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Factors to consider before choosing a wedding venue

Once couples become engaged and share the good news with their friends and families, the next step is to begin planning their weddings. While couples must make a myriad of decisions during the wedding planning process, perhaps none is more significant than where to tie the knot.

According to The Knot 2016 Real Weddings Study, the average cost of a wedding for couples who married in 2016 was \$35,329. That's a sizable amount, and a big portion of that was spent on the wedding venue. The Real Weddings Study found that couples spent an average of \$16,107 on their wedding venues in 2016. That figure easily dwarfs the next biggest expense (\$6,163 for the engagement ring) for

couples tying the knot.

Because the wedding venue comes with such a potentially high sticker price, couples should give ample consideration to a host of factors before choosing where to get married.

Size

Until they can agree on a guest list, couples might want to delay even looking for venues. However, some couples might want to first look at some venues so they can determine just how many guests they can afford to invite. Whether they're hosting small affairs or large parties, couples should choose venues that can comfortably accommodate all of their guests. If possible, look for venues with multiple reception

areas, which might allow for some wiggle room if the guest list grows or dwindles during the planning process.

Availability

Some couples might have an ideal time of year they hope to get married. Some even know the exact date they hope to get married. While that can help with the planning, it can also limit couples with regard to their venue options. Some venues may be booked for as much as a year or more in advance during peak wedding season. The Real Weddings Study found that the most popular months to get married in 2016 were October and September. Couples who hope to follow in the footsteps of many

2016 brides and grooms may need to book their wedding venues well in advance. Those who can be more flexible regarding their wedding dates may find it easier to book their dream venues.

Insurance

Ask about the venue's insurance policies, including the policies the venue has to protect itself. In addition, ask if the venue requires couples to have their own wedding liability insurance for protection in the event of injury, property damage or incidents related to alcohol. Couples may also want to make the investment in cancellation/postponement insurance, and some venues may even require it.

Financials

It's easy for couples to be focused on the bottom line when choosing wedding venues, but it's also important that they get a complete grasp of the financials before choosing a wedding venue. Ask about the amount of the initial deposit and if that deposit is refundable. In addition, ask when the deposit is due and when each subsequent payment is due until the balance is paid in full. This can make budgeting easier and planning less stressful.

Couples should have fun choosing their wedding venues while recognizing that certain factors must be given ample consideration before signing any contracts.

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Save your rainy wedding day

Nature can make a couple's wedding day that much more special. Beautiful backdrops like ocean waves or rolling country hills lend a lot to a wedding, making the day even more special for couples and their guests.

But Mother Nature is the inherent risk of hosting an outdoor wedding. Weather is unpredictable, and couples who hope to tie the knot in the great outdoors must develop a contingency plan just in case Mother Nature decides to rain on the parade. While outdoor wedding venues often have backup venues in place should the weather prove uncooperative, couples can take some additional steps to ensure

their rainy wedding days still go off without a hitch.

- Find a place to take photos. Wedding photos document a couple's big day, and many couples arrange for outdoor photos whether they're tying the knot indoors or outdoors. But couples must arrange for a place to take photos in case outdoors is not an option. If possible, walk the grounds of your ceremony or reception site with your photographer in the weeks before the wedding to scout out potential areas to shoot indoors in case the weather is not cooperating. Ask a representative from the venue to recommend potential photo locations around the building.

- Consider a tent. Some wedding venues are exclusively outdoors, meaning they don't have backup options indoors on their premises. If that's the case, couples can rent tents to serve as their safety nets. Tents can be expensive, and some couples may not want to pay for a tent they ultimately may not use. But tents may be a couple's only option if their chosen venue has no indoor alternatives.

- Establish a cutoff time. Depending on how remote the ceremony location is, couples might be able to wait until a few hours before their weddings to decide if they will still tie the knot outdoors. Make the call earlier if

your wedding is to be held at an especially remote location. But no matter where the wedding is, establish a cutoff time to let guests know if the wedding will be indoors or outdoors. Include such information on your wedding website and/or invitations. Use a social media platform such as Facebook or Twitter to inform guests of your final decision.

- Provide umbrellas. Some inclement weather may not be enough to deter couples or guests from braving the great outdoors. Couples getting married in the summer may be able to withstand a summer shower, but provide guests with

umbrellas just to be safe. The umbrellas will make for a nice wedding gift, and hopefully couples and guests won't even need to use them.

