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Each packet includes forms to publish your engagement, wedding or shower. Packets may be picked up at our office located at 115 W. Burlison St., Wharton or found online at www.journal-spectator.com/site/forms.

The cost for an engagement announcement is \$50 in the Wharton Journal-Spectator and \$45 in the East Bernard Express. Anything over 12 inches will be instead charged at a rate of \$8.75 per column inch in the Wharton Journal-Spectator and \$6.40 per column inch in the East Bernard Express. To publish a photo with your announcement we will charge an additional \$15.

The cost for a wedding announcement is \$75 in the Wharton Journal-Spectator and \$65 in the East Bernard Express. Anything over 12 inches will be instead charged at a rate of \$8.75 per column inch



in the Wharton Journal-Spectator and \$6.40 per column inch in the East Bernard Express. To publish a photo with your announcement we will charge an additional \$15.

The cost for a party or shower announcement is \$35 in the Wharton Jour-

nal-Spectator and \$30 in the East Bernard Express. Anything over 12 inches will be instead charged at a rate of \$8.75 per column inch in the Wharton Journal-Spectator and \$6.40 per column inch in the East Bernard Express. To publish a photo with your announcement we will charge an additional \$15.

Please feel free to use the forms provided and attach additional pages as needed.

Photos should be good quality in color or black and white. Color is preferred. Photos published in the newspaper will be printed in black and white but will be shown in color in the online edition of the newspapers. We strongly suggest digital photos, which can be emailed or turned in on a Secure Digital (SD) memory card. Please note that photos taken on cell phones do not print well. We will have your photo ready for pick up two weeks after it is published.

Those who wish to fill the form by hand are asked to please write legibly.

Engagement announcements should be turned in at least a month prior to the wedding date. We cannot guarantee a specific issue for publication.

Weddings announcements should be turned in the week before the wedding. Wedding announcements turned in more than two weeks after the event will run as space allows. Wedding photos should be

turned in with the story but may be submitted within two weeks of the wedding date. We don't suggest to wait to turn in your wedding form until you have the photo. Turn your announcement in as promptly as possible for it to be considered timely. Any wedding announcement turned in a month after the wedding date will be shortened to exclude descriptions.

For wedding photos, we do not suggest full-length photos as the details and embellishments on wedding dresses do not print clearly. Close-up images are preferred.

Please make sure to list full names of the bride and the groom as well as anyone else mentioned. Those who go by nicknames or a different name may include it in parenthesis. The bride or a representative of the bride (such as a mother) must sign any and all forms.

The shower and party forms may be turned in as the events occur. We will run the shower announcements as promptly as possible.

If you have any questions or need additional forms, please do not hesitate to call us at 979-532-8840 or email us at lifestyle@journal-spectator.com. This is a special moment for you and your family and we want to help make your wedding even more memorable by sharing the event with our readers.

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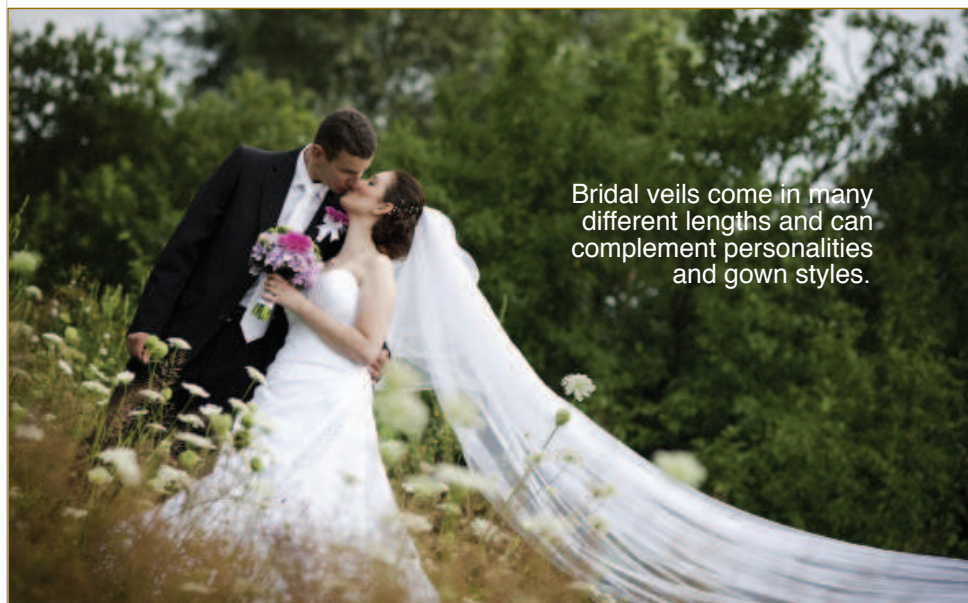
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Wedding veils complete bridal look



Bridal veils come in many different lengths and can complement personalities and gown styles.

