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# The Do's and Don'ts of Bridal Shower Planning

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# The Do's and Don'ts of Bridal Shower Planning

## **Bridal Shower Planning Protocols from Start to Finish**

Your bridal shower is meant to be your special time during which you get together with your family and friends to celebrate your upcoming nuptials. But, planning a bridal shower can become somewhat overwhelming, especially if you have never been involved in planning one before. Just remember, a bridal shower is meant to be a fun and enjoyable experience. Don't get so caught up in the planning that you forget to enjoy yourself!

### **Create a Guest List**

Traditionally, the maid of honor is responsible for throwing the bridal shower. This does not, however, mean that the bride-to-be is not involved in the planning. In fact, the bride-to-be has a great number of responsibilities when it comes to planning the bridal shower. The first of these jobs is to sit down with the hostess of the bridal shower and determine a guest list. This list should always include the bride's mother, her future mother-in-law, her female siblings, the bridesmaids and, of course, the maid of honor. It should also include other close family members and friends. Co-workers can also be included on the list if the bride desires.

Before making the list, determine the budget for the bridal shower. This should help you decide how many guests you can invite. Also, keep in mind that those you invite to your bridal shower should also be invited to the wedding itself.

If you are planning a bridal shower for someone and you want the shower to be a surprise, you will have to consult with the groom-to-be and with the bride's mother to make sure you create an accurate guest list.

### **Set a Date**

After you have created your bridal shower guest list, it is time to set a date for the celebration. Typically, the bridal shower should be as long as two months before the wedding date and no less than two weeks. If the bridal shower is to be a surprise, discuss possible dates with the groom (you will likely need his help in more ways than one to ensure the shower is a surprise, anyway!). Otherwise, the bride-to-be should work closely with the bridal shower hostess to determine the best date. Sundays are a popular choice for bridal showers because most people are off from work on this day.

### **Choose a Theme**

Picking a theme for your shower can help make it more fun for both the bride-to-be and the guests. In addition, a bridal shower theme often makes the rest of the shower planning easier because invitations, decorations, and favors can all be coordinated to fit the theme. Some popular bridal shower themes include household gifts, wine, lingerie, and romantic gifts.

## **Select and Send Invitations**

Now that you have set a date and determined a theme for the bridal shower, it should be much easier to find the perfect invitations. If you can't find the right invitations, however, you can make your own. No matter which way you choose to go, be sure to mail out your bridal shower invitations at least two weeks before the shower. This will give your guests plenty of time to make arrangements to attend. Unless you are sending invitations to guests who will need to travel a long distance to attend the bridal shower, you shouldn't send the invitations out more than a month in advance. Otherwise, you risk having your guests forget about the celebration.

When sending out bridal shower invitations, be sure to include all of the vital information. This information includes the shower theme, the time and date of the shower, the location of the shower, and where the couple is registered. With both a theme and a registry to guide them, your bridal shower guests should have no problem finding the right gift. You should also include an RSVP date to help you with making the final plans for the bridal shower.

## **Purchase Decorations and Favors**

The decorations at a bridal shower are very important, particularly if it will be themed. The favors, which serve as small mementos for each of your party guests, should also fit the theme. In fact, every part of the bridal shower should follow the theme as much as possible – even the food! A nicely decorated bridal shower will help set the tone for the rest of the shower.

## **Create a Menu**

It is traditional to feed the guests who attend a bridal shower. Exactly what you decide to serve may vary depending on your theme. It is acceptable to serve either a full lunch or dinner or to provide light snacks. In either case, there should be a cake and it should certainly match the theme.

## **Select the Entertainment**

Usually, the entertainment at bridal showers consists of games. You can have music at a bridal shower, but it should serve as background music rather than music for your guests to dance to. Games help get everyone talking and getting to know each other. Be sure to include prizes for those who win at the games. If possible, the prizes should match the theme as well. Otherwise, prizes such as candy, candles, and journals make good substitutes.

## **Eight Important Basics to Planning a Bridal Shower**

Planning a bridal shower can be one of the most exciting activities you have ever experienced. There is so much joy associated with a bridal shower. Everyone is pleased to bring gifts that the bride is excited to see as a sign of the start of her new life. Even though getting ready can be an exciting time, it can also be a very stressful time. There are so many things that you must consider when you are planning your bridal shower.

One of the most important things to first consider is the guest list. You should invite anywhere from five to twenty people. If you invite more than twenty, you risk overwhelming the bride and the guests, as you want it to be a rather intimate affair. When you make your guest list, be sure to consult the bride as to whom she wishes to have at her wedding shower. Female family members of both sides of the wedding party should certainly be at the top of your guest list. You will also want to include the bride's closest friends, and, of course, the wedding party. Be sure that everyone who is invited to the wedding shower is also on the invitation list to the wedding to avoid any hurt feelings.

The second important thing to think about is the invitations. The invitations you choose can have any look or feel that you like. If you wish to have a themed shower, send out invitations that match your theme. For example, if you plan to have a beach party shower, send out invitations that have the look of a beach party. If you are not having a themed shower, you might want to go with something that looks like the bride's wedding invitations. Check with the printer of her wedding invitations, as he or she might be able to cut you a deal if the bride's invitation order was big enough.

Whatever type of invitation you go with, be sure to include the guest of honor's name, the time, date, and location of the invitation, the hostess' name and phone number, an RSVP deadline (about two weeks before the shower is sufficient), and the shower theme. If you wish, include a map of how to reach the location. You might also think about including where the couple has registered and the colors of their future home. Send the invitations out about one month in advance of the wedding shower.

Once you've sent out the invitations, it is time to start planning your party. You will want to start with some light appetizers for your party guests. Try to provide a variety of foods, and try to avoid foods that guests might be allergic to. If you intend to serve highly allergenic foods like peanuts, be sure to keep them well away from the other foods you will serve. Don't forget to think about drinks as well. Serve a wide variety, and be sure to include healthy drinks like water and fruit juice. If you also intend to serve cake, try to make it fit with the theme of your party.

