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Together, we can do anything

Service to humanity is the best work of life. It's not just part of the Jaycee creed but part of your DNA as Jaycees members. 100% Volunteer driven Jaycees of the Quad Cities give countless hours and donations to make our community a better place to live, work and play.

Projects supported by the Jaycees this year included assisting on National Rebuilding Together Day. Though the weather was cold and rainy, helpers still arrived to assist a local man in staying in his home.

During the four hour work session, the Jaycees saw immediate improvements to the home.

- Replacing the hardware on storm door
- Replacing the light fixture above the sink
- Installing a new faucet
- Installing two GFCI outlets
- Replacing a light switch
- Installing a ceiling fan
- Replacing a light fixture in the hall
- Installing ceramic tile in the bathroom



- Painting the kitchen ceiling
 - Painting the faux brick in the kitchen
 - Removing floor tile in the basement
 - Installing a smoke and CO detector
 - Installing a shower rod and curtain
- "This is a project with a longstanding history for our organization. One of our former Presidents started years ago and it's been a staple ever since. We have a few handy helpers but mostly people want to do good work and learn from others while helping out a neighbor," said Caitlin Breedlove, project coordinator.

The Jaycees of the Quad Cities supports Rebuilding Together Day and other projects aimed at cleaning up our neighborhoods and community. Individuals and groups interested in volunteering with Jaycees of the Quad Cities should contact info@jayceesqc.org or call (563) 484-0041. "Sometimes our few hours of helping hands are all someone needs to remain in their home safely," said Christy Bruce President of Jaycees of the Quad Cities. "I mean who says no to that?"

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It's all about community

The Jaycees build personal and professional relationships by working together on projects to strengthen and grow the Quad-Cities community. The Quad Cities Chapter is one of the oldest chapters in the state of Iowa and has grown to include young professionals from both sides of the Mississippi River. They pride themselves on blending social opportunities with service – like planning the today's Bridal Expo and the Brew Ha Ha that raise funds for charitable initiatives.

But we don't stop there! Jaycees recognize other do-gooders in the community. We need your help to catch others doing good deeds.

The Community Awards showcase individual excellence in leadership as demonstrated by outstanding initiative, impact of work, and inspiration of others.

Young Community Leader

This award recognizes an individual whose leadership has made a significant impact in our local community. This work could include societal or civic

issues, address health or environmental concerns, or promote arts and humanities. The Jaycees of the Quad Cities celebrate people who strive to serve the less fortunate in their communities through active involvement while encouraging others to do the same.

Young Religious Leader

This award recognizes an individual whose religious leadership has made a significant impact on our local community. This recipient lives out the Jaycee Creed.

Young Educator

This award recognizes an individual whose leadership in the classroom and/or within the educational setting has made a significant impact on our local community. This individual works to educate the whole student, works creatively to achieve excellence in learning, demonstrates leadership at their educational institution, and is a positive role model for all ages.

Young City Servant

This award recognizes an individual whose



Jaycee Member Whitney serves coffee to seniors at the annual Thanksgiving Luncheon at Center for Active Seniors (CASI). The Jaycees support this event annually to mingle and spread holiday cheer to nearly 200 seniors. "The seniors always appreciate time with us and love the whipped cream!" says Jennifer Kincaid, Chairwoman of the Board.

city leadership (elected or appointed office, administrator, police, or firefighter, etc.) has made a significant impact on our local community. This individual is a hard worker that strives to be helpful, honest, and fair while striving to make our community better.

Davenport Jaycees Foundation Scholarship Recipient

This \$1,000 scholarship recognizes a resident of the Quad Cities attending Alleman High School, Assumption High School, Bettendorf High School, Central High School, Moline High School, North High School, Pleasant

Valley High School, Rock Island High School or West High School. The student must be entering their freshman year of college in the fall semester 2017 at an accredited post-secondary educational institution; be active in volunteer efforts within the Quad Cities community and demonstrate a

Your local Jaycees members are often seen driving golf carts, packing backpacks, serving meals at Café on Vine, scaring Haunted House patrons, herding brides and grooms, cleaning our hall, delivering checks, shaking hands, and a million other things that embody all that we are as an organization – service to humanity. Here's a few of our favorite moments of 2016:

- CONTINUED ON
NEXT PAGE

We do ... good deeds

GOOD DEEDS

from Page 4

"Café on Vine is one of my favorite events of the year. You see firsthand those who don't have much. They are so grateful for so little. It's very humbling," said April Boyer, Jaycee member. Each year the Jaycees serve at Café on Vine's Volunteer Appreciation Day so that volunteers can enjoy a break and spend time with the clients they serve on a daily basis.



