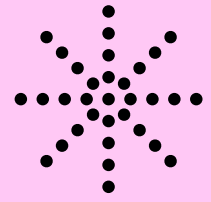

HOW TO PLAN A



WEDDING

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CONGRATS!



You're either the one who popped the question or you're the one who said yes. Either way, Congratulations! You're getting married! This is an all too exciting time in your life, but with all that excitement can come tons of stress. From hair to dresses to suits to ties to flowers to guests to food to music, planning a wedding can take a lot out of a person. If you're stuck and not sure how to even begin this wonderful process, don't worry! You're not alone. Many people struggle to begin the first steps of wedding planning. With so much to do, who even knows where to begin? Luckily for you, we've got you covered. This guide is designed to help you prepare and plan the wedding of your and your partner's dream! So sit back, relax – take a breather – and follow this guide for a guaranteed well-thought-out wedding plan!



BUDGET, BUDGET, BUDGET!

When planning the wedding of your dreams, as much as castles, chauffeurs, and royal ball gowns can sound dreamy, it is, unfortunately, not realistic for many of us. To plan a successful wedding, it is important to be realistic about your goals, your wants or needs, and your financial means. Have a large savings account? That helps, but it may not necessarily be the smartest move to empty it completely.

- Know who is contributing. Is it just you and your partner paying for everything? Are your parents helping? Do you have a long-lost cousin who would be more than happy to help?

While a wedding is a once-in-a-lifetime moment you get to experience with your partner, it can also be quite expensive. Keep realistic expectations of your wedding to avoid any disappointment and unnecessary stress!



KEEP ORGANIZED

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WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT

Communication is important. While you may think you and your partner are always on the exact same page, you may find sometimes that that is not entirely true. It is important to speak with your partner in a detailed manner to determine what they want from the wedding and what you want from the wedding. If anything is not the same, find a compromise!

If your partner wants a church wedding, but you are more of the beach type, then perhaps try to find a church next to the beach, giving you both what you want!

Some things you and your partner may need to discuss can include:

- Wedding location
- Family or cultural traditions
- Do you want to write your own vows?
- The size of the guest list
- Who is on the guest list
- Who is and is not giving speeches
- Your first dance
- The budget size
- Your wedding theme and style
- Do you want a “first look”?
- Wedding colors
- Food
- Do you want to exchange wedding day gifts with each other?
- Do you want children present?
- Do you want alcohol present?

There are many other questions and conversations you may need to have with your partner. Every couple is different and that's okay! Find what would make you and your partner happiest and don't worry about what the rest of the world is doing!

BE REALISTIC

While getting married in a few months to a year may sound perfect if you feel like you can't wait, it may not be the best choice for you and your partner!

While some people get married a year after their engagement, it's not for everyone. If you work long hours, rarely get days off, or have already used up this year's vacation time at work, getting married sooner may not be the best decision for you or your partner.

Allow yourself plenty of time to plan while staying as stress-free as possible. There's no shame in waiting two or even three years after getting engaged to have your wedding ceremony! The longer you wait, the more time you have to resolve any problems that may happen along the way.

We know weddings are exciting and hard to wait for, but being realistic with your time will keep pressure and tensions low and will give you plenty of time should any hiccups arise!



RESEARCH & MORE RESEARCH

Are you the ballroom type? A cowboy or cowgirl? A beach-lover? A dark, mysterious forest kind of person?

Before you start ordering things and picking locations, research different wedding styles and themes to get a better idea of what you definitely want and what you for sure do not want. This will help make your day all the more memorable and special to you and your partner.

Choosing a style for your wedding can be important. It helps your wedding look well-put-together while also giving you the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to live however you want for a day! If inside your heart you've always known you were fit for royalty, this could be your day to live out that dream with your favorite person in the world!

Once you know what you want, it will much easier to narrow down the things you would like at your wedding, making overwhelming choices that much easier for the both of you!



CHOOSE A DATE

Choosing the date for your wedding can be very important! Maybe not the exact day, but the month and season for sure!

Don't like cold weather? Months like December, January, and February may be poor months to choose to have a wedding during.

Don't want to sweat on your wedding day? July and August are probably not for you then.

Your partner hates the cold, but you hate the blistering heat? Find a compromise with fall or spring weather in months such as October, November, April, or May!

Choosing the time of year your wedding happens can affect everything from what you wear to your decorations or your food to your location! It is important to choose a date as early as possible to avoid any possible problems arising in the future!

Remember to take into account where you live as well! If you live in a known hurricane or tornado area, choosing a wedding date within those seasons risks your wedding day being ruined by a natural event!



CHOOSE YOUR WEDDING PARTY

No, we don't mean the actual party or reception afterward. We mean who is going to best your best man, your groomsmen, your bridesmaids, your maid of honor!

Pick reliable people who you love to be in your wedding party. These are the people who will be there for you no matter what and can fix problems that arise on the day of the wedding, keeping the bride and groom stress-free on their big day!

Having a wedding party can be a huge breath of relief and fresh air. Not only are these the people you are closest to, such as siblings or best friends, but they are also there for you no matter what you need before and on your big day!



MAKE YOUR GUEST LIST

While your first reaction may be that everyone is invited, that doesn't always work for everyone and that's okay! For different reasons, people we love can be excluded from a wedding. Whether it's budgeting reasons, you're wanting a childless wedding, or you just have that one grumpy aunt who's never happy, choosing a wedding guest list is important!

Don't feel like you have to invite everybody you've ever met in your lifetime. It's okay to leave people off the list if it is unrealistic they could come because of health or distance, if you've grown distant from them, or if they simply would spoil the mood! Remember, this is your wedding day! You and your partner get to decide who comes and who doesn't!



