

THE GLOSSARY OF JEWELRY DESIGN

TERMS TO HELP YOU COMMUNICATE
YOUR DREAMS TO YOUR JEWELER

by Calla Gold



GLOSSARY TERMS

Alloy	Flexible Ring	Prong Setting
Anniversary band	Flush Set	Reshank
Bail	French Clip Back	Re-Tipping Prongs
Band	French Wire/French Wire Finish	Rhodium Plating
Band-Aid Repairs	Gemstone Enhancement	Ring Guards
Basket head	Gold-Plated and Gold-Filled	Ring Sizer
Bench or Jeweler's Bench	Hammer Finish	Satin Finish
Bezel	Head	Semi-Mount
Boutique Jeweler	Hidden Bail	Setting
Butterfly Spring	Hinging Ring Shanks	Shank
Carat	Imitation Gem	Sizing
Casting	Inlay	Sizing Bar
Channel Setting	Illusion Setting	Sleeper Earrings
Clasps	Jeweler's Bench	Slide
Cocktail Ring	Karat	Solder and Soldering
Costume Jewelry	Knock-Offs	Speed Bumps, Sizing Beads, Etc.
Crown	Knuckle-to-Finger-Differential	Square shank
Cubic Zirconium -CZ	Laser-Sizing / Laser-Soldering	Stackers
Design	Lever Back	Stacking
Diamond Bail	Loupe	Super Fit
Die Struck	Malleable Metal	Synthetic Gem
Ear Charms	Matte Finish	Tapered Shank
Ear Jackets	Monster Backs	Tapered head
Earlobe Droop	Natural Gemstone	Tiffany Head
Engagement Ring	Omega Chain	Ultrasonic Cleaner
Enhancer bail	Open Work	Wax Model
Estate Jewelry/ Estate Jeweler	Outer Ring	Wedding Band
Eternity Band	Oxidation	
Filigree	Pancaked Prong.	
Findings	Pave (pah-Vay)	
Fine Jewelry	Peg Head	
Finger Mate	Personal Jeweler	
Fit Feel	Plastic Disc Backs	
Flat Bottom Shank	Platinum	



Alloys are formed when two or more elements are combined to form a different type of metal with special attributes. The new metal is typically stronger, more durable, and may be a different color.



An **Anniversary Band** is a ring in which gemstones have been set one-third to one-half of the way around the perimeter. Anniversary bands can be the same width all the way around or they can be tapered. Typically anniversary bands are set with diamonds and symbolize romance.



A **Bail** is the top loop on a pendant that the chain slides through. Bails come in many different shapes, sizes and designs. Changing the bail on a pendant can make a big difference, both for aesthetic reasons and for strength.



A **Band** appears to be the same width all the way around your finger. The classic wedding band can be thin, thick or medium in width as long as the width is uniform. Typically, bands are simple rings of uniform width with little or no raised elements, although decorative designs can be engraved or cast into the piece. They can be thick or thin. Occasionally, gemstones will be flush set in bands.



A **Band-Aid Repair** is a repair done to a poorly made piece of jewelry. Band aid repairs can't be guaranteed to last. The problem has to do with the substandard manufacture of the original piece of jewelry.



A **Basket Head** is a type of prong setting for gemstones. It looks similar to a basket—thus the name. Basket heads provide support and stability for the prongs. Viewed from the side, basket heads can have one or two horizontal bars or can be quite ornate.



A **Bench** (Jeweler's Bench) is a specialized work table where he or she makes and repairs jewelry. Normally, they have drawers to accommodate his tools.



A **Bezel** is a type of setting in which a vertical rim of metal snugly surrounds a gemstone to securely hold it in place. The bezel setting was one of the earliest methods of setting gemstones into jewelry. Today, many beautiful and modern designs make use of bezel settings.



Boutique Jeweler stores feature lines of jewelry from well known jewelry designers. Boutique jewelers are often the exclusive representative for these designers within particular geographic regions. The jewelry is usually artistic, well made, and their prices reflect this.



A **Butterfly Spring** is a thin, flexible strip of metal soldered to the inside bottom shank of a ring. Its purpose is to hold a ring securely on a finger and in an upright position. Butterfly springs are useful for women whose knuckles are larger than the rest of her fingers. The device allows a ring to be sized slightly larger so that it can slip over the knuckle, yet be safe from twirling or falling off the finger.



Carat (with a C) refers to the weight of a gemstone. Abbreviation: ct. Example: 2.3ct carat diamond ring. Note: Karat (with a K) refers to the percentage of gold in fine jewelry. See “Karat.”



