

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN CREMENS TEXT BY AMY ELLIOTT

SCHOOL *of* ROCK

You don't need a gemology degree to find an engagement ring. Just take our quick course on the four Cs of diamonds (cut, clarity, color, and carat weight)—plus Settings and Metals 101. Then all you'll have to do is say yes.

Tiffany & Co. round brilliant cut 8.12-carat "130th Anniversary Diamond Pavé Tiffany Setting" with platinum band and prongs, tiffany.com.

ALL PRICES UPON REQUEST EXCEPT WHERE NOTED.



CUT CLASS

What makes a diamond sparkle? The art of cutting—shaping and polishing a rough stone into a faceted jewel. Different diamond cuts are achieved by varying the type, number, and configuration of facets.

Round brilliant-cut diamonds, for example, are especially fiery (and the most popular), while the clean, rectilinear facets of emerald-cut stones best show off a gem's clarity. If you want a look that's less bling-bling, opt for an antique Old European-cut or a rose-cut diamond. Unlike modern styles, these have wider facets and were originally intended to glimmer in candlelight.

1. Jack Kelege pear cut, jackkelege.com. 2. Blue Nile style 4122 heart cut, \$590 (not including center stone), bluenile.com. 3. Martin Katz modified marquise cut, martinkatz.com. 4. Sylva & Cie rose-cut center stone and Old European-cut band, bergdorfgoodman.com. 5. Leon Mege Inc. three-stone "True Antique" French cut, leonmege.com. 6. J. Birnbach radiant cut, jbirnbach.com. 7. Harry Winston oval cut, harrywinston.com. 8. Norman Silverman Diamonds style F1629B cushion cut, normansilverman.com. 9. De Beers "DB Classic" Asscher cut, debeers.com. 10. Verdura emerald-cut solitaire, verdura.com. 11. Tacori "Royal T" princess cut, \$8,090 (not including center stone), tacori.com. 12. Kwiat Ashoka cut, kwiat.com.

If a stone's color is described as "fancy," it has a particularly intense and vivid shade.

TRUE COLORS

White diamonds are graded on the absence of color. The scale ranges from D to Z; the most valuable stones are "colorless" (D through F), and a J diamond is the minimum many jewelers recommend, because traces of brown or yellow are visible from K onward. Consider clarity, the C that evaluates the inclusions or blemishes, ranging from "flawless" to "included," at the same time. Pro tip: When it's cut and polished properly, a high clarity grade can make an I- or J-grade diamond more attractive. Colored diamonds, however, are a different story. With them, you're looking for the strength and purity of the hue, as well as rarity (the rarer the color, the higher the price). Champagne, gray, black, and brown diamonds are fairly common; the wildly glamorous blue and pink varieties are exceptionally precious; and a red diamond is among the rarest of all.

1. Mish New York "Arden" brown diamond with brown-diamond pavé, mishnewyork.com.
 2. Coast Diamond fancy yellow diamond, coastdiamond.com. 3. Christopher Designs Crisscut L'Amour" white diamond with rose-gold halo, lamourcrisscut.com. 4. Diamonds by Lauren style R6639 natural light brown-pink diamond set with white and pink diamonds, diamondsbylauren.com. 5. Daria de Koning "Czarina" gray diamond with crystal-clear colorless diamond side stones, dariadekoning.com. 6. Loriann Stevenson yellow diamond slice with diamond pavé, \$4,250, augustla.com. 7. Anna Sheffield "Bea" ring with champagne-diamond center and white-diamond halo, and white-diamond-trillion side stones, annasheffield.com.

MORE CARATS, PLEASE

Size certainly isn't everything, but we'll admit to giddy exclamations when we laid eyes on these gigantic gems. Measured in carats, a diamond's weight is also an important cost driver. "Full size" (whole or half numbers) are often in demand, so they come at a premium. Shave off just a few points (say, 2.46 carats versus 2.5) and the difference to the eye is negligible, but you may see a significant price drop. Size and weight alone don't dictate price, though. The trick is to downgrade some Cs and upgrade others—sacrifice a bit of size for better color, for instance—until you find a combination you like that fits your budget.

1. VTse Jewelry 5.02-carat Old Mine cut with 1.57-carat pavé diamonds, vtsejewelry.com. 2. Graff New York 11.09-carat emerald cut with side baguettes, graffdiamonds.com. 3. Harry Kotlar style J-5783 8.19-carat pear shape with pavé, harrykotlar.com. 4. Norman Silverman Diamonds style F16259 5.18-carat oval cut with diamond pavé, normansilverman.com. 5. Oscar Heyman style 302578 17.35-carat emerald-cut fancy color with sapphire halo, oscarheyman.com.



