



CHOOSING AN
ENGAGEMENT
RING

THE 7 MOST COMMON
BUYING MISTAKES

Julie Deal

I SPECIALISE IN DESIGNING BESPOKE ENGAGEMENT RINGS. MOST OF MY CLIENTS ARE MEN WHO WANT A UNIQUE STATEMENT OF THEIR LOVE AND COMMITMENT WHEN THEY PROPOSE.

IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO SURPRISE HER WITH THE PERFECT RING, HERE ARE SEVEN KEY BUYING MISTAKES I SEE PEOPLE MAKE TIME AND AGAIN.



DESIRE AND DESIGN – THE ‘WILL SHE LIKE IT?’ QUESTION

Obviously you are completely in love, or you wouldn't be asking her spend the rest of her life with you. You want her ring to be a unique and special surprise, not the same as a thousand other women wear. But do you know what she wants, what she would love and what would make her feel really special? How do you avoid disappointing the lady you love most?

WHERE DO I START? – THE ‘HOW MUCH DO I SPEND?’ QUESTION

If you are anything like most of my clients you won't be a jewellery expert. Where do you find out what you really need to know? With so much information and misinformation to wade through, where do you find the time to research properly, and how do you separate fact from fiction or what's truly important, from the marketing hype?

WHO CAN I TRUST? – THE ‘IS IT WORTH IT?’ QUESTION

There are hundreds of jewellers out there, and a million and one rings. After a while they all start to look the same. How do you make sure you don't pay more than you should, or go for a 'deal' which turns out to be a false economy? Expert advice can help you assess value and make sure you don't fall for the seriously overpriced or suspiciously cheap.

Who do you trust to advise you and help you to avoid the mistakes so many people make?

I WANT TO GET IT RIGHT

In the end, all you want is to get it right, to give her the perfect ring she'll treasure forever. She'll love that you did it for her alone and she'll always remember the day you proposed. You don't want disappointment – for her or for you.

So what *are* the top seven buying mistakes?

MISTAKE 1

BUYING ON LOOKS

The design of any piece of fine jewellery is key to how well it will last. You are always using your hands and this ring will be worn every day forever. So it must be designed with that in mind.

So often I see clients with rings which were bought because they looked lovely, but turn out to be impractical, difficult to wear or poorly structured, leaving stones vulnerable. Apart from the expense of putting it right, it's disappointing and upsetting to lose a stone.

Richard knew what Kate had in mind but there is more than one way to design the look. Some can be worn with a straight band, others can't. Few people think about this and no-one told Richard when he bought it. Kate can't always wear her engagement ring and she felt a shaped band looked wrong on its own. In the end we redesigned her ring from scratch using the same stones. Just in time - the centre setting had twisted, and Kate had already lost one of the little diamonds. We saved the central stone, but the remake was an additional cost to Richard.

TIP: CREATING A BEAUTIFUL DESIGN TO LAST A LIFETIME REQUIRES SKILL AND UNDERSTANDING. A GOOD DESIGNER WILL TALK YOU THROUGH THE KEY FEATURES AND ENSURE YOUR RING WORKS FOR HER LIFESTYLE.

MISTAKE 2

INAPPROPRIATE MATERIALS

There are many different metals and a huge range of gemstones to choose from. Each has its own qualities, each more or less suitable for any one

client. Many coloured gems will not stand up to a lifetime of wear and if you choose the wrong materials your ring may not last as long as it should or it may need regular costly maintenance.

Emily wanted a purple stone in her engagement ring. So James bought her a lovely amethyst set in diamonds. Sadly, amethyst is not robust enough for every day wear, it became dull with chips and scratches so had to be replaced with a purple sapphire after a couple of years.