Casting is a process in which melted metal is poured into a mold and allowed to harden. After a piece of jewelry is removed from the mold, it is filed, polished and if need be, set with gemstones.



In a **Channel Setting**, multiple gemstones are set in a row between two walls of metal, in other words, “the channel.” The gemstones are held in place by their edges tucked inside a groove in the inside wall. Channel-set gemstones are smooth to the touch and resist catching on clothing.



A **Clasp** is a device used to join together the two ends of chains, bracelets, and necklaces. Clasps come in many different shapes and sizes.



A **Cocktail Ring** is typically large and three dimensional and rises significantly off the finger. It is usually set with many colored gems and smaller diamonds. Cocktail rings are typically worn when dressed up and out to parties. They are not practical for everyday wear.



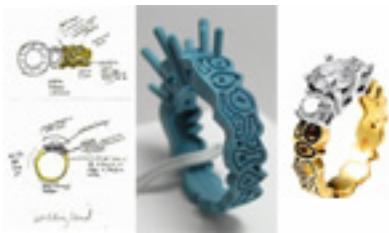
Costume Jewelry is low-cost jewelry made with inexpensive materials. These materials can consist of almost anything: plastic, wood, tin, copper, enamel, glass, crystals, cloth, etc. Gold, silver, platinum and real gemstones are, for the most part, not used in costume jewelry. Costume jewelry is often expensive to repair, if at all possible. Frequently, it costs more to repair costume jewelry than the original cost of the item.



The **Crown** on a ring is the top portion displaying most of the design elements. A crown is also the upper part of a gemstone.



Cubic Zirconium are manmade replicas of gemstones. They are meant to look like precious gems but possess none of the hardness or durability of the real thing. They wear quickly and become dull and are not suitable for rings worn on a daily basis. CZ's are fine for earrings, pendants or rings worn occasionally. They are very inexpensive.



The **Design** is the idea for the jewelry that is to be made. The design process starts with a drawing of your idea. Next comes a hand-carved or a 3D CAD (computer aided design) wax model of the piece of jewelry. After the wax model is completed, the piece is cast in metal.



A **Diamond Bail** is a solid-front bail cast and set with diamonds.



A **Die** is a hollowed out metal form into which gold and silver is hammered to produce one shape or another. The new "die-struck" piece of metal is light, shiny, and strong and is usually soldered together with similar pieces. The result is jewelry that looks "big" but without the heaviness of thicker, cast pieces. Die striking is often used in the manufacture of earrings.



Ear Charms are small, lightweight charms designed to hang from hoop earrings. They let women jazz up, otherwise, plain earrings.



Ear Jackets fit under stud earrings to enhance and enlarge their look. They come in many different designs and shapes: circular, flower, and drops, to name a few.



Earlobe Droop is caused by heavy earrings tipping forward until they're facing downward. Not only is this unattractive, it's hard on your ears and ear holes.



An **Engagement Ring** is a ring that a man gives to a woman when he proposes to her. After she's married, it will be worn together with her wedding band. Often engagement and wedding rings are designed together and come in sets that are specifically contoured to fit snugly into each other. The engagement ring is usually the fancier and more elaborate of the two and is characteristically set with a larger diamond in the center as the focal point. Oftentimes, this diamond is surrounded by smaller diamonds. Designs range from simple, single stone settings to complex and wildly imaginative creations.



An **Enhancer Bail** hinges open in the back so it can be snapped onto to larger chains and necklaces. Enhancers work especially well with pearl and beaded necklaces that are too thick to slip through regular bails.



Estate Jewelry is purchased from buyers of estates or the heirs, of varying age, often antique for resale. A Jeweler who specializes in this type of jewelry. Estate jewelry is older, antique, and previously owned jewelry that comes from estates. Today however, almost any jewelry that was previously owned is referred to as estate jewelry.



An **Eternity Band** is a ring set with gemstones that extend uniformly around the perimeter of the piece. The gems can be set with prongs or in one continuous channel. Multiple bands are often worn together to create dazzling new looks. These bands can be different widths and set with different gemstones.



Filigree is a delicate, intricate, and lace-like artistic design element used in gold, platinum and silver jewelry. Filigree creates openness and lightness in pieces.



Findings are any of the small, functional, and handy pieces of pre-made jewelry parts that combine to make a finished piece of jewelry. Clasps, bails, earring posts, heads, and gold balls are all examples of findings. It is much more convenient and cost effective to buy these “parts” pre-made.



Fine Jewelry is jewelry made out of precious metals, such as gold or platinum, and may contain precious gemstones.



