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THE WEDDING OF

AND

TO BE MARRIED ON

AT

DEAR BRIDE TO BE

So, you've decided to get married & tie the knot – congratulations! Whatever stage you are currently at in making & thinking about all the arrangements, no doubt you are starting to realize there's more to it than you first thought. We've been there & we've done it & we are here to help make your wedding more stress-free &, in all likelihood, save you money.

You will benefit from our knowledge & contacts within the industry & we are there to guide you through the often-daunting feeling of preparing such an important event.

It doesn't stop there! We will be with you all day to ensure everything runs smoothly.

We can do as little or as much as you desire. Cake, decorations, flowers, venues, hair & makeup, accessories, catering & evening entertainment, see our packages & fees page for more information. We will guide you through the decision making process, & using our list of recommended suppliers we promise you the best possible stress free wedding day, our full planning package even includes our attendance on the day to ensure everything runs smoothly leaving you to relax & enjoy the experience.

Our advice is free, and were here to discuss your thoughts, themes, budget & requirements.

We can meet with & interview suppliers on your behalf presenting you with the results for you to make the final decisions. We have suppliers to suit every budget so contact us today & we promise to find a supplier that meets your needs.

It's your wedding day and what happens on the day is by your choice and your choice alone- Mums, Dads and the in-laws, all want there say on how things should or shouldn't be done, however it's your day and things should be the way you want them.

I hope you find this information Useful and if you need any further info or advice please feel free to call me any time on **08712002420**.

Peter Baxter. - The Venue Dresser - UWD

SWEET MEMORIES

The Moment Someone Special Proposes is a memory that is cherished forever. The story will be told over and over, to friends, family, children, grandchildren...

How was your proposal special? Did he plan an elaborate scheme, or was it a simple, romantic display of his love for you? Did you propose to him? Every proposal is special, because it is yours. You will have it forever, in your mind and in your heart.

Use the next two pages to record that precious moment so the two of you can relive your memories together.

Answer the questions as you remember them. Let your words reflect the memory of each moment. After you have both answered the questions, read what the other has written. How do your thoughts and memories differ from those of your fiancée's? Come back to these pages often as you plan your wedding. Reading about your fiancée's thoughts on that day will help you keep your romantic thoughts alive as you plan the event that will bind the two of you together for the rest of your lives!

THE PROPOSAL

The Day:

Where it happened:

Who Proposed:

He Said:

She Said:

BREAKING THE NEWS

Her Parents Said:

His Parents Said:

Her Best Friend Said:

His Best Friend Said:

NOTES:



BUDGET AND CHECKLISTS

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CREATING A WEDDING BUDGET

Creating a wedding budget not only helps the couple determine how much they can afford to spend on their wedding, but also keeps the costs under control. On average, a 200-guest wedding costs \$17,000 – an incredible amount!

The first step for the couple is to sit down with their families to determine how much they are willing to contribute. As men and women getting married later in life the couple may decide to foot the entire bill themselves.

The next step involves taking a realistic look at wedding style and wedding size you want. Keep in mind the bigger and more elaborate the wedding the higher it costs. Compare this with the available funds. Is it possible to get the wedding you want with the money you have? If not, look for more cost-effective alternatives in the style or size of the wedding. Controlling the size is a little easier. Simply try to limit the number of guests when creating a guest list (granted, this is easier said than done). As for the style finding compromises may require more imagination. Do you have your heart set on a Renaissance themed wedding in an English castle? The costs would be enormous! However, having your wedding at a local Renaissance fair or theatre would provide the same look and feel at a much lower cost.

Once you have a firm idea of the total amount you can spend the next step is to divide that number among the various wedding parts. For example, how much do you plan to budget for the wedding dress, the reception hall, the invitations and the honeymoon? Do some research and estimate the costs. List all the items and their estimates on a sheet of paper. Do the math. Does it all add up to your total budget? If not, play with the numbers until everything balances. Compromise is very important during this step. You'll both have different ideas of what you're willing to spend on a given item. Once a decision has been reached stick with it. Constantly altering the numbers will make it impossible to maintain and balance your budget. Like your wedding checklist carry your wedding budget with you when you go shopping. It will keep you organized and help you stick to the costs.

If you don't have the funds already saved the next step involves creating a savings plan. On average the couple should try to save 20% of their income a month. Although it seems a lot, that amount can be reached by cutting costs in other areas in you life.

COUNTDOWN CALENDAR *Part 1*

Detail after detail. List after list. Planning a wedding can seem like a daunting task. But not to worry, our Countdown Calendar will keep you on track and on time as you brave the wonderful world of weddings.

For a fuller list visit our web site. www.ultimateweddingdays.co.uk

6 TO 12 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Announce engagement and set the date
- Orchestrate a meeting of parents and future in-laws
- Discuss the budget with groom and both families
- Reserve the ceremony site, reception site and official
- Select members of the -wedding party
- Meet with potential wedding consultants
- Select gown and schedule fittings
- Interview and sign a contract with vendors such as the photographer, baker, florist and caterer
- Buy wedding insurance
- Select bridesmaids' attire

3 TO 6 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Meet with the official to discuss our ceremony.
- Meet with the musicians to select music for the ceremony.
- Along with the groom's mother, compile the guest list.
- Order invitations and personal stationery.
- Make honeymoon plans and reservations.
- Assist the groom's family with rehearsal dinner plans.
- Create a wedding registry for easy gift giving.
- Check marriage license requirements for our state.
- Choose and order wedding bands.
- Purchase attendants' gifts.
- Select wedding accessories: guest book, Ring pillow, favours and, of course, something old, -something new, something borrowed and something blue.

COUNTDOWN CALENDAR *Part 2*

2 TO 3 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Address the invitations and announcements.
- Visit a formalwear specialist with my fiancé.
- Ask close friends and family who are not in the wedding party to do Special readings during the ceremony.
- Determine the need for babysitting services during the wedding
- Discuss menu details with the caterer
- Send guests information on local accommodations
- Arrange transportation from the ceremony to the reception for the two immediate families, the wedding party and us.

4 TO 6 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Mail invitations.
- Sit for wedding portrait.
- Write thank-you notes as wedding gifts arrive.
- Have programs printed for the ceremony.
- Discuss life insurance, a will and other legal documents.
- Bride: Select a gift for the groom.
- Groom: Select a gift for the bride.
- Submit wedding announcements to local newspapers.
- Order the wedding cake.
- With the reception in mind, enjoy dance lessons together.
- Choose a hairstyle that complements my headpiece and schedule time with a makeup artist.

COUNTDOWN CALENDAR *Part 3*

7 DAYS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Notify caterer of the final number of guests.
- Review final details with all other wedding vendors.
- Confirm honeymoon reservations and begin packing.
- Have gown delivered.
- Go over details with attendants such as accommodations, Transportation and the complete schedule of wedding events.
- Along with the groom, write as many thank-you notes as possible before the wedding.
- Put together a "survival kit" For the ceremony with extra hosiery. Nail polish, Scissors needle and thread.
- See hairstylist for a last-minute trim
- Secure the marriage license with my fiancé

1 DAY BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Greet out-of-town guests or have someone meet them.
- Pack everything I need for the ceremony.
- Pamper myself with a massage, manicure and pedicure .
- Exchange wedding gifts with my fiancé.

YOUR WEDDING DAY

- Send a note of heartfelt thanks to both parents.
- Have a friend mail my wedding announcements.

NOTES:

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WEDDING EXPENCES: WHO PAYS?