METAL WINNERS

The best relationships make you stronger than you are alone, and the same can be said for the gold used in jewelry—pure gold, soft and malleable on its own, is blended with harder metals to make it more durable. White gold is often plated with white metal, while trendy rose gold gets its pink hue from copper. The gold content is measured in karats, and most gold engagement rings are offered in 14-karat (58.3 percent) and 18-karat (75 percent) blends. Platinum, on the other hand, is naturally white, strong, and remarkably resistant to tarnish—and it's also 30 times rarer than gold, making it the most luxurious choice. Its sister metal, palladium, has similar properties but is lighter and less dense (and also easier on the wallet).

1. Uneek "Silhouette" style LVS853 princess cut in 18-karat white gold, \$4,127 (not including center stone), uneekjewelry.com. 2. Kirk Kara Pirouetta Collection style K274LWR oval cut in rose gold, \$2,040, kirkkara.com. 3. Scott Kay "Embrace" style SK5610 oval cut in platinum, \$4,450, scottkay.com. 4. Cartier "1895" round solitaire in platinum, cartier.us. 5. Michael M style R371L-3 round solitaire in 18-karat yellow gold, \$5,100 (not including center stone), michaelmcollection.com. 6. Carizza princess cut in 18-karat white and pink gold, \$1,875, miacarizza.com. 7. Precision Set "Lattice" flush-fit semi-mount in 18-karat gold, \$3,150 (not including center stone), eisemanjewels.com. 8. Harry Kotlar Edwardian Collection style J-5980 cushion-cut pink diamond in 18-karat rose gold and platinum, harrykotlar.com. 9. McTeigue & McClelland "Classic Flora" round solitaire in 18-karat bloomed yellow gold and platinum, mc2jewels.com. 10. Michael Bondanza "Essex" emerald cut in platinum, \$1,880 (not including center stone), michaelbondanza.com. 11. Todd Reed style trdr481-pd-0103 fancy cut with white brilliant cut in palladium, \$8,250, toddreed.com.



1



2



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8



9



11



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SET IN STYLE

Settings protect your diamond and hold it securely in place, but form matters as much as function—a talented jewelry designer can use setting details (pavé, filigree, engraving, accent stones) to transform a ring into a work of art. Increasingly popular East-West settings, in which a stone is set horizontally instead of vertically, make diamonds look larger because they span across the width of the finger. Fashion-forward geometric designs are also trending.

1. Simon G. round diamond ring in 18-karat white- and rose-gold geometric setting, \$3,850, simongjewelry.com. 2. "Single Stone "Marni" emerald-cut diamond in 18-karat yellow-gold East-West setting, singlestone.com. 3. Fred Leighton lozenge ring in East-West geometric setting, 212-288-1872. 4. Eva Fehren "Warrior Ring" white diamond and white diamond pavé in 18-karat rose-gold geometric setting, evafehren.com. 5. Suzy Landa oval-cut diamond ring with 18-karat yellow-gold and diamond East-West setting, \$2,100 (not including center stone), suzylanda.com. 6. Forevermark by Jade Trau "Center of My Universe" marquise-cut halo engagement ring in 18-karat white-gold East-West setting, forevermark.com.



A stackable engagement-ring set is easy to pair with any delicate wedding band.



BETTER TOGETHER

Since most brides wear their engagement ring and wedding band on the same finger (band first—closer to your heart), it's important to try on engagement-ring styles with potential bands so that you can make a decision based on the combo. Which isn't to say you need to go with a pair designed as a set. The two rings just need to nest well (no gaps or bumping) and should complement—or tastefully contrast with—each other in terms of metal color and decorative details.

1. Hearts On Fire "Aerial" stackable with 18-karat white-, yellow-, and rose-gold band, \$1,490 each, heartsonfire.com. 2. Sylvie Collection 1.4-karat white-gold band, \$990 (not including center stone); and mixed-shapes diamond and 18-karat white-gold wedding band, \$825, sylviecollection.com. 3. Cathy Waterman champagne-diamond ring; and "Open Leafside" with pavé band, \$5,460, twistonline.com. 4. Gabriel & Co. style ER13661P6W84JJ diamond halo, \$3,630 (not including center stone); and style WB13661P6W84JJ diamond curved band in 18-karat white gold, \$1,420, gabrielny.com. 5. Jeff Cooper Designs "Caley" ring, from \$2,050; and "Cage" band, from \$1,950, jeffcooperdesigns.com. 6. Karl Lagerfeld style 31-KA112GVP diamond ring, \$7,600; and matching diamond-and-platinum band, \$3,200, 800-487-2724. 7. David Yurman "Crossover" diamond and platinum ring; and "Crossover Cable" band, in platinum, \$950, davidyurman.com.

