Things To Consider When Choosing A Wedding Party

Tricks To Make Your Big Day Easier

Secrets To At-Home Weddings

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Wedding planning is no small task. From sending out engagement announcements to gifting guests with take-home favors, a couple will pour over scores of details as they plan their weddings.

As if selecting a photographer or choosing the right passed appetizers isn’t challenging enough, some unknown variables are sure to pop up on the big day as well. Couples can take their cues from others who have walked the aisle before them with these tips of the trade, which may help couples’ wedding days go smoothly.

1. Host everything at a single location. Couples who want to simplify their wedding day can select a site that can host the ceremony and reception and also house guests. The cost of such facilities may be more affordable than couples think, as transportation costs will be minimal and the venue may offer discounts on group packages.

2. Think about a day coordinator. Couples who cannot afford a wedding planner to handle all of the details often find that a day-of-service provider is within their budget. This person can handle all of the details of the wedding day so brides and grooms can fully immerse themselves in the festivities.

3. Bring extra cash. Unexpected expenses may pop up. Couples may have to feed an extra member of the band or a guest who was able to get a babysitter at the last minute. Brides and grooms may want to offer a bigger tip than anticipated to the waitstaff or deejay who went above and beyond.

4. Learn how to bustle. Walking around with a free-flowing train all day can become tiring for brides. Brides should make sure that one person practices how to bustle the train and will step in to do so for the reception. Also, it may not be the height of fashion, but having a garbage bag on hand can keep the train clean during inclement weather, or if the bride has to trek across grass or soil for photo opportunities.

5. Give an outgoing person a job. Enlist a boisterous friend or family member to wrangle guests for photo opportunities. He or she can be the photographer’s helper and give the happy couple one less thing to do.

6. Stock the bathroom. Some venues will have courtesy items for their guests, but couples also should bring their own necessities, such as breath mints, toothpaste, extra pantyhose, hairspray, lip gloss, and/or sanitary pads.

7. Be all smiles. Couples can’t predict everything that will happen on their wedding day, but they can help create the mood. Smiling couples can make things better for everyone, even when zippers break or someone gets the chicken instead of the salmon.
Couples about to embark on their wedding journeys will likely learn a thing or two about party planning once their engagements are over and they are newly married. Wedding planning can seem overwhelming and a tad confusing at times, but a crash course in wedding terminology can help couples make more informed choices along the way.

- **Blusher**: A short, single-layer veil that covers the bride’s face before the ceremony.
- **Boutonniere**: A single flower bud worn by the men in the bridal party.
- **Canapés**: Bite-sized appetizers served during the cocktail hour of a reception.
- **Civil ceremony**: A marriage ceremony conducted by a council official or justice of the peace at a municipal location rather than in a house of worship.
- **Cocktail hour**: Typically an hour-long interlude between the wedding ceremony and the main dinner of the reception. Guests have time to arrive and mingle before being seated.
- **Corkage fee**: A fee some establishments charge to allow guests to bring their own wine.
- **Dais**: A podium or platform raised from the floor where the bride and groom are seated.
- **Deposit**: A percentage of the total cost of service given to a vendor to secure a date for their services.
- **Dragees**: Round, small edible balls of sugar that appear on wedding cakes.
- **Escort (seating) cards**: Printed cards that direct reception guests to their seats.
- **Fondant**: A sweet, pliable product used to decoratively cover layered cakes. It can be used in lieu of straight buttercream.
- **Handle wrap**: Ribbon or fabric that wraps around the stems of a bouquet the bride and wedding party carries.
- **Maid/matron of honor**: The title given to the woman who assists the bride and stands closest to her at the altar. ‘Maids’ are those who are unmarried, while ‘matrons’ are women who are.
- **Master of ceremonies**: An individual who will work with the DJ or band to announce the various components of the wedding reception.
- **Nosegay**: A small bouquet or flower arrangement typically given to the mothers of the bride and groom before the ceremony.
- **Processional/Recessional**: Musical pieces that mark the entrance and exit from the wedding ceremony.
- **Receiving line**: A line of the key people in the wedding who welcome and greet guests.
- **Stationery**: All of the paper products used at the wedding, including invitations, programs and enclosures.
- **Tablescape**: A word that describes the multiple components of centerpiece designs.

