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Madelyn (Ball) and Asher Knobel share a kiss at their Pentwater wedding July 29, 2023. Photo courtesy Photography by Sue Brown

A promotional graphic for Redi Rental Weddings & Events. The background shows a dining table set for a meal in a bright room with large windows overlooking a green lawn. The table is set with white plates, glasses, and a centerpiece of white flowers. A large, lush green leafy garland hangs across the top of the image. The logo features three green mountain peaks above the text "REDI RENTAL" in a bold, black, sans-serif font with a green arrow pointing right. Below this, "Weddings & Events" is written in a cursive script. Contact information is provided at the bottom: "231 737-7368" and "kristin@redirental.com or brandi@redirental.com". A vertical watermark on the right side reads "©kendrastanley-millsphotography".



ON THE COVER: Tim and Susan (Brown) Graskewicz enjoy a laugh at their Ludington Wedding on July 8, 2023. Photo courtesy Photography by Sue Brown



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Picture perfect wedding day photography

Few things document weddings more effectively than photographs. Carefully curated wedding albums and portraits hung on walls serve as daily reminders of a couple's special day.

Photography is often left in the very qualified hands of professional photographers. However, couples can pitch in to make their photos really pop. These picture pointers from industry insiders can help couples put their best smile forward.

LEAVE AMPLE TIME

A carefully orchestrated timeline can ensure photos are the best they can be. Why? Because a couple who is relaxed and not overwhelmed will notice that attitude translates to their photographs. When planning wedding timelines, couples should leave ample opportunities for getting dressed, chatting with the wedding party and going through various photography settings to grab great photos, advise the experts at Martha Stewart.

PUT TOGETHER A SHORT LIST

The photographer will have his or her

ideas of which shots to cover, but a couple with specific goals in mind should relay that information to their photographer. For example, if a grandparent is getting up in years, request some solo photos of that person so you can look back on happy times together. Certain couples want to be snapped posing with a beloved pet. Putting that on the list helps ensure it will happen.

ENLIST A FAMILY PHOTO COORDINATOR

If the photographer does not have his or her own assistant, recruit someone who is assertive to help wrangle everyone for the family shots. Attempt to get family photos when family members are relaxed but not too far rumped by dancing or having a good time.

PLAY YOUR STYLE SAFE

A wedding day is not a time for the bride or groom to try a dramatic new style, according to photographer Amanda Lamb. Resist the urge for a daring cut or color. It's also likely not the place to try out new facial hair or heavy makeup.

A couple unaccustomed to the way they look may be shy in front of the camera.

DELVE INTO THE DETAILS

Prepare wedding details, like gowns, shoes, accessories, etc., in advance to save time once the photographer arrives, suggests Desi Mendoza, a pro from Dez and Tam Photography. Invest in a beautiful hanger for the wedding gown as well, because you may want to photograph that on its own.

LEARN TO POSE

Couples can practice posing in front of mirrors to get a feel for body positions that put them in their best light. A photographer's advice in regard to posture is invaluable as well. Create space between arms and the body and learn how to angle the body so you look your best.

Photos will capture wedding day memories forever. Couples can put themselves in the best positions for success by following some photography guidelines.



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Your wedding timeline guide

Wedding planning involves many movable pieces that ultimately need to come together on the big day. Planning is typically a months-long process, and adhering to certain monthly benchmarks can help couples stay the course.

Brides magazine offers that the perfect engagement period is 12 to 14 months, which affords ample time to get organized and work with vendors. With that in mind, here's a 12-month timeline for couples getting ready to say "I do."

12 MONTHS OUT

At the start of the planning process, establish your budget, hire a wedding planner (optional), choose the wedding party, pick a date, and start to assemble a cursory guest list. This also is a great time to begin touring venues to get a feel for potential ceremony and reception locales.

11 MONTHS OUT

Now is the time to get a firm handle on the theme and scope of the wedding. Start picking wedding colors and overall design. Also, interview and hire vendors, such as photographers, bands and videographers. These vendors tend to book up quickly as wedding season draws near, so it's never too early to book them.

10 MONTHS OUT

This is a good time to start shopping for a wedding gown because it might take some trial and error to find the perfect dress. You also can start shopping for wedding party attire at this time. Check with formalwear vendors to see how long it will take for the gowns to arrive in the shop for alterations. If you haven't already done so, be sure to book the wedding venue.

8 MONTHS OUT

Reception halls may have their own schedules, but you should think about setting your menu at this time, including deciding if you will host a seated dinner, a buffet or something else.