"Supporting local kids and families has always been at the heart of the Jaycees. This event reaches a large number of kids and is a fun way to celebrate learning and interaction," said Joan Kranovich, VP of Community Development for the Jaycees. Join the Jaycees on March 18, 2017 at Western Illinois University to meet PBS favorites like Curious George and Clifford at WQPT's Imagination Station. Learn more at wqpt.org.

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Do you know someone who is doing Good Deeds? Nominate them for one of these awards. Find out more at <http://www.jayceesqc.org/community-award-banquet>. Applications are due February 1, 2017.

Embrace the season

Truth: If you are a bride planning a spring wedding, you've spent some time agonizing over wedding day weather.

And, let's face it, while spring brings with it all the charms of colorful flowers and warmer days, it is also notorious for its unpredictable weather patterns. It could (and will) rain when you least expect it.

Instead of fretting over inclement weather, use these four tips to embrace the season.

Trust your vendors ...

Wedding vendors are skilled professionals, and it is very likely that your wedding is not their first. This means they understand the unpredictability of the weather and have had to deal with the issues that arise because of it. They understand that this day is one you will remember forever, and they would rather be remembered as a venue or florist that took the stress out of your day rather than having added to it.

... But not too much

Just because they are skilled professionals doesn't mean you should trust that they will all offer the same level of service. Make sure you read the fine print in each vendor contract to understand their approach to handling inclement weather. If you are having an outdoor ceremony or reception, understand if a back-up location is provided or if that responsibility falls on you. If you are planning on having live music, check with your band. Some musi-

cians feel uncomfortable playing near rain because of what the dampness might do to their instruments and equipment.

Accessorize

Planning for rain opens the door for colorful accessories. Purchase matching umbrellas for you and your spouse — or just one large one to share. Rain boots in a cheerful color will brighten any dreary day, even becoming conversation-starters or show-stealers during picture time.

Use the rain

The rain can be a great prop, and you have the chance to capture amazing photos you wouldn't have the opportunity to capture on a sunny day. Most wedding photographers have had to deal with rainy weddings before and are skilled at using the rain as a backdrop. Don't be afraid to get wet. The tuxes are rented. The dress will be laundered. Embracing your day for what it is will only add to its beauty.



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Go bold

White may still be the charming and traditional choice for a wedding dress, but colors from blush to black are making their way down the aisle in quick and bold fashion. Let your personality shine through in full color. Here are a few pros and cons to the most popular white-alternatives.

Blush

Blush is a term that has been used to describe many different colors, ranging from a golden champagne color to a deeper rose. Typically, blush-colored dresses are a pale pink — as if your white dress were “blushing.”

Pro: The color is subtle and soft. Wearing a blush dress can lend a romantic note to your celebration. While definitely not white, it also doesn't rock the boat of tradition too much.

Con: It may not look great on everyone. Like red lipstick, you have to find your shade. Pick the right shade for your skin tone and the result is classic and romantic. Pick the wrong shade and you could look washed out or naked. Bringing a friend or family member with you — people you can count on being honest and having your best interests at heart — is a great way to figure out what shades look better on you if you are unsure.

Black

Once reserved for funerals and boardrooms, black has made its way into the wedding industry in the past few years, and the results are stunning.

Pro: It's bold, and it makes a clear statement. Brides have been wearing white since Queen Victoria brought it in vogue in 1840. Wearing white is a beautiful and classic choice, and one that guests expect. Choosing white's antithesis is not only a completely vintage choice (before Queen Victoria, brides always wore color), but unexpected. If you are looking for a “wow” factor, black will certainly deliver.

Con: While fashion has brought us a long way, there are still some who consider black to be a color of mourning, and you might have invited such people to your wedding. The key to overcoming this obstacle is not caring. If you feel beautiful, then you will be stunning.

Blue

From pale silver to dark midnight, blue is a unique option that can both surprise and delight your guests.