Once you've considered the food, you are ready to start thinking about party games. You will want to play two to four games during your bridal shower. These games can serve as icebreakers if you wish. One fun game is to issue a list of common purse items. Whoever has the most items in their purse from your list wins. Another great game is a simple wedding word scramble. Whoever deciphers the most words in the time allotted is the winner.

Be sure to include time in your shower for everyone to introduce themselves and their relationship to the bride. Remember that several of your guests may have a connection to no one but the bride, so it is important to help them get involved with the other shower attendees.

A sixth thing to consider when you are planning a bridal shower is party favors for all of the guests. While this tends to be a regional idea, offering party favors for each guest is a nice touch. You can do something as simple as a small box of candy or a scented candle. Try to offer party favors that reflect the theme of your shower, if you have one.

An additional thing to think about when you are planning is the decorative scheme. If you are having a themed shower, you probably already have some ideas in mind for decorations. If you

are having a fairly general themed bridal shower, you need to think about table linens and centerpieces at the very least.

One final thing you must consider when you are planning a bridal shower is planning for after the shower. Buying some thank you notes for the bride to send that match the invitations is a nice touch. Furthermore, giving the bride a preprinted list of guests with up-to-date address information can also be quite helpful.

Planning a bridal shower is an intensive procedure, but getting the right combination of events will lead to a happy memory.

### **Planning a Bridal Shower Brunch**

Planning a brunch for a bridal shower can be a terrific way to have an elegant, but simple and inexpensive party. Most food and beverages served for a brunch are easy to make and many can be made ahead of time. If you are thinking about hosting a bridal shower, consider planning a bridal shower brunch.

Most of the time, a brunch is a meal that is served between breakfast and lunch. Brunch can be served any time between about 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Brunch foods are versatile, too. A hostess may choose to serve egg dishes or casseroles, fruits, finger sandwiches and desserts. Drinks at a brunch can range from soda, to punch or juice, to alcoholic beverages such as champagne or mimosas.

Hosting a brunch can be easy to plan and prepare. In addition, you can plan a nice and elegant brunch on a budget, too. When you begin planning for the brunch, consider where the brunch will be held. It is acceptable to serve a brunch in a buffet style. You might only need a long table to hold all of the food. If your home is short on space, consider having the brunch at a restaurant that specializes in brunch meals. Some places even have large rooms for parties and showers and can offer special menu items. It is possible that many restaurants that do not normally serve breakfast, will offer a brunch buffet on Sunday mornings.

Planning a brunch bridal shower will be easier once you have a guest list and know how many people you are expecting. This will tell you how many tables and seating areas you will need. You will also know how much of each type of food will be necessary to serve. Work with the bride-to-be while planning a bridal brunch to find out what she likes. Serve a menu that will please her and the guests. In addition, brunch is a perfect way to host a co-ed shower where both men and women are invited.

You can keep the brunch shower elegant and simple. Some simple ideas for decorations include using pressed white table clothes and simple floral arrangements on the tables. If you are hosting a buffet, decorate the buffet table with roses in the color of the bride's wedding. If you have silver or china that you do not use very often, a brunch is the perfect opportunity to dust it off and put it in use. Do not worry, though, if you do not have china. Visit a party supply store and purchase sturdy clear plastic tableware. This is inexpensive, yet it looks nice. Using disposable plates and forks makes clean up a breeze, too.

There are many food options when you are planning a bridal brunch. Many brunch foods can be made ahead of time and heated right before the shower. If you do not enjoy cooking, you can still host a brunch with minimal cooking. Check with your local warehouse store for bulk food items such as croissants, muffins, frozen quiche, and seasonal fruits. Find pretty platters and serving dishes and transfer the items before the shower begins. The food will be delicious, but the time you have spent is minimal.

Also, you might consider a potluck bridal shower brunch. Have everyone bring his or her favorite dish to share. You could even ask the guests to bring the recipe to give to the bride for her collection. If you have a large guest list you might want to consider a certain food category by last name. For example, if the last names begin with A-C, bring a dessert. This will ensure that there are a variety of foods available.

If you do want to cook, here are some suggestions that are always welcome at a bridal shower brunch. Look for seasonal fruits and vegetables and make a platter with dip. Fruits are always good with chocolate dip or a flavored yogurt. Serve vegetables with a light dip. There are many good egg recipes that can be made in advance. Quiche with ham, bacon and broccoli is a good option for a brunch. Other casseroles might include an egg strata made with sausage or a layered potato and ham casserole. Muffins, breads, bagels, sausage links, finger sandwiches and desserts are other ideas for a brunch. Hosting a brunch is a great way to have a bridal shower. The foods can be kept simple, giving you time to spend visiting with the guests.

### **Timetable for a Bridal Shower: When to Plan and What Time to Party?**

Planning a bridal shower can be a lot of work. So when should you begin? You can begin planning any time you would like. It all depends on how big the party is going to be, where your guests may be coming from, and if any reservations or special accommodations need to be made. As far as how much time to allow between the bridal shower and the wedding that can vary from a couple of months to two weeks before the big event. Another decision that is sometimes hard to choose is the time of day to have the party. There are many factors that help a hostess make all of these decisions.

Once you decide you are going to host a bridal shower you should decide how much time the planning will take. If you want to have the bridal shower at a location that is public, such as a restaurant or bar, you may need to start fairly early, as you will probably have to make reservations for a large group. Another factor is the food; if you are planning a formal meal you may want to start planning your menu and calling caterers right away. Planning an informal shower would definitely save you some time and you would not have to start planning so soon.

Invitations should go out at least a month before the shower to allow guests to plan accordingly. Out of town guests should obviously be given more notice so they can make travel arrangements and reservations. The actual date of the party should never be less than two months before the wedding. The last two months before a wedding is typically a full schedule for a bride-to-be, with dress fittings, last minute decisions and finalizing all plans.