- Insure the wedding. Couples who are hosting destination weddings on tropical isles should look into insuring their weddings. Such islands might be susceptible to harmful storms like hurricanes that can prevent weddings from taking place. Insurance can cover couples for a host of unforeseen circumstances, including weather.

Outdoor weddings can be magical, but couples must build contingency plans in case Mother Nature proves uncooperative come the big day.

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The pros and cons of Friday weddings

Couples give a great deal of thought to the day they choose to get married. Many engaged couples are more attached to a particular season than a specific day, but some couples will consider any time of year to say "I do."

Weather factors heavily into many couples' decisions regarding when to get married. According to The Knot 2015 Real Weddings Study, 39 percent of the nearly 18,000 U.S. brides and grooms surveyed chose to get married in the months of September, October or November, three months of the year when the weather tends to be both predictable and pleasant.

But more and more couples are paying more mind to which day of the week to get married as well. While Saturday is widely considered the most traditional day to tie the knot, couples may want to consider walking down the aisle on Friday. Friday weddings can be just as enjoyable as Saturday weddings, but there are some pros and cons to choosing Friday over Saturday.

Pros

Perhaps the biggest advantage to getting married on a Friday is the cost. Wedding venues tend to be most expensive on Saturday because that's when the majority of couples prefer to get married. While each venue is different, couples willing to get married on a Friday might find it far less expensive than getting married on a Saturday.

Another advantage to getting married on a Friday is the opportunity to spend more time with guests. Couples who get married on a Saturday tend to be busy most of Friday and Saturday, and that leaves little time to

spend with their guests, many of whom will return home first thing on Sunday morning. But by getting married on a Friday, couples then have Saturday to spend with their guests, and they can even plan a laid back get-together like a backyard barbecue or Saturday brunch with guests who will likely stay in town through the weekend.

Cons

Likely because they are so extraordinary, Friday weddings may be less popular with guests. Bridal party members may be obligated to take two days off from work in order to make it to the rehearsal dinner on Thursday night, and that might not sit well with friends and family who do not have much vacation or personal time. Even guests who are not in the bridal party may need to take a day off from work that they otherwise can avoid taking if the wedding was scheduled for Saturday or even Sunday.

Couples also should know that Friday weddings tend to begin later at night, as it's customary to start the ceremony in the evening so guests who have to work can still arrive on time. Couples inviting several elderly guests or children may find that these people miss the ceremony and/or reception because of the later start time.

Brides- and grooms-to-be may find their options with regard to venues and entertainment are more limited when they choose to get married on a Friday instead of a Saturday. Some venues may only host weddings on Saturdays, while entertainers like deejays or bands who work day jobs during the week may not be available on Friday nights.



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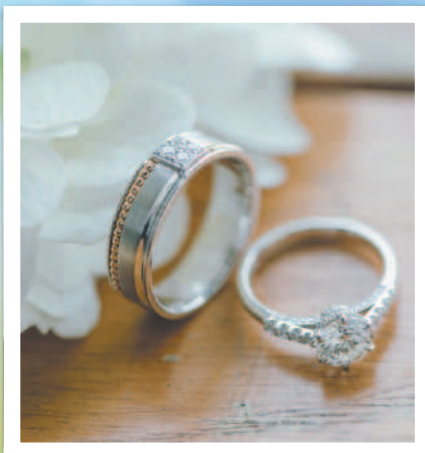
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Reconnect during wedding planning

Wedding planning can be intense and often requires dedication and many hours of work. Coordinating a wedding often requires that couples make many different decisions and spend a considerable amount of time in the wedding-planning trenches.

Couples expend so much energy planning their weddings that it can be easy to lose sight of the bigger picture — namely the relationship that is the basis for the marriage in the first place. But as easy as it can be to get lost in wedding planning, couples can use this time together to connect on a deeper level and learn to work cooperatively.

- Divide and conquer. Separate wedding planning duties so that both of you feel you are contributing equally and no one person gets overly stressed out. Stress can lead to short tempers and arguments.
- Establish a mutual budget. Even the healthiest couple argues over finances from time to time, but budgetary debates should not set a negative tone for wedding planning. Couples should discuss their potential budget before they even begin to plan their

weddings, and both partners should do their best to compromise while also understanding where the other person is coming from.

