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Planning A Wedding: Everything You Need To Know and Do

Topics Covered:

Part I: A Wedding Without a Plan is Often a Disaster!

Part II: Wedding Planning Timeline/Overview

Hiring a Wedding Planner

Planning Your Wedding Budget

10 Tips for Setting a Budget and Sticking to It

Getting Ready for the BIG DAY: Your Wedding!

Planning Your Wedding Flowers and Decorations

Learn to Delegate Wedding Responsibilities

Best Man's Role in a Wedding

Maid of Honor's Role in a Wedding

Selecting the Location of the Wedding Ceremony

Choosing the Perfect Wedding Location

Destination Wedding Ideas

Selecting the Perfect Wedding Reception Location

Hosting a Wedding in Your Home

Wedding Attire for Groom and Bride

Who Will Be Attending the Wedding?

Wedding Transportation for Today's Bride and Groom

Transportation: Arrive at Your Wedding in Style

Accommodating Out of Town Guests

Wedding Considerations When It is a Second Marriage

The Official Business that Goes Along with Marriage

Crunch Time: 1 Week to Wedding Day

Planning A Wedding Everything You Need To Know and Do

Part I: A Wedding Without a Plan is Often a Disaster!

The day you've been waiting for has finally arrived. Your partner has proposed marriage and you've emphatically said 'YES!' Now what do you do? The answer to that simple question will make a tremendous difference in how the real 'big day' plays out. Gone are the days when weddings were simple affairs that took place on family farms with all the neighbors pitching in to help. Today the bride and the groom are the ones calling all the shots. Others will try to get involved, but overall, it's the two people getting married who decide what's going to happen, when and how.

With so much to coordinate, it's amazing that weddings go on at all. Considering that both the bride and the groom are likely holding down full-time jobs, who has time to work out all the details? And there are so many. Well the big secret is it's all in the plan. Having a well-thought out plan that starts with selecting the perfect wedding date and ends with arriving at the most romantic honeymoon destination is the only way to keep nerves from fraying and budgets from being blown.

Plenty of tools are available to help you plan your wedding. It's up to you to decide which tool will work best for you and then you've got to make sure you use the tool you've selected. Wedding planning tools range in price so before you go spending any money, take a step back and think for a moment about the b-word. A 'budget' is crucial because it's what will keep you and your partner (and anyone else funding the festivities) from going into debt. As unflattering as the word is, every wedding needs to begin with a budget. Wedding costs can rapidly spiral out of control because let's face it: everybody wants their big day to be magical.

To determine a budget for the big day, start with figuring out who is going to be contributing towards the finances and how much each can afford to contribute. Once you have a total dollar amount to work with, you can then begin to allocate the budget to the different parts of the wedding.

The wedding plans all begin with the wedding date. Everybody wants to be a June bride, but with only four weekends in this month, not everybody can. The wedding date you select will have a significant impact on your budget. A wedding during the busy summer months will cost far more than one that's held off-season. Not only will the wedding date impact the price you'll pay for everything from the function hall to the photographer, it also impacts availability.

Once the wedding budget and wedding date have been nailed down, it's time to get busy. Part II will provide a timeline of tasks you need to accomplish in the days and months leading up to the big day!

Part II: Wedding Planning Timeline/Overview

When planning the wedding, work backwards from the 'big day' according to the timeline presented below.

Six to twelve months before your wedding date is the time when you need to make most of your reservations and put down deposits. You've got to get a rough but fairly accurate estimate of the number of guests you'll have because each wedding location can accommodate a certain number of people and you want a location that can comfortably accommodate everyone. Here's what needs to be accomplished during this timeframe.

- Select and reserve locations for the wedding ceremony and the reception
- Interview and reserve your professional talent including: Musician or DJ, Photographer/Videographer, Floral arranger, Caterer, Wedding cake baker, Wedding official, Wedding planner or consultant (optional)
- Select and confirm wedding party attendants for both bride and groom
- Select wedding party attire and coordinate fittings
- Arrange transportation for bridal party on the big day
- Place engagement information in local newspaper

Four months before your wedding date is the time to make sure everything is in place.

