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Setting your wedding date: four things to consider

Are you and your partner about to take the leap into marital bliss? Here are four things to look into before you send out your save the dates.

1. The season

First, decide during what time of year you want to get married. Every season has its own charm, but know that the high season for weddings is over the summer. If you're dealing with a small budget, consider an off-season ceremony to get the most bang for your buck. Winter weddings can be absolutely stunning.

2. The day of the week

If you feel like getting married on a Monday, there's nothing stopping you from doing just that! However, the traditional Saturday wedding

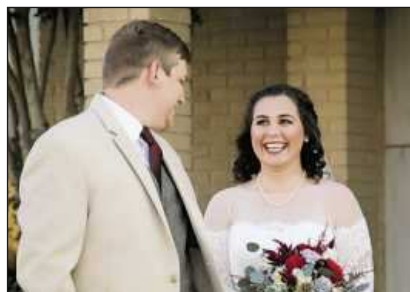
is a convenient option if most of your guests work Monday to Friday. Getting married on a Saturday is more expensive than on a Friday or a Sunday though, and you'll need to reserve early to ensure that your dream venue is available.

3. The schedules

Open up your planner and carefully study your own schedule, and then ask your close friends and family about their own plans for the foreseeable future. Remember to consider time off work, vacations and holidays, various appointments and other significant events (birthdays, baptisms, other weddings, etc.) that are already planned among those in your circle to avoid any major scheduling conflicts.

4. The professionals

Before you send your invitations, make sure that the pros you want to hire are available on the chosen date. If you have your heart set on a certain photographer or caterer, secure their services right away so you don't get left high and dry.



BROOKE SIVLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

Caleb and Savannah West unite in marriage at Boaz Church of God.

Three tips to help you plan your destination wedding

Do you dream of saying "I do" to the love of your life barefoot in the warm sand? If so, know that getting married in paradise is relatively easy to do. Follow these three tips to plan an unforgettable ceremony under the sun.

1. Determine your needs

First, decide what you want and set your priorities. Brainstorm with your partner about your ideal destinations and discuss when you'd like to hold the ceremony. Draw up your guest list and establish a firm budget to avoid getting carried away.

2. Call on an expert

A travel agent can give you the inside scoop on the best deals and destinations for your special day. Thanks to his

or her expertise, the agent will make recommendations based on your needs, your budget and your expectations. Most beach resorts offer all-inclusive wedding packages; if that's something you'd be interested in, ask your agent for details.

3. Send out your invitations early

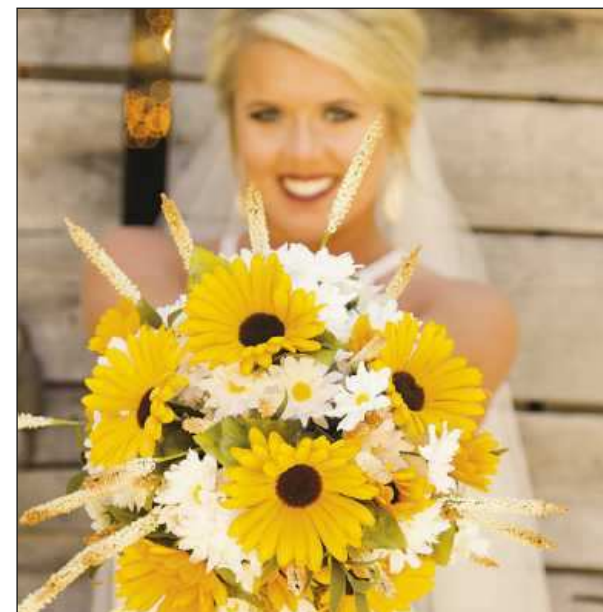
Send out your wedding invitations as soon as you've settled on a wedding date. The earlier you inform your invitees about your plans, the better. Aim for at least six months notice to allow your guests to prepare for the trip.

If some of your friends or family members can't make it to your wedding destination, plan a celebration with them when you get back home.



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Taylor Smith's gown includes full train.