Nothing celebrates true love quite like a wedding, but underneath the sentiment and romance there is also the bottom line. Tradition plays an important role in determining the financial responsibilities of a wedding, so early on, familiarize yourselves with the established rules for who pays for what. Then discuss the budget with both sets of parents as soon as possible. Traditionally, the bride's family takes on the greater share of the wedding and reception expenses. Reflecting changing times, however, the groom's family sometimes contributes to the reception costs, especially in instances when they have the larger guest list. Regardless, the bride and her family should never expect economic assistance from the groom's family. Many couples also pay for their own weddings.

Below is an outline of who traditionally pays for what. It includes the financial responsibilities of not only the bride and groom, but their families and attendants as well.

BRIDE & FAMILY

- Her attire
- Groom's wedding ring
- Groom's wedding gift
- Bridesmaids' gifts
- Personal stationary
- Invitations
- Wedding gift for the couple
- Bride's gown, veil and accessories
- their own attire
- Lodging for out-of-town bridesmaids
- Fees for the organist, soloist or musicians
- Flowers for the church • Bridesmaids' bouquets
- Reception expenses (including the hire fee, catering, wedding cake, bar, music, flowers, decorations, tips)
- Engagement and wedding portraits
- Wedding and reception photography
- Transportation for the bridal party on the wedding day - Bridesmaids
- Their own gowns and accessories (bride may elect to furnish accessories)
- Their own travel expenses
- Wedding gift for the bride and groom
- Lodging (if the bride's family does not provide accommodations)
- Bridal Party – Hen Night

GROOM

- His attire
- Bride's engagement and wedding rings
- Bride's wedding gift
- Gifts for best man and groomsmen
- Marriage license
- Clergyman's or judge's fee
- Bride's bouquet and her going-away corsage
- Flowers for the mothers and grandmothers
- Boutonnieres for all men in the wedding party
- Groomsmen's gloves, ties and ascots (If these are not part of the rental)
- The honeymoon

GROOM'S FAMILY

- Their own wedding attire
- Their own travel and lodging
- Lodging for out-of-town groomsmen*
- Wedding gift for the bride and groom
- Rehearsal dinner

BESTMAN / GROOMSMEN

- Their own wedding attire (groom may elect to furnish accessories)
- Their own travel expenses
- Wedding gift for the bride and groom
- Lodging (unless arranged by the groom's family)*
- Bachelor party

*Providing lodging for your attendants is a lovely gesture if you can afford it, but it is not required. This practice is more popular in some parts of the country than others.

BRIDE'S SHOPPING LIST *Part 1*

BRIDE'S ATTIRE & ACCESSORIES

- Bridal Gown
- Bridal Headpiece/Veil
- Garter
- Gloves
- Handkerchief
- Hosiery
- Jewellery
- Lucky Penny for Shoe Purse
- Reception Shoes

RECEPTION

- Cake Knife and Server
- Cake Top
- Decorations for Car
- Disposable Cameras
- Favors for Wedding Guests
- Personalized Napkins
- Place Card Holders
- Place Cards
- Reception Music CD
- Streamers, Bubbles or Rose Petals for Departure
- Table Assignment Cards
- Toasting Flutes

HONEYMOON

- Accessories
- Cosmetics
- Jewellery
- Lingerie
- Luggage
- Perfume
- Resort Attire

BRIDE'S SHOPPING LIST *Part 1*

WEDDING STATIONERY

- Announcements
- Invitations
- Reception Cards
- Response Cards
- Thank-You Notes
- RSVPS

CEREMONY

- Flower Girl Basket
- Guest Book and Pen
- Ring Bearer Pillow
- Ring Pouches
- Rings
- Unity Candle
- Wedding Music CD
- Wedding Programs

GIFTS

- Attendants
- Children in the Wedding Party
- Father (Bride's)
- Father (Groom's) Groom
- Mother (Bride's)
- Mother (Groom's)

NOTES:

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ANSWERS TO YOUR MOST ASKED QUESTIONS *Part 1*

Q: Our families have never met. How should we introduce our parents for the first time?

A: It's customary for the groom's parents to make the first move by calling to arrange a time to meet and share in the joy of your upcoming marriage. If they don't, however, the bride's parents can certainly call to invite them to dinner or to their home for the evening to celebrate the engagement news. Once everyone is together, it's time to discuss the formality of your wedding and the budget.

Q: Is it necessary to have an engagement party?

A: NO, it's not required, but it's definitely fun! Typically hosted by parents. Other relatives or even very close friends, engagement parties do not require guests to bring a gift, although some will. To eliminate the gift dilemma altogether, your parents might invite close friends and family over for a get-together, keeping the real reason for the party a surprise until that evening.

Q: What factors influence the formality of a wedding?

A: Many elements contribute to the style of your wedding, including the expected size of your guest list, where you plan to marry and your personality as a Couple. You'll know from the start if the two of you favour the elegance and tradition of a church wedding with a reception in a grand ballroom, or a more casual setting such as a garden, hotel or even a wedding by the sea. The time of day you marry will also affect the degree of formality.

Q: We're about to sit down with our parents to discuss a budget. Where should we begin?

A: Take a deep breath and agree in the beginning that compromises may be in order! First, discuss the availability of funds to cover the wedding. Although the bride's family typically covers the majority of the expenses, many groom's families are stepping in these days to help out financially. You should also prioritize what's important to each of you right from the start, and prepare a list of details that you can't compromise on. Then present instances where you might be willing to negotiate.

Q: I have invited five close friends to be bridesmaids, but two live out of town. What exactly are their duties?

A: Above all, it's the job of each bridesmaid to be supportive of the bride. That means helping with a variety of tasks, from addressing invitations, to assembling favors for the reception, to gathering measurements from the other maids when it's time to order dresses. The bridesmaids may host a party and give the couple a gift as a group. On the wedding day, the honour bridesmaid assists the bride with her gown, holds the groom's ring until the appropriate time in the ceremony and also holds the bride's bouquet while she says her vows. Situations vary, but it's best to have an honour bridesmaid who lives in the same city, so she's always nearby to lend a hand.

ANSWERS TO YOUR MOST ASKED QUESTIONS

Part 2

- Q: What is the best way to let people know where we have registered our gift list? Is it proper to include that information with our invitations?
- A: It is not appropriate to ask for money or gifts, so registry information should never be included in a wedding invitation. It may be added to a shower invitation, since everyone knows gifts are part of the occasion. Your best bet is word of mouth. Relying on your parents to let guests know where you have registered,
- Q: How we can determine the best style for our reception: seated dinner or buffet?
- A: Seated dinners are decidedly more formal, while a buffet is perfect for more informal weddings or a setting where you want guests to mingle throughout several rooms a buffet can be easily designed to accommodate a large guest list, with duplicate stations arranged on each side of the room, taking a close look at your guest list is helpful. Would most of your guests feel more comfortable with assigned seating and waiters serving the meal? That signals a seated presentation might be better.
- Q: Our parents insist on a receiving line. Is it necessary?
- A: Often a sensitive point of discussion because the bride and groom shy away from such formality, a short receiving line is the ideal way to greet every person. It also gives you the opportunity to introduce each other to guests one of you may not know. But it's a not a hard-and-fast rule. Instead, you can visit each table as a couple, saying hello briefly before dinner or between dances. If you must compromise, allow your bridesmaid to mingle with the crowd and just have the receiving line include you, your new husband and both Sets of parents. Remember, you need only say a few words to each guest.
- Q: I'm surprising my new husband with a groom's cake at the reception. How and when should it be presented?
- A: Guests will be delighted with two delicious desserts. This can be presented together or separately. The groom's cake can rest on a smaller table beside the bride's cake, or in another part of the room. It can in sliced just after you share the tint piece of the wedding cake. If you prefer, the groom's cake can also be presented at die rehearsal dinner as a sweet surprise.
- Q: Our baker suggested we save the top layer of our wedding cake to celebrate our first anniversary is that a tradition?
- A: Yes! Tradition suggests that a cake that withstands a year of storage and still maintains its flavour represents a lasting marriage. After the reception, the top layer should be wrapped and placed in the freezer for safekeeping.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

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WEDDING CEREMONY

The wedding ceremony is the heart of the wedding. It's the reason the couple's loved ones have gathered together - to witness the wedding vows that joins the couple in matrimony. This touching expression of love, devotion and commitment has moved many a guest to tears. A wedding is one of life's most joyous occasions and many guests are honoured to have shared in the special moment.