Pro: Your “something blue” is covered. Blue also lends a certain fairytale quality to weddings. Cinderella anyone?

Con: There is the potential that it will look more like prom and less like your wedding day. The style of your dress is key. Consider implementing less sparkle on the dress and letting the beautiful color stand on its own. If you still crave a bit of glitter, wear a jeweled headpiece or shoes.

Want to incorporate color in your attire in more subtle ways? Wear a sash around your waste in a bold color that matches your flowers and decor. Or wear colorful shoes and have your groom wear matching socks that you flash on the dance floor or whenever you sit down.



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Open bar

Have fun planning your wedding reception by thinking outside the traditional sit-down dinner and wedding cake. Serving food at stations or “bar style” can be a fun option for offering up (un)traditional fare in a fresh way.

Whether you want to incorporate a food bar just for appetizers or dessert, or you are looking to forego a formal dinner, these tasty and innovative stations are one more way to show your guests who you are as a couple.

Here are a few reception bars that have nothing to do with cocktails:

Fondue station

Cheese or chocolate? Both are crowd-pleasers and both offer a variety of tasty dipping accompaniment that will delight guests. Fondue works great during cocktail hour, or in addition to or in lieu of wedding cake.

Antipasto

Think crostini station, the intersection at which crusty breads meets your choice of tomato bruschettas, olive tapenades, spicy salamis and all a variety of cheeses.

Candy bar

No cake? No problem. Satisfy your guests’ sweet tooth by

showcasing your favorite candies in clear glass jars, like you’d see in a vintage drugstore.

You can even offer small paper bags or boxes so that guests can fill them and take them home, doubling your dessert as guest favors.

Popcorn bar

What is a better late night snack than popcorn? If you plan on dancing the night away with your guests, a popcorn bar could be a fantastic addition to your reception. You can offer various flavors, such as movie style, cheese or kettle corn.

Encourage guests to spice it up with different salts or spices,

such as cinnamon or paprika.

The best part about reception bars? Your imagination is the limit. Virtually any food can be turned into a chic, self-serve station. They are totally customizable to your taste, personality, and even geography.

Hosting a Southern fete? Offer a biscuit bar with various spreads and toppings. Or a sweet tea bar with assorted syrups guests can add, such as peach or raspberry. Never been a fan of the traditional “chicken or beef” option? Create a taco station. Any one of these is sure to be something your guests remember forever.

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Our parents put disposable cameras on every reception table; we have Instagram. Creating a personalized hashtag is the hottest new trend to hit weddings and can be a great way to gather photos from your special day — especially moments that you may have missed because you were busy taking family portraits, or just staring at your spouse thinking, “I can’t believe we’re married.”

Best of all, hashtags, by their very nature, collect all of the photos attached to it in one place. No idea where to begin? Just keep in mind that the ultimate goal is usability: You want people to use it so you can see the aggregate of fantastic photos.

There are several wedding hashtag generators out there if you’re feeling creatively crippled. (Weddinghashtagwall.com and weddingwire.com are two such sites). But remember wedding hashtags are personal, so don’t overthink it. Here are a few tips to get you started:

Keep it simple

Start with some combination of your names: First, last, nicknames, initials. Your hashtag should not only be a reflection of the two of you but also be easy to remember. Capitalizing the beginning of each word in your hashtag keeps the message clear and helps people distinguish what you are saying (for example, #MeagenandCarter). Bonus: It doesn’t matter if your guests capitalize every word. It will work either way.

Have fun with it

Play with turns of phrase, idioms and alliteration! Think: #ForeverYoung, #Weber Wedding, #HappilyEverAllard.

After you think you have a few you really like, check and see if others have used them. Chances are you won’t be the first couple to use #MeantTo Be. Hashtags are public, and depending on how popular your favorite one is, you

might not want to have to wade through hundreds of photos of other people’s weddings to find yours.

Numbers are a great way to set your hashtag apart from the rest. Think wedding date or year, or another number that holds special meaning to you.

Advertise it

Once you’ve successfully chosen your hashtag, spread the word. Make sure it is prominently displayed on your wedding website and save the dates.

It should also appear in multiple locations at your reception.

Couples have chosen to display their hashtag everywhere from welcome signs to cocktail napkins. Make sure your guests don’t have to search too hard, and your wedding hashtag will be a social media hit.