BROOKE SIVLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

Taylor Smith's bouquet fits for spring or summer.

ON THE COVER

Taylor Smith blends formal wedding attire against the rustic backdrop of Hidden Cove Farms.

Necktie or a bowtie?

You popped the question, got a yes, and now you're planning every detail of your wedding day. Future husband—it's time to think about what you'll be wearing when you exchange your vows! The dilemma is quite real: will you choose a necktie or a bowtie to finish off your look? Here are some thoughts to help you make this important decision.

THE BOWTIE: A CLASSIC

You can't go wrong with the traditional bowtie. Match it with your tuxedo for a sophisticated look, or dare to be different with a velvet, knit or wooden bowtie that matches your wedding's colour scheme. Show stopping looks guaranteed in any case.

THE TIE: A MORE RELAXED OPTION

Thinking of getting married in a suit and tie? Go for it! The good old necktie has become a popular option for the modern groom. From the distinguished traditional version to more avant-garde options, ties are available in endless patterns, colours and textures. You're sure to find one that fits your personal style to a t.

Have you decided yet? If you're still on the fence, ask a stylist or knowledgeable salesperson for advice.

TYING THE KNOT

Choosing your tie is the easy part; you'll also need to learn how to knot it to perfection. If you aren't comfortable with the idea of doing it yourself, ask your best man or your dad. They may have some tips for you—or they'll simply take care of it for you on the big day.



BROOKE SIVLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

Austin and Taylor Smith in classic wedding attire.



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Caleb and Savannah West at ease in formal patterns.

The right way to wear a boutonniere

The right way to wear a boutonniere

Many grooms choose to follow the tradition of wearing a small floral accessory called a boutonniere on their wedding day. If you're about to put a ring on your sweetheart's finger, read on to find out how you should wear your boutonniere.

First off, know that this accessory isn't an essential part of the groom's traditional attire and that many prefer to opt for the subtler handkerchief. So don't worry—you're free to wear whatever you think looks best. If you do choose to say yes to this floral adornment, here's how to wear it:

Attach it to the lapel of your suit or jacket
Always pin it on your left side, above your heart

Choose a delicate or magnetized fastener to avoid damaging your jacket

Make it match your bride's bouquet (this is not optional!)

Match it to your wedding's colour palette

WHO SHOULD WEAR IT?

If the groom decides to wear a boutonniere, all male members of the wedding procession must follow suit. This means that the important men in the groom's entourage—his father, godfather and groomsmen, for instance—should all sport the boutonniere with pride.



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Wedding cake history

The tall, tiered wedding cake—with or without toppers—is one of the most widespread wedding traditions in the western world. You've probably tasted a slice or two over the years, but what do you know about the origins of this sweet nuptial custom?

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

Nowadays, bakeries create wedding cakes that are true works of art. Anything goes when it comes to the shape, flavor and color—and toppers are no longer limited to the tiny bride and groom model.

A SYMBOLIC GESTURE

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



BROOKE SIVLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

Caleb and Savannah West's layered cake.



BROOKE SIVLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

Austin and Taylor Smith's cake with fruit.

White isn't your only option

If, at a time in the past, the boldest move you could make when it came to the color of your wedding dress was to pick off-white instead of a pristine snowy shade, that's simply no longer the case. Like most rules, the one that dictates the color of your wedding dress is meant to be broken—and more and more brides are taking the plunge. Read on for some inspiration.

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

On the fence about your color choice because you

fear you'll shock your guests by choosing an unconventional gown? Remember that this is your day and that you have the final say on what you wear. That being said, there are ways to compromise: you could incorporate

a colored sash or veil in your look or choose an all-white dress with colorful stitching.

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



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The perfect do

A wedding day that's also a bad hair day is one of the million preoccupations of most brides-to-be. Choosing how you'll wear your hair on the big day is no easy task, either. Here are some tips for picking the perfect 'do for saying "I do".

Make an appointment with your stylist for a hairdressing test (or several) at least a month before the big day.