- Schedule time for fun. Do not let wedding planning be all-consuming. Schedule days that allow you to enjoy yourselves together without having to think about or discuss your pending nuptials. This may include date nights that may have fallen by the wayside since getting engaged or periodic day trips to get away from it all. Explore your mutual hobbies or try something new.

- Learn to laugh at the little things. Not every detail will go off without a hitch. How you react as a couple may influence how much you enjoy your wedding. Recognize that certain things will not go your way, but that unforeseen circumstances will not ruin your wedding day, no matter how unpleasant they may seem. Laugh at what cannot be changed and recognize that, in the long run, the details you think are major today may actually prove trivial when you look back on your wedding day in the years to come.



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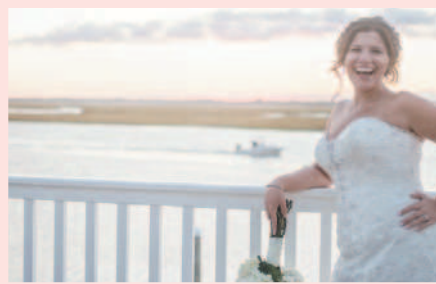


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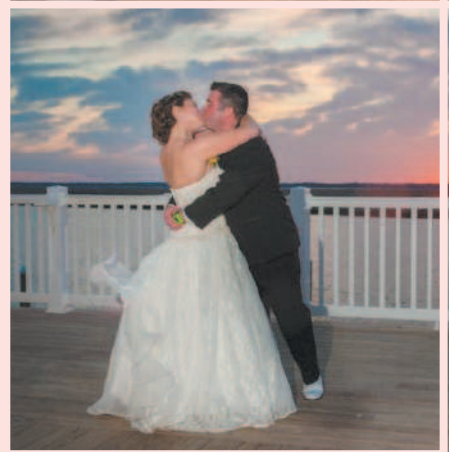


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Weddings are special moments for couples and the guests they invite to share their happiness on their big days. Beautiful weddings require substantial planning, as every last detail must be considered for couples to enjoy the wedding of their dreams.

Flowers play a big role in many weddings, and couples can add beauty and ambiance to the event by using floral arrangements in various ways. Modern floral arrangements are stunning, and many couples may not know that herbs, spices and flowers have been used in weddings for centuries.

Today, flowers are used to decorate wedding venues, impart sweet fragrances and complement formal attire, but in ancient times they were used differently. Flowers were used to bestow good luck on the couple and keep bad omens away. Brides carried aromatic flowers and spices to keep evil spirits from spoiling the festivities, and some even tucked bulbs of garlic into their bouquets. In ancient Greece and Rome, both the bride and groom wore garlands made out of strong-smelling herbs flowers around their necks or heads. These wreaths were considered gifts of nature, and thus extremely appropriate for a wedding. Traditionally, bridesmaids would be responsible for



fashioning these floral components. In ancient Sweden, young girls would carry small bouquets of fragrant herbs down the aisle and the groom would put thyme in his

pocket. These aromatics were thought to help keep trolls at bay.

Besides warding off spirits or hungry trolls, flowers also served more practical purposes throughout history. During the Middle Ages, people bathed less frequently than they do today. Bathing might only have occurred twice a year, once during summer and then again at Christmastime. Because many weddings took place in the spring, flowers were used to mask bodily odors. Not only were flowers and herbs carried, but they also would be sewn into clothing.

Modern brides and grooms may no longer see their wedding days as times for opportunistic evil spirits. But that doesn't mean that couples cannot borrow from ancient traditions and incorporate flowers into their weddings in various ways.

· Wreaths and garlands: Ask the florist to weave small flower buds, berries and vines to a headband, wreath or piece of twine so that the bride and groom can wear

these flowers in the way they were worn by ancient Greeks and Romans. When coupled with Grecian-styled wedding gowns, brides can look like beautiful goddesses on their wedding days.

· Fragrant favors: Tuck dried rose petals and other fragrant flowers into sachets that are embroidered with the wedding date and couple's names. Guests can use these sachets to keep their clothing smelling fresh in drawers or as subtle air fresh-

eners around the house.