Learning some basic wedding terminology can simplify wedding planning.
Things to consider when choosing a wedding party

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Making the important decision to get married can fill couples with joy and excitement as they imagine spending the rest of their lives together. Naturally, brides- and grooms-to-be are anxious to share the good news with others and include family and friends in the festivities. One way couples exemplify inclusion is by asking their closest acquaintances to be part of their wedding parties.

Being asked to serve as a bridesmaid or groomsman is an honor. Some couples may be tempted to ask every friend, sibling or cousin they have to be in their wedding parties, and some do. In fact, ancient Roman law required 10 witnesses to be part of the wedding ceremony. However, the larger the wedding party, the more people in attendance, the larger the wedding party and vice versa.

• Match it to scope and style. Wedding planners may use a standard ratio for a proportion of guests to wedding party members. That ratio is one pair of wedding attendants for every 50 guests. This creates a balanced feel where the more people in attendance, the smaller the wedding party and vice versa.

• Consider your expenses. Wedding party members may be asked to spend considerable amounts of money to be in the wedding, but the couple will have certain expenses tied to the wedding party as well. These can include limousines to ferry people between the ceremony and reception, photography costs to arrange and photograph large wedding parties, the cost of boutonnieres and bouquets, attendants’ gifts, as well as extra mouths to feed at the rehearsal dinner. Small wedding parties can be easier on couples’ budgets.

• Know your expectations. Couples should discuss what they expect from their wedding parties. Do couples want their loved ones to be very hands-on or waiting in the wings? For those who want a lot of input from their wedding parties, asking distant friends or family to be included may be impractical.

• Select reliable, easygoing people. Wedding party members should be people couples can rely on, and it only helps if wedding party members are not prone to overreacting. Choose a wedding party that can be trusted and people with whom you get along.
Make healthy habits a part of wedding prep

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After the big question is popped and loving partners decide to spend their lives together as a married couple, a whirlwind of activity will ensue. Although wedding planning is exciting, some couples may feel overwhelmed with all the decisions that need to be made before they can tie the knot. In this state of increased pressure, stress may build and health could falter. According to a Cornell University study, more than 70 percent of brides-to-be have weight loss on the brain, but shedding pounds shouldn’t be the only health factor to consider. Here are some easy ways to stay mentally and physically fit in advance of a happy wedding day.

- Get daily exercise. Exercise is important for maintaining a healthy body weight and keeping stress levels in check. Exercise also can boost mood. The Department of Health and Human Services recommends getting at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity each week. Strength training exercises performed at least twice a week complete a well-balanced exercise regimen.

- Slow down and relax. Those who go full-throttle with all of their responsibilities — including wedding planning — may burn out. Stress can weaken the immune system and make people vulnerable to illness. Schedule some time for date nights with your fiancé, and don’t overlook the benefits of hanging out with friends and getting away from wedding planning for a bit.

- Eat body-boosting foods. The foods we eat can impact everything from energy levels to skin radiance. Foods like berries, sweet potatoes, broccoli, greens, green tea, and dark chocolate all contain antioxidants that boost the immune system, states The Food Network. Avoid drastic diets that can do more harm than good. Simply cutting 500 calories a day can help the average person lose a pound per week if weight loss is a goal. Simple ways to trim calories are to choose skim milk over whole milk and choose low-calorie snacks.

- Cut down on alcohol consumption. Toasting to the future with a glass of wine may become rote in the months leading up to the wedding, but alcohol is a diuretic and a source of liquid calories. Alcoholic beverages dehydrate the body and cause it to hold onto water. When imbibing, stick to low-calorie cocktails like a vodka spritzer (60 to 80 calories) instead of a calorie-laden frozen margarita (300 calories).