The perfect dress is on the wish list of many a bride-to-be, but no bridal ensemble is truly complete until the bride chooses her veil.

Veils have been worn by brides at their weddings for centuries. Veils can be traced back to the Middle East, where veils helped protect against the weather while also preserving the modesty of the bride. In Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, veils were used as protection against evil spirits.

According to popular wedding website The Knot.com, until Vatican II, all Catholic women were required to have their heads covered in church, including during their wedding ceremonies. Veils were worn for this purpose, but they also symbolized trust in the groom and his love and companionship. Some Christians also see the veil as a visual representation of submission to the Church and to God. Others think of the veil as another beautiful accompaniment to their bridal gown, without attaching any additional meaning to the veil itself.

Veils come in various lengths and can complement the style of a wedding gown. They also tend to add glamour to 'brides' looks. Here are the types of veils from shortest to longest.



Blusher: Blushers cover the face, though some extend only to mid-cheek on the bride.

Flyaway: Flyaways cover just the back of the head. Shorter veils may work better on petite women.

Shoulder: Shoulder veils are about 20 inches in length and will hit at the bride's shoulders or just below.

Waist: Waist-length veils cascade down to the middle of the bride's waist.

Fingertip: These veils extend down 38 to 42 inches, brushing against the bride's fingertips.

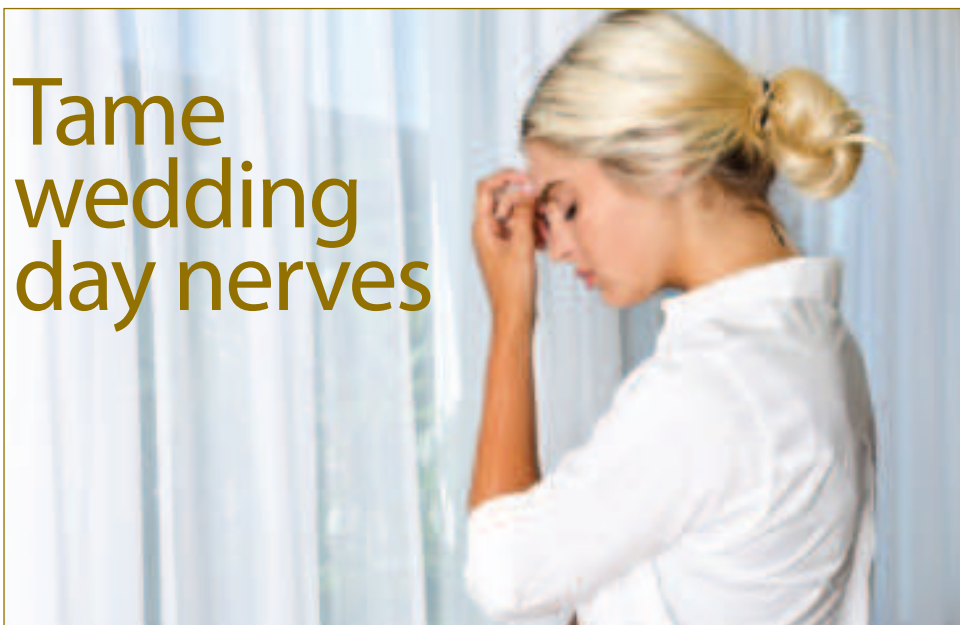
Waltz/Knee: For a dramatic look, many brides may opt for waltz-length veils, which fall to the back of the knees.

Chapel/Floor: Veils that extend to the floor may be referred to as "chapel" or "floor-length" veils. Such veils cascade slightly behind the bride.

Veils can complete brides' wedding day looks. Shorter veils may be comfortable to wear throughout the day and evening, but brides may want to consider detachable veils if they are selecting lengthier options.



Tame wedding day nerves



When couples tie the knot, many changes are in store, many compromises will be made and many lasting memories will be created. But in the weeks and months before their big day, couples can easily get caught up in the whirlwind of wedding planning, never taking inventory of their feelings until their wedding days have arrived.

Come their wedding days, couples should not be surprised if some nerves set in. A survey from the anxiety self-help resource The Fear Source indicated 71 percent of brides-to-be suffered from some type of nerves during the lead-up to their weddings. Ninety-two percent of brides experienced nerves on the day of the wedding or the evening before, while 66 percent reported that it affected their daily lives prior to their weddings or hampered their performance and enjoyment during the day itself.

According to Psych Central, a modern online voice for mental health information, emotional support and advocacy, pre-wedding jitters are common and can be the subconscious telling a person that something needs to be remedied. Wedding nerves do not mean a wedding is doomed; it just means certain issues may need to be worked through. The following are some ways to tame wedding day nerves.

Keep an open dialogue. Speak with your future spouse about the things that may be causing your anxiety. Maybe you have doubts on financial choices or where you will be living after the wedding. Communicating openly and honestly is one of the foundations of a strong relationship.