CHOOSE THE LOCATION

If your budget, date, and theme are good to go, then it's time for the location! The location of your wedding can be important! If you and your partner have always dreamed of a wedding abroad, and it's in the budget, go for it! If you're more of the traditional type, a wedding church or wedding venue could be exactly what you've always wanted!

When choosing a location, know if you're looking to hire caterers, how big is your guest list, and whether you would want to have your reception there afterward.

Be sure to speak to your partner to figure out what they have always dreamed of and would like as well. If need be, come to a compromise should anything be different than what you expected!



HIRE A PROFESSIONAL

While your second cousin's son's best friend who knows a guy may be a great amateur photographer, they may not be the best person to go to for wedding photos. If your budget can allow for it, try to splurge on some professionals to get the best out of your wedding experience.

Professional chefs, photographers, wedding planners, caterers, musicians, and florists can give your wedding ceremony that special pop when it comes to beauty and convenience.

Not everyone can afford every professional, and that's okay! Work with what you have! If you do decide to hire a professional, be sure to review your contracts thoroughly and request a clause be added for any hiccups that may occur to keep you and your money safe!



INVOLVE YOUR LOVED ONES

If you're close with your family, it may be a great experience for everyone to get them involved in your wedding planning! For brides, this may look like inviting some loved ones to help you choose the perfect wedding dress! For grooms, this can look like loved ones helping you pick out your tux.

However you decide to go about it, involving the people you love most in your life can take the experience of wedding planning and your ceremony from an 8 to a 10 just like that! When we are with the people we love, we are the most happy, so try to find jobs – big or small – for the people you love most in your life to help out with! Not only can this take some pressure and jobs off your shoulders, but it can make everyone feel needed and appreciated along the way!



BUY WEDDING INSURANCE

Weddings are expensive. Very expensive. From flowers to dresses to suits to food or venue to reception to alcohol to hired help, the cost of a wedding can add up faster than you may realize! And if something does go wrong, it helps to have peace of mind in knowing you're covered!

If you plan to involve family or friends for their professional services, make sure you get everything in writing to keep everyone covered and happy, so no miscommunication or problems can occur!



ASK OTHERS

While this may seem like a no-brainer, you'd be surprised how many people, in all the chaos, forget to simply ask for advice or help. And no one knows better about how weddings can go than someone who has already done it themselves!

If you find yourself unsure or in need of some help, especially when your budget doesn't allow for a professional wedding planner, it can be a great idea to talk to other married couples. Young or old, they could have some great ideas or solutions to problems that you may not have ever even thought of!



ARRANGE TRANSPORTATION

How are you getting to your wedding ceremony? If your reception is at a different location, how are you getting there? Do you and your partner want to ride alone, or are you okay riding with other people as well? Do you want to ride separately from your partner with your wedding party?

These are important questions to ask yourself when it comes to your wedding. Know what you and your partner would like and who is riding with who, at least when it comes to your wedding party. While you don't really need to know how your guests are arriving, it is helpful and can tone down stress on the big day to already have a plan put in place for you, your partner, and your wedding parties.

Keep in mind your budget and the prices of different kinds of transportation. A limousine sounds great, but if you will struggle to afford it, it may be best to opt for something else.



HAVE THE BACH PARTIES

Nothing screams excitement and fun like a good party every now and again! Decide if you and your partner are comfortable with your wedding parties planning a party for you! Having a bachelor or bachelorette party before your big day is a great way to celebrate the people in your wedding party, as well as celebrate your wedding! They have done so much for you and, with almost everything hopefully done, you can now relax and wait for your big day in peace!

It's also a great idea, if your budget allows, to give your wedding party small gifts as a token of your appreciation!



DECIDE ON A HONEYMOON

Wedding ceremonies are great. They are fun, full of love and laughter, and something to remember for a lifetime! However, some may argue that honeymoons are even better!

To make the most out of your wedding experience, you should choose when you would like to have your honeymoon. While some may choose to leave for their honeymoon the same night as their wedding, others may opt to wait a few years to make sure they have enough money or vacation days from work to do something they really want to do for their honeymoon! However you decide to go about it, be sure to talk with your partner about their expectations and desires for a honeymoon and find a perfect middle ground!

Remember that there is no pressure to have a honeymoon right away. While that may be what we often see in the movies, it isn't necessarily realistic for many people. If your honeymoon location is somewhere expensive or remote, it may be best to wait for the perfect moment when you have enough savings and enough vacation days from work!



FINAL ALTERATIONS

Bodies change, especially if you are giving yourself lots of time to plan from the time you are engaged to the time you get married. Allow yourself some time relatively close to the big day to put back on your suit or dress to make sure it still fits perfectly.

You don't want to do this too early, however, as your body may change again. However, you also don't want to do it too late so as to not have any time for any alterations needed.

It is a good idea to have a final fitting at the two-week mark. This gives enough time for minor alterations needed to be made, but also doesn't give your body a lot of time to change drastically!



ENJOY IT!

Last but not least, and probably the most important part of all when it comes to planning your wedding, enjoy it!

If everything goes right, and we hope it does, you will only do this once in your entire life, so enjoy it. Find the joy and fun in everything from choosing flowers to dresses to suits to hairstyles or make-up!

We all want our wedding day to be perfect, but sometimes even the most well-prepared things can go wrong. Instead of allowing it to spoil the mood, if it isn't something big, perhaps try to shrug it off. If the color of the flowers is slightly off or the DJ has to unexpectedly update his software for 10 minutes before he can begin, remember that it's going to be okay. Try to find the humor in things rather than stressing over every small detail, and your wedding is sure to be a wonderful night you won't ever want to forget, even if things do go wrong!

