Happily Ever After Starts Here

Plan the perfect wedding with local advertisers and tips gathered just for you!
Clever ideas for an inexpensive wedding

Are you in search of some ideas for a wedding that won’t leave you and your new spouse in debt for the next ten years? Here are a few tips on how to organize a delightful wedding that will not break your newly joined budgets.

First of all, it’s not necessarily a thrifty move to limit the number of guests you invite. In theory, inviting someone to a wedding doesn’t cost you anything; by giving you a gift (usually money), the guest is likely giving you more than the cost of his or her meal. Rather than opting for traditional invitations, you could choose the electronic option. Your photographer or a graphic design service could put together a pretty digital invitation that would save you mailing costs and delays.

Bear in mind that quality can be cost-effective where guest favors and decorations are concerned. If you order some beautiful centerpieces from your favorite florist, they can decorate the reception hall all by themselves, especially if the room you’ve rented is already attractive. What’s more, your decorative elements or centerpieces can also be used as guest favors. If there is only one on each table, you could hold a draw for them, or they could be given away as prizes for entertaining games organized by the master of ceremonies or the DJ.

When planning how to integrate alcohol into your reception, moderation is the key word. Formulas such as open bars can lead to indelicate behavior from some of your guests and can be very expensive to boot. Instead, opt for a cash bar with a complementary glass of champagne for toasting or else a limited number of free drinks per guest.

Think about choosing a wedding date just before or just after the high season. Between May and September costs increase astronomically for limousines, caterers, reception halls, florists, and the list goes on. Don’t let anybody tell you otherwise—a magical wedding is still possible in April or October!

The history of the wedding cake

The tall, tiered wedding cake is one of the most widespread wedding traditions in the western world. What do you know about the origins of this sweet nuptial custom?

Historians believe that the concept of wedding cakes can be traced back to ancient Rome. At that time, it was customary to break a wafer or loaf of sweet bread over the bride’s head with the goal of invoking happiness and fertility. In medieval Europe, wedding guests typically stacked small pastries as high as possible, and the bride and groom would kiss over the resulting pile of sweetness. The higher the pastry tower was, the happier the couple would be. Sweet, tall, tiered cakes like those seen today in weddings across North America only became commonplace around the eighteenth century.

Nowadays, bakeries create wedding cakes that are true works of art. Anything goes when it comes to the shape, flavor and color.

A symbolic gesture The tradition of the wedding cake being sliced by the bride and groom dates back to the Middle Ages. The gesture symbolized the first action taken by the bride and groom as a legitimate couple. Traditionally, the groom rests his hand on the bride’s as a sign of fertility and protection.

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Bridezilla Be Gone!!
Dodge drama and stay sane for the big day

You’ve seen the movie (and its reality TV offshoots—don’t lie!) and know that Bridezilla isn’t exactly a term of endearment. Yes, having an extreme control-freak attitude about your wedding plans might get you what you want; but is alienating your entire entourage really worth it? (We checked. It’s not.)

Bride-to-be, are you struggling to keep your cool as you plan for your rapidly approaching big day? If so, take a look at the top five potential sources of wedding-day drama and our tips to on how to deal.

Potential drama source #1: the planning
It is completely normal to want everything to be perfect for what may be the happiest day of your life. But there’s a difference between irritable at times and disagreeable all the time!

Our tip: If you can afford to hire a wedding planner, drop everything and do so right away before skipping to #2. Otherwise, start early—as in, not the month before D-day. Make an exhaustive to-do list and be willing to delegate some tasks to people you trust—but stand your ground and don’t let anyone else take control of your day.

Potential drama source #2: the dress
You’ve always dreamed of a fairy-tale ball gown with all the trimmings, but a look in the fitting room mirror reveals the cold, hard truth: you could be mistaken for the wedding cake.

Our tip: Don’t be afraid to step out of your comfort zone, and trust the advice given by trained boutique staff—it’s their job to make you look and feel great, after all. When it comes to dresses for your bridal party, just remember the cautionary scene in Bridesmaids. To avoid having your BFFs wish they’d never met you, let them choose a style that suits both their silhouette and their budget. You have final say on the color, though!