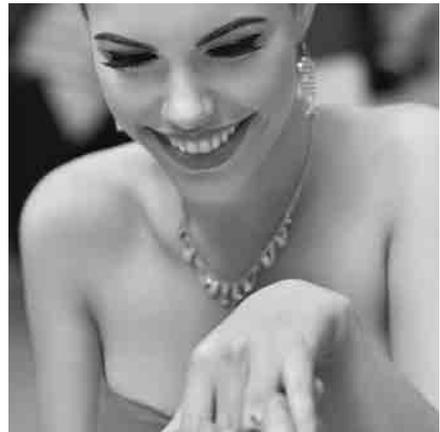
TIP: YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANT YOUR RING TO LOOK LIKE, BUT GET EXPERT ADVICE FROM A DESIGNER WITH THE CONTACTS AND EXPERTISE TO ENSURE YOU GET THE METALS AND GEMSTONES WHICH ARE RIGHT FOR YOU.

MISTAKE 3

THE GREAT DEAL

There are so many variables, especially when it comes to diamonds and gemstones that if you try to do it yourself, it is easy to be misled. New diamonds should be independently certified but standards vary widely and there is no certification system at all for coloured gems. You depend on the integrity, experience and expertise of your jeweller to find the right stone and to ensure you get the best you can. You do not want to buy a diamond or gemstone and later find it is not what you thought it was.

Chris and Gemma went to a London jewellery quarter as Chris thought he'd get a deal there.





The diamond was described as a 0.7ct EVS1 and seemed great value, but there was no certificate. In fact most independent bodies would classify it 3-4 grades lower in colour and 2 in clarity. Chris had no comeback against the shop because the 'certification' was just a matter of opinion.

TIP: WITHOUT EXPERTISE YOU CAN'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE REALLY BUYING. A GOOD DESIGNER WILL HAVE PERSONAL CONTACTS WITH TRUSTED GEM DEALERS AS WELL AS THE KNOWLEDGE AND A PROPER CARE FOR THEIR CLIENT, TO ENSURE THAT YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT. AND WHAT YOU PAY FOR.

MISTAKE 4 ONLINE AND CHAIN STORES

Search online or walk down any High Street and you are assailed by a mass of diamond rings in white metal. And after a while, they'll all look pretty much the same. If you want an individual ring, especially with a coloured gemstone, you won't find it here.

Large online operators sell a commodity for the mass manufacturers and diamond dealers they contract. They are not personally invested in the product and rarely even see it. The same designs are sold and drop-shipped the world over. Quality varies and it's a pretty soulless place for the ring of her dreams.

The chains and multiples have existing stock and more interest in moving that than in giving you

what you want. They offer standard diamond qualities, often without a GIA or other certificate, and the designs are again multiples.

Ollie wanted something different so chose a design and a diamond from a big online retailer. When it arrived the diamond had a visible inclusion, the ring was lighter than expected, and the presentation was basic. It wasn't what he imagined for the woman he loved, so he sent it back. It took three weeks to recover his money, causing him to delay replacing it and interfering with his plans for proposing.

TIP: IF YOU WANT A UNIQUE AND SPECIAL EXPERIENCE AND A REMARKABLE RING, FIND A DESIGNER WHO WILL GIVE YOU CONTROL OVER QUALITY, STYLE AND COST. SHE'LL APPRECIATE THE EFFORT AND THOUGHT YOU PUT INTO CREATING HER PERFECT RING.

MISTAKE 5 BUYING THE BOX

Engagement rings are surrounded by heavy-duty marketing and Brand Hype. It's hard to resist. Big brands finance big PR and marketing campaigns, expensive retail locations, commissions, shareholder returns, and the rest. So a lot of the 'value' is there, not in your ring. Again, styles are made in their hundreds so nor is it unique. No matter how much you spend, no woman wants her special ring to be the same as the next woman's. And she can't wear the box on her finger.

For inspiration Paul bought all the quality women's magazines. He saw how the big advertisers – fashion, cosmetic and jewellery brands – also influenced the editorial. So he wasn't surprised to hear two female colleagues competitively comparing their very similar rings – one from a big Brand Name, the other an online copy. He decided there and then to have his ring made just for him.