A mid-morning shower is the perfect time for a brunch. It may be a great time of day for most, as a lot of people typically do not make plans in the early part of the day. If brunch is not something you want to do, you could always host a mid-morning tea party. Both of these options can range from very formal to very casual, it all depends on what the hostess or bride may want. A mid-morning time is more suitable if the guests are all local, if out of town guests were to come they may have to stay the night before and that can be difficult when they will probably already be planning to travel to the wedding.

Early afternoon bridal showers are common. The hostess can serve a light lunch or ask guests to bring a dish to pass. Having the food catered is always an option too. Afternoon parties are great as they allow plenty of time for visiting and games. Also one must allow for gift opening. Having an afternoon tea party is always an option too. Hosting an afternoon party for a wine lover could include a wine tasting party with cheese, crackers and other finger foods.

If you would like to throw a more formal bridal shower an evening party would be a very nice choice. Having a sit down dinner party is a wonderful idea if including both the bride and groom. But it is also a great idea for a girl's night out to have a formal meal among friends. Evening parties could also be focused solely on desserts and wine. What woman does not like an evening filled with chocolate, cheesecake and other delicious desserts?

Different twists on bridal showers are combining the bridal shower with the bachelorette party and maybe have a night at a casino and then a stay at a hotel. The night could be filled with gambling, dinner and maybe a show at the casino if offered. In the morning you could all have brunch and have the bridal shower and gift opening right at the hotel or a restaurant if you choose.

Throwing a bridal shower can take as much time or as little time and effort as you want to put into it. It all simply depends on how far and big you want to go. Also always consider the bride and groom and also the potential guests when choosing time and location of the bridal shower.

### **Who's The Host? Proper Bridal Shower Protocols for Hosting the Event**

When considering a bridal shower, there are so many things that should be thought about. Most of these, though, will be taken care of by the host. Many people wonder, who should be the one to host the shower for the bride? Proper wedding etiquette suggests that a shower should be hosted by a close friend of the bride.

It is considered impolite for a family member to host a bridal shower. Showers are considered to be gift-giving events, and if a family member serves as the host, it looks as if the family is fishing for gifts. However, this suggestion is not always true in cases where the maid of honor is the sister or relative of the bride, as the maid of honor is the traditional wedding shower host. Once you've decided to host the event, there are a number of protocols that you must think about.

One of the most important protocols you should consider is the invitations. Invitations can have any look or feel you wish. You can go with a themed invitation. For example, if you plan to have

a kitchen shower, choose an invitation that reflects that – maybe something with pots and pans on it. You could also go with an invitation that reflects the bride's wedding invitations. In fact, many printers will sell companion invitations and thank you cards. Check with the printer, as he or she may be able to give you a good price on these depending on how many wedding invitations the bride and groom have ordered.

Once you choose the perfect invitation, you need to think about the wording. You need to be sure to include the guest of honor's name, the time, date, and location of the invitation, the hostess' name and phone number, an RSVP deadline, and the shower theme. If you wish, include a map of how to reach the location. You might also think about including where the couple has registered and the colors of their future home.

Most people invite around five to twenty guests. If you have more guests, things tend to get complicated. Be sure to consult the bride when you get ready to make an invitation list. Female family members of both the bride and groom should top any guest list. You should also include the bride's close friends and wedding party. Anyone who is invited to the bridal shower should also be on the wedding guest list as that may prevent some hurt feelings. Be sure to send out the invitations at least one month in advance of the shower.

Another important host protocol is the order of events. Once the guests arrive, you should greet everyone personally and serve some light appetizers and drinks. After everyone has arrived, seat them in a circle, and introduce each one or allow them to introduce themselves and tell their relation to the bride. Play two to four shower games. You can use these as icebreakers. Take a break for everyone to refill their food plates, and then have everyone sit back down so the bride can open her gifts.

Be sure to have someone right down each gift and its giver on a list for the bride, as it will help her write her thank you notes. After the gifts have been opened, if you wish to serve cake, serve it then. Allow people some time to socialize and look over the bride's gifts. Be sure to thank each person for attending before they leave. The total shower should last about two hours, but you can cut it short if you need to for special reasons.

Some hosts wonder about shower favors for the guests. This is more a regional thing than anything else. In some areas, it is traditional for each guest to leave with a small gift. In other areas, shower favors are only given to the winner of the shower games. You might ask friends and family for their opinion on shower favors. If you do decide to hand out shower favors, you only need to do something small like a scented candle or a small sachet of potpourri.

Figuring out what to do when can be one of the toughest parts of hosting a wedding shower. Following the right protocols, though, will help you figure out the best way to handle all of the events.

### **Who Pays the Way: Bridal Shower Etiquette Revisited**

The perfect bridal shower is more than just a group of women getting together toasting to the new bride to be. Instead, there is much expenditure to consider. For example, if you are

renting a room or banquet facility, you will need to pay for the location. If you choose to have the event at a restaurant or other location that offers catering services, you will be expected to purchase your food from them, and in addition to the cost of the food, you will also need to pay for the wait staff. Then, of course, there are the decorations to consider, as well as the party favors, invitations, thank you notes, and any other assorted items, which may be needed. Who is supposed to pay for this extravaganza?

While there is no hard and fast rule to the payment for this party, one rule is set in stone that is the rule that absolutely positively absolves bridal shower guests of any monetary obligations. In other words, if you choose to host a bridal shower at a restaurant, the attendees should never be expected to pay for their food. Thus it is up to you, the hostess, to find other methods of payment. Generally speaking, the bridesmaids and maid or matron of honor will collect money amongst themselves to host that bridal shower for the bride. While the bride's mother should never be in the hostess' seat herself, it is entirely acceptable for her to help out with the bridal shower budget.

Of course, if a restaurant party is a strain on the bridesmaids' purses, it is an acceptable alternative to hold the bridal shower at someone's home, backyard, or clubhouse. Food may be catered, or if finances again are too tight to manage, it is entirely acceptable to simply have some easy to prepare finger foods available.