Potential drama source #3: the other half
Ever since you announced your engagement you’ve been sending out rather mixed messages. You want your fiancé to add his touch to the wedding, but you keep shooting down his ideas. You won’t stop saying that all that matters is to have fun on the big day, but keep reminding your soon-to-be husband that his buddies better be on their best behavior—or else.

Our tip: Instead of wasting precious time and energy on bickering, take a deep breath and remember that a wedding involves two people. The big day should be a reflection of you as a couple (of which you’re both equal parts).

Potential drama source #4: social media
Are you a tad obsessed with turning your online followers green with envy at the sight of your picture-perfect wedding posts?

Our tip: It takes more than a vintage filter (or four) to achieve professional-worthy results to share on your feed. It also takes more than a DSLR camera to be a wedding photographer, so do your homework and hire someone worthy of the title. And about those DIY decorations that bloggers and magazine writers always advertise as “super-easy to make”: run a few trial sessions with some of your artistically gifted friends, and refrain from angrily ripping up your creation because it’s not identical the Pinterest post you were trying to emulate. Not everyone is an arts-and-crafts wizard—you can hire a decorator, you know.

Potential drama source #5: your mirror
The thought of waking up on your wedding day with a huge zit (or a cold sore, or a sunburn, or massive dark circles or a creepy third eye) might keep you up at night, but these things do happen (well, most of them anyway).

Our tip: To avoid feeling like you should keep your veil on all day (or worse, take flight à la Runaway Bride), have your beauty team—hair whisperer, makeup queen et al.—by your side to doll you up before you walk down the aisle. And don’t sweat the small stuff! No blemish in the world is big enough to steal your thunder.

Your wedding is going to be absolutely beautiful, because it’ll be yours. And, most of all, because you’ll have successfully preserved both your loved ones’ sanity and your own—that’s what we’d call a happy ending.
If, at a time in the past, the boldest move you could make when it came to the color of your wedding dress was to pick off-white instead of a pristine snowy shade, that’s simply no longer the case. Like most rules, the one that dictates the color of your wedding dress is meant to be broken—and more and more brides are taking the plunge. Read on for some inspiration.

Did you know that the white wedding dress has only been popular in North America since the nineteenth century? Before then, it was customary for the bride to wear—you guessed it—a colorful dress! Today, the brightly colored dress is making a comeback and designers from around the world are reinventing this vintage trend. While shopping for a non-white wedding dress might have been a tricky task a few decades ago, boutiques are now stocked with gowns in every color of the rainbow—and then some. Whether you’re in the market for an electric pink ball gown or an emerald green A-line, your local bridal boutique is sure to deliver the goods.

On the fence about your color choice because you fear you’ll shock your guests by choosing an unconventional gown? Remember that this is your day and that you have the final say on what you wear. That being said, there are ways to compromise: you could incorporate a colored sash or veil in your look or choose an all-white dress with colorful stitching.

So, will you let your true colors shine through with your dream wedding dress?

White isn’t your only option

As the bride, you will be the focus of everyone’s attention on your big day, including all the guests as well as your beloved, of course. But in order to be the most beautiful woman in the room, the star of the celebrations must choose her dress carefully. Here are a few tips to help you.

1. Think before you shop. It’s exhausting trying on dozens of dresses at random in the hopes of finding the perfect one. Before going shopping, be sure to browse some magazines and search the Internet to narrow down the styles you prefer.

2. Shop well in advance. Most people get married in the summer, so dressmakers’ agendas soon fill up and the prettiest dresses fly off the racks quickly. Make sure you plan enough time for the fittings.

3. Choose carefully who you shop with. Don’t shop with a crowd of friends who will confuse you with all their comments and diverging opinions. Choose one or two people who know you well and who have good taste. You’ll want them to be able to give you some honest feedback.

4. Choose a dress that you like. Your dress should make you feel good and allow you to be yourself. You also want to be comfortable walking up the aisle and dancing. Naturally, you’ll also want to choose a model that flatters your figure.

5. Bear in mind the general atmosphere. Your outfit should harmonize with the wedding theme and the reception hall. For instance, a formal sequined dress is not really appropriate for a country setting.

