



Guides For Brides

A Wedding Ring Is Forever:

Top Tips For Finding Your Perfect Wedding Band

(NAPSA)—When it comes to wedding rings, engagement rings tend to steal the spotlight. They embody the excitement of your engagement and come with the timeless story of how he proposed. Yet, given what marriage stands for—a lifetime commitment to one another—it's the wedding bands that have the greatest symbolism.

"An engagement ring merely signifies the *promise* of impending nuptials," says jewelry and style expert Michael O'Conner. He advises couples to begin looking for their wedding bands immediately after the engagement. "Couples who wait to buy their bands often relinquish smart considerations like platinum because they've gone over budget by then. But why wouldn't you invest in the most enduring symbols of your love?"

While finding the perfect ring can be daunting, there are a few tricks to selecting a ring that can help make the purchase as smart as it is sentimental.

Budget. Standard practice is to apply two months' salary to both bands. Look for the best value ring for the price. Many retailers are introducing lines of entry-level platinum wedding bands starting at just \$500, making the high quality of platinum accessible for most budgets.

Quality. Selecting the highest quality ring can require a greater investment up front, but it pays off in the long run. Choose a metal for its natural color to save on maintenance costs. Eighteen-kt. gold is preferred for yellow bands; for white metal, however, platinum is ideal. As celebrity wedding planner David Tutera™ explains, "Buy a white setting that will actually stay white. Unlike white gold, plat-



The wedding rings you pick symbolize your love for a lifetime.

inum is naturally white and doesn't change color or need replating."

Durability. You'll be wearing your ring every day for the rest of your life, so you want to make sure it's durable. Platinum is what Tutera™ refers to as the "ultimate safety clasp." Of all the precious metals, it's the most dense and it holds diamonds most securely. Everyday wear also means scratches, so take note of a metal's "scratch factor." Platinum merely displaces metal when scratched, whereas gold actually loses metal.

Metal Harmony. There is no rule that says his and her wedding bands have to match. In fact, 60 percent of women want diamonds, while 85 percent of men don't. It is wise, however, to match metals since it shows you two are in sync—O'Connor refers to this as "metal harmony."

So, as you plan your dream wedding, just remember—your rings are one of the few items that last beyond the cake and flowers; make sure they'll be there to reflect "I do" forever.