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Are you registered?

Registering for your wedding can be a great way to stock up on everything you need to begin your married life, as well as help guide your guests to items you would most enjoy receiving.

However, a registration list can also be stressful to create. What do you need the most? How much do you need? Where do you register? Here are some of the most important things to remember as you navigate through the process:

Do set up your registries early and check them often. As soon as you announce your nuptials, you will have guests who want to know where you are registered. To avoid receiving unwanted items, register as soon as possible. You will also want to check your registries often to make sure that as guests purchase items, there are still gifts at a variety of price points from which others can choose.

Do register at more than one place. This is important for several reasons. First, guests may prefer one retailer to another. Perhaps they don't like to shop online and certain shops are easier for them to visit.

Registering at multiple locations also allows you and your significant other to pick out a variety of items. Choose retailers that you and your spouse enjoy shopping at frequently. Many vendors have registry programs that allow couples to purchase items left on their registries at a discounted price after their wedding date has passed.

Don't overlook the everyday items. Even if you already have a house or apartment, or you and your spouse are living together and you think you have everything you need.

There are items that you will never stop needing, or not want multiples of. Already have a toaster, pots and pans, and flatware? Use this opportunity to upgrade your bath towels, or register for another set of bed sheets in a fun print and high thread count.



Don't request cash. It is always going to be tacky to outright request a dollar amount from your guests. If you and your spouse are trying to save for a big-ticket item, such as a house or your honeymoon, set up a registry account.

This allows guests to feel like they are contrib-

uting to your future, instead of handing over an impersonal check or gift card. Also expect that some guests will want to give you a tangible gift no matter what.

Do it together. Creating a wedding registry is not only a time for you and your spouse to bond but to mesh your styles into one. Discussing patterns and color preferences now will make putting it all away and using it more enjoyable later.

Do write prompt and personalized thank you notes. There is no exception. You must thank every person who gives you a gift. Customize each thank you card by mentioning the gift and how you plan to enjoy it. "Thank you so much for the salad bowl, Aunt Wilma. I can't wait to use it at our first dinner party!"

This will show that you were thinking of that guest, and her thank you card isn't a carbon copy of another.

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Budget basics

For many couples, a wedding is the first major event they have ever had to plan and execute. It also might be the first time they have prepared and followed a budget, which is no small feat.

The equation for creating a wedding budget is seemingly simple: Think about what type of wedding you want, think about what type of wedding you can afford, and hope that those two images align as much as possible.

The cost of the average American wedding is on the rise at roughly \$32,000, according to a survey conducted by wedding planning giant The Knot. However, a wedding does not need to be a costly affair.

While it is easy to witness other couples' weddings or view endless stylized photos on Pinterest and feel like there is a standard to which you must adhere, most couples that go over budget do so not because they are trying to keep up with the Joneses. They spend beyond their budget because of assumptions they made and hidden costs, which add up quickly when you don't stay as informed as possible.

Set priorities

The entire day is important to you. It's your wedding day. But if you had to pick three things that you would rather not compromise on, what would they be? Write them down.

Now let the stress of everything else go. Knowing what your priorities are and being on the same page as your spouse will help keep you both accountable. Also when planning your budget, keep in mind the things that are important to you — not just in the wedding, but afterward. This will help guide you toward financially smart choices. You don't want buyer's remorse over the money you could have put toward a new car or apartment.

Have the talk

As uncomfortable as it is to talk about money, especially with loved ones, it is necessary for creating and maintaining a successful budget. Talk with your spouse. Talk with each of your parents and anyone else who might be contributing to your celebration.

You don't want to be in a position where you thought your parents were going to contribute a certain amount toward your wedding, only to find out halfway through that they are contributing much less, or not at all. It is not anyone else's responsibility to pay for your wedding, but if someone does wish to contribute, you need to know how much.

Constantly reevaluate

It is also important to realize that the categories you create in your budget exist to help guide you but are not set in stone numbers. Through your planning process, you might come to find that you allocated much less for photography than your local industry demands.

You might not need as much money for music as you originally thought because your cousin's up-and-coming band offered to play at a family discount. Regularly evaluating and reevaluating your budget keeps you on top of what things are actually costing you and allows you to reallocate funds as necessary.