Now that the money questions have been answered, you may be wondering if there are other pitfalls in the realm of proper bridal shower etiquette that need to be weathered. As a matter of fact, there is a list of a few dos and don'ts the clever hostess, bride, and guest will know to commit to memory:

Do not expect your guests to pay for anything at the shower; the food, tip, room rental, and any other expenses are the responsibility of the hostess and bridesmaids.

If you are the bride's mom, leave the hosting of the shower to someone else. Traditionally, it is the job of the maid or matron of honor to see to it that the bride will receive a shower.

If you know that there are a number of showers planned, please consider combining them into one bigger event.

If you do hold a number of parties, please be sure not to invite the same guest twice in the course of the parties.

If you are the recipient of a bridal shower, please be sure not to use any presents you received until after the wedding. If for some reason the wedding falls through or the marriage is annulled before you and your new husband had a chance to live together, the gifts need to be returned.

When opening presents, it is the bridesmaids' responsibility to record the gift's giver, so that the bride may later on send a note of thanks to the giver.

Co-ed bridal showers are becoming more and more the norm, and hence it is acceptable for the groom to attend, if indeed a co-ed shower is planned. If, however, the party is not expressly

co-ed, it will be awkward to have him attend, thus please be sure to specify if a shower is co-ed or not.

If the groom does happen to be present at the location where the shower is held, but will not be an actual part of the shower itself, it is considered good form to present the bride with a bouquet of flowers, and the attending ladies with handshakes, hugs, and a few words of appreciation before retiring to another room. Simply dashing for the living room with the big screen TV in time for the football game would not be appropriate and is downright rude.

### **How to Plan a Bridal Shower for a Second Marriage**

Is a second marriage less important than the first one? The answer is no. There is no reason to forego all of the pre-wedding celebrations just because it is the second marriage. Engagement parties, bridal showers, bachelor and bachelorette parties are all still perfectly ok to celebrate. After all, the new couple is starting a new life together. Marriage is a joyous occasion whether it is the bride or groom's first, second or otherwise marriage. Why wouldn't they want to share the occasion with family and friends?

Planning a bridal shower for a second marriage should not be approached much differently than a bridal shower for a first marriage. It is quite possible that the bride-to-be did not have a bridal shower for her first marriage. The bride should definitely be included in the decision to have a bridal shower for her second marriage, if she insists that she does not want one then by all means grant her wishes.

When planning a bridal shower for a second marriage one thing to consider is that the couple probably has all the necessary household items needed. This brings up the consideration of a more themed bridal shower centered on the likes or hobbies of the couple. For a couple that likes gourmet food you could host a formal dinner party at a gourmet restaurant and suggest that the guests bring gourmet kitchen items, foods or gift certificates for gourmet delis. Maybe the couple loves wine, you could host a wine tasting trip or organize a tour of a vineyard. After the tour you could have a light lunch at the vineyard or go elsewhere and have lunch or dinner.

If the bride enjoys reading you could host a bridal shower at a local bookstore that serves coffee and tea. There are endless possibilities to the bridal shower themes. Maybe you could use a garden theme for the gardening enthusiast. For the make up lover you could host a makeover party or even have an old-fashioned girl's only slumber party. A day at the spa is another great idea for the bride to take her mind off of the busy schedule of planning another wedding.

Gift ideas for a bridal shower for a second marriage can be somewhat hard to choose. As mentioned before the bride and groom-to-be probably have all the necessary household items that seem to be popular gifts at bridal showers. If you have a theme for the bridal shower there is nothing wrong with making a suggestion as to what the guests should bring. Gift certificates for stores, restaurants, and even movie theatres would be a great idea.

If the couple has children, together or from previous marriages, you may want to suggest family board games or movies as gifts for the new family to share time together. Another gift idea for a couple blending families with children is to ask that the guest pool monies together for a family day trip to a zoo or other local attraction. The hostess could even plan a family oriented bridal shower at a water park or local activity center, a roller-skating rink, for example. A blended family will need support from everyone in their lives and why not have it start off right with some quality family activities!

Be sure to ask the bride for her input as she may not want any gifts at all or may choose to have her guests donate to a selected charity. Sometimes it is just the thought of the guests coming to spend time with the bride at the bridal shower that is a gift in itself.

In conclusion there really is no right or wrong way to throw a bridal shower for a second marriage. The only differences are that the bride should be involved and that the shower should probably be themed towards a hobby or the likes of the bride and/or the new couple. Be considerate of the bride and groom-to-be. If they do have children, involve them if possible as well. Make the day of the bridal shower a day centered on the bride. And above all remember that a second marriage is just as important as a first marriage, love should be celebrated not ignored.

### **How to Host a Bridal Shower in an Office Setting**

Bridal showers are much less formal than in the past. With more people working long hours during the day, an office shower is the answer for many busy people. Most offices now have more relaxed rules about socializing, making the office a perfect place to throw a shower.

There are many ways to hold a shower. Some brides prefer a couple's shower that includes the groom, while others prefer a more traditional women-only party. Bridal showers that are held in the office are easy to plan and you can count on the attendance to be high. When you get ready to plan a bridal shower in the office consider the following tips and ideas to host the perfect bridal shower at work.

Most bridal showers are held about two months prior to the wedding. This gives the bride and groom plenty of time to plan ahead while they are still concentrating on their wedding. If you are giving a bridal shower in the office, this is no exception. Also, before you plan a big shower at the office, consider the bride and groom's guest list. As a general rule, it is not good etiquette to invite someone to a shower that has not been invited to a wedding. This is not a hard and fast rule though. There are exceptions, such as when the bride and groom travel far away for a wedding and might only have family in attendance.

When planning a bridal shower at the office, the first step you should take is to talk with the management and get permission. You might find that your company prefers that the shower be held outside of the office during lunch break. Others might approve of giving the shower at the office and not have a problem with doing so. Also, consider everyone's work schedule. Make sure that you plan the shower at a time when everyone can be in attendance. If you work somewhere that must stay open to customers or clients, be sure that there is a time frame

when the shower will not be interrupted.