One last tip: decide how much you want to spend on your dress before you begin your search. That way you won’t ruin your whole wedding budget by splurging on an expensive dress.
You’re getting married! Congratulations! Now it’s time to plan the wedding. Here are 15 steps you should follow (not necessarily in order) so that everything is perfect on the big day. Before you start, set your budget and stick to it at all costs. If you think you might lose your head, your best bet is to hire a wedding planner.

1. Decide on your theme. Hollywood glamour, car-themed, turquoise and white—you know the possibilities are endless!

2. Draw up your guest list and send invitations. Will it be a grand affair or an intimate gathering? Who do you want by your side on your special day? Make sure everyone can make it by sending out save the date cards and invitations early.

3. Plan the wedding procession. Who will you pick to be the best man, and who gets to be the maid of honor? Have you found a flower girl and a ring bearer?

4. Select the officiant and the type of ceremony. Courthouse wedding or religious tradition? Officiated by a priest or by a friend? Make sure that the option you choose welcomes your personal touch.

5. Find your venues. Where will the ceremony and the reception be held—in a church, at the beach, in a grand hotel, at the park or in a cozy cabin? Will you need to rent any equipment?

6. Dream up the floral arrangements and decor. Which flowers will be featured in the bride’s bouquet, the boutonnieres and the centerpieces? What kind of accents (balloons, candles, draperies) will create the perfect ambiance?

7. Prepare your registry and your gift bags. What household items do you and your partner need—a toaster, wine glasses, silk sheets? Open a registry to avoid receiving duplicate gifts. And remember to thank your guests with a personalized keepsake.

8. Secure an entertainment team. Do you need a master of ceremonies? Will a DJ, a string quartet or a rock band be in charge of the music?

9. Hire a photographer and a videographer. Who will immortalize your magical day? Take a look at several portfolios to find the pro that understands your vision.

10. Find a caterer and a bakery. What will be on the menu, and how will food be served? Will there be a candy bar, or even a chocolate fountain? Don’t forget the cake!

11. Plan your grand entrance. Will you arrive at the ceremony on horseback? On your bike? In a limo, a sports car or a hot-air balloon?

12. Purchase your rings. What will the objects symbolizing your union look like? Will they be golden, diamond-studded, massive or subdued? Choose wisely, because you’ll (hopefully!) be wearing them for life.

13. Shop for your outfits. Bowtie or regular tie? White gown or colorful sundress? Your attire for the event should reflect your personal style and make you feel absolutely stunning!

14. Book your beauty appointments. Have you called your hair stylist, your makeup artist and your esthetician yet? And what about the nail salon? Don’t forget to plan for trial sessions.

15. Write up your vows. What words will you choose to describe your feelings? Time to brainstorm!

Remember to book everything as early as possible to avoid scrambling for a backup plan. And one last thing: where will you spend your honeymoon?

Send your invitations early to make sure that all of your loved ones can be present for your big day.
So the question has been popped and joyfully accepted. Now you both have to start thinking about what needs to get done to make sure this special day runs smoothly and that nothing is forgotten. Dear brides and grooms, here are the top 20 essentials to consider for a memorable wedding.

1. Guest list. This is your day, so only invite the people with whom you actually want to share the moment.
2. Invitations. Would you prefer to send out lavish printed invitations or simple virtual invitations? Whatever your choice, send them out as soon as you’ve set the date.
3. Wedding planner. This service can take quite a load off your shoulders so you can focus on the important stuff.
4. Groomsmen and bridesmaids. Choose people you like and who aren’t afraid of being in the spotlight.
5. Celebrant. Be sure that the person you choose to unite your destinies will allow you to personalize the ceremony.
6. Location of the ceremony. Do you prefer a church, city hall or a beach?
7. Reception venue. You can opt for a reception hall in the country, a posh hotel or simply a family member’s home.
8. Flowers. Choose a bouquet that goes with the bride’s outfit—and choose one that all the single women will try to catch when the time comes.
9. Rental equipment. For the sound system, tableware and even the tables and chairs, opt for a local company with a trustworthy reputation.
10. Gift registry. By making this virtual document available to your guests, you won’t receive the same gift twice.
11. Music and entertainment. Choose an experienced DJ who will take into account your needs and preferences.
12. Photographer. Look through a photographer’s portfolio and ask for references before choosing the person who will immortalize this special event.
13. Cameraman. Watch videos made for previous clients before making your choice.
14. The cake. Visit a few bakeries to find a cake that makes your mouth water and a baker skilled in cake decorating.
15. Wedding favors. Don’t forget to give your guests a personalized memento of your wedding.
16. Transportation. Would you prefer a limousine, a sports car or a vintage car? Or maybe even a horse and carriage?
17. Rings. Be sure to visit more than one jewelry store before making your choices, and don’t skimp on the quality of these precious symbols.
18. The groom’s suit. The future husband should choose an outfit that shows him off to advantage without eclipsing the star of the day.
19. The bride’s outfit. This is the most beautiful day of your life, so you have a legitimate right to the dress of your dreams—and shoes and jewelry and veil.
20. Hair and makeup. The bride should take this part of her preparations very seriously. Just think about all the photos that are going to be taken throughout the day!
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The Main Concerns of a bride-to-be

