourced according to your criteria and the final ring is built around your stones to enhance their individual qualities. This is the most personal, flexible way to create a ring.

Custom-made. Custom-making a ring is like selecting your options for a new car. The car may be a mass produced design, but you get to choose the equipment, interior and paint job. When building a custom ring, you choose from a selection of ring mounts and metals then add a standard sized diamond (usually) of your choice. Custom-made is more flexible than a ready-made ring, but it is not a personalised design and usually has few options for alternative gemstones.

Off-the-Shelf. Off-the-shelf or ready-made rings are just that. You see one in a shop or online, and you buy it. This is the least personal option, and the same design will be worn by hundreds of women; the only personal touches you can add are re-sizing it to fit or ordering it in the ring size you want. Ready-mades use standard-spec diamonds, often uncertified (see Chapter 8). You are limited by the stock shops hold, and they have an interest in selling you just what they have, which will not necessarily be what best fits your priorities.

What's new?

Although most people, including jewellers, don't realise it, fantastic developments in technology and software are revolutionising jewellery design and production for clients. It's long been used in industry, but now designers and jewellers have access to the same technology from their

studio and laptop and are using it to produce individual designs *with their clients*.

No longer does a designer have to spend many hours creating designs on paper only to have to rework all the detail or some major element over and over again. Excellent new CAD (Computer Aided Design) software has liberated the designer, allowing them to spend time on new and innovative designs instead of laboriously drafting and redrafting the same work.

It's possible to make major real-time changes to a design – *you* can direct the designer to make the changes you want to the finished piece. The ring becomes partly your own creation, adding to its personal story and specialness, which is very exciting.

We all know about the miracle of 3D printers. They can reproduce in fine detail the cellular structures required in complex medical applications. These printers are an example of Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM). The same CAM technology is used with CAD to create intricate, beautiful and robust designs for rings, some of which it would not be possible to make by hand. In the past, incredible filigree work was created by court craftsmen with all the time in the world, producing for princes and bankrolled by national treasuries. Most people's pockets are not that deep, but now that doesn't stop you from having a ring fit for a prince (or a princess, for that matter).

And finally, all of this is achieved in much less time than traditional bespoke manufacture. The designer saves time with CAD, the craftsman saves time with CAM, and the final ring is a more faithful realisation of the original design. This has a massive impact on cost, because these new tools make the specialists in their field more productive and efficient and their time more cost-effective.

In essence, what the new CAD/CAM technology does is allow *anyone who wants one* to have a personal bespoke ring, made to their specifications and to the highest standards of craftsmanship, within both their budget and a few short weeks.

If you can have a unique personal ring that easily and that quickly, why wouldn't you?

Conclusion

You want this ring to be the most special piece of jewellery you will ever give to the woman in your life and you want her to love it. But the engagement ring market is flooded with mass produced standard designs, both in shops and online, and the same rings are given to hundreds of women the world over.

Increasingly people are looking for greater personalisation in the things they use and buy. Bespoke is challenging the

supremacy of mass production and offers more people the chance to express their individuality and uniqueness.

Just like choosing the right hi-spec bicycle, finding the right engagement ring to delight her, which is well designed, built to last and within your budget, requires some specialist knowledge. Customisation has been around a while and is fine as far as it goes, but you now have more options than ever before. New technology has put within your reach the exclusivity of a personalised bespoke service and, because you are in control of all the decisions, if you find the right designer this has become the most attractive and best value option of all.

Commissioning a bespoke ring may seem a little daunting at first, and it may take you out of your comfort zone, but the rest of this book will help you to make the right choices. Make the most of this opportunity to truly delight and surprise your fiancée to be.

If you would like to read more you can download further chapters from my book FREE at:

juliepeel.co.uk/Tools_and_Advice/The_Handbook

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