· Edible flowers: Ask the caterer to make meals flower-friendly by including some edible blooms in the salad or as a garnish on meals.

· Raining petals: In lieu of bubbles or birdseed, guests can shower the newlyweds with rose petals after the ceremony.

· Memorial: Some couples like to honor departed family members. Floral arrangements with small placards can make for fitting memorials.



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Rehearsal dinner planning pointers

Rehearsal dinners are customarily held after couples and their bridal parties walk through the wedding ceremony. Rehearsals may occur one or two nights before the actual wedding, depending on the availability of the wedding venue.

Rehearsal dinners tend to be less formal than wedding receptions, but couples should still prioritize planning to ensure their dinner goes off without a hitch.

- Confirm who is paying for dinner. Tradition once suggested that the groom's parents pay for the rehearsal dinner while the bride's parents foot the bill for the wedding. But perhaps due to the rising cost of weddings, many couples no longer feel beholden to such traditions. If couples are financing their own weddings, parents of both the bride and groom may want to pay for the rehearsal dinner. If parents are splitting the cost of the wedding, then couples themselves may want to pay for the rehearsal dinner. Confirm who is paying and if there is a budget to work with before booking a restaurant. This way there is no confusion once the bill is brought to the table.

- Give consideration to bridal party members' dietary restrictions. Couples may not want to book a seafood restaurant if a handful of guests have shellfish allergies. So before booking a restaurant for the rehearsal dinner, couples can ask members of their bridal party and other attendees if they have any food allergies.

- Emphasize location. Couples whose bridal party includes out-of-towners should look for a restaurant that's close to the wedding hotel and/or the ceremony site to host their rehearsal dinner. Ideally, one that's within walking distance of both makes getting to and from a lot easier. Regardless of where the restaurant is located, make sure to arrange for transportation for any out-of-town guests who are not planning to drive to the wedding.

- Inform guests about the dress code. Rehearsal dinners tend to be laid back affairs, but members of the bridal party may be uncertain about what to wear. Couples should inform rehearsal dinner guests well in advance of the wedding if the dinner will be casual, semiformal or formal. This gives guests the time to shop for and pack their attire for the night, and saves couples the trouble of answering wardrobe inquiries in the busy final days before the wedding.

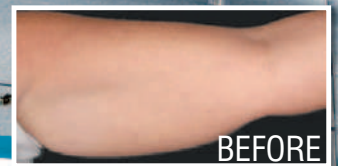
- Toast the guests. Brides and grooms are toasted at their wedding receptions, but rehearsal dinners afford happy couples the chance to thank their closest friends and family members for their love and support. Plan to give a brief toast to loved ones at the dinner. Grooms may also want to use this opportunity to toast their brides-to-be, thanking them for all their efforts planning the wedding.

Rehearsal dinners typically are fun, less formal affairs. But even the least formal dinners require some planning.

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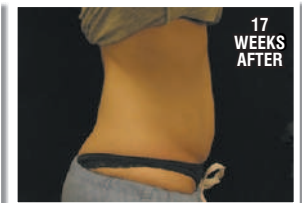
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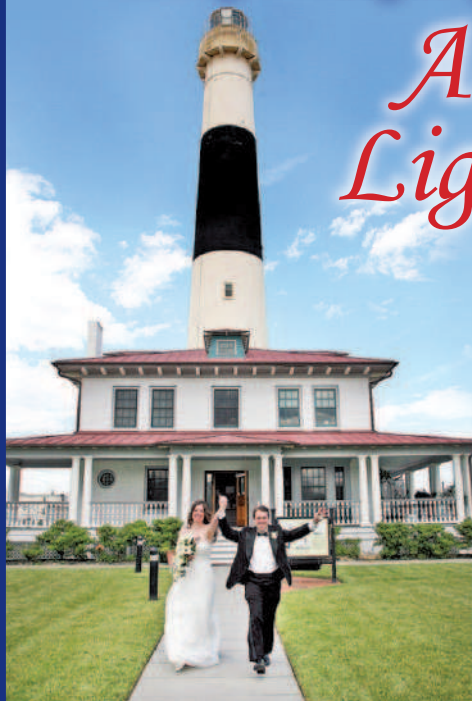
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Get a grip on your guest list

Cooperation is key for couples planning their weddings. Compiling the guest list is one area of wedding planning where couples oftentimes must embrace both cooperation and compromise.