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Au naturale



Every bride wants to look her very best on her wedding day. While some elements of appearance are more controllable than others — such as hair and nails — achieving a clear and bright complexion is a much more formidable task.

Some of the best tools at your disposal exist not in your bathroom or high-end beauty counters but in your kitchen. Mother Nature, lovely as she is, has given us plenty to create a pre-wedding beauty regimen.

Concern: Dry and dull hair

Try: Olive oil

Use olive oil in place of your conditioner after using your usual shampoo. It is simple as that. Olive oil is packed with great fatty acids that nourish and moisturize your locks. Looking for

a deep conditioning treatment? Instead of rinsing out right away, apply and wrap your hair in a towel for 15 minutes, then rinse.

Concern: Uneven skin tone

Try: Coconut oil

The great thing about this treatment is that it triple-tasks as makeup remover, cleanser and moisturizer. Best done at night, rub roughly a tablespoon of coconut oil all over your face, massaging the skin for several minutes. Remove with a warm, damp washcloth first by holding the cloth to your face and allowing the steam to open your pores, and then slowly massaging the oil off. Rinse the cloth as needed.

Concern: Puffy eyes

Try: Tea bags

Soak two tea bags in warm water before chilling in the refrigerator for about 10 minutes. Place each tea bag over one eye and let rest for five minutes. The caffeine in the tea will reduce most swelling for a dramatic, immediate difference.

Concern: Weak and slow-growing nails

Try: Milk and lemon juice

Soaking your nails in this mixture for 10 or so minutes will help promote strong and healthy nails. You should start to notice a difference after a couple of treatments. Really want to pamper your hands? Follow up by massaging a natural oil, such as olive or coconut, into your nail beds to soften cuticles and the surrounding skin.

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Stunning engagement ring alternatives

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White diamonds have been the traditional engagement ring stones for decades. While shoppers have experimented with gold, silver, platinum, and other precious metals for ring bands, the star of the show has long been that twinkling, pristine diamond.

Even though diamonds may be a 'girl's best friend,' they may not fit every woman's style, particularly the bride who likes to buck tradition and think outside the box. According to Money magazine, the average engagement ring costs more than \$5,800. In addition to being one of the most expensive gemstones, diamonds have become quite commonplace. Some women even eschew diamonds for moral reasons.

Whatever the driving force behind shopping for alternative gems, women who want to set themselves apart from others — and men who want to 'wow' their significant others with unique and eye-catching rings — may opt for other daz-

zling stones.

- **Moissanite:** This crystal naturally occurs in meteorites and is nearly as hard, dense and scuff-resistant as a diamond. Some feel moissanite offers more brilliance and fire than diamonds. Moissanite is a white-colored stone, so it can mimic the look of a diamond. And since it can be made in the laboratory at a fraction of the cost of even lab-made diamonds, it's a frugal option. A nearly flawless one-carat moissanite gem can cost less than \$1,000.

- **Lemon quartz:** This is the trade name for a lemon-yellow stone that is a variety of color-enhanced transparent quartz. Quartz is turned into this sunny hue through an artificial gamma ray irradiation process. Like other quartz gemstones, lemon quartz is considered to be very durable and is therefore suitable for all types of jewelry.

- **Sapphire:** Sapphires tend to be blue stones (of varying intensity), but they also come in peach,

pink, yellow, green, and white. Sapphire may not sparkle as much as a diamond or even moissanite. However, with the right cut, it can be hard to distinguish any lack of luster. Sapphires are the third hardest mineral, and at about one-third the price of diamonds, they make an ideal diamond substitute.

- **Morganite:** According to the blog Bridal Musings, morganite is currently one of the most popular choices for engagement rings. Its pretty pink hue is romantic and feminine. It also sits at around the same hardness as sapphires, ensuring the rings will endure.

Vividly cut rubies, emeralds and tanzanite — all gems that are rarer yet less expensive than diamonds — can make beautiful engagement rings. Some couples also may opt for rings without gemstones, such as traditional Claddagh or 'true lover's knot' rings to signify their union.



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Tips for trimming the wedding guest list

METRO CREATIVE

Weddings are a time to celebrate, and many couples hope to invite as many people as possible to share their excitement. A 2014 study by researchers at the University of Denver found that couples who invite at least 150 guests to the wedding may have happier marriages. The study examined 418 people who were single at the beginning of the study and married five years later. It found that 47 percent of those people who had gotten married in front of at least 150 guests had 'high-quality marriages,' while those with 50 or fewer guests fell short.