Slow down and breathe. Wedding planning involves making many decisions, and sometimes couples move at breakneck speeds. Make slowing down a priority. Try to enjoy a quiet dinner with just the two of you. When enjoying peaceful moments, take deep breaths, which can be calming and revitalizing. If need be, consider signing up for a yoga or tai chi class to force you to slow down.

Address performance anxiety. It's easy to build up the big day in your mind and hope that everything goes according to plan. But it's impossible to plan for each

and every outcome on your wedding day. Focus on everything that can go right, rather than worrying about what might go wrong. Also, realize that your guests are your friends and family members who will be forgiving of any hiccups along the way. You're bound to recover gracefully from any mishaps.

Work on confidence. Wedding fears may stem from inadequate self-confidence. Give yourself a pep talk and surround yourself with positive people. Keep the worry-warts at arms' length for the time being.

Wedding days nerves are to be expected and often have little to do with the decision to get married. Planning such a big event can be nerve-wracking,

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are many opportunities to put your own stamp on the wedding, there are plenty of ways to do just that.

When looking to personalize your wedding ceremony, determine if there might be anything blocking you from doing so. For example, if yours will be a religious ceremony, there may be certain rites that need to be followed. Secular ceremonies may offer more opportunities to

customize.

Vows: Vows are one of the easiest ways to put a personal touch on your wedding. You can select the words you want to exchange during the ceremony as well as any readings during the service. Work with your officiant to narrow down particular phrasing or sentiments that fit with your vision of the wedding and relationship.

Participants: Wedding party members fulfill

certain roles during the ceremony, but they are not limited to those tasks alone. Consider asking wedding party members or other friends or family members to take on specialized roles in the wedding. They may be able to do certain readings, escort guests to their seats, light candles, or sing and participate in other ways.

Musical interludes: Choose music that connects with your personalities as a couple rather than selecting standard songs merely because they are the easier route. Work with the organist or other musicians and request that they perform or play musical pieces that you enjoy.

Candle lighting: Many couples like to incorporate candle-lighting components to their ceremonies. Lighting unity candles blends two families together into one in a symbolic way. Other couples choose different traditions, such as mixing two different-colored sands in a new vessel, to represent the joining of two lives together. You can consider these types of additions for your wedding ceremony or come up with your own unique tradition.

Impart a special touch to a wedding ceremony in any number of ways. Doing so will help set this special day apart in the minds of guests and make it even more memorable to look back on as a couple.

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Grooms: Look your wedding day best



Weddings are a chance for couples tying the knot to be the center of attention. All eyes will be glued to the bride and groom on this special day, which makes it even more important for couples to look their collective best.

Brides might garner most of the attention on a couple's wedding day, but dashing grooms also will get their share of attention. As a result, grooms must be just as diligent as their blushing brides with regard to grooming and appearance on their wedding days. To look picture-perfect, grooms may want to include these grooming tips in their wedding day preparation.

Hair

Schedule a haircut with a professional stylist roughly a week before the wedding to get your hair shaped and trimmed. Although trendy

hairstyles may show off creativity, keep in mind that photos last forever, and it's often better to stick with a classic cut. A barber or stylist may suggest styles that best suit your face shape and hair texture. Above all, the haircut should be neat. Resist the urge to wash your hair every day before the wedding. Allow some natural oils to build up and make your hair shine in a healthy way.

Shaving

Shaving is another thing grooms must consider. If you have a beard, make sure it is clean, combed and trimmed. Men who shave the day of their weddings may find their skin is sensitive and irritated, which can lead to redness. Unless your facial hair grows especially fast, shave the evening before. This is a good time to splurge on a professional shave with a straight razor at a barber shop. A hot shave from a professional will produce a close shave with the least amount of irritation

when done correctly.

Hands

Grooms also may want to book a manicure. Keep in mind that salons will do men's nonpolish manicures and pedicures, and they can be well worth the investment. Photos of entwined hands or close-ups of the ring exchange will have guests zeroing in on your fingers. Have hands look their best with clean, shaped fingernails and trimmed cuticles.

Skin

Get plenty of sleep the night prior to the wedding. Being well rested will help reduce puffy eyes, dark circles and sallow skin. It will also put you in a more positive mood, which can help you enjoy the day even more.

The day of the wedding, shower using water and a mild soap. Avoid any skin irritation by patting your face and body dry, rather than rubbing it with the towel. Moisturize your skin to avoid dry patches. Stores sell many moisturizers geared toward men's needs, often in unscented or more masculine fragrances.

Reducing shine is key for wedding day photos. Rely on face and hair products that will not add unnecessary sheen to your skin or hair to avoid making you look greasy. Matte hair waxes and sprays will tame tresses. Also, ask your fiancé to pick you up a package of blotting tissues if you are prone to oily skin. These absorbent, typically rice-paper sheets will remove oil from your face and keep sheen to a minimum.