Putting together a wedding guest list can cause some tension. That tension may be confined to couples, but it may even occur between couples and their families. Getting a grip on their guest lists may be one of the more difficult tasks couples encounter when planning their weddings, but there are ways to make creating the guest list go smoothly.

- Recognize the need to compromise. Couples who recognize the need to compromise in advance of compiling their guest lists may find it easier to pare down that list if the initial number of guests is too high. Couples can create lists of people they want to invite, breaking these initial lists down into categories such as "friends," "family," "acquaintances," and "coworkers." Couples may not want to compromise on inviting friends and family, but each person should be willing to remove some coworkers and acquaintances from their final lists.

- Don't succumb to parental pressure if mom and dad are not paying the bills. Couples who are financing their own weddings should not feel beholden to their parents' wishes when compiling their wedding guest lists. Politely explain to parents you're working on a budget and

that you have a predetermined number of guests you're capable of inviting. Couples can appease their parents by encouraging them to compile a list of people they hope to invite, and then telling them these people will be invited if other guests are unable to make it. Couples whose parents are footing some or all of the bill must be more receptive to their parents' wishes than those paying for their own weddings.

- Agree on a kids policy. A policy regarding kids may help couples as they create their guest lists. Couples working with tight budgets may decide that the only children who will be invited are their nieces and nephews. Young cousins likely won't feel slighted if they don't make the cut, and their parents may even appreciate a night out without the kids in tow.

- Employ the "future versus past" formula when paring gets tough. When all else has failed, couples faced with difficult decisions regarding their wedding guest lists can ask themselves if prospective guests are people they expect to see again in the future or if they are people from their past. Including the former might be a good idea, while removing the latter may also make sense, especially if it's been a long time since couples have seen people who fall into the "past" category.

Creating the guest list is one of the more difficult parts of planning a wedding. But couples willing to compromise may find the process goes smoothly.



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Tips for planning the perfect honeymoon

Honeymoons are big business. According to a recent Conde Nast Bridal Infobank survey, the average couple spends more than \$5,000 on their honeymoon, indicating just how much meaning couples assign to their first official trip as newlyweds.

If the average spending on honeymoons seems high, it's important for couples working on budgets to realize that there are plenty of ways to plan memorable getaways without breaking the bank. Couples can keep the following strategies in mind as they plan their honeymoons.

- Plan and book early. In its 2016 Real Weddings Study, online wedding resource The Knot found that the average engagement length was 15 months. That gives couples plenty of time to plan their weddings, but also a great chance to book their honeymoons well in advance of their wedding days. Fifteen months affords couples the chance to piece together the perfect honeymoon on their own or shop around for package deals.

- Delay the honeymoon. Couples without much wiggle room in their budgets or those who simply want to save money can delay their honeymoons, choosing to take their getaways months after they tie the knot. This provides couples with more traveling flexibility. And depending on when couples get married, delaying the honeymoon may push the trip into the vacationing off-season, when more affordable deals can often be found.

- Don't shy away from your newlywed status. Resorts might not advertise it, but many offer special amenities to honeymooning newlyweds. Some may provide complementary spa services, while others might offer free room upgrades if they have any vacancies. Such amenities may be grand or small, but no matter their size, they can make honeymoons feel more special.

- Give ample consideration to all-inclusive honeymoon packages. Whether couples are working on tight budgets or



planning their honeymoons without regard to cost, all-inclusive packages may be worth the extra money upfront. All-inclusive packages tend to include meals, some beverages

and fun activities that couples would otherwise have to pay for à la carte. All-inclusive packages may also remove some of the work of planning the honeymoon because couples

won't need to tirelessly research activities and find the most affordable local vendors. Couples can examine the nuts and bolts of all-inclusive packages to make sure they include activities and

foods they're likely to enjoy. Planning a honeymoon takes work, but much of that work is fun, and couples who do their due diligence can save substantial amounts of money.



Tux-renting basics

Brides-to-be may invest thousands of dollars into their wedding day ensembles. Online wedding resource The Knot says that the average cost for a wedding dress is \$1,469. Grooms generally have a less expensive experience with their wedding day attire. In fact, grooms often rent their tuxedos for minimal cost.