Eight months out also is a good time to finalize the guest list and send save-the-date cards.

This also is a good time to visit stores to create registry gift lists.

6 MONTHS OUT

Meet with potential florists and other vendors, like transportation companies and hotels, to secure these arrangements. Your place of worship also may require certain classes or preparatory meetings, so be sure to inquire about these.

Meet with a makeup and hair stylist and book a trial. Choose attire for groomsmen and give them a deadline for fittings and orders. If you will not be getting married in a place of worship, hire an officiant at this time.

4 MONTHS OUT

Grooms traditionally arrange the honeymoon, so this is a fine time to get those travel plans in order. If you need passports, you should secure them as early as possible, and no later than four months prior to the wedding to ensure processing times. Book cake tastings and order the cake if it is not part of the venue food and beverage package. If you haven't already done so, the bride should have an initial gown fitting, and wedding invitations should be ordered at this time.

2 MONTHS OUT

Secure your wedding license and buy wedding party gifts. Address and mail the wedding invitations. Undergo a second gown fitting and work with the seamstress for the final fitting date just before the wedding. Finalize any song selections with the DJ or band.

The final details will occur in the last weeks before the wedding. Buy all the small accessories and items, undergo final fittings and check in with all vendors for final payments and to ensure they are on schedule. Notify the reception hall of the final guest count.

Once the wedding day arrives, couples who have done their best to stay on schedule can relax and have a great time with family and friends.



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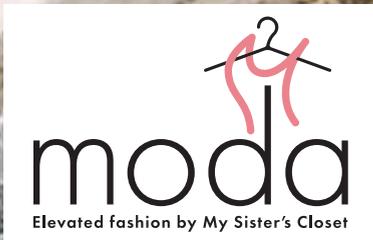
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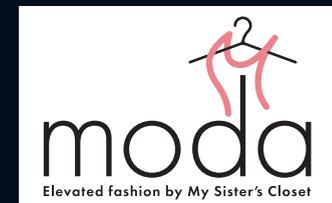
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How to find the right wedding reception venue

Every decision engaged couples make in regard to their weddings is significant, but some may affect the day more than others. Perhaps no decision will help couples set the tone they hope to establish more than their choice of reception venue.

Reception venues are where couples and their guests will spend the vast majority of their time on the wedding day, which is why choice of venue bears such significance. With that in mind, couples can consider these tips as they look for the perfect place to host their receptions.

- Decide what you want out of a venue. Prospective brides and grooms may have vastly different ideas regarding how they want their weddings to go, and it's imperative that couples discuss their ideal weddings prior to looking for a venue. Do you want to get married in a place of worship? Or do you prefer a venue that can host both the ceremony and reception? Do you want an indoor, outdoor or hybrid ceremony and reception? Define what you both want before looking for a venue and make the necessary concessions if you have different ideas in mind.

- Consider picking a venue before setting a date. It can be wise to pick a reception venue first and then choose your wedding date based on the availability of the venue. This is especially important for couples who already have

an ideal venue in mind, and it also provides some flexibility as couples search for the venue. For example, couples working within a strict budget may not be able to afford a preferred venue during the height of wedding season, but that venue could be less costly dur-



ing slower times of year. By waiting to pick a date until you've chosen a venue, you're increasing your options.

- Consider your guests. Though couples, particularly those footing the bill on their own, should prioritize their desires when choosing a reception, it's important they also consider their guests before making a final decision. A venue that's accessible and located near transit hubs like airports and train stations will increase the likelihood that more people can attend. In addition, if children will be invited, a venue that includes family restrooms, including at least one with a changing table, can make parents' nights much easier.

- Consider your budget. The Knot 2021 Real Weddings Study found that couples typically spend around 30 percent of their overall budget on the venue, which makes this decision the biggest one in terms of the financial commitments a couple will have to make. Couples may be tempted to choose an awe-inspiring, costly venue for their reception, but they should consider how devoting so much of their budget to the venue will affect the rest of their big day. The best reception venue might be one that won't eat up too much of your budget.

- Consider the package. Venues vary in terms of their reception packages. Some may offer catering, including beverages, with each of their packages, while food and beverage might not be part of other venues' offerings. If you find a venue you love but it doesn't offer catering services, seek estimates from area caterers to determine how much it will cost to feed and serve your guests. Many couples find it more convenient and less stressful to pick a venue that offers on-site catering, though plenty of others have had no trouble after choosing a venue and separate caterer.