TIP: PUT YOUR MONEY INTO THE THINGS WHICH MATTER - DESIGN AND MATERIALS, NOT THE MARKETING HYPE OF THE BRANDS. A BESPOKE RING DESIGNED FOR YOU WITH YOUR CHOICE OF STONES WILL BE BETTER IN ALL WAYS THAN AN EXPENSIVE BRANDED PURCHASE.

MISTAKE 6

LAST MINUTE

Not allowing enough time is a factor in all the common mistakes people make when buying a ring. You've done your research but if you leave the purchase to the last minute you risk becoming prey to high pressure sales techniques. Sales staff in fine jewellery are trained in sophisticated and subtle arts to get you to part with your cash before you realise it. If you are under the added pressure of having to buy quickly you stand no chance against their emotional leverage.

The dangers are threefold. You could buy from the first person you speak to when the design you really want is just around the corner. You may be persuaded to spend more than you are comfortable with, so instead of feeling great about surprising her, you can end up resenting the purchase. And even if you do stick to your limit it's more than likely that you won't get the best value because of pressure of time to make a decision.

Jon was taking Sarah to Rio for her birthday and planned to propose. He wanted a special ring to match the occasion. Because time was running out, he thought he'd do his research as he shopped. He was persuaded to 'Buy the Box' in the second store he visited. It was a nice enough ring, but not as special as he'd wanted it to be, and it took longer to pay off his credit card than he had planned.

TIP: IF YOU WANT A UNIQUE RING, ALLOW ENOUGH TIME TO FIND THE DESIGNER YOU LIKE AND TRUST, TO GET THE DESIGN RIGHT, SOURCE THE STONES AND HAVE IT MADE FOR YOU..

MISTAKE 7

MISSING OUT ON BESPOKE

Too few people know how easy it now is to commission a bespoke ring. Not long ago it was a daunting, intimidating and costly exercise but so much has changed in the field of fine jewellery.

New technologies and the revolution in communications now mean that anyone can commission a bespoke engagement ring. Not only that, but the client can have complete control over

the design (if they so wish), the materials and the budget. Plus, he can have her perfect ring in his hands much sooner. If you choose your designer carefully, a Bespoke Ring gives you maximum flexibility, maximum value and a perfect result.

Jason had found two rings he really liked from a high end brand in Mayfair. He was referred to me by a mutual friend. We created a unique look for him, adding personal touches to the design, and sourced him better quality diamonds. We were still able to save him around £4,500. As he said, 'that's a lot to pay even for a smart red box'.

TIP: THERE IS NO NEED TO SETTLE FOR THE STANDARD OR MASS PRODUCED, EVERYONE CAN BE UNIQUE. CHOOSE A DESIGNER WHO UNDERSTANDS YOUR PRIORITIES AND CAN OFFER YOU THE CONTROL YOU WANT TO CREATE YOUR PERFECT RESULT.

BONUS MISTAKE

NOT TALKING TO ME

I have to make this point. Very few jewellers have my background or my impeccable care for each individual client outcome. Nor do they use new technology to put the client in control, simplify the issues and lighten the burden of choice - so you don't waste your time (or your money).

IF YOU WANT TO EXPLORE THE MANY POSSIBILITIES FOR YOUR RING, CONTACT ME DIRECTLY ON: 020 8819 3848

OR DROP ME A LINE AT: INFO@JULIEPEEL.CO.UK

*All images and case studies are used with permission, but some names have been changed to protect the guilty.



JULIE DESIGNED A BEAUTIFUL
ENGAGEMENT RING FOR MY FIANCE
THAT WAS ABSOLUTELY PERFECT.
SHE GOT THE DESIGN SPOT ON AND
SOURCED AN INCREDIBLE DIAMOND.

LEE ANDERSON, SURREY

Julie Peel

Bespoke Ring Design

www.juliepeel.co.uk

London Design Appointments

020 8819 3848

Farnham Design Appointments

5 The Borough, GU9 7NA

01252 724815