Renting a wedding tuxedo has its advantages, namely in the cost savings. However, it's easy for a guy to fall into the trap of renting something that will not help him look his best if he isn't educated about the process.

Choose your retailer wisely

Many stores sell or rent suits and tuxedos. As is the case with many aspects of wedding planning, getting a recommendation from friends or family members can help grooms identify the shops that offer exemplary service. When attending others' weddings or special events, pay attention to the look of the groom and his groomsmen. Find out where they got their tuxes. Price alone should not dictate where to shop.

Once bridesmaid dresses have been selected, the groomsmen can begin to shop around for tuxedos. This way ties and vests will coordinate. Initial tux selection should begin between four and six months before the wedding.

Get a proper fitting

The experts at Men's Wearhouse say

that it is important to be fitted for a tux or suit properly. Their professionals can handle the measurements, or men shopping elsewhere can use a tailor of their choosing. Shoulders should be close to the body in the jacket but not restrictive. Sleeves should fall so that they show a quarter- to a half-inch of shirt sleeves when arms are at the sides. An ill-fitting suit or tux can make a gentleman look sloppy. It is key to pay attention to sizing and use a shop that has a variety of styles that fit various body types.

Choose a classic style

No one wants to look outdated in their wedding pictures. By choosing a classic cut and color in a suit or tux, guys will look stylish no matter the year. Fun can be had with vest colors or bow ties.

Confirm the order

The entire wedding party can visit the tuxedo shop for selections and fittings. The groom should call the store at least a month prior to the wedding to ensure that everyone has been fitted. Tuxes should be picked up a few days in advance of the wedding and tried on to ensure that everything fits and all accessories are included. This way last-minute alterations or substitutions can be made.

Grooms and groomsmen can look dapper by selecting a classic suit or tuxedo, having it properly fitted and confirming that all wardrobe components are ready to go in time for the big day.

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How to host a casual wedding

Weddings tend to be formal affairs, but there are no laws prohibiting happy couples from hosting more casual affairs. In fact, many couples confronted with the rising costs of tying the knot are doing just that.

According to The Knot 2016 Real Weddings Study, the average cost of a wedding in 2016 exceeded \$35,000, and that price tag does not even include couples' honeymoons. Some couples may not have the means to finance such lavish affairs, while others may want to save for larger expenses, such as a house, while still being able to celebrate their nuptials with family and friends. Casual weddings can provide that opportunity. However, while casual weddings are less formal, couples will still need to keep some things in mind to make their ceremonies and receptions both fun and memorable.

- Let guests know the wedding will be casual. Perhaps the most important thing couples can do when hosting a casual wedding is inform their guests that the ceremony and reception will not be formal affairs. Be as specific as possible regarding the dress code so guests don't feel embarrassed if

they overdress.

- Don't abandon tradition entirely. Couples hosting casual weddings may not feel beholden to all the traditions associated with more formal affairs, but that does not mean tradition should be abandoned entirely. For example, fathers-of-the-bride may still hope to share a spotlight dance with their daughters, while siblings or friends may still hope to serve as bridesmaids or groomsmen. Just because a wedding is less formal does not mean it has to be completely void of tradition, especially those traditions that can let couples' closest loved ones know how much they are loved and appreciated.

- Create your own traditions. Embracing some tradition does not mean couples cannot simultaneously create their own wedding traditions. Guests at casual weddings will likely be expecting something different than they're used to, so couples should not hesitate to provide that. Couples should strive to keep things tasteful but not shy away from unique ideas that fit into the casual theme.

- Plan to feed guests. While couples having casual weddings



may choose to have their receptions somewhere other than banquet halls, they should still plan to feed their guests. Some guests may be traveling and staying in hotels to attend the wedding, and it's a nice gesture to show appreciation for their efforts by providing them with a meal. A meal also

offers a great chance for guests to mingle with the married couple and fellow guests. Something simple like a backyard barbecue or a catered meal at home fits nicely with a casual setting.

- Don't overlook logistics. Small details, like transportation, parking and lodging will still need to be

arranged. If hosting guests at home after the ceremony, make sure guests will have ample places to park their vehicles. In addition, make the same efforts regarding lodging for guests that you would if planning a formal wedding, as out-of-town guests will still need a place to sleep.