The bulk of a couple's wedding day and night will be spent at the reception, making choice of venue one of the more fun and important decisions they'll have to make.



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How to pick

Planning a wedding requires making many different decisions. The choice of wedding attire is among the most crucial decisions that couples must make. Whether the wedding is traditional or customized to suit couples' personalities, brides and grooms want to look their best when they say, "I do."

Many brides-to-be spend a significant amount of time looking for their ideal wedding dresses. What defines the right gown depends on personal preference and is unique to the person doing the search. For example, a dress that sets a fairy tale scene for one bride may not necessarily align with the tastes of another. According to Bridal Atelier, the average bride-to-be tries on try three to seven dresses before finding the right one. The following tips can help those shopping for dresses find a look that makes their big day even more special.

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1. DON'T GET HUNG UP ON PERFECTION

Many brides get caught up as they search for the one dress they consider perfect. No dress is likely to check every box. Getting hung up on a desire to find a dress that has it all may make it hard to see the beauty in other dresses. Remember, with the talents of an experienced tailor or seamstress, most dresses can be tweaked to suit your vision of the ideal gown.

2. CONSIDER THE SEASON

Getting married during the hazy and humid days of summer is an entirely different experience than tying the knot during the heart of winter. The fabric of the wedding dress should complement the season, whether it's lightweight and breezy for a warm day, or more sub-

stantial and cozy when darting to the ceremony in snowfall.

3. FLATTER YOUR FIGURE

Chances are brides-to-be know which cuts and styles are most flattering. Mimic those style choices in the wedding dress. If you want to take focus off of full hips, choose a basque or asymmetrical waistline. Gowns with substantial straps or higher necklines may be better if you have a larger chest. Sheath and mermaid style gowns are options if you are confident with your figure and want to show off your curves.

4. TRY A BIT OF THIS AND THAT

Don't go into a wedding dress appointment with firm parameters. Although you may have a ball gown style

in mind, after trying on other options something with a less voluminous silhouette may actually catch your eye. Many brides also automatically defer to strapless gowns, when various straps and sleeves can be very appealing.

5. ARRIVE WITH A FIRM BUDGET

Weddings can be costly. It's important to set a budget for the wedding dress just as you will with other expenses. There are plenty of dress designers across a wide spectrum of price points. A willingness to consider and ultimately purchase a less costly dress can help you stay on budget.

Browsing through magazines and looking online can provide wedding dress inspiration as well. Also, when in doubt, defer to the experts.



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Tips when toasting the happy couple



Many special moments unfold during a couple's wedding day. A bride's walk down the aisle, a married couple's first dance together and, of course, the moment couples say "I do" are just a few of the many memorable moments to take place during a wedding.

Another memorable moment, and one that couples have little to no control over, is the wedding toast. Toasting is a tradition that some historians trace to ancient Greece, which should give nervous toasters-to-be a little more confidence as the wedding day approaches. After all, given the lengthy history of toasting, it's likely that millions of people have toasted happy couples over the years. If millions of others can do it, then so can this year's crop of best men, maids of honor and proud parents who will be asked to raise a glass to happy couples. As a couple's big day draws near, those trusted with toasting the newlyweds can consider these tips.

- Introduce yourself. Unless it's a very intimate affair with only a handful of well-acquainted guests, introduce yourself before beginning your toast. This not only ensures everyone recognizes who you are, but also provides a simple way to begin your comments without feeling a need to impress.

- Keep things lighthearted. Though it's best to avoid being too informal, a lighthearted toast with a funny anecdote and/or a joke or two can help to maintain the jovial vibe of the reception.

- Explain your relationship. Maids of honor and best men are often chosen because they have a special relationship with the bride or groom. So it's alright to give a brief explanation of that relationship and explain how much it means to you during the toast.

- Toast the couple. Even though most people toasting at a wedding have a special connection with just one half of the newly married couple, it's normal to toast the new couple and their happiness before closing your remarks. If you want to toast each person when delivering your remarks, speak to your counterpart (i.e., a maid of honor if you're the best man, or vice versa) for some special insight.

- Keep your toast short. Toasts need not be lengthy. In fact, toasts should be on the shorter side so everyone tasked with delivering a toast can do so in a reasonable amount of time.

- Avoid winging it. Plan your remarks ahead of time, even writing down your toast or at least organizing your ideas be-

fore you're handed the microphone. Winging it might seem like an option, but if you speak off-the-cuff you'll likely find yourself rambling and going off course. Planning also allows time to practice your remarks before the big day, which also can help to calm your nerves.

