

Helping Hands

Hand and finger shapes determine the right ring style

by Calla Gold

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Intuitively, many of us know what kind of ring looks good on a particular finger. A good intuition is a valuable servant in any jeweler's toolbox.

Feelings aside, it's a good idea to know and recognize the specific traits that combine to match individual fingers to corresponding ring styles. Several factors contribute to one ring looking better on a particular hand shape than another.

Age Range

Age plays a role in determining which kinds of rings look good on which hand and finger shapes. Younger hands should wear smaller rings. Thin bands close to the finger set off the smooth perfection of the skin, allowing the youthful complexion to stand out. Rings with small gems and those with narrow gauges and simple designs are appropriate. They complement the youthful body and the unblemished skin.

More mature hands should wear larger rings. As we age, knuckles continue to grow – they take on more personality. To strike the proper proportional balance, the size of jewelry and gemstones worn should continue to grow.

Larger pieces create an overall impression of elegance and femininity, which is why women often remount their wedding rings with larger diamonds on their 10– year anniversaries. The delicate 0.15– ct. diamond originally set in a wedding ring looked perfect then, but a larger center stone and bigger band is more flattering to a more mature hand. That's good news for jewelers!

Hand and Finger Shape

Those blessed with long, slender fingers have more options. They can wear rings with wide, horizontal styling; large, flat rings; stacking rings; and ring sets. Long vertical designs also look fabulous.

Shorter fingers need more vertical designs. Rings that stand up slightly off the finger produce the impression of length for the finger. Avoid wider rings that completely cover the finger

between the knuckles. A gold– intensive design with a bold and definite line would be more effective than a visually busy ring.

Plump fingers look best in rings with angular and asymmetrical designs because they minimize the rounded look of the fingers.

Bony or large– knuckled fingers should be adorned with wide– banded rings with designs or gems on top. The broadness of the ring draws attention away from the large knuckles toward the beautiful ring.

Women with large, big boned or mannish hands need to create balance with larger designs. This will make their hands look smaller.

Lend a Hand

It happens too often: customers with large hands wear tiny rings that belong on teenagers. "It's to make my hands look smaller," they say. You can gently disabuse them of this notion by putting a properly proportioned ring on one hand, a tiny ring on the other and letting them see the difference.

Shy, large– boned customers will benefit from wearing bigger rings too. Tiny equals shy and demure, but larger adds confidence.

Put a big ring on one hand and a small ring on the other and let the customer see the difference. Position her in front of a full– length mirror. Have her stand five to 10 feet back so she gets the "across the room" view – it's how others see her. She'll see the correct ring is really not so enormous after all.

Encourage those with hands showing flaws – such as scars or discoloration – to wear large bold rings that extend high off the finger. Don't let your customer's feeling that she has "ugly" hands prevent her from wearing rings and bracelets. You should kindly advise her that the overall impression of beauty and femininity imparted by the jewelry greatly dilutes the effect of any blemishes on the hand. Demonstrate this concept by having them try on bold rings and bracelets.

Certain women, by virtue of their confidence and bold attitudes, can wear rings that ordinarily wouldn't look right on another woman with the same build. It's a good idea to take the whole woman into account when selecting any jewelry.

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All illustrations by Entera

Age Range

Younger women should wear smaller rings, which complement youthful skin and delicate proportions.



A delicate ring on an older woman's hand draws attention to the hand, not the ring.

Hand and Finger Shape

A small flat band makes the larger knuckles on older hands more noticeable.





Larger rings create elegance to flatter the hands of older women.

Hand Size

A chubby hand looks slimmer with an elongated ring.





A round ring makes a chubby hand look even rounder.

Finger Size

A delicate ring is lost on long slender fingers.



Long slender fingers look graceful when adorned with an elongated vertical ring.