

How to Start Planning your Wedding

Make sure you have actually talked about the wedding and agreed:

- What you're going to spend;
- Whom you want to invite; and
- How much you expect your families to contribute.

As soon as you decide to get married set a provisional date for the wedding and tell all the important people in your life about it. Make the basic decisions about what sort of ceremony you want:

- A religious ceremony or a civil one?
- If it's a civil wedding, do you want to have it in a register office or a licensed venue?
- If you go for a licensed venue, which one do you want it to be?

Get in touch with the appropriate people about your ceremony:

- Provisionally book the register office;
- Find out how much notice the superintendent registrar will need to attend a licensed venue; or
- Contact your chosen religious organisation.

Check the legal requirements for your type of wedding ceremony, including:

- Residency; and
- Documents (birth certificate, decree absolute certificate, etc.).

Start talking to anyone other than the two of you who might want to help pay for the wedding - your parents, for example. Make a tentative guest list - this has a bearing on the kind of venue you choose and it will affect your budget. Agree on the budget. Check out the reception venue you want (unless it's the same as the venue for the ceremony). Some reception venues are booked years in advance, especially for Saturdays in summer. Think about whether you want to arrange it all yourself or whether you'd like a wedding co-ordinator (this is an expensive option).

Plan your honeymoon - if you're going abroad you can often get much cheaper deals by booking well in advance.

Provisionally book your first-night hotel room or bridal suite. Take out wedding insurance before you pay any deposits. Suppliers and even venues sometimes let you down, and finding last-minute replacements can be expensive.

Describe Your Wedding Photography for Your Photographer

When you meet with your wedding photographer, you will have a lot to talk about. There will be many different moments happening before, during and after the wedding. Wedding photography is part photojournalism and part portraiture. You want your wedding photographer to be prepared for the unexpected. During your interview with them, you want to ask them about their style; their background and their experience.

You want a wedding photographer who watches the people around them. You want wedding photography that comes from being unobtrusive where they catch not only the key wedding moments, but also the moments of deep connection between the bride, the groom, the family members and other guests.

Imagine, standing in the vestibule of the Church while the Bride is waiting with her father for their cue. They aren't saying anything with words, but Dad brushes her cheek with his knuckles, ever so lightly and her eyes shimmer with tears. The corners of her mouth turn up just ever so slightly and her father's face softens as well. That is the shot you want in your wedding photography. Be sure to give your wedding photographer clear details of the wedding location, venue, theme and most of all – what you want to see.

Take the time to talk to your wedding photographer during the interview and during the wedding planning. If it helps, write down what you want your wedding album to look like before you meet with the photographer in order to give them clear directions. Remember, however, that while the wedding photographer is a professional, it's still your wedding.

Creating Personal Traditions: Writing Your Own Wedding Vows

Writing your own wedding vows may suit your personal wedding style, but it can be a bit of a daunting task to begin with. If you are trying to write your own vows, don't let the task overwhelm you or intimidate you. Writing your own vows should begin and end with how you feel, not what others are expecting. If you are creating your own wedding ceremony and style and you want to write your own vows, here are a few questions to consider in creating the vows you want to make.

- When and where did you first meet?
- What was the state of your life before the two of you met?
- At what point did you realize you were in love? Describe the feeling.
- What inspires you about your loved one?
- What life goals and dreams do you share?
- What have you learned from each other?
- What qualities make your love unique? What qualities will keep it strong?
- How has your view of the world changed since you fell in love?
- What do you most look forward to about life with this person?
- What are some special moments in your relationship? Use them all, even the sad times as well as the happy, moving, or profound.
- What happened the day you asked her to marry you? How did you feel?

Reading the vows you have written yourself during your wedding ceremony can be one of the most romantic things you've ever done. It's the kind of thing that really helps you create your own personal wedding style. Writing your own vows is a kind of personal touch that cannot be replicated by any other style of vow.

Wedding Reception

Where do you get your wedding reception ideas? How do you decide between a formal dinner and a buffet? Do you really want to create a seating chart for 200 people? Do you want to embrace the pomp and the circumstance of the receiving line? Where do you look for your wedding reception ideas? The answer to that is a simple one. You look to your own life, the life of your soon to be spouse and you find the a happy middle ground that satisfies you both.

The wedding reception is the first major event hosted by you and your new spouse. It's a function that celebrates your marriage and invites all of your family and friends to celebrate alongside you. The reception is as much for your guests as it is for you. In fact, in many cases your wedding reception will continue after you and your new spouse leave it to head out for the honeymoon.