Lunchtime might be a perfect time to plan the bridal shower. Try to keep the shower from becoming lengthy when you are hosting it during the day. Usually an hour is a perfect time. It might even be possible to request a long lunch hour for the shower. If you are giving the shower during lunch hour consider a potluck style luncheon. Have everyone bring a certain dish so that those who are invited can enjoy a meal and the shower at the same time.

The other option is to collect money before the shower from everyone. Use that money to purchase a catered meal, deli tray or other easy to serve refreshments. Do not forget to include drinks and other items you will need such as eating utensils, plates and napkins. Remember that alcohol is not appropriate in an office setting. Limit the drinks that are offered to sodas or non-alcoholic punch.

Many times when showers are held at the office, everyone likes the idea of contributing money towards one large gift. This can often be the easiest way to have a shower at work. Having one large gift will cut down on the amount of time needed to open gifts. In addition, individuals can contribute any amount that they see fit and not feel pressured to give expensive gifts.

If you do collect money and find that the contributions are low, consider having less food and snacks and concentrate on just a cake and drinks. If the bride has not registered for gifts, consider purchasing a gift card with the money that has been collected. This can be a great way for the bride and groom to buy exactly what is needed and is almost always appreciated.

In addition, when you are giving a bridal shower at the office, try to keep decorations to a minimum for easy clean up. There may not be much time for set up or the office may have limited amounts of space. Place tablecloths on the tables and hang a banner or balloons. This should be enough decoration to set the mood without going overboard.

The main idea of a shower in the office is to get co-workers together to honor the bride or groom. Everyone can appreciate a shower that is kept simple, but festive.

## **Eight Places Perfect for a Bridal Shower Event**

If you are planning a bridal shower, you want everything to be perfect. From the theme, to the decorations, to the food, and to the games everything must be just right. With that in mind, special attention needs to also be placed on where your bridal shower will be located. The location of your bridal shower can have a huge impact on how your bridal shower theme turns out. It can also lend itself naturally to some wonderful activities that will be memorable for all that attend.

### **A Private Home or Apartment**

When choosing to have the shower at a private home, the options really are wide open. If you are a traditionalist, then the bridal shower should be held at the maid of honor's home. It is, however, perfectly fine to have the bridal shower at the home of the bride or at the bride or

groom's parent's house, or at anybody else's home you desire. There really are no restrictions as to whose house you can have the bridal shower at. Just be sure to choose a home that is spacious enough to accommodate all of your guests.

Don't forget that the presents will take up space, too! And, somehow, they seem to take up even more space after they are open, so be sure there is plenty of room for the gifts both before and after they are opened. You don't want to be crowded or cramped in any way.

If you or someone you know lives in an apartment complex, you might also want to look into having the bridal shower on the roof of the apartment. This area is quite spacious and can be a great deal of fun. Empty lofts are another option of living space turned to bridal shower location.

You also need to be sure the home is located somewhere the bride and all of her guests can easily locate and get to. Your home may seem "perfect" in every way, but it won't matter if no one can find it or if it is so far out of the way that it becomes a hassle.

### **A Park**

A park can offer a pleasant outdoor atmosphere to be enjoyed by all guests. Often, parks have picnic areas that you can use to barbeque some enjoyable treats for guests. A park also lends itself naturally to fun outdoor activities for a "sports" or "outdoors" bridal shower theme.

### **A Bowling Alley**

Many women are choosing to just go out for a night of bowling and pizza for their bridal shower. Typically, this would be a smaller group of women, such as just the bridal party. A bowling alley bridal shower does, however, lend itself well to a co-ed bridal shower because the atmosphere is relaxed and enjoyable for the men, as well.

### **A Room in the Community Center or a Hall**

A room in a community center or a rented hall can be great for a bridal shower. Typically, these spaces were designed with special activities such as bridal showers in mind. Therefore, there should be plenty of space available for the bridal shower.

### **A Bar or Club**

Sometimes, there is just nothing better than just going to a bar or club, particularly if those invited to your bridal shower enjoy dancing and having a "girls night out." Just be sure to only invite those you know would be comfortable in this type of environment. A bar or club is also a good place to have a coed bridal shower.

### **A Room at Country Club or the Spa**

Spending a day at the spa has become an increasingly popular bridal shower trend. This is generally a smaller party, as going to the spa can become quite costly. Often, just the women who are members of the bridal party enjoy this bridal shower. To spend a day at the spa,

everyone usually signs up for two or three spa services. The job of the hostess is to ensure the space is available at the spa and to reserve a spot for lunch. At this time, gifts can be exchanged. Or, the guests might combine their money to pay for the spa treatment for the bride-to-be.

### **A Boat or Yacht**

Renting a boat or Yacht for the day can be a great place for a bridal shower. You and your guests can enjoy the scenery and have a great time sailing away. A boat or a yacht can be perfect for a themed bridal shower, particularly if the bride-to-be enjoys sailing or likes gifts with a nautical theme, such as dolphins.

### **A Restaurant**

Restaurant showers are gaining in popularity. This is largely because there is no clean up required afterward and it requires very little preparation. It is customary to pay for the food for guests invited to a bridal shower. You can, however, expect the guests to pay for their own meals and drinks while you provide dessert or a cake. Or, you can put a cap on the spending or only pay for pre-selected foods and drinks. If you won't be paying for all of the food and drinks, be sure your guests are well aware ahead of time. In fact, this information should be included on the invitation.

## **Defining Responsibilities – Bridal Shower Guidelines You Need to Know**

Hosting a traditional bridal shower can be confusing when you look at all of the etiquette rules and guidelines. Who should host the shower? Is it appropriate to ask for gifts? Who should be invited to the shower? Most of the time, the maid of honor or bride's family is expected to host a bridal shower. If the responsibility of hosting a shower falls on you, then here are some bridal shower guidelines you should know.