Smile

Make sure your teeth have been thoroughly brushed and that you have used a minty mouthwash so you're primed for that first kiss. Many grooms also opt for whitening treatments prior to the wedding so they have a dazzling smile.

On their wedding days, grooms will likely be photographed more than any other time in their lives. That means putting extra effort into personal grooming to look their best.

Did you know?

Pets play important roles in their owners' lives and are increasingly included in more activities, such as vacations, dining out and even weddings. The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters says more couples are customizing their wedding celebrations and bridal parties to include pets. Dogs and cats are turning up in wedding photos as well as trips down the aisle. Some pets even serve as ring bearers. Before giving your pet a job for the wedding, consider his personality and temperament. How does the pet react around crowds? A dog or cat accustomed to a quiet home may behave differently when placed in a room full of excited people. In addition, confirm that pets are allowed inside your ceremony space. Certain venues may not allow animals that are not service dogs. Make sure to inform guests that an animal will be present, so those with allergies can take precautions. If it isn't practical to have animals in the ceremony, give them a primary spot in wedding or engagement photos.



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Clever takes on the something old, new, borrowed and blue tradition



Wedding day tokens of good luck come in many forms, but “the something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue (a sixpence in your shoe)” adage remains one of the most popular luck-enhancing wedding traditions. According to the bridal resource *The Knot*, this tradition stems from an Olde English rhyme. Something old represents continuity; something new is for optimism for the future; something borrowed stands for borrowed happiness; and something blue is for purity, love and fidelity. The sixpence in your shoe is a wish for good fortune and prosperity, but this is not a tradition widely celebrated outside of the United Kingdom or British territories.

These traditions can add some creative flair and personality to wedding ceremonies. There's no end to the inventive combinations of items brides can carry to increase their good fortunes.

Something old

Something old is one of the easier mementos to obtain. There is a good chance that someone in the family is willing to pass an item down to the bride that she can include in her wedding wardrobe. It also can be something the bride may have in her own memory box. Beads taken from a grandmother's dress or a swatch of fabric from a beloved toy doll are creative ideas that can be sewn into inconspicuous places on gowns.

Something new

Brides already purchase many new items for their wedding day looks, so “something new” should not be too hard to find. Couples may



want to work together to find something new they can both carry so they have a matching set upon tying the knot. Interlocking charm bracelets or keychains may work. What about the groom carrying a small padlock and the bride the key? Quirky couples can each wear one sock from a pair. Get clever and have fun.

Something borrowed

Much like something old, something borrowed is yet another way to pay homage to a friend or family member. It's also one way to add a sentimental twist to everyday items. Borrow a grandfather's handkerchief to wrap around the stems of the wedding bouquet. Exchange vows with the original rings used by a distant relative at their own wedding. Flatter a close friend by wearing the same veil she did.

Something blue

There are many ways to incorporate “something blue” into your wedding ceremony. Brides can paint their toenails blue or wear blue shoes under their gowns. Sew a patch from a pair of denim jeans into the bodice of the dress. Paint the bottom of your shoes bright blue so they stand out when kneeling at the altar. Blue sapphire or topaz jewelry can add an exotic look to the wedding wardrobe.

With a little ingenuity, brides can easily incorporate “something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue” into their wedding ceremonies.

Easy ways to trim wedding costs



Couples planning their weddings realize pretty quickly just how expensive weddings can be. Depending on where couples tie the knot, the costs can stretch into the tens of thousands of dollars, leaving many young men and women to scramble to find ways to trim costs without trimming quality.

Many couples look for ways to cut wedding costs, and couples facing that very dilemma should know that there are several ways to save money but still host the wedding of their dreams.

Guest list

Guest lists can consume a significant portion of couples' wedding budgets. When compiling the guest list, couples should keep in mind that guests will need save-the-date cards, invitations, catered meals (including cocktail hour, dinner and dessert), drinks, and gifts (including hotel gift bags and wedding favors). So the cost per guest will be more than just the per person cost of the meal couples negotiate with their caterer. Couples who can pare their guests lists down to just family and close friends can save a substantial amount of money without affecting their ceremonies.

Reception

A couple's wedding reception also will chew up a lot of their wedding budgets. But there are ways to reduce the costs of receptions, too. Couples planning on having a morning wedding can shift their receptions from the evening to the afternoon, when the cost per meal will be considerably less. Afternoon receptions also can be alcohol-free, saving couples even more money. If a nighttime reception is a must-have, choose a limited cash bar instead of an open bar. Limited cash bars often provide guests with free beer and house wine while guests who prefer liquor or mixed drinks must pay for their own libations. If you are planning an

outdoor wedding reception, you may even be able to provide your own alcohol, which can save considerable amounts of money.

Couples also can trim reception costs by choosing the least expensive meal package. Packages often differ greatly in price but are not always so different with regard to their menus. If you find the packages offered by your venue are similar, choose the least expensive option.