Religious wedding ceremonies are the perfect way for a couple to join together in the name of God. A beautiful expression of love and faith, a religious wedding ceremony often follows sacred and time-honoured traditions that have a special significance. A religious wedding ceremony often accentuates the spiritual side of marriage and the joining of two souls.

A non-religious wedding ceremony is better suited to those of a more secular nature. While religion is not mentioned the same themes of love, trust and commitment remain. Non-religious wedding ceremonies include services that are without rituals; ceremonies that include rituals but no religious elements; and finally those that are religious in feel, but not in practice. Due the variety of styles and experiences among non-religious wedding ceremonies many include custom wedding vows.

Writing your own wedding vows allows you to express your feelings for your partner in your own words. While certain requirements should be met (for legal purposes) you are free to write vows that better reflect your hopes, dreams and expectations. If you're having trouble articulating your feelings your wedding official can provide suggestions. Of course, you must first choose your wedding official!

In addition to deciding how to get married you must also decide where to have your wedding ceremony. You may decide to get married in a church. Or you may prefer an outdoor wedding ceremony. The advantage of an outdoor ceremony is that Mother Nature provides all the necessary wedding ceremony decorations.

Lastly, decide if you would like to include additional rituals during the ceremony. A unity candle is popular for its symbolism and as a sweet way to end the ceremony. You can also honour past loved ones during the wedding ceremony. This should be done in a simple and dignified manner. There's no need to dwell on sorrow during what is a happy, joyous occasion. A wedding is a celebration of life – which your past loved ones would understand.

RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES

Religious wedding ceremonies are the perfect way for a couple to confirm their commitment to each before the eyes of God. Whether or not you normally attend church, having a religious wedding ceremony often provides a renewal of faith – an unexpected benefit of getting married. In fact, many couples feel that getting married in a church or temple gives their wedding vow a special significance that can't be provided elsewhere. However, if you haven't attended church for several years, but want to have a religious wedding ceremony, here's what to expect for each faith.

CATHOLIC:

Catholic wedding ceremonies may or may not include a Mass. The following descrip-

tion is for a ceremony that includes a Mass. The ceremony begins with processional hymn, followed by an opening prayer by the priest. The Liturgy of the Word comes next, followed by the Rite of Marriage, which includes the exchange of vows, the blessing of the rings and the exchange of rings. Next is the Liturgy of the Eucharist, followed by Holy Communion. The Lord's Prayer is then recited and a Nuptial Blessing given. The ceremony concludes with the proclamation of the couple, a closing blessing and a recessional hymn.

PROTESTANT:

while most Protestant ceremonies are similar each denomination has its own customs and practices. For the most part the majority follow this order: the wedding begins with a processional that may or may not be a hymn. The minister will open with the words "we are gathered here to today to join (bride) and (groom) in holy matrimony." He/she then asks for the parents' blessing after which the vows begin. The couple pledge their love, loyalty and support to one another, "til death do us part." The minister may or may not bless the rings (depending on the particular denomination). The couple exchanges rings, which is sometimes followed by a unity candle ceremony. A benediction prayer or the Lord's Prayer is recited. The couple is then proclaimed and the ceremony concludes with the recessional.

JEWISH:

the wedding ceremony starts with the badeken, the ceremonial veiling of the bride by the groom. This act symbolizes the value the groom places on the bride's spiritual rather than physical self. The couple are then escorted to a chupah, an outdoor canopy which represents the couple's future home. The rabbi then recites the betrothal blessing after which the couple drinks a glass of wine. Next the wedding rings are exchanged. Then the ketubbah, the marriage contract, is signed. This is followed by the recital of seven wedding blessings, after which a second glass of wine is consumed. This glass is wrapped in a napkin and broken under the groom's foot. This act concludes the wedding ceremony.

MUSLIM:

called an Al Nika. The Muslim wedding ceremony begins with a sermon by the official, which invites the couple, as well as guests, to a life of piety, mutual love, kindness and social responsibility. Praise of Allah is given and his guidance and help is requested. This is followed by a confession of faith stating "There is not worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is His servant and messenger." Three verses from the Koran are read as well as a prophetic saying, called a hadith. The official concludes the ceremony with a prayer for the couple and their families, the local Muslim community and all Muslims worldwide.

NOTES:

NON RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES

Non-religious wedding ceremonies come in three distinct varieties: those that are non-religious and without rituals; ceremonies that include rituals but no religious elements; and finally those that are religious in feel, but not in practice.

THE FIRST OPTION IS ESSENTIALLY A CIVIL CEREMONY.

What is a civil ceremony?

It contains no religious elements or anything with religious connotation. It is conducted by the superintendent registrar or deputy and registered by the registrar, or deputy. It can take place in a register office or a licensed venue after 8am and before 6pm, subject to staffing arrangements. The service can last from 10 - 30 minutes.

The registrar has to receive an "Authority" for your marriage to be able to proceed, which can only be obtained by giving a notice of marriage.

Arranging your civil wedding.

If you've decided to have a civil wedding, the first thing to do is to choose the ideal date and time for your ceremony. You then need to decide whether you intend to marry at a register office or civil venue.

If you wish to get married in a civil venue in England or Wales, there are over 3000 to choose from, from hotels and stately homes to zoos and football grounds. A civil venue has to fill various criteria it must have a roof, be moored to its foundations, and licensed by the local registrar. If you're getting married in Scotland, civil or religious ceremonies can take place wherever a minister or registrar agrees to hold them.

BOOKINGS.

If possible, make a provisional booking with the register office/civil venue for the date and time of the wedding, up to a year in advance. The earlier you do so the more likely you are to get the date you want, Registrars are busy people and they attend both the register office and civil venue. You are entitled to marry at any register office or approved premise in England or Wales. Make an appointment with the register office in the district in which you live to give a 'Notice of Marriage'.

GIVING NOTICE OF MARRIAGE.

It is a legal requirement to give notice of marriage and, once given, your notices of marriage are displayed on the notice board at the register office for a period of fifteen days. A legal document covered by the Perjury Act 1911, a notice of marriage states the names of the people to be married, age, marital status, address, occupation, nationality and the intended venue for the marriage. After giving notice you must then wait a further sixteen days before the marriage can take place - for example, if notice is given on 1 July, the ceremony can take place on or after 17 July. Once given, your notice is valid for 12 months.

You both have to give a Notice of Marriage in person the District in which you live, even if you both live in the same District, and pay a fee. Each party is also required to declare their nationality.

You may need to produce some or all of the following when you give your Notice of Marriage. *All documents must be the original (photocopies are not acceptable):*

- Birth certificate
- Passport
- Decree Absolute (if a previous marriage has ended in divorce)
- Previous marriage certificate and spouse's death certificate (if you have been widowed)
- Any name change deed
- An item showing your current address, e.g. driving licence or a utility bill
- Parental, court or Guardian permission may be needed for anyone aged 16 to 18 who wants to get married.

From here on, it all depends whether you've chosen a register office wedding or to marry in a licensed civil venue as to what happens next.