A **Finger Mate** shank is hinged with an internal latching mechanism that allows it to expand three to four ring sizes larger when opened so that it can slip easily over larger knuckles.

[Click here](#) to see blog post about Fingemate Hinged Shanks with examples.



Fit Feel. You probably have a particular tightness or looseness you're most comfortable with in the fit of your rings. It's an important thing to know about yourself because your Jeweler will measure your ring to the tightness they like, not be the feel you like. For best results, communicate your fit feel to your Jeweler when resizing your rings or having custom-made rings created.



A **Flat Bottom Shank** is a shank that's been flattened on the bottom to help prevent a ring from turning and twisting on the finger.



Flexible Ring style is made like a link chain. It's floppy, not hard like a regular ring. They are very comfortable, hence their popularity.



In **Flush Settings**, the top surface of the gemstone and the surrounding metal are both on the same plane. In other words, the gem is "flush" with the surface of the metal. There are no prongs or bezels in flush settings.



A **French Clip** is a type of earring backing in which an open, wire clip fits over a post and against the earlobe. French clip backed earrings normally prevent the ear from bending downward at an unflattering angle.



French Wire is an extremely fine coiled wire. Imagine a very small toy Slinky. French wire finishes protects the thread between the last pearl in a necklace and the clasp. Better quality pearl and bead necklaces are finished in this way.



Gemstone Enhancement is any method used to alter the appearance of a gem. Heating, dying, and irradiating are typical techniques. Gem enhancement is used to draw out the maximum color, luster, clarity, and brilliance of gemstones.



Gold Plated and **Gold Filled** jewelry is made by coating a less expensive metal with a thin layer of gold. Gold plating can wear off over time but it's easy to re-gold plate jewelry. Gold-filled has more gold content than gold-plated jewelry.



A **Hammered Finish** is accomplished by making small dents or indentations with a rounded hammer in the surface of the jewelry. Hammered finishes often add a rustic and organic character to a piece.



A **Head** is a three to six pronged gemstone setting. Heads are cast separately from the main body design of the jewelry piece. Later, depending on the gemstone that will be set, the selected head is soldered onto the main body of the piece. This is done so different shapes and sizes of gems can be set onto a piece of jewelry per the wishes of the customer.



With a **Hidden Bail** design element, either the bail is affixed behind the body of the pendant—rendering it out of sight—instead of being attached to the top, or the chain is going through the designed piece invisibly. Either way the pendant appears to float on the chain, adding modernity and mystery to the piece. See **Omega Necklace** for picture of hidden bail on a necklace



A **Hinging Ring Shank** hinges open at the bottom so that it can easily slip over the knuckle. These types of shanks are especially helpful for those whose knuckles are considerably larger than the base of the finger where their ring resides.



An **Imitation Gem** is basically an artificial replica of the real thing. A CZ is an imitation of a diamond. A 1ct diamond may cost \$6,000. A 1ct CZ may cost \$4.



Inlay is a decorative technique in which a custom cut stone gem like lapis lazuli is imbedded into a corresponding unfilled area with the same dimensions so that the “inlaid” material is level with the surface of the piece. Common stones and organic substances used in inlay are lapis lazuli, malachite, opals, and mother of pearl.



In an **Illusion Setting**, shiny white gold makes small diamonds appear larger than they are.



A **Jeweler's Bench** is the specialized table a jeweler works at while making and repairing jewelry.



Karat is a measure of the percentage of pure gold in a piece of jewelry. 24 karat (24k) gold is 100% gold. 14k gold is made up of 58% gold and 42% other metals (14 parts gold, to 10 parts other metals). Similarly, 18k gold is made up of 75% gold and 25% other metal (18 parts gold, to 6 parts other metals). Note: Carat—with a "C"—is a measure of gemstone weight.



A **Knock-off** is an imitation of another piece of jewelry, often a copy of a piece from a well known designer. Knock-offs are usually less expensive than the original. Quality varies widely, but knock-offs regularly lack the weight and fine details of the real thing.



The **Knuckle-to-Finger-Differential** is the difference in size between the knuckle and the part of the finger where your ring rests is what I call the knuckle-to-finger-differential. Persons with large differentials are good candidates for rings that hinge open on the bottom so they can be slipped more easily over the knuckle.



Laser Soldering --Traditional jewelry soldering is done by applying a hot, open flame to the area of the piece needing work. Because gold is such a good conductor, the heat from the soldering can be transferred to heat-sensitive gemstones causing them to crack or change color. Laser Soldering is accomplished by directing a tiny laser beam at the jewelry. Much less heat is generated in this process. Thanks to this new technology it's possible to make repairs on jewelry with heat-sensitive gemstones.