- Remember you're among friends. If need be, remind yourself before your toast that you're among friends. Speaking to a room full of people you know or are at least familiar with should help you avoid the nervousness that can come with speaking to a room filled with strangers.

Toasts are a beloved wedding tradition. People tasked with toasting the happy couple can follow some simple strategies to stay calm and deliver remarks couples will remember forever.

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A guide to wedding day floral arrangements

Various elements come together to complete a wedding day visual. Floral arrangements are one such component that can create a special and awe-inspiring ambiance.

Flowers appeal to at least three of the senses. Their delicate aroma can help a venue smell fresh and inviting. And it's hard to deny the visual appeal of a stunning floral arrangement. There are colors, sizes, textures, and much more that can cater to any theme. In addition, flowers can add a tactile element, even if guests do not go around touching the blooms.

Flowers convey so much during weddings that it's important to make finding a florist a priority, according to the wedding resource *The Knot*. The following is a guide to understanding floral arrangements that may be included in a wedding.

BOUQUETS, CORSAGES AND BOUTONNIERES

The wedding party, bride, groom, and parents of the couple are set apart from others at the wedding ceremony by the special flowers on their attire and in their hands, among other indicators. Boutonnieres are a single bud pinned

to the left side of a gentleman's jacket. Corsages can be attached to a dress, but are now often worn on the wrist. Bouquets are held in hand. They can be a few flowers gathered together, or more extensive displays. Bouquets may feature bare stems, or stems may be bound and hidden beneath ribbon and fabric.

Some couples also have a small tossing bouquet to use later in the day. Flower petals for a flower girl to drop down the aisle also may be part of the floral plan.

CEREMONY FLOWERS

Guests often are first introduced to floral arrangements at the wedding ceremony. Potted or vase-encased flowers may bookend the couple at the altar. Seats or pews may be adorned with flower sprays to draw attention to the aisle, known as aisle markers. These are subtle choices that enhance the ceremony space.

RECEPTION COMPONENTS

Flowers may truly shine during the reception. They're one of the most important components when decorating the space. Flowers serve as centerpieces,

so the guest list and the number of tables will dictate how many centerpieces are required. These centerpieces can be elaborate or simply a few loose flowers in vases. Florists can customize the look depending on couples' budgets. Some additional reception flowers can include installations on arches or on anything hanging like a floral backdrop for photo opportunities.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Couples should create a list of everywhere they would like to use flowers and present it, along with magazine clippings or planning boards, to show florists what they have in mind when shopping services, according to *Hummingbird Wedding Advice*. A 2021 survey from *The Knot* reported that the average cost for wedding flowers was \$2,300. It's important to set a strict budget so florists can present ideas that are in line with what couples can spend. Many expensive looks can be replicated with in-season flowers or less costly alternatives.

Flowers are an important part of the wedding day and should be incorporated into couples' budgets.



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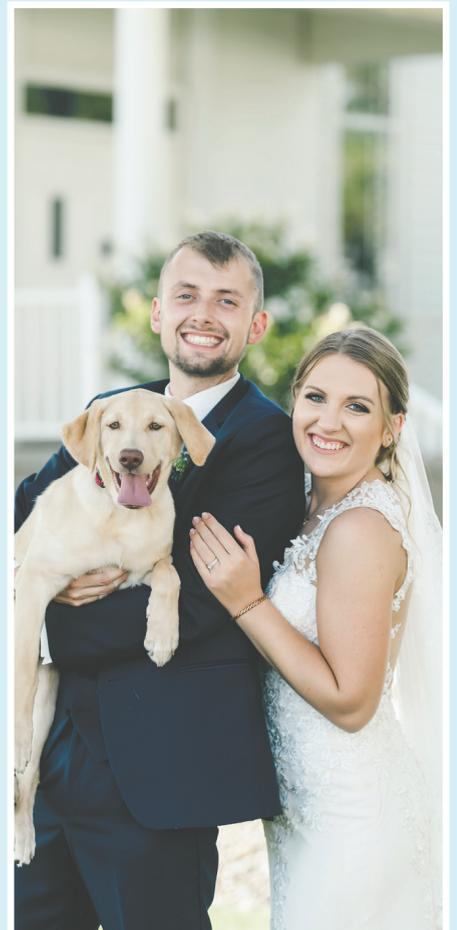
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