FOR REGISTER OFFICE WEDDINGS:

- Book the date with the registrar.
- Although most couples choose to marry in their nearest register office, you may want to get married in a different one - perhaps one nearer your chosen reception venue. Once you have your licence, make an appointment to see the registrar of this other office
- If you decide to have readings or music in your ceremony, this is usually submitted and discussed with the registrar prior to the service. You will need his or her approval
- Discuss other details such as music, parking, flowers, confetti, photographs, and video with the Superintendent Registrar.

FOR CIVIL VENUE WEDDINGS:

- Select the licensed venue you intend to marry in.
- Check the availability of the registrar at your local office.
- The Superintendent Registrar explains the legal basis of marriage in this country. You are both asked to make declarations that you are legally free to marry one another and, provided there is no legal impediment to your marriage, you exchange marriage vows. This can be accompanied with the exchange of rings if you so wish. You are now legally married to each other. The bride and groom are then asked to check the register carefully before signing. The two witnesses, who may be friends or relatives, will then be asked to sign. The bride and groom will then be usually invited to lead their wedding party out.
- The second option is a wedding ceremony that includes rituals, but no religious elements. Often called humanist weddings, these ceremonies don't include any aspects of religion, but aren't as plain as civil ceremonies. Instead of religious vows, the couple writes and exchanges their own vows, which focus on love, trust and commitment rather than religion, faith or God. An exchange of rings is still performed as are other rituals such as the lighting of a unity candle or selected readings. While these rituals are often conducted in religious wedding ceremonies here they have a secular, rather than religious context.

The sense of unity, devotion and love that occurs in a religious ceremony is also very apparent in a humanist wedding ceremony. In fact a religious wedding ceremony and a humanist wedding ceremony are surprisingly similar in feel, except that a humanist wedding is not held in a church nor is God mentioned.

- The last option is a wedding ceremony that may feel religious, but that doesn't include actual religious practices. For example the couple may choose to marry in a church, but the service doesn't include religious components. Likewise rituals that are commonly practiced in religious wedding ceremonies, such as a unity candle ceremony, readings and songs are included. However they are secular, rather than religious in nature. Despite having a religious feel, at heart this is a non-religious wedding ceremony.
- Rather than following the set practices of a religious wedding ceremony, a non-religious wedding ceremony allows the couple to marry in their own special way. And instead of abiding to religious conventions of marriage, a non-religious wedding ceremony allows the couple to set their own expectations for their new life together.

HOW TO CHOOSE A WEDDING CEREMONY SITE

Your wedding ceremony site sets the tone for the entire wedding, including the wedding reception. The ceremony site is decided by the formality and style of the wedding, the season of the wedding and the guest list. Once the wedding date has been set, begin to look for your ceremony site immediately.

The wedding ceremony can be held almost anywhere; however the location will depend on whether you're having a religious or non-religious ceremony. Regardless of the wedding ceremony site expect to pay a fee to use the facilities.

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CHOOSING YOUR WEDDING CEREMONY SITE:

- Is it available for the date and time you want? If there are other events that day how will it affect your wedding?
- Is the site large enough to hold your guests? Is there adequate parking?
- Do you like the wedding official and feel that he or she is the person you want to join you in marriage?
- Does the site have restrictions concerning music, flowers or photography?
- Who is responsible for cleaning up the site afterwards?
- What are the costs involved? Some ceremony sites only require a small donation, others a significant fee. Others require a permit (specifically outdoor wedding ceremony sites). you may have to pay the wedding official.
- How early can you decorate the site?
- Will the site be available for a rehearsal?
- Does the site provide any services, such as decorating the pews?

WHO STANDS WHERE

You probably have an idea of how your wedding party will enter the ceremony site and where they will stand, but the rehearsal is your chance to see the big picture and to find out if what you had envisioned will work. Your wedding planner can help position the wedding party, so they look best as a group. It is important to take advantage of the opportunity to practice before the wedding so you will feel relaxed and confident. The day you have been picturing and planning will be just as wonderful as you imagined!

5 TIPS TO FEELING RELAXED AS YOU START DOWN THE AISLE

- Have some of your photos taken before hand to give you something to concentrate on and help subdue butterflies.
- Hold flowers at your waist (not higher) for a more relaxed look.
- Don't lock your knees,
- Eat a light snack before the ceremony.
- Take a good look around to appreciate the joyful presence of those who have gathered to celebrate with you.

Practicing the processional and recessional will ensure that everyone in the wedding party is comfortable with his or her part. In a Christian processional, the vicar, groom and best man enter from the right-hand side of the sanctuary. Next the groomsmen enter, leading the processional. They will stand in order of their height, with the tallest first. The bridesmaids follow, each waiting until the one before is halfway down the aisle. The maid-of-honour always enters by herself, just before the bride; if there is a flower girl or junior bridesmaid, she precedes the bride. Finally, the bride enters with her escort, typically her father or a close male family member.

Once at the altar, the bride's father remains next to her until he "gives her away." Then he leaves to take a seat with the bride's mother. The maid-of-honour stands to the left of the bride and the best man to the right of the groom, with all four facing the altar.

The Jewish processional differs, in that it includes the groom and the rabbi. The grandparents are seated just prior to the processional. The groom enters, escorted by his parents. The bridesmaids follow the entrance of the groom, then the maid- or matron-of-honour. The flower girl, if there is one, enters next, followed by the bride, who is usually escorted by both tier parents.

After everyone has entered the bride and groom. Maid-of-honour, best man, both sets of parents and the rabbi stand under the chuppah (wedding canopy). Any remaining attendants stand outside the chuppah.

HONOURING PAST LOVED ONES

Although your wedding is the happiest day of your life it's easy to miss past loved ones you always thought would share your special day. While it's understandable you would want to honour the deceased it should be done in a simple and dignified manner. A wedding is a joyous occasion – which your past loved ones would understand. You can choose to honour past loved ones in a private way or publicly before all the guests.

Light a memorial candle: A single candle can be used to honour all the past loved ones of the bride and groom's families. Once the candle is lit the couple

or the minister can say a few simple words such as “This candle is in honour of (name of the deceased), who the bride and/or groom miss very much and who they know is present in spirit here today”. This can be followed with a short prayer.

- Light a candelabra:** Have each of your siblings light a candle for each loved one that is no longer with you.
- Framed photos:** Place a framed photo of the deceased on the altar. The bride can then pull a single flower from her bouquet and place it before the picture. If the bride lost her father or mother she may choose to carry their framed picture down the aisle. The picture can then be placed on the altar, which may or may not include a memorial candle or special bouquet.
- Carry something special in your bouquet:** The bride may carry something in memory of her past loved one in her bouquet. This could include their favourite flower, ribbons in the colours of their favourite sports team, or a small charm (in the shape of their favourite hobbies, passions) attached to the bouquet’s handle. The favourite flower and coloured ribbons could be repeated in the boutonnières.
- Recite a song or poem:** Read out a poem or play a song that had special meaning for the deceased.
- Make a bequest:** Make a donation to the deceased’s favourite charity.
- Give a speech:** Acknowledge your past loved one during your wedding speech.

COMPILING A GUEST LIST

Your final wedding guest list should be one everybody is happy with. It should include all of the people you, your groom and both sets of parents really want to share your wedding day with. However, we are all aware that money and space will determine your guest list in the end.

The best way to start out is to make your fantasy wedding guest list, one where money and space is no option. The next step will be to get out the red pen and start eliminating names until you’re within budget.

If you’re running into conflicts with either set of parents you should consider who’s paying for the wedding. Traditionally, the bride’s parent’s pay for the wedding, so they determined the number of guests and told the couple and grooms parents how many they could invite. Today, many couples are footing the bill for their own wedding. This means that the couple should first invite everyone they want to and take parental guest suggestions into consideration if there is space and money left over.