Feeling and looking one’s best starts long before the wedding day. By making health a priority, couples can start their new lives together on healthy footing.
Get the most out of bridal shows and wedding events

Recently engaged couples may be excited to get a jump on wedding planning. Bridal shows can be a great way for couples to meet and familiarize themselves with local wedding professionals, all the while introducing themselves to the terminology of wedding planning.

Though they’re a great source of information, contacts and samples, bridal shows also can be a bit overwhelming. Learning how to maximize time spent at shows can help couples plan their weddings as efficiently as possible.

- Start small. If the idea of large crowds is unappealing, attend the more intimate, boutique shows that are often held at local reception halls and restaurants instead of the larger installations at convention centers and hotels.
- Scout out vendors. Check the bridal show’s website for lists of exhibitors and see if your desired vendors are on the list. But even if they’re not, keep an open mind and use the show as a chance to compare offerings. If an event map is available, marking off must-visit booths can help save time.
- Pre-register. Pre-registering for bridal events saves time at check-in, and doing so may make you eligible for discounted tickets.
- Come prepared. Chances are each vendor is going to ask couples for information so that they can follow up with a phone call or email with more detailed offerings and estimates. Couples attending the show can expedite the process by coming equipped with labels that feature their names, contact information and wedding date. They can then stick the labels on sign-in sheets or use them like business cards.
- Dress comfortably. Bridal expos involve a lot of walking and roaming around. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes. Consider a backpack or hands-free bag so you are not weighed down when collecting the swag and other handouts throughout the day.
- Ask questions. When face-to-face with vendors, rely on their expertise but don’t hesitate to ask questions concerning themes, colors, recommendations for honeymoon locations, invitation paper suggestions, and much more.
- Stay for the fashion show. Many shows will offer a runway experience to present the latest gown and tuxedo offerings. This can be an entertaining way for couples to formulate their wedding styles.

Wedding shows introduce couples to vendors and set them on the path to making decisions regarding the planning of their weddings.

Factors that can affect the length of your engagement

Each year, millions of couples around the world tie the knot. But before couples walk down the aisle, the proposal to get married must take place. Many couples mutually agree to get engaged, while the experience may be a surprise for others who have thought about it, but may not have been sure when one partner or another would ‘pop the question.’

Upon getting engaged, couples may ponder how long their engagement should last. There is no perfect answer, and engagement length typically depends on personal preference and the needs of the couple. In fact, according to The Knot 2017 Real Weddings Study, the average length of an engagement is 14.5 months.

A number of factors affect the length of a couple’s engagement, and couples should not feel as if they need to hurry down the aisle. For example, couples who will be financing their own weddings may need a longer engagement than those whose parents will be chimping in. In such instances, longer engagements give couples more time to save and may help them ensure their weddings are everything they hoped for.

Others may prefer a shorter engagement if they are financially stable and prepared to tie the knot. Couples in their late 30s may feel the tug of a biological clock and want to ensure there is ample time to get married and have children. A shorter engagement can facilitate that.

Some couples may have little choice in the matter, as the length of their engagements may be dictated by the availability of their favorite venues.

Military deployment, work commitments, medical issues, or travel responsibilities also may affect the length of an engagement.

Some couples may feel that an especially lengthy engagement diminishes their excitement about getting married. That ‘new engagement shine’ can wear off as family and friends wait months or years for the wedding to take place.

Couples generally are advised to stick with what feels right to them regarding the length of their engagements. Just like all aspects of the wedding, couples can weigh the opinions of others but follow through with what works best for them.

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Secrets to at-home weddings

Many couples preparing for their trip down the aisle follow the familiar sentiments expressed by Dorothy in ‘The Wizard of Oz.’ Such couples feel ‘there’s no place like home’ when hosting a wedding ceremony or reception.

There are many benefits to hosting a wedding at home. Homes often hold couples’ most cherished memories, and hosting a backyard celebration or an intimate indoor ceremony at your own home or the abode of a loved one can be a cost-effective way to have a good time.

Here are some tips to help couples navigate hosting an at-home wedding.