Arrangements

Floral arrangements are a big and potentially expensive part of many couples' weddings. The bride needs her bouquet, as do her bridesmaids. In addition, many couples decorate their ceremony space with flowers, and of course reception table centerpieces typically include flowers as well. When working with your florist, request in-season flowers, which will cost considerably less than exotic flowers that are out of season. In addition, let your florist know your budget and ask that he or she recommend flowers that won't break the bank.

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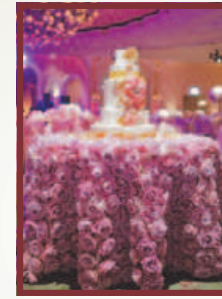
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Helpful hints when planning floral arrangements



When planning their weddings, couples may find themselves becoming experts on subjects they previously never gave much thought to. Thanks to the cost of weddings, today's couples must make each decision carefully, and that may result in hours of research and discussion.

One of the big decisions couples must make when planning their weddings concerns their floral arrangements. The right floral arrangements won't break the bank but will add substantial aesthetic appeal to ceremonies and receptions. It can be difficult for couples to achieve that balance of cost and look on their own, so the following are a few helpful hints for couples when choosing their wedding day floral arrangements.

Work with a florist you trust and like. All florists are not the same, so finding one you can trust and will enjoy working with can make all the difference. Many couples have little or no experience with floral arrangements prior to planning their weddings, so it can calm couples' nerves to work with someone they trust in such situations. Florists with significant wedding experience will no doubt make a host of recommendations based on couples' budgets and preferences, so couples might be more inclined to listen to that advice if they are working with someone they trust. Ask relatives, friends or coworkers if they can recommend any florists whose wedding work they are familiar with.

Choose in-season or native flowers. Couples working with tight budgets may want to choose in-season flowers or those native to the area where they will be tying the knot. In-season and native flowers won't need to be

ordered or shipped in from afar, which can be costly. In-season and native flowers tend to be more abundant as well, and the greater their availability the less couples are likely to pay for them.

Repurpose floral arrangements. Another way to save on floral arrangements is to repurpose flowers throughout the day. Once bridesmaids no longer need their bouquets, use them to decorate gift tables or cocktail areas. Floral arrangements on display during the ceremony can be removed once you have both said "I do" and moved into the reception area where they can be enjoyed through the night. Go over any repurposing you plan to do with your reception hall manager prior to your wedding day so he knows where and when to move the arrangements.

Go big. Some flowers simply bloom larger than others, and choosing such flowers may help you save money since you won't need to buy as many flowers as you would if you were to go with smaller blooms. Once you find a florist to work with, discuss your options with regard to doing more with less. Many florists embrace the challenge to be creative within a budget, so you might just be surprised and impressed by what they come up with.

Floral arrangements can set the mood for a wedding ceremony and reception, and even couples with little or no experience choosing arrangements can end up with stunning displays.



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Tips for toasting the bride and groom

in such public settings. That anxiety is perfectly normal, especially for those who have never before been asked to serve as maid of honor or best man. Those tasked with toasting the newly anointed husband and wife can consider the following tips to make the task a little easier.

Keep it brief. While there might be many things you want to say, try to express yourself as concisely as possible. Convey your relationship with the bride and/or groom, but avoid lengthy histories that might come off as rambling. While personal anecdotes that shed some humorous light on your relationship are great additions to wedding toasts, avoid going into too much detail when telling such stories, focusing instead on the parts of the stories that illustrate your feelings and generate a few laughs.

Avoid being too formal. Even the most formal wedding can benefit from a toast that veers more toward the spontaneous. While you want to thank the parents of the bride and groom for hosting the wedding and the guests for being on hand to celebrate, don't feel as though you need to be especially formal. Giving a less formal speech also may help calm your nerves.

Practice, practice, practice. Practice your speech ahead of time so you are not reading from cards or notepads during the toast. Reading from a piece of paper is less likely to engage the audience than if you are speaking to them directly and sharing

some heartfelt thoughts about the bride and groom. It's alright to hold onto some cue cards to keep you on track as you deliver your toast, but practicing your toast as the wedding draws near will boost your confidence and make you more comfortable once you have the microphone in hand.

Stay appropriate. Humor adds a lot to wedding toasts, but make sure to clean up any humorous anecdotes so they can be shared with all wedding guests, including kids. In addition, avoid stories that, while humorous, may end up embarrassing the bride and groom.

Share well wishes. Before you raise your glass and ask guests to do the same, express some heartfelt well wishes for the bride and groom. Doing so is a fitting end to a tradition that's meant to highlight the special relationship brides and grooms have with their maids of honor and best men.

Maids of honor and best men making their first wedding toasts may be nervous in advance of the big day, but there are ways to calm those nerves and deliver heartfelt, memorable toasts that will be remembered for all the right reasons.

Post-wedding day tasks to tackle

Couples who plan their own weddings might enjoy a satisfactory exhale once the knot has been tied and the last rug has been cut. There are some lingering tasks for couples once they return from their honeymoon.