Hosting a bridal shower can be a great way to get together with the bride-to-be and socialize with friends and family. If you are expected to host a shower, you might not understand what responsibilities you have as a hostess. After you understand what your job will be as a hostess, you can plan the shower and sit back and relax as everyone has a good time.

The first step in planning a bridal shower is to talk to the bride. Her preferences will determine what kind of shower you give. She may want a more traditional shower, or might prefer an informal co-ed shower. You will also need to work around her schedule when planning a date and time. She will be very busy as the date of her wedding approaches. Find out what day works best for her and plan on using that date. If she has guests that will need to travel to attend the shower, make sure they are aware of the date in plenty of time.

Also, you will need to get a guest list for the shower. As a general rule, you will not invite someone to the shower that has not been invited to the wedding. Talk to the bride and find out who will get a wedding invitation. Also, find out whom she wants included in her shower. If she has a large family, it might not be possible to invite all of her family and friends. Most bridal

showers have no more than about 30 guests.

After you have determined the guest list and the time and date, you can start planning the shower. The number of people she invites will help you determine where the shower will take place. If she only wants to include a small circle of friends, you can think about hosting the shower at a private home or an intimate restaurant. For larger guest lists, it might be necessary to rent a space. Also, selecting a theme for the shower might help you stay on track when planning a shower. You might want to have a barbeque, a brunch or host a pampering spa bridal shower. Select a theme that interests you and the bride before making other plans.

As you plan the guest list, you will need to think about the budget. Most of the time, the maid of honor is expected to host a shower, but things are changing and this is not a hard and fast rule. The bride's family can also help pay for the shower or help provide food and decorations. The budget is the amount you are able or willing to spend on a shower. If you have a limited budget, you might be able to get others to help pitch in to pay for the shower. Your budget will also determine what kinds of decorations you will use, the food you will serve and activities you will provide to the bridal shower guests. As the hostess, you might choose to splurge on food while keeping activities or decorations to a minimum.

Sending out the invitations is the next step in getting ready to host a bridal shower. Make sure that all of the information is included on the invitation, such as the time, date and location. If you are going with a theme, incorporate the theme onto your invitation. For more casual showers, you can even make phone calls or send out email invitations instead of mailing invitations. Generally, shower invitations are sent out two to three weeks prior to the shower. This gives guests enough time to plan ahead.

If you need an accurate count on the number of guests that will be attending, be sure to include contact information for RSVPs. In addition, bridal showers are usually given about eight weeks before the wedding. This will help you plan when the shower will be held.

### **Defining the Bride's Role in the Bridal Shower**

Originally, the bride's role in the bridal shower was quite simple: according to legend, a well to do Dutch or Danish girl who fell in love with a poor miller's apprentice was said to have become engaged to the young man against the wishes of her father. In an attempt to dissuade the couple from going through with their marriage plans, the father made it known that he would withhold the dowry, which was customarily used to help the young couple to set up their own household.

The legend further states that the townspeople were so upset with the rich father, that they decided to take it upon themselves to equip the young people with the items they needed to being their lives together, and therefore held a bridal shower, where they showered the bride with gifts of household items, linens and other useful things. Obviously, times have changed and we no longer have dowries. Nonetheless, the tradition stuck, and we are now hosting bridal showers for any bride to be who is ready to walk down the isle, notwithstanding her or her fiancé's financial wherewithal.

Interestingly, the bride's role in the bridal shower has not changed that much. She is still pretty much the passive participant while the bride's maids and other female relatives take it upon themselves to plan and host the shower. All the bride really needs to do is to show up and accept the gifts! Of course, even being the recipient of the honoring is not without rules and regulations, and here are some tips on how to weather the stress of an upcoming shower with grace and how to make throwing your bridal shower a joy to your brides maids.

Allow your maid of honor access to your address book. This sounds simple, but how often do we think of letting someone else know whom we would like to see invited to a party? Since the maid of honor is probably a close friend of yours, she will know most of your friends already, but does she have their telephone numbers?

Additionally, since she probably does not know everyone to whom you sent a wedding invitation, and since etiquette mavens suggest that it is proper to invite all the female guests to the bridal shower, it is important that she has access to the guest list and your address book to make sure nobody feels slighted. At the same time, since it is your brides' maids and maid of honor who will be footing the bill for this event, do not insist on inviting everyone and anyone. If they would prefer -and can only afford- to only invite close friends, go along with a smile.

Stay out of the maid of honor's way as much as possible. Sure, you probably have an opinion on everything from where to hold the shower to what games to play and how to word the invite. In one word: "don't." While your wedding may be the event of your dreams come true, your bridal shower is not, and while the hostess of the event may consult with you on your preferences, it is not mandatory, nor should you tell her how you want it done. This is a party that is thrown in your honor, and you are the guest of honor – not the party planner!

As the day of the shower arrives, please be sure to make your maid of honor's job easy by taking an active role in mingling with the guests, speaking to each one for a bit, and interacting with all in a gracious manner. Yes, you will probably be nervous and a bit harried as the big day rapidly approaches, but this is not the time or the place to show it.

The week after the shower, be sure to sit down and write "thank you" notes to the shower guests who came, and also mention a sincere note of gratitude about the gifts they brought for you. At that time it would also be of great kindness to write some "thank you cards" to your bride's maids and maid of honor for throwing this party for you.

### **Catering the Bridal Shower Yourself – Ten Easy Tips to Stay Sane**

Planning a bridal shower can be frustrating, especially if you are planning on catering the event yourself. When you are getting ready to host a shower, it is important to take some time for planning and relax. Bridal showers should be a fun time to socialize with friends and families and should not cause stress. Here are ten easy tips to keep you sane when you host and cater a bridal shower.

**Number of guests:** When you get ready to host a bridal shower, the guest list will determine just about everything about the bridal shower. Work with the bride, or if you are planning on a co-ed shower, talk with the couple. Find out ahead of time, before you begin planning, how many guests they want to invite. The number of guests will tell you where you can have the shower and how many you need to plan for. You might find it necessary to rent tables, chairs and serving platters or plates depending on the number of guests.