**ASSESS THE SPACE**
The average home is not equipped to handle hundreds of guests, wait staff, caterers, and parked cars. Concessions in regard to comfort and safety will have to be made when drawing up the guest list. The wedding resource The Knot advises the general rule is six- to 10 square-feet of floor space per guest for row seating. You’ll probably need even more space for buffet tables, seating and a dance floor.

You will likely need to temporarily move furniture to comfortably fit everyone indoors — or rent a large enough tent for a backyard wedding.

**HIRE A CLEANING SERVICE**
It’s important to present a clean, inviting space when hosting a wedding at home. A cleaning service will conduct a thorough cleaning before and after the festivities, freeing up your time for last-minute tasks or to embark on your honeymoon.

**BOOK AN OFFICIANT EARLY**
Confirm with an officiant that they can oversee the wedding proceedings at your home. Many religious officials are not able to perform ceremonies outside of a place of worship.

**LEARN IF IT’S LEGAL**
Certain municipalities may require permits for parking on street, noise past a certain hour, closing of streets, and much more. Do your research. You may need to coordinate parking at a nearby lot (like a school closed on the weekend) and shuttle people to your home.

**CONSULT WITH AN INSURANCE CARRIER**
Inquire if having such a large party at home is covered by your homeowner’s insurance policy, particularly if your home is damaged or someone gets injured during the festivities. Supplemental liability insurance or an umbrella policy may offer greater protection.

Weddings at home can be a unique opportunity for couples who love the comfort and familiarity of their homes.

Wedding insurance can ease nerves

Couples spend thousands of dollars on their wedding ceremony and celebrations. The cost of a wedding varies depending on geographic location, but according to the business and financial resource Business Insider and The Knot 2017 Real Weddings Study, the average wedding in the United States costs $31,391.

Insurance policies can help couples protect their wedding investment. Special event insurance provides coverage for various scenarios, including extreme weather, damaged gifts, lost jewelry, vendor cancellations or no-shows, venues closing before the wedding, and canceled weddings, according to Travelers Insurance. Insurance also may cover other unforeseen scenarios, such as unexpected expenses from injuries during the wedding or spoiled food.

Policies will pay directly for any damage or injuries that occur, or reimburse the couple if the wedding is postponed or canceled. If weddings occur at home, some people’s home insurance or umbrella policies may cover certain wedding liabilities. Most wedding venues carry their own liability insurance, so couples may not have to overlap there. However, for those who desire extra pro-

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Because fashion preferences were once ornate and dependent on precise fits, ready-to-wear clothing really did not become widely available until the early 20th century. Such attire is now available in just about any retail store.

Because ready-to-wear clothing is so readily available, the average person may be unfamiliar with custom-made or tailored items. In fact, a couples’ wedding may be the only instance in their lives when they require the services of a seamstress or tailor.

Fittings are a part of wedding planning, and here’s how brides-to-be can navigate the process of finding and being fitted for a dress.

■ Try on sample gowns. The first step is to make your rounds to various gown shops and try on the samples they have available. Most sample sizes will not be the size you wear every day, so expect them to be ill-fitting. Do not be discouraged. Once a gown is chosen, the dress shop will take your measurements and order the gown according to the manufacturer’s sizing guide. Again, this can be shocking, since the size will likely be larger than what you wear in street clothes. Some shops will also order a little larger to allow for adequate tailoring.

■ Schedule the first fitting. The first fitting should be anywhere from eight to 12 weeks before the wedding date, according to experts at WeddingWire, an online wedding information provider. This is the time it takes to complete most standard alterations. Complex customizations can take even longer. Brides should also budget a minimum of $500 for alterations, which may or may not be included in the price of the dress.

■ Bring shoes and undergarments. Remember to bring along the exact shoes and undergarments you will wear with your gown. A change in shoes or bra/corset can result in the alterations fitting poorly the next time. Bring these items along to all subsequent fittings.

■ Speak up. Martha Stewart Weddings suggests speaking up at fittings if anything is uncomfortable or needs tweaking. Seamstresses are masters at their crafts, but only if they understand the desires of the bride.