Selecting a comfortable wedding gown

Many brides-to-be visit bridal shops with specific goals in mind regarding the style of their wedding gowns. Some women come equipped with magazine tear-outs or pull up ideas on their mobile phones. Others may have an entire scrapbook filled with various ideas they've been compiling for years.

Much consideration is given to wedding gowns. The cost and silhouette of the dress may garner the bulk of that consideration, but brides might want to spend more time considering comfort.

Depending on the time of day their weddings take place, brides can spend 12 hours or more in

their wedding gowns on their wedding day. However, when shopping for their gowns, brides may prioritize beauty over comfort, even though it's entirely possible to find a gown that's both stunning and comfortable. When staff and friends or family who have come along to offer advice start to blush over wedding gowns, brides-to-be may feel pressured to downplay any discomfort they feel.

To make sure brides look flawless and elegant but are still comfortable in their wedding gowns, consider the following tips.

- Know what to highlight and what to cover up. No two body types are the same, and many

women feel certain parts of their bodies are their best assets while they want to downplay others. Try on gowns that play up your best features. If you have shapely legs, consider a dramatic gown with a slit to show them off. Certain gowns can enhance the decollete or show off an hourglass shape. Remember, many gowns can be modified so that you feel secure and confident. Sleeves can be added or fabric placed to cover up any perceived flaws. Confidence and pride are important parts of the comfort factor.

- Get sized correctly. Bridal gown sizes do not coincide with street sizes. Depending on the manufacturer, brides may have to

select gowns that are several sizes larger than they would normally wear. This should not be a cause for alarm. Brides should go by their measurements. Attempting to squeeze into a dress that is too small will only lead to discomfort on the wedding day.

- Purchase the right undergarments. Improperly fitting bras, shapewear and other undergarments can lead to discomfort as well. Some seamstresses can sew in supportive cups to remove the need for separate bras. Brides can explore various options to reduce the visibility of certain accoutrements.

- Move around in the gown. Brides should not just stand in

front of the mirror and smile when trying on gowns. Put them through their paces. Try sitting, bending and even a little dancing. Make sure the dress is comfortable to move around in.

- Try different options. The gown brides have in mind may not be the one they ultimately go home with. Explore different styles and materials. Choose cooler, breezier fabrics and lightweight gowns, like crêpe, georgette or organza, for summer weddings. Heavier fabrics, such as brocade, may be more comfortable in the winter.

Wedding gowns can be both beautiful and comfortable for those who know how to shop.

Make every anniversary count

Wedding anniversaries provide opportunities for couples to reflect and relive the excitement of their wedding days. Anniversaries can easily be forgotten amid the hustle and bustle of daily life, but many couples are making concerted efforts to ensure their anniversaries are celebrated as the special occasions they are.

A first wedding anniversary is a special one. Some couples celebrate their first anniversaries by enjoying a piece of wedding cake that has been properly preserved in the freezer. Couples may also dance to their wedding songs or enjoy a nice dinner at a favorite restaurant. The first anniversary also is a time to pull out the wedding video or photo album and reminisce about the wedding day.

Anniversaries are a great way for couples to celebrate their time together by stepping away from emails, text messages, work obligations, and even

mundane everyday tasks to once again remember a day and moment that changed their lives forever. Those who may need a little inspiration celebrating their anniversaries can consider these suggestions.

- Have dinner at your reception site. Find out if the reception site, which may be a catering hall or restaurant, serves dinner or brunch. Make a reservation and enjoy celebrating in the spot where the memories all began.
- Take a second honeymoon. Honor wedding memories by booking a second honeymoon at a special location.
- Throw a party. Use your anniversary as an excuse to have friends or family over for a party. Be sure to include your wedding song on the music playlist.
- Create a romantic evening. Rekindle the romance by pulling out all the stops, complete with a nice homecooked meal, candles and mood music.