Many couples make the mistake of choosing the venue before determining the guest list. This causes problems when the venue you’ve chosen is too small to accommodate the guests you want at your wedding. When deciding on a wedding site and reception venue it’s always best to start the hunt after you’ve determined your guest list. However, if you come across the reception site of your dreams you may find yourself willing to sacrifice that enormous guest list in lieu of a more intimate cocktail reception or sit-down dinner with your most dearest.

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WEDDING LIMOUSINES

A limousine is more than just a means of getting to and from the wedding ceremony and reception sites. It was just a matter of simple transportation you’d use your car. A limousine is part of the allure that surrounds a wedding. Like renting a tuxedo, renting a limousine is reserved for special occasions – and what’s more special than your wedding?

Start your search for a limousine by getting referrals from newlywed friends. If you don’t know anyone that’s used a limousine recently ask the reception site or caterer for suggestions. The wedding industry can be surprisingly tight-knit at times with many vendors knowing one another.

Call multiple limousine services and compare prices. Rates start at approximately £50 per hour. You’ll likely require the limousine no less than 3 hours, so figure on spending at least £300. That number will likely be higher during the busy wedding season. If you’re not picky about colour you could save approximately 10% by opting for a limousine that’s not white, black or silver.

Reserve your limousine at least 6 months in advance, especially if your wedding is between May and August. Limousines come in different sizes to accommodate different numbers of passengers. A super-stretch limousine will carry 10-12 passengers, while a standard-stretch limousine will carry 6 passengers. The limousine should provide enough room that the bride and bridesmaids don’t wrinkle their dresses.

When you’ve narrowed down some choices go and physically check out the limousine. It’s surprising how some people define “luxury”. Ensure the limousine is safe for the roads and the driver has a clean driving record. Confirm that the driver will be wearing a tasteful uniform (black jacket, pants and tie, white shirt). If the limousine looks rundown or downright dilapidated go somewhere else.

Once the details have been worked out get everything in a contract. The contract should outline specifically the length of the rental (how many hours), departure and arrival times, and the colour and type (size) of limousine. Last, but not least, ensure the driver knows where he’s going. If necessary, provide a map!

BEST MAN DUTIES

The best man is the groom's right hand man throughout the wedding planning and during the wedding day. In addition to taking care of details (big and small) the best man provides moral support to the groom during this exciting, yet stressful time. Often working with the maid of honour the best man's duties are intended to make the wedding as enjoyable as possible for the couple.

WEDDING PLANNING DUTIES:

- Get measured and rent tuxedo
- Host the "stag" party
- Arrange the wedding day transportation (such a limousine)
- Buy the couple a wedding gift

WEDDING DAY DUTIES:

- Bring any necessary decorations or equipment to the reception site
- Help the groom get dressed
- Help get the groom and groomsmen to the ceremony on time
- Drive the groom to the wedding ceremony if necessary
- Hold the bride's ring until the exchange of rings
- Witness the signing of the marriage license
- Give the wedding official and vendors their payment envelope
- Participate in the wedding photos
- Stand in the receiving line
- Give the best man's speech and toast
- Dance the first dance with the maid of honour
- Deliver the wedding gifts to bride's or groom's parents' house
- Return the groom's tuxedo to the formalwear rental store the day after the wedding

The most important of the best man's duties is to simply "be there" for the groom. More often than not, the groom just needs a second opinion or a sympathetic ear. While the wedding tends to focus on the bride and her duties the groom can also get stressed or worried about the wedding. Just having a shoulder to lean on can go a long way in keeping him calm and relaxed.

FLOWERS FOR YOUR WEDDING

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CHOOSING A FLORIST

Every aspect of the wedding, from the ceremony to the reception, includes flowers. Their beauty makes them the perfect accessory for the bride's wedding dress and the groom's tuxedo. They're also the perfect finishing touch to any decoration. Unless you have a garden full of flowers in your backyard you'll need a florist to create stunning bouquets and decorations.

When it comes to finding a florist start early! The better florists are often in demand and their calendar books quickly. Before you even set foot into a flower shop you must first have an idea of the number of flowers you'll need.

HERE ARE THE DIFFERENT BOUQUETS AND FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS YOU MAY WANT:

- Bridal bouquet
- Bridal party bouquets
- Button Holes (for groom, best man, groomsmen, ring bearer, fathers, grandfathers)
- Corsages (for mothers and grandmothers)
- Alter and aisle arrangements
- Centrepieces (for reception tables)
- Guest book table arrangement
- Flower girl headdress
- Flowers or petals for the flower girl's basket
- Flowers for the wedding cake

You should also have finalized your wedding day (time of day and year), formality of the wedding, wedding themes and colours (bridesmaid dress colour), and booked your ceremony and reception sites.

Start your florist search by asking the ceremony and reception sites for recommendations. If they have none ask family and friends. Hopefully, they'll be able to provide you with a few names. Now book a meeting with several florists.

A GOOD FLORIST SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

- make suggestions, supply any type of flower (whether in season or not)
- provide photos and samples of their work
- suggest many designs for any style of wedding
- will work with the baker to design the wedding cake
- provide customer references
- guarantee the work, freshness (quality) and on-time delivery of your flowers

The most important aspect in choosing a florist is finding someone who will work with you and listen to your thoughts and concerns. While the florist should offer their professional opinion you shouldn't feel as though yours don't count. This is your wedding - every decision is ultimately yours.

If you're interviewing several florists be sure to get a quote. You'll need that information when it comes time to negotiate the price (and every price is open to negotiations). Lastly, get everything in a contract.

BRIDAL BOUQUET

Of the bride's wedding accessories her bridal bouquet is one of the most important. Traditionally, the bride carried an all-white bouquet with flowers renowned for the symbolism of purity and fidelity: lily of the valley, white roses and stephanotis. With so many colours and styles to choose from more bridal bouquets are featuring a beautiful mixture of different colours, textures and greenery. While the bridal bouquet should be stunning it shouldn't be distracting. It should complete, not compete with, the bride's wedding dress.

Bridesmaid bouquets can include some of the same elements of the bridal bouquet, but shouldn't be exact replicas. Your best bet is to either match or complement the bouquet with the bridesmaid dresses. Whether a bride or a bridesmaid, the bouquet should be proportionate in size to its carrier.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Biedermeier: | Tightly assembled concentric circles of individual colours, wired into a holder. |
| Cascade or shower: | The classic bouquet shape with long-stemmed flowers (usually roses) and ivy which hang gracefully in a waterfall effect. |
| Composite: | Hundreds of real petals wired together to look like one enormous flower. |
| Crescent: | Flowers are arranged into a crescent shape and attached to a single holder. |
| Hand Tied: | Long stemmed flowers tied together with a ribbon for that simple "just picked from the garden" look. |
| Nosegays: | Round bouquets (16-18 inches in diameter) of flowers, greenery and occasionally sprigs of herbs or berries all tied (or wired) together. |
| Pomander: | Flowers arranged into the shape of a ball which hang from the wrist by a ribbon. |
| Posies: | Smaller versions of nosegays. Ribbons and lace are often used to accentuate the bouquet. |
| Presentation: | Long-stemmed flowers (roses, calla lilies, tulips) cradled in your arms. This is the "pageant" style bouquet. |
| Tossing: | A small bouquet used for the "bouquet toss" so you can keep your actual bouquet. |

When walking down the aisle, hold the bouquet by resting your elbows at your hipbones and holding the bouquet stem with both hands in front of your belly button. Keep your pose natural and relaxed.