If you're part of a future bride's inner circle of friends you might be expected to offer some tangible support during the wedding preparations. Of course, if you've been asked to be the maid of honor, the following list will also be of interest to you.

The guiding principle in assisting the bride-to-be is to put yourself in her position and keep in mind her main concerns. Staying in an empathetic frame of mind will let you give her some good advice when she needs your opinion.

She will likely be preoccupied by the following things:

1. The gown
   The dress has to be absolutely perfect. For some brides, the gown is something they've dreamed about since childhood. Help her choose one suitable for a true princess.

2. The invitations
   The first step is to draw up a guest list, prepare the invitations, and then mail them in good time.

3. The reception venue
   As early as possible, the bride and groom will have to choose a venue that suits their needs. Do they want to celebrate their union in a reception hall, a restaurant, a marquee, on the side of a lake, or at a vineyard?

4. The wedding bands
   The rings are an important part of the wedding ceremony; they symbolize the love and commitment of the bride and groom.

5. The flowers
   What could be more beautiful than surroundings filled with flowers? The bride will want to choose with great care the flowers for her bouquet, centerpieces, and hall decorations.

6. The wedding cake
   Choosing a baker and a cake design is an important detail. The cake is a central element of every wedding reception.

7. The guest favors
   A small gift or wedding souvenir allows the bride and groom to thank their guests for celebrating with them.

8. The music
   The bride and groom will want to choose music that has a special meaning for them, whether it's for the wedding march or for the couple's first dance.

The Main Concerns of a bride-to-be

Nowadays the garter toss is no longer as popular as it once was. If you're not a fan of showing off that much skin to your extended family, here are four ways to revisit the tradition without losing its original spirit.

1. Scratch-off
   Set up a lottery by making scratch tickets on which you will write "winner" or "loser." Whoever holds the winning ticket wins the garter. You can easily find instructions for homemade scratch tickets online.

2. Trivia time
   Find out how well your guests really know you by hosting a quiz that's all about the bride and groom. Include trivia questions about your habits and tastes, how you met and anything else you can think of. Whoever gets the most answers right is the big winner.

3. Goofy games
   Old-fashioned party games like musical chairs, limbo, charades and pin the tail on the donkey are perfect for fostering friendly competition. The grand prize: your garter, of course.

4. Contests
   Ferret out your guests' hidden talents by holding a dance-off, a funny face contest or even a kissing contest. The person that impresses you or makes you laugh the most wins your wedding garter. Good times guaranteed.
Planning your head table seating arrangements can be tricky, especially when parents are divorced or remarried. It is important to leave lots of time to plan a solution to this problem and consult the parties involved.

Typically, if the parents of the bride or groom are divorced and remarried, they are not seated at the head table with their new spouses. However, if head table space and family relationships allow for it, then toss convention to the wind and do what feels right for your family. You could organize a separate table for step-parents and their families in close proximity to the head table or an extension of it.

Generally speaking, the groom is seated to the right of the bride. If the bridal party is seated at the head table with the newly married couple in the center, then men and women are seated alternately.