Thank-you notes: Thank-you notes should be sent to all guests who attended your wedding and those who couldn't attend but still gave gifts. Carve out some time in the weeks immediately following your honeymoon, mailing them all at the same time.

Vendor reviews: Many vendors now rely on Internet reviews from past customers to help grow their businesses, and it's a nice gesture for couples to offer their reviews once they have returned from their honeymoons.

Dress: New brides who want to keep their dresses as keepsakes or preserve them as heirlooms should have their dresses cleaned and professionally preserved when they return from their honeymoons. The earlier you do this, the easier it is to remove any stains.

Gift returns: Newly married couples often receive repeat gifts or gifts they never put on their registries that they simply have no use for. Return such gifts as soon as possible so your home is not overwhelmed with clutter.

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Responsibilities of bridal party members

associated with their roles. The following are some of the tasks bridesmaids and groomsmen can expect to perform in the months leading up to the wedding and during the wedding itself.

Maid of Honor: The maid of honor serves as the bride-to-be's right-hand woman as she plans her wedding and gets ready on her big day. Maids of honor typically go gown shopping with the bride and may even choose or offer suggestions about the color and style of the bridesmaids' dresses. Once a dress style and color has been chosen, the maid of honor will make sure everyone is fitted on time.

A maid of honor will also plan the bridal shower, sending invitations and arranging for lodging for out-of-town guests if necessary. Many brides want the details of their bridal showers to be a surprise, and maids of honor should honor those sentiments when possible. A maid of honor also plans the bachelorette party, though many brides do not mind being involved in the planning of such parties. The maid of honor may be asked to help address save-the-date cards and envelopes as well.

Come the day of the wedding, the maid of honor will ensure the bride's day is as stress-

free as possible, helping to address any last-minute issues that may arise. Maids of honor may be asked to serve as the legal witness to the wedding and sign the wedding license before the reception. At the reception, the maid of honor will toast the bride.

Best man: The best man is the maid of honor's counterpart, helping to plan the bachelor party and toasting the groom at the reception. The best man also tends to hold the rings during the wedding ceremony, and during the day of the wedding, he will coordinate the groomsmen to make sure everyone is ready to go on time. The best man may arrange transportation for the groom and groomsmen on the day of the wedding and may also return the groom and groomsmen's attire the following day if the newlyweds are departing on their honeymoons.

Bridesmaids/Groomsmen: The bridesmaids and groomsmen serve similar functions, acting as sources of support as couples plan their weddings. Bridesmaids and groomsmen help to plan the bachelorette and bachelor parties and may also be asked their opinions as couples make decisions regarding their weddings. Bridesmaids and groomsmen must be prepared to take pictures once couples have officially tied the knot. They also must

help the brides and grooms with any issues that may arise in the hours before couples become husband and wife.

Flower girl/Ring bearer: Flower girls and ring bearers are often young relatives of the couple, whether they are a young brother or sister or a niece or nephew. The responsibilities of the flower girl and ring bearer are typically limited to the ceremony, during which they will walk down the aisle, either together or individually, before the father of the bride escorts his daughter to the altar or stage.

Father of the bride: The father of the bride walks his daughter down the aisle during the ceremony, and, along with his wife, may pay for the wedding, though many couples now finance their own nuptials. The father of the bride will dance with his daughter during the reception, and some fathers may even share a special toast for the newlyweds during the reception, though such a toast is not traditionally required.

Bridal parties play a big role on couples' wedding days, and those roles are both an honor and a responsibility.

Being asked to join a bridal party is both an honor and a responsibility. When asked to take on such significant and meaningful roles, men and women may recognize the honor but be unsure of what their responsibilities are as couples move forward with their wedding plans. Bridal party roles can vary depending on certain circumstances, but many couples still want their bridesmaids and groomsmen to perform many of the more traditional tasks



Navigating the rehearsal dinner

Rehearsal dinners are a fun wedding tradition that typically take place the night before a couple walks down the aisle. The immediate families of the bride and groom as well as any additional members of the wedding party are on hand for the rehearsal dinner, which often follows a walk-through of the wedding ceremony. The rehearsal dinner is usually a laid-back affair, but there are some things couples must navigate as they sit down to their last dinner together before becoming husband and wife.

GUEST LIST

It is customary to invite anyone participating

in the wedding, including bridesmaids, groomsmen, ushers, flower girls, and ring bearers, to the rehearsal dinner. In addition to those in the wedding, family members, such as parents of both the bride and groom and their respective siblings who are not in the wedding, also are invited to traditional rehearsal dinners.

MENU

If your rehearsal dinner will take place at a restaurant, then try to find a restaurant that can cater to various tastes. Rehearsal dinner parties tend to be large, and within your party you may have guests who are vegetarian or on gluten-free diets or those who need to avoid certain foods. The more versatile the menu, the more capable an establishment is likely to be with regard to meeting the various needs of your party.

