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Shopping for an engagement ring is exciting (Congratulations, by the way!), but once you get out there and begin to discover the thousands of options available, the experience can also become somewhat intimidating. Fortunately, with a little basic knowledge of diamond quality, you can make a purchase with confidence in the value that you're getting for your money. Here are 4 things to look for in the selection of preset engagement rings.

1. Carat Weight

Carat weight refers to the size of the diamond solitaire, but also to the total collective weight of all the diamonds incorporated into the ring design. Because preset engagement rings are assigned a value based on the rarity of the stones, the larger a diamond solitaire is the more expensive the ring becomes, and not necessarily on a logically sliding scale. However, there are other factors which are perhaps even more important than a diamond's size when it comes to choosing a ring she'll love.

2. Cut

The cut of a diamond is the single most important factor in determining its brilliance or sparkle. Beyond just shape (princess cut, round cut, marquise cut, etc.), the cut of a diamond refers to the precision with which it is shaped and faceted. It is this precision stone cutting that allows for the maximum amount of light to enter and exit the diamond. The more surfaces the light has to bounce off of, the more sparkly it becomes. Excellent or Ideal cut diamonds make the most brilliant and impressive present engagement rings, regardless of the size of the solitaire.

3. Color

The color grade of a diamond actually refers to the lack thereof. Due to the slightly larger size of the diamonds typically involved, a grade of colorless or near colorless should be sought in diamond solitaires and three stone engagement rings.

4. Clarity

The clarity of a diamond refers to the number of flaws present. Internal flaws are referred to as inclusions. External flaws are referred to as blemishes. Each type of flaw can result in detracting from a diamond's beauty, but it is extremely important to note that in order for a blemish or inclusion to significantly affect the appearance of pre-set engagement rings, it must be major. The majority of diamond flaws are actually not visible to the naked eye, having little to no effect on the diamond's brilliance. Pay more attention to the diamond's appearance than the microscopic appearance of flaws.

Collectively, these qualities are known as the "four Cs" of diamond quality. By possessing a basic knowledge of the four Cs, and the bearing they can have upon a diamond's value, you'll be able to shop preset engagement rings with a level of consumer savvy that will assure you get a great value on the most beautiful ring your budget will allow.

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