■ Check the details. The second fitting is designed to check that all issues from the first fitting have been addressed, the gown is comfortable and you can move freely. At the last fitting, ask the maid of honor to come along so that she understands how to bustle or help you handle complicated straps or closures.

Open communication with a seamstress and bridal shop can ensure brides-to-be get a dress that fits like a glove.

Insurance

From T7

Protection for vendor mishaps, it is wise to speak with an insurance professional about special wedding coverage.

Prices for wedding insurance policies can start at around $100 to $200 for minimum coverage and reach $1,000 for more expensive ceremonies, according to the financial advisement website NerdWallet.

Speak with an insurance agent and read policies carefully before purchasing one. Non-covered issues typically include theft or loss of an engagement ring; rainy days that do not classify as extreme weather; switching vendors after a deposit is made; and risky entertainment, such as fireworks or live animals.

Protecting wedding expenditures with insurance policies can provide couples with added peace of mind on their big days.

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Wedding days can be hectic. In fact, many couples note after tying the knot that their wedding days were so busy that the ceremonies and receptions were over before they knew it.

Creating a wedding day schedule can seem like a daunting task. Couples tend to have lots of things to do before saying ‘I do,’ and organizing everything so ceremonies begin on time can seem as puzzling as a brain teaser. But certain scheduling strategies can help couples ensure they look their best and make it to the altar on time.

Start with the ceremony. Couples can establish a framework for their wedding day schedule by working back from the ceremony. Once the ceremony time is set, couples who plan to take photos before their ceremonies can then work with their photographers to determine how much time they will need for photos and where they want to take the photos. Bridal parties may need transportation to the photo session, so determining when and where to take photos before the ceremony gives couples an idea of when to arrange for pickup.

Confirm when the wedding venue is open to the wedding party. Before booking hair and makeup appointments, couples should confirm when they will be able to access their wedding venue. Brides may want to get their hair and makeup done at the ceremony sight, but that may only be possible if the venue opens early for the wedding party. If it does not, then brides must account for transportation time to the ceremony sight when making their wedding day schedules.

Determine how much time is needed for hair and makeup. Weddings that feature large bridal parties will require more time for hair and makeup than ceremonies with small bridal parties. Grooms and groomsmen often take care of their own hair, though some grooms might want to schedule hot shaves for themselves and their groomsmen. Grooms should ask groomsmen if they want a hot shave and then work with their barbers to determine how much time it will take to tend to all participants. Brides with large bridal parties may need to book more than two hair and makeup artists so everyone can get done on time. Wedding hair and makeup sessions can last several hours for large bridal parties, so brides should schedule their sessions early if their parties are big.

Make lunch arrangements. Some couples choose to tie the knot and host their receptions at the same venue. In such instances, if brides are getting their hair and makeup done at the venue, ask the venue representative if lunch can be provided to the bridal party. Some venues may include small lunch buffets in their reception costs, while others might charge extra. Confirm the availability and costs, and if it’s unavailable or too expensive, then arrange for lunch to be delivered. Either way, couples should not skip lunch, as it may be their only chance to eat until after the ceremony.

Distribute your schedule to one another and the bridal party. Once the wedding day schedule has been devised, couples should share it with each other and their wedding parties. Grooms’ wedding day to-do lists might not be as extensive as brides’, but grooms should still be kept in the loop regarding the schedule so they can help if anyone has questions or if something goes awry. Sharing the schedule with the wedding party decreases the chances of someone being late or missing an appointment.

Couples can solve the riddle of scheduling their wedding days by working backwards and asking their vendors to cooperate in laying out the day’s events.

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Wedding registry tips to help ease your mind

Building a wedding registry is a task unlike any other couples may encounter during their lifetimes. Wedding registries are invaluable resources that provide engaged couples’ loved ones with gift suggestions. In spite of that value, couples may find it daunting and even a little uncomfortable to build their wedding registries.

Building a wedding registry can feel like walking a tightrope. Couples likely won’t want to ask for too much or for gifts that are too expensive, but a poorly built registry can be a major inconvenience for guests. The following tips can help couples build adequate registries that benefit them without asking too much of their guests.