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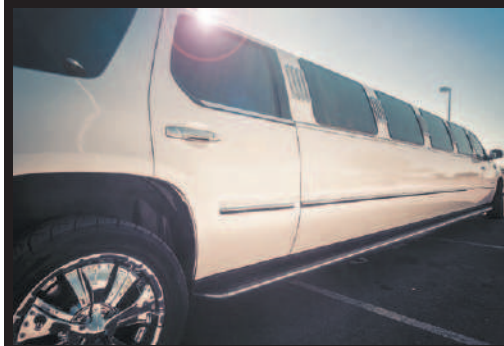
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Different roles for the father of the bride

Popular movies and televisions shows give the impression that the job of the father of the bride in a wedding is ultimately about making sure the festivities are adequately funded. In the movies, fathers fret about the costs of everything from flowers to photos.

But gone are the days when the father of the bride bankrolls his daughter's entire wedding. The Knot's "2014 Real Wedding Survey" reported that, on average, the bride's parents contribute 43 percent of the total cost of a wedding; the bride and groom contribute another 43 percent; the groom's parents spend 12 percent; the remaining 2 percent of the budget is paid for by family members or friends. That frees up Dad for other roles in wedding planning. With some creativity, couples can find ways to incorporate the father of the bride into the festivities in even more productive ways.

· **Wedding sites:** Assign dear old dad the important task of looking at potential wedding reception sites prior to visiting them yourself. He may have certain connections through work or attended business or leisure occasions at catering halls and other venues. Dad's connections can pay off. Let him impart his negotiating skills and find the best deals with the ideal backdrop for the

festivities.

· **Wardrobe:** Let your father assist the best man and other groomsmen in securing their tuxedos or other wardrobe essentials. Dad also can step in and return rented items following the wedding.

· **Beverages:** Dad may be fitting to keep tabs on what is occurring at the bar during the reception, ensuring that guests' needs are being met. He also can keep an eagle eye trained on anyone who may have overindulged and needs to take a break.

· **Speech:** Give your father an opportunity to shine by letting him make a speech. Remember, this is a momentous day for Dad as well, as he may be trying to come to terms with his daughter starting a new life.

· **Father-daughter song:** Let Dad pick father-daughter song, and go with his choice even if you had something else in mind.

· **Ceremony:** Even if you prefer a less traditional wedding ceremony, let your father walk you down the aisle. This will likely be a moment he'll remember for years to come.

Expand the father of the bride's role in the wedding by assigning him tasks where he can put his style, experience and excitement to good use.

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Employ helping hands during wedding planning

Accepting the honor of being in a friend or family member's wedding means more than dressing in the fancy clothing and showing up on the designated date. The wedding party — particularly the bridesmaids and groomsmen — should understand that standing alongside the happy couple generally means doing some work during the planning period as well as on the big day. It's the wise wedding couple who can recognize the strengths of their family and friends and put those attributes to work in productive ways.

According to The Knot.com, the average wedding party includes four people on each side. That means eight extra people who can lend their eyes, ears and hands to the bounty of tasks that comprise the wedding planning to-do list. Here's how to delegate with flair.

- Ask and ye shall receive. First off, it is never safe to assume that the wedding party will be taking on extra work. Even if tradition suggests wedding party members lend a hand, it's in the best interest of the couple to graciously ask for help. This helps establish good will at the start.

- Be specific when assigning tasks. Rather than just asking for generalized help, make a list of the tasks that seem the most challenging and then delegate accordingly. If a member of the bridal party is excellent at getting travel deals, have him or her help arrange the honeymoon. Someone with an intimate knowledge of cuisine can come

along to food tastings and help plan the reception menu. Friends with a flair for organization can be in charge of disseminating information to the entire wedding party or keeping a running list of gifts given at various parties so thank-you notes can be sent.

- Make wardrobe suggestions. Couples can rely on their most honest bridal party members when picking out wedding attire. These no-holds-barred individuals can set them straight on fit, look and comfort. Trust these people in helping to make the entire wedding party look stylish and feel confident.

- Extend the host/hostess duties. It can be tiring for couples to tend to the needs of all their wedding guests. Couples can enlist the help of their wedding party to ensure that elderly or disabled guests get the assistance they need. The wedding party can also step up to serve as stand-in dance partners or to help grab drinks or escort people as needed.

- Get the party started. Couples can usually count on their wedding parties to help fill the dance floor at the wedding reception — even when others have not yet built up the courage to showcase their dancing skills. Those bold and loveable friends and family members will help keep the energy up and make the wedding a blast.

Planning and hosting a wedding is a large undertaking. With the help of the wedding party, it can be that much more enjoyable.

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