While guests make weddings more enjoyable, and may increase the propensity to enjoy a more successful marriage, couples must be practical and consider their wedding budgets when creating their guest lists. The average American wedding includes 120 guests, according to a 2015 Newlywed Survey released by WeddingWire.

Couples who are finding it difficult to create and pare down their guest lists can employ the following tips.

- **Create initial lists.** When jotting down potential guests' names, write down everyone you want to invite, regardless of budget. Then list the must-have guests for the wedding. This should include the family and friends with whom you interact on a regular basis. Create a separate column for guests who don't make the must-have list.

- **Separate friends from friends' friends.** If you don't see people outside of events set up by mutual friends, you should not feel obligated to invite those people to the wedding.

- **Know the guest list ceiling.** Catering halls or reception rooms often can only accommodate a certain number of people. Know this number before making a final list. The limits of the space may serve as the catalyst for trimming the list.

- **Consider coworkers carefully.** Think about whether you'd still be friends with your coworkers if the company dissolved tomorrow. If not, you should not feel obligated to invite them.

- **Have we met?** If you don't remember interacting with a person (your parent's long lost friend from high school) or the person has never met your significant other, then they probably can be cut. If parents insist on inviting someone you barely remember, they should help defray costs.

- **Cut out the kids.** Even though children's dinner costs may be lower than adults', inviting children can significantly increase the guest list. A no-child policy at the reception can save money.

- **Avoid uncomfortable situations.** Unless you have remained particularly close, keep former boyfriends and girlfriends off of the guest list.

- **Ask for an unbiased opinion.** Give the editing pen to someone else if you cannot make a decision.

Throw a casual wedding to remember

METRO CREATIVE

Elegant, lavish weddings provide moments couples will remember for years to come. But while such storybook ceremonies and receptions remain popular, casual affairs are gaining popularity.

According to the bridal resource The Knot, more and more couples are opting for less pageantry and more laid back panache when planning their weddings. For those who prefer something more intimate and more personalized, casual weddings may be right on target.

There are many advantages to having a 'luxé with less' wedding, including the ability to break molds and impart more of the couple's personality into the event.

Another advantage is the price tag. The average U.S. wedding, according to The Knot 2014 Real Weddings Study, costs \$31,213. In some urban areas, particularly New York City, average costs are three times that amount. Golden Girl Finance, a leader in financial digital media, has found that Canadian weddings average \$31,000 with honeymoon included. Although wedding costs have gone up, the average number of wedding guests has gone down. As such, certain couples might look to rein in other aspects of their wedding. Transforming the festivities into a casual affair can help keep the overall budget low while still allowing for an exciting and enjoyable event. To put casual plans into motion, consider these ideas to help the wedding vision come to fruition.

Venue

Catering halls and other reception sites do a wonderful job of meeting the needs of their clientele. However, food and beverage costs are often the most expensive wedding expense. To reduce the per-guest cost and also incorporate some variety into their wedding days, couples can consider a venue change. Look for public locations that allow couples to hire their own caterer, which may be a favorite restaurant or specialty food shop. The cost per person may decrease dramatically from the venue costs.

Changing the venue also enables couples to pick unique spots that may hold special meaning to them. For example, couples can choose the site of their first date or the location where their proposal took place.

Contrast

Enjoy a casual, free-spirited wedding that incorporates some aspects of formality in an off-beat way. Think about serving fast food, such as fried chicken or pizza, on fine china. Those wearing tuxedos and gowns can opt for casual footwear, such as athletic shoes. Place wildflowers in crystal vases. These are just some methods to give a rich feel without removing the fun element.

Personal touches

Menus or wedding programs printed at home in a fun font can set the casual tone couples are looking for. Look for eclectic fabrics to use as gift tags or napkin holders. Hand-painted signs or a hodge-podge of picture frames can display pertinent information, such as itineraries or

seating arrangements. Encourage friends or family to contribute a favorite menu item to the food offerings. A home-baked dessert can be delicious and budget-friendly.

Wardrobe

Clothing often indicates the formality of an occasion. Everyone from the wedding party to the guests can dress down. Sundresses can replace taffeta bridesmaids' gowns. Guys can opt for tailored sports coats with jeans. Guests may feel comfortable in less formal attire that facilitates dancing and mingling.