A **Lever Back** is a type of earring backing that hinges open and closed. Normally, this type of backing is more comfortable than a post.



A **Loupe** is a small hand held magnifying device used by Jewelers. The typical magnification is 10 times. It's used to look at diamonds, gemstones and the fine details in pieces of jewelry.



Malleable Metal can be shaped. Something brittle or rigid, such as an icicle, will break when pressure is applied to it. Something malleable, such as clay, can be easily sculpted or molded. Gold and platinum are malleable metals are favorites with jewelry makers.



Unlike polishing to a high shine, the **Matte Finish** puts very fine pits into a metal surface to create a non-reflective surface.



A **Monster Back** is simply a very wide—9-10mm—earring backing. Monster backs give more support to the ear than smaller backings.



A **Natural Stone** is one produced by nature. Diamonds, rubies, and quartz are natural stones. Imitation, artificial, and synthetic stones are manmade and created in a laboratory.



An **Omega Chain** is made up of small, smooth, curved, metal plates all linked together to form a rounded and flexible necklace. Omega chains are typically 6 to 8mm in width.



Open work uses openings in the metal itself, which go all the way through a piece of jewelry. It's often done to create more interest or lightness in a design. A shape, or many shapes are cut into the design. When the openings are small, delicate and numerous, it can look like filigree. Filigree however is known for using wire in its work. This openwork technique can be done on the metal itself or worked into a wax model before it is cast. This is also called "pierced through" work.



Outer Ring is the name I give to the ring closest to the knuckle when discussing stacking rings. Stacking rings often need to be sized differently on the same finger.



Oxidation with regards to jewelry refers to the application of a black finish, to one degree or another, by immersing the jewelry in an oxidizing solution such as potassium sulphide. Oxidation creates contrast in jewelry and is often used as a background color in order to highlight a raised element in a design.



A **Pancaked Prong** is a slang term for a prong that's thin and worn down flat. Pancaked prongs should be replaced.



Pave (pah-Vay) is a type of setting in which multiple small gemstones are set together as close as possible — much like paving stones.



A **Peg Head** has a peg on its base to allow it to be soldered more securely into a ring. Soldering both the peg and the base of the head to the ring achieves a much more secure bond.



A **Personal Jeweler** is someone who listens to their clients and provides them with their needs, wants, and desires. Communication is the key. Personal Jewelers really get to know their client and are interested in the what their client has to say. In turn, their clients feel comfortable with them. A Personal Jeweler gives great service that ultimately leaves clients satisfied and happy.



Plastic Disc Backs are earring backings approximately 12mm in diameter. A small, wax filled barrel in the center firmly grips the post. The wide plastic provides support for the earlobe.



Platinum is a grey-white, heavy, precious metal that is dense, malleable and resistant to corrosion and tarnishing. For these reasons it is an excellent metal for jewelry making. Also because of these properties, platinum doesn't have to be alloyed with other metals to the extent that gold does. Platinum used in jewelry is generally about 95% pure, as opposed to 14k gold, which is 58% pure.



A **Prong Setting**, sometimes called a claw setting, holds gemstones in place with three or more small, finger-like extensions of metal that wrap up and over the edge of the stone, securing it in place. Prong settings are the most common type of setting for gemstones, particularly for solitaire engagement rings.



Reshank -- A shank is the bottom portion of a ring that sits under the finger. When a shank breaks or cracks or is too thin, it's time to replace or "reshank" the ring. This involves cutting off the worn shank and replacing it with one that is thicker and wider. This provides superior support for the top of the ring and prolongs the overall life of the piece.



Re-Tipping Prongs is the process of replacing old, worn out prongs with new ones. [See blog post](#) with more details.



Rhodium Plating adds a very bright white and shiny metal and is good at resisting corrosion. In the plating process, the jewelry is dipped in a solution containing the rhodium and electricity is applied. The rhodium in the solution then adheres to the immersed jewelry. Rhodium is often used to plate white gold and silver jewelry to make the pieces look whiter and brighter.



Ring Guards are small metal strips that stretch across the lower portion of ring shanks. Their purpose is to hold a ring in place and keep it from spinning or sliding off of the finger. Ring guards are temporary solutions, at best. They can cut the finger, collect oils and dirt, and cause rashes. A better answer is to have the ring professionally sized.



A **Ring Sizer** is a series of consecutively sized metal or plastic rings. The rings progress from very small to very large. A person tries on different ring sizes until they find the one that fits the best. That will be their ring size.



A **Satin Finish** is fine, brushed-look type of texture applied to the surface of jewelry.