INVITATIONS FOR YOUR WEDDING

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CHOOSING WEDDING INVITATIONS

Choosing your wedding invitations can be downright overwhelming. Thousands of choices are available in the invitation books of stationers for you to review. Before you decide haphazardly on any old invitation, keep in mind the following very important aspects:

WEDDING VENUE:

The site, setting and theme of your wedding should have an impact on the invitation you choose. Your invitation is meant to give your guests a feel for the theme of your upcoming nuptials. Many brides will design their wedding invitations in the colours of their bridesmaid's dresses and flowers. For example, if you were planning to be married on Valentine's Day you might choose invitations with a heart or cupid motif. Deciding on your wedding's style or theme beforehand will enable you to narrow down the choices of your wedding invitations. Remember, that a separate reception card should be included with your invitation if the reception will be held at a different location than the ceremony. A separate reception card is also required if only some guests are invited to the wedding reception. A separate map with directions should also be included to both the ceremony and reception sites.

INFORMAL OR FORMAL WEDDING:

In addition to the theme of your wedding, the formality of your wedding should also impact your invitation. For example, an intimate evening cocktail wedding and reception in your backyard will mean a simple, personalized invitation. While a formal church wedding and sit-down reception dinner will mean a traditionally engraved invitation with custom detailing.

PERSONAL TOUCHES:

Your wedding invitation should most importantly reflect of your style as a couple. Many brides hire a wedding invitation designer to customize every aspect of their invitations; while more creative couples will make their own invitations with the help of arts and crafts stores, do-it-yourself invitation kits and stationery software that can be made right on your home computer.

REPLY CARDS:

A small, separate card and a stamped, self-addressed envelope should also be included as they will prove helpful for arranging your guest list and catering.

WEDDING INVITATION WORDING

Today, a vast number of people – from the bride’s parents, groom’s parents, step parents, grandparents or the couple themselves – might be financing a wedding. Therefore, all contributors deserve mention on the wedding invitation.

Follow these examples when wording your wedding invitations:

IF THE BRIDE’S PARENTS ARE HOSTING:
(vice versa if the groom’s parents are hosting) the wedding the wording would be:

Mr. and Mrs. Leo Bloom
request the honour of your presence
at the marriage of their daughter
Elizabeth June
to
Robert Jason Jones

IF THE COUPLE IS HOSTING:

The honour of your presence
is requested at the marriage of
Elizabeth June Bloom
daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leo Bloom
and
Robert Jason Jones
son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Jones

AND IF EVERYONE IS PITCHING IN THE INVITATION SHOULD READ:

Miss Elizabeth June Bloom
and
Mr. Robert Jason Jones
together with their parents
Mr. and Mrs. Leo Bloom
and
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Jones
request the honour of your presence
at their marriage

MAKE YOUR OWN WEDDING INVITATIONS

Your wedding invitations indicate the tone (informal/formal) and theme of your wedding to your guests. But along with signifying the style of your wedding, your wedding invitations should demonstrate a couple’s personal flair. For this reason many couples choose to design and make their own wedding invitations.

The two most popular ways to make your own wedding invitations are:

WEDDING INVITATION KITS:

More and more people have computers at home. This is why wedding invitation kits are becoming an economical option compared to ordering wedding invitations through a stationer. Wedding invitation kits can be found in most office or paper supply stores. You just need to select your grade of paper, your computer font and colour and your wedding invitations can be printed right off of your home computer. Feel free to dress your wedding invitations with ribbon, stamps or dried flowers for added effect.

HOMEMADE INVITATIONS:

You must keep in mind that making your own invitations from scratch isn’t for every bride. If you hate craft projects, want an elaborate wedding invitation or need 200 invitations you might want to consider the time commitment. Paper for homemade wedding invitations can be found at stationary and arts and crafts stores – everything from simple ecru with embossed edges to recycled paper pressed with dried flowers and leaves. You can get a stationer to pen your wedding invitations with calligraphy, ask for the help of an artistic friend or do it on your own. Homemade invitations can be decorated with stamps, stickers, ribbons and even tissue paper to achieve the desired effect.

Regardless of whether you make your wedding invitations on your computer or from scratch, you will need to generate some ideas. The best place to find inspiration is in stationer’s catalogues, bridal magazines, stationary stores, arts and craft suppliers, stamp stores or even online.

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PHOTOGRAPHY FOR YOUR WEDDING

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WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO

When the wedding's long over, your wedding photos will allow you to relive every wonderful moment again and again. For this very reason your wedding photos should be beautiful pieces of art which perfectly capture the style of the wedding and all the emotions of that day.

To ensure your wedding photos are keepsakes you'll cherish forever start by hiring an experienced, professional wedding photographer. The key word here is experienced – you'll want a photographer who can easily handle any unexpected incidents during the wedding. Did three light bulbs go out at the ceremony site? No problem – they brought their own lights. Is the garden where you wanted the photos taken under renovations? They can suggest another beautiful location. Is your flower girl acting less than charming? They can coax a smile from her. When choosing a photographer it's important to hire someone you're comfortable working with. They should be open to your suggestions and should offer guidance in return. If you're happy with your photographer it shows in the photos. However, if you're unhappy with your photographer your unhappiness will show.

While hiring a wedding photographer is not cheap (up to £2500) there are ways to reduce the cost. Get packages, don't purchase the "extras" and have family and friends help out. Of all the ways to save on wedding photography don't hire an amateur. Your wedding photos shouldn't be entrusted to incapable hands.

Store your wedding photos and other wedding memorabilia in a wedding album. These can be purchased from the photographer or purchased elsewhere. The benefit of purchasing it separately from the photographer is cost (studios tend to overcharge on wedding albums) and there is a greater selection of colors and styles elsewhere.

Wedding videos are another excellent way to preserve your wedding memories. While a wedding photo captures an image, a wedding video captures the moment – the image, the voices and the actions.

Finally, there are various wedding photo tips for producing incredible pictures. Shoot the photos at an interesting location use natural poses and consider still life photos.

CHOOSING A PHOTOGRAPHER

Before choosing a photographer, first know the style and theme of your wedding. After all, the photos should perfectly reflect the entire feel of your wedding. Start your search by asking family and friends for recommendations. If they don't have any suggestions try the reception site – they have worked with many suppliers and may be able to suggest a photographer. Lastly, try the yellow pages.

When meeting with photographers look carefully through their samples. How are the quality of the pictures? Is the lighting good? Was each person well framed? How does the photographer use their surroundings? Lastly, are the pictures interesting – do they tell a story? This is your only chance to capture your wedding on film – don't leave it in the hands of someone inexperienced.

If you're meeting with a photography studio which has many photographers insist on meeting the person who'll actually take your photos. Discuss where you're getting married, the time

of day and year and how many are in the wedding party. The photographer will need to get an idea of how to shoot his photos, so he can plan accordingly. The photographer should be open and receptive to your ideas and should be able to make suggestions of his own.

In particular, if your photographer is local they should be able to suggest locations for the wedding photos; both indoors and outdoors. You should be comfortable working with your photographer – any aversion or discomfort you feel towards your photographer will show in the pictures.

Most studios will have many wedding photo packages to choose from. However, if a particular package doesn't suit your needs they should be willing to create an individual package. Also be upfront about how much your wedding budget allows; a good photographer should be able to work something out. Also be willing to provide the photographer with a list of required photos, for example: one with the couple and their parents together. A list of required

shots will help the photographer if you have divorced parents. While color photos will always be popular, black and white and sepia photos add an elegant touch to your wedding album. Black and white photos lend a sophisticated, formal air, while sepia photos provide a timeless touch. You will need to decide in advance whether you want black and white or sepia photos, as it requires separate film. Once you have chosen your photographer get all the details of the service in a contract.