To prepare for your appointment, browse through magazines or search online for inspiration. Make sure you have a good grasp on your likes and dislikes when it comes to your hair. Be ready to clearly and accurately express your preferences, expectations, and even your worries to your stylist. A good stylist will help you find a style that's suited to your personality and physical features. He or she will



BROOKE SIVLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

Taylor Smith wears a veil that compliments her hair.

consider several factors to create the most flattering of 'dos, including:

Your personal style

Your dress

Your face shape

Your hair type

When and where your wedding will take place

When the big day finally arrives, remember to bring your dress and your veil

with you to your hair appointment so you can get a clear picture of your final look. Bring some friends along, and don't forget your camera to immortalize the affair!

PC: To make sure your wedding hairdo is everything you want it be, take your tresses on a test run by planning a practice appointment (or two).

Guidelines for choosing your bridal veil

The traditional bridal veil just might be the most archetypal wedding accessory—which is why picking out this special ornament takes time and thought. Follow these three tips to find the one that will suit you perfectly.

1. Aim for balance

If your heart is set on an extravagant dress, opt for a subdued and sophisticated veil that won't outshine your splendid gown. A model with plain satin edging is a safe bet. If, on the other hand, your dress is on the more classic side, feel free to add a touch of sparkle with some crystals, pearls or other trimmings.

2. Play with length

Veils come in a number of lengths, from the coquettish birdcage to the majestic

train. Every bride can find a version that will complement her dress flawlessly. Don't be shy about trying on the various models available in your region's bridal shops.

3. Stay true to your style

Whether you're a hopeless romantic or a thrill-seeking rebel, choose a veil that showcases your unique personality. You can also select one-of-a-kind accessories (flowers, jewelry, nails) to create a look that's one hundred per cent yours.

If you're still unsure what veil to choose, swing by your local bridal shop and take advantage of a professional salesperson's experienced eye. He or she will help you find your dream veil in a jiffy!



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Savannah West shows her long-flowing veil and bouquet.



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How to choose your wedding photographer in three steps

Are you looking for a photographer that will immortalize every magical moment of your wedding, all while bringing out everyone's best side? Follow these steps to make sure you succeed in your quest.

1. DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Start by making a list of local professional photographers and have a look at their portfolios, eliminating the ones you don't like right away. Seeing the work of different pros will help you determine whether you prefer a romantic, vintage, festive, or natural style for your own wedding photos. Then, draw up a (short) list of the photographers whose talents you appreciated and whose fees suit your budget.

2. MEET THE CANDIDATES

Once your preliminary selection is made, contact each candidate to set up a meeting. After all, even if you really like their work, you still have to make sure that your personalities don't clash. Remember that your photographer will be almost as close as your shadow on your big day. Consequently, it's vital that you feel comfortable with the person—your state of mind, positive or not, will shine through in your photos.

3. SIGN THE CONTRACT

The last step, but not the least, consists in making your agreement official. It's important to sign a contract, because it is legally binding and covers you in case of unforeseen events or misunderstandings. See to it!



Savannah West, in white dress, with her bridesmaids.

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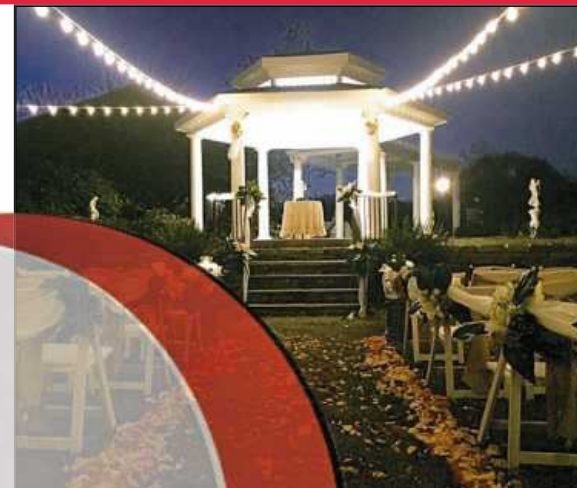
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