Casual weddings are becoming more popular as many couples are playing down the party for various



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Master the wedding save-the-date

METRO CREATIVE

Many couples' weddings take more than a year to plan. Couples want all of the special people in their lives to witness their vows, and giving guests advance notice can ensure as many loved ones as possible attend the ceremony.

To be certain that guests have ample notice to clear their schedules, many couples now turn to save-the-date cards, which announce weddings well in advance of the actual wedding day.

Save-the-date cards once were reserved only for weddings that required travel or special circumstances, such as destination weddings. But such cards have now become commonplace for all weddings. That's because many people plan vacations or business trips anywhere from four to six months in advance. Busy people require plenty of notice to include this important date on their calendars, particularly when wedding dates fall

during popular travel seasons or around the holidays.

Kleinfeld Bridal, a premiere New York bridal boutique, says that save-the-date cards are typically mailed six to eight months prior to the wedding, though some are sent as early as a year before the big day. Once a date and a location is secured, save-the-dates can be ordered and mailed.

Save-the-date cards require couples to assemble their guest lists well in advance of the wedding. The leading bridal resource The Knot notes that everyone who will get a wedding invitation should also receive a save-the-date card. There's no turning back once cards are sent, so couples will need to be certain everyone they want to attend is getting advanced notice.

It's acceptable to mail save-the-date cards even if some wedding day details are still up in the air.

Guests really only need to know the date and location of the wedding. Couples also can use the save-the-date card to direct invitees to a wedding website where guests can learn the details of the wedding as they unfold.

RSVP information does not need to be included on the save-the-date card.

Save-the-date cards are much less formal than invitations, so couples can have fun with them. They can showcase couples' clever personalities or funny quirks. Keep in mind it is in poor taste to mention gifts or registries on save-the-date cards. There will be plenty of time to direct guests to registries later on.

Couples are increasingly turning to save-the-date cards when planning their weddings to make sure busy friends and family will have enough time to make plans to attend their weddings.

Weddings and nontraditional families

METRO CREATIVE

Families come in all shapes and sizes. During special events – particularly those steeped in tradition, such as weddings – blended families may have to employ certain tactics to ensure the events go off without a hitch.

When planning their weddings, couples must give consideration to the needs of their families. Even though a wedding is about the union of two people, oftentimes couples engaged to be married must contend with the politics of divorce or other familial issues. This includes if and how to incorporate stepparents and stepsiblings into the ceremony and celebration.

There are no traditional rules regarding how to handle blended families, so brides- and grooms-to-be can customize their decisions based on their own unique situations. Even when families have been happy through the years, the unique circumstances and traditions surrounding the nuptials can dredge up former insecurities, and certain aspects may require extra patience and tact. Here's how to navigate the process.

• **Consider stepparents and stepsiblings VIPs.** Brides and grooms who are not particularly close to their stepfamilies still have to recognize the role they play in the family dynamics. These people are still family, so respect and courtesy should be offered. If there is any lingering animosity, extend the olive branch on this day and try not to let anyone be made to feel as if they are unimportant. A simple announcement of who stepparents are at the wedding reception or inclusion of their names on wedding itineraries

can help smooth over any potential bumps.

• **Put others' needs before your own.** While the wedding may be about you and your future spouse, you must consider the feelings of others. Biological parents and stepparents may act defensively if they feel uncomfortable or hurt, and that can create an air of negativity to the day. Try to avoid this by considering potential areas of conflict. For example, mothers might be hurt if their ex-husbands' new girlfriends are asked to be in a group family photo. Instead, select separate times to have everyone included. Remember to give parents and stepparents priority seating as well, and they each should be seated next to someone they love and with whom they can converse comfortably.

• **Recognize that some families break the mold.** Recently, a father made waves on the Internet when a video of him pulling the bride's stepfather up to assist in walking her down the aisle went viral. Although this scenario might not play out for all, find ways to impart a special touch, especially if you're close to both your biological parents and your stepparents. For example, your biological father may walk you down the aisle, while your stepfather may enjoy the first dance.

Weddings can be complicated affairs when factoring in blended families. With patience and compassion, such families can enjoy a beautiful and happy day.



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