A **Semi-Mount** is a ring in which the main center stone has yet to be set. Typically, the smaller side stones will have been set already. Semi-mounts provide flexibility for the buyer to choose from a variety of different center stones. One buyer might want a 1.25ct flawless diamond for the ring. Another might be quite satisfied with a 1ct, slightly included stone.



A **Setting** is any open element on a piece of jewelry into which a gemstone will be set. Settings include prongs, bezels, channels, or any other method of holding a gem in place. Sometimes, a whole piece of jewelry that has yet to be set with gemstones is called a setting. Occasionally, settings refer to particular styles of jewelry.



The **Shank** is the bottom part of a ring that rests underneath the finger. Shanks come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are important factors in how rings sit on the finger.



Sizing is the process of increasing or decreasing the size of a ring. It's as simple as that!.



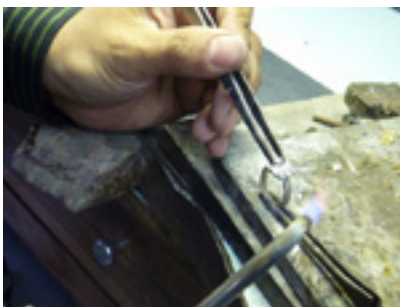
The **Sizing Bar** is a small, solid section of an eternity ring that can be cut for sizing.



A **Sleeper Earring** is called that because you can sleep in it. It's a lightweight small hoop. Its post hinges and snaps closed in a "v" lock. In other words you don't need a backing on it. Other hoops may close like this, but what makes a sleeper is its lightweight construction and small size.



A **Slide** is style of pendant in which a chain or necklace slips through an open element on the back of the piece or a part of the design without the use of a bail.



Soldering is the process of joining two pieces of heated metal together with a similar metal, called solder. There is an art to seamlessly soldering two pieces of gold together so that you can't tell any work was ever done.



Speed Bumps, also known as sizing beads, are two small balls or hemispheres of metal soldered to the lower inside section of shanks. Their purpose is to anchor rings in place on the finger and prevent them from twirling.



Square Shanks can range from strongly visible in the design, to a mere touch of square element. Sometimes the inside of the shank has the straighter up-and-down square suggestion and sometimes the square element is only on the outside.



Stackers are sets two or more of rings worn together on the same finger. Typically edges are straight so the different rings fit together seamlessly. Each ring can be set with identical or different gemstones, be curvy or straight, and have varying widths. Aesthetic possibilities are endless.



Stacking refers to wearing two or more rings together on the same finger. The rings may have been specifically designed for this purpose or they may be ones that just happened to look good with each other. I encourage creative stacking!



Super Fit shanks open completely, enabling the ring to easily slip on and off nearly any size finger. A virtually invisible push-button activates the mechanism. Super Fit is used for knuckle-to-finger differentials over four sizes.



Synthetic Gems have all the chemical and physical properties of natural ones but are created in a laboratory.



Tapered Shanks narrow toward the bottom of the ring. This is more comfortable for many people.



On a **Tapered Head** the prongs taper downward, following the contour of the gemstone. Often the gemstone is set higher and seen from above, appears to float. The tapered head gives the ring a feeling of lightness and femininity.



The **Tiffany Head** was designed by Louis Tiffany (yes, that Tiffany). The design exposes the diamond to greater light from the side. At the time Tiffany developed the Tiffany head, other jewelers were surrounding diamonds with more metal to hold the gem in place. Often, the diamond became overwhelmed by the setting. The Tiffany setting creates space and enhances the beauty of the diamond. It's still popular today for its simplicity and beauty.



An **Ultrasonic Cleaner** is a jewelry cleaning machine. Jewelry is cleaned by vibrating items at a high frequency while immersed in a cleaning solution. The high vibration dislodges dirt and grime from the jewelry.



Wax Model — Before a ring is cast in precious metal, a model of it is carved in wax. Wax models are carved by hand or by a computer-assisted machine.



Wedding Bands — also called wedding rings — are traditionally gold rings worn on the left hand ring finger and signify that the wearer is married. They can be worn alone or in concert with an engagement ring. They can be simple gold bands, as is the case with most men's wedding rings, or they can be intricate and elaborate and set with fabulous gemstones.

CALLA GOLD

J E W E L R Y

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Calla Gold, owner/designer of Calla Gold Jewelry, has been a “Jeweler Without Walls” since 1983, in Santa Barbara. A Jeweler Without Walls visits her clients outside the typical bricks and mortar store setting. Her wedding ring designs grace many happily married hands.

Calla has been happily married to Jeremy Gold, since 1979 and has a cool son.

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