If you’re afraid of hurting the feelings of people who you have not chosen to sit at the head table, you could always ask them to host the table where they will be seated. In that case, be sure to indicate the names of the table hosts on your seating chart.

If it is proving difficult to find a head table arrangement that pleases everyone, you might want to resort to a “sweetheart” table, at which the bride and groom are seated alone. This is an increasingly common solution for keeping everyone happy at the wedding reception.

5 destination Ideas for your HONEYMOON

Are you getting married soon? It will be a memorable day followed by an unforgettable trip. Here are some tips to help you discover that little piece of paradise that will turn your honeymoon into an unforgettable experience.

1. A Sun Destination
Turquoise waters, sandy beaches, and palm trees… Can you already picture yourselves sitting by the waves, sipping delicious cocktails? The beaches of Mexico, Cuba, or any other exotic island setting are good picks.

2. An Urban Destination
Paris, Tokyo, New York, Las Vegas, Venice, Montreal… World-class cities are great destinations for hip couples who are lovers of good food and culture. If you’re looking to experience the excitement that only the world’s coolest cities can provide, choose an urban adventure.

3. An Eco-holiday Destination
You both long for open spaces and fresh air? You’ll discover intimate and magical places during a romantic trip to the countryside. Whether you prefer the woods, mountain tops, or remote jungles, this kind of honeymoon is for adventurous couples only.

4. A Five-star Destination
For a shorter honeymoon, especially one that’s close to home, treat yourselves to a few nights in a luxury hotel suite. Elegance, peace, and sensual pleasures are on the schedule; what a great way to start married life!

5. A Mystery Destination
Instead of traditional wedding gifts, you could ask your families or guests to work together in choosing a surprise destination for you and your beloved. Are you brave enough to play along? Just be sure to take your budget into consideration before spinning the globe to pick your dream destination.
Mistakes To Avoid

There is no doubt about it: organizing a wedding is a big job. To help make sure your special day goes off without a hitch, be sure to keep in mind these common mistakes and avoid them at all costs.

Mistake 1: not having a budget
Budget planning is an important part of any wedding. Having a budget means that you decide in advance where all your hard-earned money is going. This lets you avoid overspending or spending your money on the wrong things.

Mistake 2: group shopping
Shopping for a bridal gown with friends and family members is not necessarily a good idea. The reason is very simple: everyone has their own opinion, even if they don’t openly discuss their tastes and favorite colors. The danger here is in being influenced to choose a gown that somebody else has been dreaming about rather than the one you’ve always wanted. It is preferable to go shopping with just one other person, someone who you can count on to be honest and objective.

Mistake 3: extending last-minute invitations
Draw up your guest list carefully and then stick to it. Don’t add names along the way to please those who want to invite themselves or interfere with your planning. Be prepared to respond gently but firmly to that single friend of yours who told you she’d be coming unaccompanied but who now would love to bring her last-minute love interest.

Mistake 4: spending exorbitantly—or stingily
A wedding doesn’t have to be spectacular and grandiose to be memorable. Some expenses can be reduced. Put your friends to work on decorating, for example, and spend a bit more on your dream dress. But be careful not to go to extremes; you can be reasonable without being cheap. Your wedding is likely going to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and too much money-pinching could result in a plain or boring day.

Bouquet Toss 101

It is customary for the bride to share her good fortune by tossing her bouquet into a crowd of single female wedding guests. With a bit of luck, whoever catches the flowers will, legend says, get married within the coming year. If you want to go through with this classic custom during your own wedding but aren’t sure exactly when the ideal moment is, read on for some insight.

If a photo shoot is planned for after the ceremony, hang on to your bouquet to include it in your pictures. You’ll have plenty of time to toss it later on during the reception, once the ambiance has warmed up and your guests are ready for a friendly floral fight. After enjoying a delectable meal, keep the fun going by gathering all eligible dames on the dance floor. Get into position and launch away! Your legendary toss is sure to put a smile on someone’s face and kick off an unforgettable evening.

Two is better
If you’re attached to your magnificent bridal bouquet and you don’t want to part from it during the tossing, the solution is simple: ask your florist to prepare a second, more modest bouquet specifically for the toss. This way you can carry on the tradition while saving your gorgeous bouquet for yourself!