**Time of day:** Another tip for catering a bridal shower by your self is to determine what time of the day the shower will be held. This can be a huge help when you are planning for food. For example, a brunch will be easier to plan than a shower that is held late in the evening when a meal is expected. In addition, if you hold a shower in the late afternoon, you will not be expected to cater a large meal. You can plan for simple fare, such as fruit and finger sandwiches. Decide in advance what time of the day the shower will be and it will help keep you sane during the planning process.

**Budget:** Before sending out any invitations, know your budget. If you are on a limited budget, know what you can spend and stick to it. It will not be fun if you overspend and are left with a huge credit card bill after the shower. Let your bride know your budget and work together to plan a shower. It is possible to plan an elegant shower without spending a lot of money.

**Plan ahead and ask the bride:** Planning well in advance is the key in hosting a bridal shower. After you have talked with the bride and set a date, you can begin making preparations. If you plan on catering the event, never wait until the last minute. Delaying can cause a lot of stress. Instead, use an event planner or a notebook to record all the of the bridal shower details.

Remember that a shower usually takes at least eight weeks to plan, so give your self plenty of time to make necessary preparations. When you cater the event, know beforehand how many guests you will serve and if there are food allergies or other preferences, such as the bride being a vegetarian. Make detailed shopping lists and know what you will need to buy before going to the grocery store.

**Make ahead and get help:** Catering a bridal shower can be easier if you know what you are serving in advance and prepare dishes ahead of time. If you are serving casserole dishes, look into making them a couple of weeks before the party and then freezing the items. You can also do this for certain desserts and appetizers. The night before the party is a great time to cut fruits and vegetables, decorate a cake and make finger foods.

Making food ahead of time will help cut down on the amount of stress on the day of the bridal shower. Also, consider getting help from others when you plan to cater a shower. It is perfectly acceptable to host a potluck style buffet where everyone brings their favorite dish. You can also enlist help from close friends or family members to help you cook and prepare dishes.

**Theme:** If you have a theme for the shower, such as brunch, co-ed barbeque or girl's day at the spa, you can prepare dishes to fit the theme. This will make planning easier and everyone will know what to expect. Having a theme can also help you choose decorations and tableware with ease.

**Keep it simple and relax:** These are two tips you should remember when planning a bridal shower. Most guests will not remember the lavish dishes it took you all day to prepare. Instead, they will remember the time they spent visiting with the bride. Keep the menu simple and everyone will enjoy the shower and you will not become stressed. Last of all, remember to relax. Take a deep breath and have fun. Do not ruin the shower by obsessing over every last detail. Have a good time and your guests will, too.

### **A Bounty of Bridal Showers – Can You Have More Than One?**

Wedding showers are a rare privilege the bride may enjoy, and thus many a bride to be is looking forward to the gathering of her friends and family to shower her with presents, attention and well wishes prior to the big day itself. The history of bridal showers is a bit murky, but the general consensus is that it dates back to the time of the dowry system, when parents would dower their girls to ensure they would have a good start in their married life and could set up a household with their husbands to be.

The story goes that a rich man's daughter fell head over heels in love with a poor but honorable miller's apprentice. Against the wishes of the girl's father the two became engaged and were planning to get married with or without his blessing. In his anger, the father sought to apply financial pressure to the young couple by threatening to withhold the dowry, thus essentially leaving the young couple to be destitute and penniless at the onset of their lives together. The villagers who heard of this cruelty were incensed and decided to take matters into their own hands and ensure that the couple would have a grand send-off and be able to have all the items they would need to set up their first household together.

The villagers banded together and collected all the household essentials the couple would require and then invited the bride to a great gift-giving party where they showered her with these gifts, attention, and well wishes her father neglected to give her. The practice stuck and became a tradition for new brides everywhere. Even in this time of plenty where women are getting married at later ages when many are already well established financially and quite possibly may have more than enough funds to set up a household many times over, the bridal shower is an event many do not wish to do without.

As concerns any event that involves a large number of people, there are some rules of etiquette that need to be observed in order to make sure that nobody's feelings are hurt, and also to prevent the bride from being accused of greed. One of the most often asked questions deals with the bounty of bridal showers; can you have more than one? Generally speaking the answer is "no" but there are some exceptions. Here are some rules to live by:

Since it is up to your bridesmaids and maid of honor to host the party, please be sure to supply them with your address book, wedding guest list, and phone numbers and addresses. This way they will be able to choose whom they will invite. Depending on their budget, and please remember that it is the bridal party who is footing the bill, this if they can only afford to host for a few, the guest list will be small, you may either encounter almost every female who is invited to the wedding, or only a small circle of your closest friends and family. Your mother, mother-in-law or sister is not in charge of this event, and thus the party your brides' maids will hold in

your honor will be the only shower you will receive.

Since a bridal shower is a “party with a purpose,” namely the giving of gifts to the bride, it is up to you, the bride, to ensure that not a gaggle of well-meaning friends and family members will be hosting a bunch of them. While each of these individuals probably wants to honor you, and your mom probably wants to make sure that you have a couple of pizza stones and slotted spoons, having a number of occasion on which people are to fork over presents is in poor taste and may make your appear greedy.

The two noted exceptions are the out-of-town shower and the office shower. While some of the office staff is probably invited to the actual wedding, many will quite possibly not attend because they probably don't know you that well. If the office staff wants to throw you a party, this is an acceptable addition to the bridal shower already in the works for you, since this is more or less a work event and an opportunity to allow those with whom you have worked side by side to have a little informal event to express their appreciations and well wishes to you. The other exception is the shower that will be held by out of town friends and family who cannot attend your own bridal shower. At times, you may not actually be at the party itself, but the hostess will gather the presents and present them at your wedding party.