- Register with at least one national chain so guests who live in different regions can shop for gifts in-person if they prefer to do so.
- Make a large list. Some couples are hesitant to make large wedding registries, feeling that doing so gives the impression that they’re asking for too much. But large registries simply give guests more options to choose from. Many industry insiders advise registering for two to three gifts per guest. That might seem like a lot, but guests will appreciate having all of those options.
- Don’t hesitate to include expensive items on your registry. Couples also may be hesitant to include especially expensive items on their wedding registries. However, the couples’ parents and other close relatives may be honored to purchase more expensive items, so couples should not feel embarrassed to include them on their lists. It’s also important to note that many retailers, after couples’ wedding days have come and gone, discount registry items that weren’t purchased. So even if no one purchases the more expensive items, including them on a registry may significantly reduce their cost for couples who want to buy such items themselves after tying the knot.
- Vary the prices of items on the list. In addition to including more expensive items on the registry, make sure to include moderately priced and inexpensive items. This gives guests more options and ensures guests who might be spending a lot to travel to and from the wedding can still purchase gifts without digging too much deeper into their pockets.
- Periodically update the registries. Periodically update your registries to remove items you have already received and to add items if many of the less expensive ones have already been purchased. This also makes things more convenient for guests.

Building a wedding registry is a unique task that couples can embrace as their wedding day draws near.

Did you know?

A wedding is a tough time to experience a bad hair day. Clothing styles, time of day and weather all can dictate a wedding hairstyle, but ultimately one of the most important factors in a wedding hairstyle is finding a stylist who understands you and can exercise your vision. A patient, understanding stylist who is open to viewing different photographs and drawing inspiration from various places, as well as running through a few trial styles, can help brides (and grooms) look their best. In fact, trials are a must to ensure that a chosen style will work with your hair texture. If you plan to get your hair colored, professionals recommend doing so about three weeks in advance of the big day so it looks natural and any potential snafus can be remedied beforehand. Your stylist may suggest a light trim prior to the wedding so that the ends are fresh and healthy. And since you’re putting your faith in a qualified stylist, trust their expertise and vision. Keep an open mind to their suggestions. You may fall in love with one of the options you hadn’t considered.
Metro

Brides and grooms fear the prospects of rainy wedding days. But even couples who have contended with everything from a few drops to an all-out deluge on their wedding days look back fondly on the ceremonies and receptions. In fact, how couples handle any precipitation can affect how happy the festivities may be.

■ Have a rainy day game plan. Rain affects outdoor weddings more than any other type of ceremony or reception. If the goal is to exchange vows outdoors, work with the venue to make this possible with a tent or gazebo. However, if the weather is especially foul and windy, move it indoors.

■ Invest in golf umbrellas. Couples who live in notoriously damp climates can purchase golf umbrellas, which tend to be larger than the average umbrella, and keep them stationed in decorated stands to ease transitions between wedding sites and keep everyone as dry as possible.

■ Wear waterproof cosmetics. Women in the bridal party, including the bride, can ask their makeup artists to use durable, waterproof products. This can help salvage beautifully composed looks should some drops begin to fall.

■ Know vendors’ rain policies. Some live musicians will not play in damp weather. Florists may need to make accommodations for arrangements blowing in the wind. Couples need to understand what they’re responsible for and what may be covered if a weather event occurs. Wedding insurance may help cover the costs of nonrefundable cancellations.

■ Move past it quickly. It is okay to get upset if the weather turns for the worse. But don’t dwell on it. Guests will sense negative energy, and couples should set the tone of sticking it through despite a little adversity — which can be a good lesson for the marriage as well.

■ Embrace the rain. While a couple probably won’t wish for rain, there are some benefits to overcast skies, say the wedding professionals at Brides magazine. Flowers are less likely to wilt in rainy conditions. In the absence of bright sunlight, outdoor photographs can really pop. Rain is romantic and may compel couples and their guests to cuddle close.

Don’t let rain on a wedding day become a drag. With preparation and perspective, couples can handle rainy wedding days.
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