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS

Your wedding photos are the single most important thing for immortalizing your wedding. When your memories start to fade your wedding photos will remain to remind you of the wonder and beauty of your special day. But how valuable will your wedding photos be if they're dull, or worse, terrible? Some wedding photographers are better than others – they will have no problem suggesting different shots. Others will need some help.

For those photographers that have asked you for suggestions, here are a few:

- Still life photos:** a picture of the wedding dress on its hanger, or the groom's tuxedo hung beside his football kit and the decorated, but empty, reception site provides a stark contrast to the excitement of the wedding. These moving photos help evoke many emotions experienced by the couple on their wedding day.
- Special group shots:** arrange some of the photos by specific groups: bridesmaids, grooms men, multi-generational (great-grandmother to great-grandchild), entire group, etc.
- Photo corner:** have the photographer set up a special "photo corner" at the reception site (think the photo corner at your high school prom). Guests can have their photo taken against a fun backdrop. Ask for doubles of the photo – you keep a set and the other you send to guests in the thank you cards.
- Location:** have your photographer scout out interesting or scenic locations for the photos. This can be a pretty garden, a river or lake, or local landmark. An old building with dramatic architecture can also provide a great backdrop – think sweeping staircases and elegant archways.
- Keep it local:** the photo location should ideally be no more than 30 minutes from either the ceremony location or reception site (depending on whether photos are before or after the ceremony). The further the distance the

greater the chance of the wedding party being late or something going wrong.

Keep it natural: instead of a line up, which looks stiff, arrange photo participants into little groups. Use the location for help – the church stairs, the garden benches, a dock at the beach may offer plenty of opportunities for natural poses.

Get candid shots: have the photographer take a picture just before or after formal shots. Everyone will be smiling naturally and feeling relaxed. Also have the photographer rove inconspicuously among the guests taking photos of everyone eating, laughing and dancing.

MUST-HAVE PHOTOGRAPHS:

Your wedding photography will be the most cherished keepsake from one of the happiest days of your life. And although the trend in wedding albums today features fewer posed shots and more spontaneous photographs, you'll want your photographer to capture a variety of scenes throughout the celebration. As you discuss the style of wedding album you prefer, consider the views listed here that you don't want to miss, and discuss with your photographer which will be posed shots and which will be candid. Then leave the photographer to weave a little magic into your romantic wedding.

| BEFORE THE CEREMONY | AT THE CEREMONY |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bride's makeup and hair • Bride in gown • Bride with mother - Bride with father • Bride with parents • Bride with maids • Bride with grandparents • Bride with child attendants • Bride leaving for ceremony • Bride arriving at ceremony • Groom dressing • Groom with mother • Groom with father • Groom with parents • Groom with best man • Groom with groomsmen • Groom arriving at ceremony | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guests arriving • Ushers escorting guests • Musicians • Seating the grandparents • Seating the groom's mother • Seating the bride's mother • Groomsmen's processional • Bridesmaids' processional • Honor attendant • Child attendants • Bride and father • Giving-away ceremony • Exchanging vows • Exchanging rings • First kiss • Newlyweds' recessional • Newlyweds leaving ceremony |
| AFTER THE CEREMONY | AT THE RECEPTION |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newlyweds and bride's family • Newlyweds and groom's family • Newlyweds and grandparents • Newlyweds and honor attendants • Newlyweds and wedding party • Newlyweds and Vicar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newlyweds' arrival - Receiving line • Head table - Guest tables • Buffet tables - Cake table • Toasts • Newlyweds dancing • Bride dancing with father • Groom dancing with mother • Parents dancing - Musicians • Cake cutting • Bouquet/garter toss • Newlyweds Departure |



WEDDING WARDROBE

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WEDDING GOWNS

When purchasing your wedding gown it's essential to deal with a professional bridal shop, who employs knowledgeable, friendly staff who are open to questions and can help you choose the most flattering wedding gown silhouette for your body type.

When you make your initial appointment to visit a bridal shop the bridal consultant will measure your body and speak with you about the bridal gown silhouettes that will best suit your body type. Even if you don't like the wedding dresses that the bridal consultant chooses for you, try them on anyway. Bridal consultants are professional wedding dress fitters and bridal gowns often look extremely different on the rack than they do on the bride.

THESE ARE THE MOST POPULAR BRIDAL GOWN SILHOUETTES:

- A-Line gowns:** Also commonly called the 'Princess cut', is the most universally flattering bridal gown silhouette because it slims and disguises flaws. This silhouette is a favourite of the top couture designers. The seams on A-line bridal gowns run vertically downward to form a flared skirt or 'A' shape.
- Ball gowns:** Commonly referred to as Cinderella or fairytale wedding gowns are the most traditional bridal gowns. They feature a corseted bodice and a trim waistline that rounds into a bouffant skirt – ideal for disguising the bottom half of brides with full butts and hips.
- Sheath bridal gowns:** Are smooth, sexy and chic, closely outlining every curve of a bride's silhouette. It requires some courage to wear a sheath bridal gown because they accentuate rather than hide any physical flaws.
- Empire gowns:** Bring to mind ages past. Empire gowns have a high waistline that sits right under the bust. They often feature long, flowing sleeves, square necklines and slim skirts. Empire gowns are ideal for medieval weddings and often feature romantic touches of velvet and silk ribbons.
- Mermaid silhouettes:** Like sheaths are for sexy brides who don't mind accentuating their curves. Mermaid bridal gowns are fit tight to the entire body through the upper body, waist and hips and flare slightly around the mid thigh or knees.

TRADITIONAL BRIDAL DRESSES

Traditional bridal dresses are typically the most elaborate of bridal wear. They often include touches of beading, sequins, laces, ribbons, rhinestones and pearls. Traditionally, bridal gowns are made of satin, which is suitable for most seasons and for the formalist of occasions.

Since satin can be a bit sticky in the summer months some brides opt for other fabrics like tulle, organdy, chiffon, silk and cotton. During winter months bridal gowns made with touches of brocade, lace and velvet complement the winter season nicely. Traditional brides are married in lengthy church ceremonies during the daytime hours, with a formal sit-down reception to follow. According to wedding etiquette the traditional bride usually covers her arms with a long-sleeved bridal gown or a pair of gloves. Bridal gloves are typically white or champagne in colour and come in a varied lengths, styles and fabrics. Gloves with a removable wedding ring finger have become very popular among brides. Gloves without removable fingers should always be taken off during the ceremony when exchanging rings.

THE FOLLOWING WEDDING GOWN ETIQUETTE APPLIES TO BRIDES:

Extremely formal brides carry large, elaborate bouquets and should choose a long, floor-length bridal gown with one of the following trains:

- Sweep Train: The shortest train, just sweeps the floor
- Chapel Train: The most popular train, extends 3 to 4-feet behind gown
- Court Train: Extends 1 foot
- Semi-Cathedral Train; Stretches 4 to 6 feet
- Cathedral Train; Extends past 6 to 8 feet
- Royal Cathedral Train: Extends 10 feet or more
- Watteau Train; This train starts at the shoulder blades and reaches the hem line of the gown (similar to a cape).

Although not considered 'traditional' by wedding etiquette standards, formal evening weddings (held after 6 p.m.) can be extremely formal affairs. Formal evening weddings call for bride's wearing floor-length gowns with shorter trains (such as chapel or sweep trains).

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BRIDESMAIDS DRESSES

After the bride's dress, bridesmaid dresses are the most breathtaking outfits of the wedding. Before committing your bridesmaids to your "dream" bridesmaid dress first consider their body types, colouring and budget. While one style of dress may flatter one bridesmaid it may look unattractive on another. It should be clear that the bride has the final say in the bridesmaid dress style and colours. Furthermore, the bridesmaids pay for their own dresses and accessories.