### **Bridal Shower Attire – What Are You Going to Wear?**

If you have ever stood in front of your nicely stocked closet, had a number of discarded outfits beginning to pile up on the bed, and still had no clue what to wear to the occasion that you are already running late for, then you should know that you are not alone! As a matter of fact, there is not one woman alive who cannot boast the same difficulty at one point or another. Of course, the other reason why the outfits are piling up could be the fact that a well-meaning spouse or friend took one critical look at the ensemble you were wearing and simply remarked “you're not wearing that, are you?”

While this indecisiveness appear to be epidemic for New Years Eve parties, the company holiday party, and assorted other celebrations of friends and families, thus far a bridal shower has not really ranked as an event that required a special kind of attire. Nonetheless, don't you wish somebody would have given you a hint as to what kind of dress would be appropriate? Perhaps it is time for this to change! After all, you have spent a lot of time coming up with the perfect bridal shower theme, so why not go all the way and choose your bridal shower attire accordingly?

For example, if you are planning a bridal shower for your friend who will be going to Hawaii on her honeymoon, why not make the theme, as well as the attire, a Hawaiian celebration? Guests could wear Hawaiian shirts, dresses, perhaps even grass skirts! On the other hand, if the bride will be going surfing, why not dress in the height of California surfer fashion, complete with bleached blond wig and cut out surf board? As you can see, the possibilities for bridal shower attire are truly endless and guests as well as the bride will be able to capitalize on the individuality of the bride, her planned honeymoon, or simply the interests her and the groom share.

If you are more formally oriented, or if the shower will be held at a formal location, you may wish to stay with the conservative ensemble of a skirt and blouse, or perhaps a pair of dressy slacks and a nice blouse. Depending on the kind of bridal shower you are planning for the bride to be, it is imperative to communicate the propriety of attire to the shower guests. As a matter of fact, there are actually some commonly understood “buzz words” that get the point across without getting into too much detail.

If you will be having a fancy party at a luxury restaurant, please be sure to include on the invitation that the dress should be “cocktail attire.” This signals to the invitee that this is the equivalent of a black tie affair, and she will know to get the little black dress off the hanger and pressed. This is especially appropriate for exclusive restaurants or hotels.

If the party is not held at the ritziest place in town but a close second runner up, please be sure to specify “evening resort attire.” This simply means an alternative to the little black dress, such as a nice conservative yet festive dress or skirt and blouse.

Once step down from this occasion would be “business casual” or “resort attire.” This is most appropriate if the party is held at the local country club. Shorts, skorts, and even short skirts are appropriate, if they are properly cut and fit well. This is not the time for the bargain basement mini skirt!

As you can see, questions of fashionable attire are entirely appropriate when considering attending or hosting a bridal shower. If you are fortunate enough to be hosting one, please take the guests’ guesswork out of the equation, and instead, let them know how to dress for the occasion! On the other hand, if you are on the guest list of a bridal shower, be sure to ask if there will be a dress code. Most often you will be able to glean this bit of information when taking a look at the location of the event, but in case you are unfamiliar with the venue, a quick phone call to the hostess will clear up any questions and prevent embarrassing misunderstandings.

### **Can Kids Come? Laying the Ground Rules Before the Shower Event**

How often has it happened that you attended a bridal shower, wedding, or other event and wondered if the gaggle of children you watched really should be there? At times you might have inwardly rolled your eyes, while at other times you might have actually questioned the sanity of the hostess. Is the attendance of children at a bridal shower appropriate? The short answer is a resounding “maybe.” While this may be a bit vague, it is important to remember that all bridal showers are not created equal.

There is a time and a place for everything and the presence of children is no exception. There are bridal showers where the attendance of children is most welcome, appropriate, and enhances the occasion, while there other differently done or themed bridal showers where a child’s presence would be inappropriate. Set these easy ground rules before the shower event and you will be sure that your enjoyment, and that of your guests as well as their children, is ensured:

If the bride will have a little flower girl to precede her in the procession, it is most appropriate to invite the little girl, and her mom, to the bridal shower. Consequently, if the bride will have one or more junior brides maids, these would be little girls aged ten to thirteen, they, too, may be invited to the bridal shower. Inviting these children to the bridal shower is only fair, since they are part of the bridal procession, and since the bridal shower is usually attended by the women of the bridal party. It is appropriate to invite the little girls even if no other children are invited or will be present.

If you are planning on having a more adult party, will be serving alcohol, or will make lingerie modeling a part of your bridal shower, please be sure to clearly state on the invitations "adults only, please." This will take the guesswork out of the planning, and will alert guests with children to the fact that they will need to arrange for child care ahead of time. In addition to the foregoing, it will prevent a guest from bringing a child into an environment that is clearly unsuitable for the youngster.

On the other hand, if you wish to include the children, it is only fair to state so on the invitation. "Please bring your children" or something to that effect will signal to everyone that children are not only allowed but most warmly welcomed. Additionally, this will spell out to the harried parent that at this party there will be food supplied that children will like to eat, and that there will be activities that will keep the kids busy for a while and without the need of constant parental interaction and supervision.

Of course, if you do wish to expressly include children, please be sure to have foods that are appropriate for them. While most adults will cherish the idea of sushi, most children will not and thus some hot dogs, chicken nuggets, and other child comfort foods should be included in the menu. Additionally, please be sure to plan some activities that will keep them entertained, since it is most unrealistic to expect a bunch of kids to be excited about a new mixer, or set of Tupperware bowls and dishes.

Coloring books and crayons are a nice idea, but will keep the kid entertained only for a little while. Thus, if you advertise in your invitations that you wish to include the children, you will also need to plan and provide for their entertainment. Perhaps you could hire a few babysitters who will have some activities for the children. Ideas for such activities are plentiful and the Internet can offer endless printable coloring sheets, word puzzles, and such, while party rental companies will be able to provide you with bouncers, jumpers, and other outdoor playthings that will keep the kids busy and entertained.

As you can see, communication is the key to planning a successful event, such as a bridal shower, and the presence or absence of children needs to be communicated well in advance of the actual event. Failure to do so will result in a room full of bored children, quite possibly a lot of acting up, and some rather frazzled bridal shower guests.

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