Wedding reception ideas come from mixing both the drama and the fantasy in our lives. Think of a romantic setting that you'd like to share with your wedding guests and create it. If that means creating a beautiful outdoor setting with tents and paper lanterns that mix both natural and quiet illuminations as well as dramatic shadows; then that's what you do.

Your wedding reception ideas might include a brightly lit room with colorful decorations, loud music and lots of group dances. Your wedding reception ideas have to come from who the two of you are individually and who you want to be together. It's the first couple of paragraphs in the new chapter of your lives. So create the setting you want to be seen in and you want to enjoy in and that's where your wedding reception ideas come from.

Lighting, Location & Love

The basic elements for planning your wedding reception and reception decorations will be determined by the location you select. Some of the reception decorations will also be based on the type of food and serving you choose. Planning the reception decorations is all a part of the details of planning the wedding reception.

Wedding receptions have six basic elements in their planning:

- Location
- Physical Comforts
- Reception decorations
- Catering
- Music
- Dancing

These elements come into play based on the reception location, especially if you are planning a wedding in a place where it's a blank slate. Some locations already have their environmental décor that will play a part in the reception decorations and you need to take that into account with your planning. There are many ways to take care of your decorations including rentals. Renting some of the accessories can save you money.

The ambience of your reception decorations includes your:

- Lighting
- Place settings
- Drapes
- Flowers
- Balloons

The lighting choices can be as simple as twinkle lights and votive candles. Your place settings can be simple or elaborate. The drapes can be made of tulle, gossamer or silk. Your flowers can match those at the wedding or be individual to the reception itself. Balloons offer a fanciful touch to the decorations.

There are so many options that you can explore with your reception decorations that the list could be endless. Decide on a venue, decide on a theme and then let that help you choose the overall look and feel you are going for with your reception decorations. You can add shallow bowls of water with candles floating in them. You can mix and match your wine goblets. You can transform candles with wrapped ribbons. Go crazy when you plan your reception decorations and create the perfect venue to celebrate your first few hours as newlyweds.

Gifts for the Couple Who Asks for Nothing

If you are looking for a few solid wedding gift ideas, but don't have a registry to work off of, here are some suggestions for gifts:

- Money – Cash gifts may seem impersonal to some, but for couples that are not registered the gift of cash can be put towards anything they'd like whether it's a down payment on a vehicle, a house or just fun splurge money for their honeymoon vacation – it's a gift that let's them get what they want.
- Reservations – You may not think this is such a big deal, but covering their expenses for a night in a luxurious honeymoon suite before they continue on to their honeymoon can be a real kick for many newlyweds. They can savor the room service, the Jacuzzi tubs and the opulent privacy that every newlywed couple deserves
- Gift Certificates – Whether you give them a gift certificate to a wonderful place at their honeymoon destination or to favored restaurants at home; gift certificates are great wedding gift ideas because it allows them to enjoy fine food and a romantic dinner
- Bottle of Wine or Champagne – This is a good wedding gift idea for the right couple. Give them a bottle of wine or champagne with a note to not be opened until their 1st

wedding anniversary. It's a charming gift that inspires confidence in their choices and their wedding

Make Your Own Wedding Favors

Weddings can be very expensive. Whether you do all the planning yourself, including making the food for the reception, hosting the wedding in your home or yard and setting up the floral arrangements yourself, you are going to be spending money. The more guests you have, the more expensive the wedding will be. One of the ways you can save money at your wedding is to make your own wedding favors.

Homemade wedding favors can include such charming ideas as the votive candle holder. These are very simple and yet look classical in their setting on the guest tables. If you like chocolate, you can wander through the craft stores and find a series of different things that you can place your chocolates in such as glass slippers.

Another popular idea for homemade wedding favors is bottles of decorative sand. While this may not sound like much of a favor, consider the fact that the wedding favor should reflect some aspect of the wedding. If the wedding is as beach ceremony and the reception is hosted with decorations of seashells and ocean themes, a bottle of decorative sand is the ideal. That's the beauty of making your own wedding favors, they can tell the story you want them to tell and accent the theme you want it to accent.

Brides Accessories

Here's the bare minimum for what brides should consider when planning their accessories for the wedding:

- headpiece/veil/tiara
- gloves
- wrap/shawl
- shoes
- necklace
- earrings
- engagement ring/wedding rings
- bracelet

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