While many rehearsal dinners are held at restaurants, it's not unheard of to host a dinner

party at home or at the home of the bride's or groom's parents. If you plan to go this route, just be sure to provide a variety of food so no one goes home hungry.

BOOKING

If you are hosting a rehearsal dinner at a restaurant, booking a reservation should be near the top of your priority list once you have chosen a date for the wedding. It's not always easy to find restaurants that can accommodate especially large parties, nor is it easy to find restaurants that can accommodate the unique diets of potential party guests. So try to book a reservation three to six months in advance of the dinner. If you are getting married during an especially popular month to tie the knot, such as June or October, try to make the reservation even earlier, as the longer you wait the more likely other couples will have booked the restaurant for their rehearsal dinners. Starting

early also gives you more time to find the ideal restaurant to host the dinner.

TAB

Many wedding traditions have fallen by the wayside over the last several decades, and that includes who is picking up the tab. In the past, the brides' parents paid for the wedding while the grooms' parents were expected to pick up the tab for the rehearsal dinner. But many couples now pay for their own weddings, and those that are footing the bill should include the rehearsal dinner in their wedding budgets. If parents offer to pay or split the tab, you can take them up on their generous offer. But it is still to a couple's advantage to expect to pay for their rehearsal dinners.

Rehearsal dinners are an enjoyable tradition that affords couples the chance to sit down with their closest friends and family members and enjoy a great meal together. Planning ahead can make the dinner even more enjoyable.

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Factors to consider when hosting an outdoor wedding



tions at each location you are considering. The cost of such permits may be negligible, but the rules may restrict what you can do in a given space and how long you can do it. Discuss these rules with each other to determine if the rules are something both of you can live with.

LOCATION

Proximity to your reception venue and the hotel where guests are staying is another factor to consider if you are planning on hosting an outdoor wedding. A remote location might provide stunning views and privacy, but guests might tire if the ceremony location is far from the hotel and/or reception venue. This should not be too big an issue if the ceremony and reception are held at the same locale, but couples should still look for nearby lodging before booking remote outdoor locations.

WEATHER

Weather is perhaps the biggest factor couples must consider when planning an outdoor wedding. Outdoor weddings are best held during those seasons when the threat of precipitation is insignificant and temperatures are mild, but it's still necessary to have a backup plan just in case Mother Nature does not want to cooperate. If possible, find an outdoor location that provides access to an indoor ceremony facility in case of inclement weather. If that's not possible, monitor the forecast as closely as possible and arrange for a tent to be erected should rain start to fall. (*Note: The cost of such tents can be considerable, so build this contingency into your budget.*) If the forecast is calling for chillier temperatures than you had hoped for, email out-of-town guests a few days in advance to remind them to dress warm.

LOGISTICS

No matter how beautiful a backdrop may be, photos of an outdoor ceremony can be compromised. Couples, along with their photographers, should visit the site in the weeks before their weddings to determine arrangements for the ceremony that will guarantee photos are not compromised by sunlight or shade. Facility managers can probably offer advice as to the best places to hold the ceremony and seat guests, but a run-through at the location with your photographer in tow can help ensure your photos come out perfect.

LAWS

Laws dictate what can and cannot be done in open spaces, and couples with outdoor locations in mind should confirm local laws and regulations before they commit to a location for their wedding. Research which permits you might need and if there are any rules or restric-

Did you know?

The modern bridal shower may trace its origins the 1890s. "The Old Farmer's Almanac" says the first bridal shower hostess filled a paper parasol with small presents and turned it over the head of the bride-to-be. Soon the concept caught on, and many other women began "showering" future brides in such a manner. Naturally, as presents became larger and heavier, the tradition of literally showering the bride with gifts was modified — but the name has stuck.

Bridal showers are designed to equip couples with many of the necessities to start their new life together. This custom is believed to have evolved from an old dowry

system, in which a bride was expected to bring valuables to the marriage. The dowry was originally intended as compensation for the burden of supporting a wife placed on the groom. Some parents of the bride were not rich enough to afford an ample dowry, so friends and family members would offer small gifts to help offset this financial responsibility.

Today, both the bride and groom are equal partners in the marriage, bringing together their collective wealth. However, showers are still held regardless of the financial need of the bride as a way to offer good wishes before she embarks on her new journey.

How to arrange the best outdoor wedding photos



Outdoor photos can look beautiful when couples are in the hands of accomplished photographers.

It's also important for photographers to select locations that have shade. This way they can adjust the amount of light needed, rather than having to contend with the photo washing out from too much sunlight.

There's much a photographer can do in production to fine-tune photos, but the couple can help things along. Bring along some powder or makeup to touch up between photos. Warm weather can cause shininess or beads of sweat on the skin. A light dusting of powder can tame shine, while any remaining moisture can be blotted away with a towel.