There are four main styles (silhouette) of bridesmaid dresses: A-line (princess), empire, ball gown and sheath.

THE A-LINE BRIDESMAID DRESS:

Is by far the most popular style. Vertical seams run from the shoulders to a flared skirt, creating an "A" shape. Because the A-line dress loosely outlines the figure this style of dress is flattering to most body types. If your bridesmaids range in size this style of dress is your best choice.

THE EMPIRE BRIDESMAID DRESS:

Features a waistline that starts right under the bust and flows straight down in a slightly slimmer dress. An empire dress flatters bridesmaids who have a thicker waist (the dress hides it) and will give a tall, slim line to petite bridesmaids.

THE BALL GOWN BRIDESMAID DRESS:

Has a fitted bodice and waist that flares into a very full skirt (think "ballerina style"). The ball gown style of bridesmaid dress is typically reserved for the bride alone. However, if you're considering it for your bridesmaids, keep in mind this style works best if your bridesmaids are all close in size. This style dwarfs smaller bridesmaids and looks disproportionate on larger bridesmaids.

THE SHEATH BRIDESMAID DRESS:

Is very form fitting (hugging the curves), with a narrow skirt. This is another style that works well if your bridesmaids are the same size.

In addition to the style the colour is the next important aspect of the bridesmaid dress. Often the bridesmaid dress is the colour of the wedding – it will appear everywhere from the ink on the wedding invitations to reception decorations. Consider the colouring of each bridesmaid when you select their dress colour. Blondes tend to look great in pastels and orange-reds. Brunettes are complimented by deep greens, blues and red.

For those formal, elegant evening receptions classic black suits any skin tone. While all the bridesmaids usually wear the same colour a "colour run" is becoming a popular trend. With a colour run each bridesmaid wears the same style of dress, but in a different colour for example: pink, pale yellow, light blue, soft green and lavender. A variation of the colour run are different shades of the same colour – ice blue, light blue, medium blue and deep blue.

When it is finally time to purchase the bridesmaid dresses (approximately 7-9 months before the wedding) keep in mind the following tips. Order the dresses at the same time so they're all part of the same dye lot. It helps ensure the dresses will be the

same colour. If the bridesmaids are ordering matching shawls or gloves they should also be ordered at the same time as the dress, again to remain in the same dye lot. Finally, the largest of the bust-waist-hip measurements is the size in which the dress is ordered. So, if the bust is a size 10, the waist a size 8 and the hips a size 12 the dress should be ordered in a size 12. The other areas are then altered.

HAIR & MAKEUP

Your wedding hair and makeup should be a little more dramatic than usual. After all, the face and hair you present to the world on your wedding day will be remembered by your husband every time he reminisces about your vow exchange and will be captured in photographs till the end of time.

Many brides confuse classic bridal hair and makeup for plastic, overdone looks. There are tragic consequences when brides overdo it at the tanning salon, use too much heavy powder which ends up looking like a chalky mask in the wedding photos or when brides mask their natural beauty with excessive makeup. The biggest complaint of a groom on his wedding day is that he didn't recognize the woman coming down the aisle.

To pull of a radiant, yet natural, bridal glow every bride should follow these helpful hints to achieve hair and makeup worthy of a flawless bride:

- Like your dress, brides should take time choosing their makeup and hair. Flip through bridal magazines and rip out photos to take to the salon.
- Schedule practice sessions with your stylists before the big day.
- Bring a picture of your wedding dress so the stylist/makeup artist can aim for a look to flatter your dress.
- Ask for waterproof mascara – you don't want tears of joy to ruin your wedding photos.
- Stay away from makeup with shimmer – it appears unflattering and reflective in photos.
- Don't tan right before the wedding – instead use a light bronzing powder or moisturizer to give your skin a warm glow.

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WEDDING ACCESSORIES

So, he's popped the question and you've responded with a resounding shriek of glee. You've spent the last 6 months planning and shopping for the perfect wedding dress, the perfect wedding site and reception venue and putting together the perfect guest list. Both the bride and groom will want to look their best on their big day.

The following is a last minute accessory checklist for both the bride and groom:

BRIDE'S WEDDING ACCESSORY CHECKLIST

- Bridal Gown - Veil
- Headpiece/Tiara
- Shoes
- Stockings - Garter
- Lingerie (for under dress) - Strapless bra
- Gloves
- Jewellery – necklace, earrings, bracelets, watch and engagement ring
- Extra hair pins
- Handbag
- Bouquet
- Something Borrowed, blue, old and new
- The groom's ring
- Your vows (if self written)

GROOM'S WEDDING ACCESSORY CHECKLIST

- Tie - Cummerbund - vest
- Belt
- Jacket
- Cuff links - Wrist or pocket watch
- Undershirt
- Underwear - Socks - Shoes
- The bride's ring
- Your vows (if self written)

TUXEDO RENTALS

There is nothing quite like a man in a tuxedo – it is the epitome of style and sophistication. Plus, a striking black tuxedo is the perfect contrast and complement to the bride's white wedding dress. With the groomsmen in tuxedos and the women in beautiful bridesmaid dresses is it any wonder the wedding party looks so elegant in the wedding photos?

On the surface renting a tuxedo may seem simple. However there's more to it than you'd think. The number of tuxedo styles to choose from is surprising. While the differences are often subtle they can really change the overall look of the outfit. Here is a very brief list of the different components of the tuxedo and available styles for each. Only by visiting a formal wear rental store can you get a complete idea of all the available options.

- **Jacket:** Single Breasted, Double Breasted, Tails, Cutaway/Morning Coat, Dinner Jacket
- **Jacket lapels:** Peaked, Notched, Shawl
- **Handkerchief (Pocket Squares):** Multi-Pronged, Pouf, Square-Ended, Triangle
- **Shirt:** Pleated, Wing, Spread, Mandarin
- **Pants:** Peg-legged, Double pleated
- **Neckwear:** Bow Tie, four-in-hand (business) Tie, Ascot, Bolo, Cross
- **Shoes:** Lace-up, loafers
- **Accessories:** Cumberbund (also known as Cummerbund), Vest, Gloves, Cane, Hat, Suspenders, Socks, Cufflinks

The formality of the tuxedo depends on the formality of the wedding. Formal evening wedding calls for a jacket with tails, bow tie, double pleated pants and a cummerbund. A more casual wedding only necessitates a single breasted jacket, four-in-hand tie and vest. With so many styles to choose from your tuxedo can be as formal or informal as you like. As for the accessories, the vest, cummerbund and handkerchief can either match the bridesmaid dress colour or complement it.

Normally the groom and the groomsmen wear the same style of tuxedo. If you're worried about all the men looking alike there are ways to distinguish the groom: different cut jacket, different coloured handkerchief, different coloured vest or cummerbund or different boutonniere.

About 4-6 months before the wedding book your tuxedos at a formalwear rental store. At this point you're only reserving the number of tuxedos and their style. Pass this information on to your groomsmen. About 2-3 months before the wedding get measured for the tuxedos and place your order (which will require a down payment). If you lose or gain weight just before the wedding get measured again. A day or two before the wedding pick up your tuxedo – make sure you try it on. You look great – now enjoy your wedding!

WEDDING WORKSHEET

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| 56 | WORKSHEET |



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WEDDING WORK SHEETS

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VICAR/REGISTRAR:

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Address:

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Date Booked:

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Company Name:

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Dates Booked:

FLORIST:

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Company Name:

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SUIT COMPANY:

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Contact Name:

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