Although brides and grooms may think clouds on their wedding days are a harbinger of bad luck, overcast conditions can actually contribute to better photos. A healthy blanket of cloud cover can produce richer colors and pleasing shadows, making photos even more appealing. If the clouds are just passing, photographers may wait until a cloud passes over the sun to provide just the right amount of light filter.

Couples may want to change into comfortable footwear as they traverse the landscape to get into perfect portraiture locations. This will help keep their fancier shoes clean, and photos can be cropped to hide feet.

Bring along some refreshments when posing for photos, as it can be tiring. Couples can take frequent breaks as the photographer adjusts his or her camera for the next shot. Staying hydrated will keep skin looking supple and ensure that everyone feels refreshed when it's time to return to the party.

Not every family member will be able to join the happy couple for outdoor photos. Elderly relatives or those who have mobility issues may find it difficult to stand in the sun or make their way across certain landscapes. Arrange for indoor photoshoots with guests who can't handle the outdoors.

Photography is a great way for couples to capture all the special moments that occur on their wedding days. Long after the final piece of wedding cake has been consumed, wedding albums remain to remind couples of all those moments that made their big day so special.

Photography preferences differ from couple to couple, but when weather permits, many brides and grooms prefer to take photos outdoors. Mother Nature can provide some awe-inspiring backdrops, and such beauty comes at no extra cost.

Couples using professional photographers should share their image preferences with their photographers, especially if outdoor photography is desired. Photographers may have to do a little more work to achieve great outdoor photographs, even visiting a site in advance of the big day to scout areas that can produce great photos. Scouting and preparation can involve seeing the landscape, examining the way the light shines on photo subjects and getting an accurate light reading on a meter to adjust flash accordingly. Photographers also will need to ensure there are no obstructions that will appear in the background of the photos.



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Wedding rings are symbolic gestures of commitment



Exchanging rings is an important wedding day tradition for many couples.

Couples adhere to many traditions on their wedding days, including the exchange of wedding rings. Wedding rings symbolize the union of two people and their pledge to remain faithful to each other.

No one is exactly sure just when the tradition of exchanging wedding rings originated, but some say it can be traced back to ancient Egypt, when the oldest recorded exchange of wedding rings was made. Reeds growing along the Nile were twisted and braided into rings and given during betrothal ceremonies. The round ring symbolized eternity, and the hole within the center meant a gateway to things unknown. Since reeds were not very durable, soon ivory, leather and bone were used to create wedding rings.

As new lands were explored and territories expanded, traditions from one culture were adopted and modified by other cultures. The same is true with wedding rings. According to the Diamond Source, wedding rings were adopted by Romans and incorporated into Western wedding ceremonies. Romans' rings were highly decorated, and some historians believe wedding rings were given to represent ownership over brides instead of symbolizing love. These rings were made of iron and called "Anulus Pronubus," or "betrothal ring."

Rings have been simplified since those

days and ultimately made of many materials. Throughout history, wedding rings were worn on various fingers and even both hands, whereas many married people in Western cultures now wear their wedding rings on the left hand and on the fourth finger. Romans once believed that this finger contained a vein, called the "Vena Amoris," that ran directly to the heart. Though that is not true, the tradition has prevailed.

Other legends say that, when blessing a Christian marriage, priests would bind the marriage by saying, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," simultaneously touching the ring to the recipient's thumb, index finger and middle finger, before slipping it on the fourth finger while saying, "Amen."

Another theory on ring placement is that wedding rings are worn on the ring finger because that finger isn't used as much as the rest of the hand, ensuring delicate ring materials won't be damaged.

Ross Simmons Jewelry states that gold is still the most popular metal choice for wedding rings, but couples are opting for some other metals that are more durable. Platinum is popular not only because it is long-wearing, but it also tends to be the most expensive. It's also a dense metal and can feel heavy in hand. Tungsten carbide is another durable metal that has grown in popularity in recent years. These rings cannot be cut and resoldered, which means it's important to size the rings correctly the first time. Titanium is both lightweight and durable, and it's popular because it is hypo-allergenic, making it practical for those with allergies to other metals.

Wedding rings continue to serve as symbols of a couple's vows and union. Much like the marriage itself, they are designed to last the test of time.

Did you know?



Historically, June has been the most popular month for getting married. But some numbers now indicate that July and even October have begun to edge out June as the most popular months to tie the knot.

The June wedding tradition may be traced back to the ancient Romans. Romans honored Juno, the goddess of marriage and childbirth, and the month of June was named after her, so it is fitting that weddings take place in her namesake month. As centuries passed, June remained a popular month to get married. June was a prime time for people to come out after a long winter and take communal baths in the fifteenth century. In addition, June weddings meant children conceived after betrothal would be born close to or during the following spring. This helped assure youngsters' survival during the rough and often lean months of winter. Spring births would not conflict with workers' demanding schedules during the autumn harvest, either. Even when weddings began shifting from pragmatic business transactions to romantic affairs, June remained popular.

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