- Finalize your guest list including complete mailing address for invitations
- Order wedding invitations
- Select a destination for the honeymoon, make hotel and airfare reservations, get passports
- Reconfirm that bridal party dresses are on order and menswear rental attire is coordinated
- Begin planning the wedding shower
- Register at bridal registries for shower and wedding gifts--if not registering at national chains, remember to register at stores that are local to the families of both bride and groom
- Reserve suite for bride and groom's wedding night
- Reserve block of hotel rooms for out-of-town wedding guests
- Shop for and order wedding rings
- Make sure you both agree where you will live once you're married

Two months before your wedding date:

- Address and mail wedding invitations
- Make preparations for rehearsal dinner
- Coordinate details for marriage license in state where marriage ceremony will take place
- Coordinate, order, or make decorations and favors for wedding
- Select the music you want for the ceremony and the reception

One month before your wedding date:

- Have the wedding shower
- Complete final fittings for bridal dress and all bridal attendants
- Coordinate and schedule all hair and make-up appointments

- Purchase gifts for bridal party and groomsmen

Two weeks before your wedding date:

- Get marriage license
- Begin process of changing name on credit cards, social security card, driver's license, bank accounts
- Prepare seating arrangements and prepare place cards
- Make sure accommodations for out-of-town guests are in order
- Reconfirm all details with those who have been hired
- Prepare change of address paperwork, pack and get ready to move (if applicable)
- Give final count to caterer
- Practice hair and make-up styles; grooms should get hair cut now

Day before wedding your wedding date:

- Hold rehearsal and rehearsal dinner
- Get some rest

The Big Day

- Make it to the ceremony on time
- Bring wedding rings
- Have a means of paying final tab for all services rendered and have cash for tips
- Eat before ceremony so you don't get sick
- Smile pretty for your pictures
- Be proud because you've just pulled off a major feat!!

Hiring a Wedding Planner

As wedding receptions are becoming increasingly extravagant, more and more couples are looking to hire a wedding planner to assist them in planning their wedding. While it is true that a wedding planner can be extremely useful and help to eliminate or minimize the stress of planning a wedding, it is important to remember that this will only happen if you hire a qualified and capable wedding planner who understands your needs and expectations.

The wedding planning business is becoming increasingly popular and with this newfound popularity comes a slew of wedding consultants who are new to the business or not qualified to plan a wedding. It's extremely important to carefully screen potential wedding planners and to choose a wedding planner who has the experience and resources necessary to plan your wedding so that it meets and exceeds all of your expectations.

Perhaps the most important criteria in choosing a wedding planner is the degree of comfort that you feel with them. If you are not comfortable with your wedding planner you are likely to not communicate with them as well as you should. This could cause a great deal of problems for even the most qualified and capable wedding planner. If you leave out details or are not

completely honest with your wedding planner, it may result in a series of decisions being made that do not meet your standards or expectations. Even if a particular wedding planner has an impressive resume and comes highly recommended they may still not be right for planning your event if you don't feel comfortable working with them.

If you feel comfortable with a few wedding planners and want to investigate them further the next step is to review their resume and references. While some wedding planners who are new to the business may be extremely qualified and capable you are still taking a chance if you opt for a wedding planner with little or no experience. A wedding planner who has assisted in the planning of numerous weddings similar in scale and budget to your own wedding is a good indication that the wedding planner will be able to meet your needs.

Careful check of the wedding planner's references can also shed some light on their abilities. Be sure to contact each reference that is supplied to you and ask them pertinent questions about the wedding planner's professionalism, attitude, punctuality or anything else that is important to you. Asking these questions can help you to determine whether or not the potential wedding planner meets your expectations.

You may also want to determine whether your potential wedding planner is a full or part-time consultant. A part-time consultant may be fully capable of handling your wedding planning but it is important to remember that a part-time consultant is likely to have another job that would take precedence over your wedding. While this may be acceptable if you are planning a small wedding, you may want to consider opting for a full time wedding planner if you plan to have an elaborate wedding to ensure that the wedding planner has the necessary time to devote to planning your wedding.

Another important aspect to consider is whether or not the wedding planner has a contingency plan in case they are unable to assist you in planning your wedding. This would become extremely important if the wedding planner were to become ill just prior to your wedding. If you choose to hire a wedding planner who works alone then you are likely to be out of luck if your wedding planner becomes ill. However, choosing a wedding planner who belongs to a reputable company often affords you the luxury of having a full staff at your disposal in case there are any emergencies that arise.

Another tip for hiring a wedding planner is to ask each of your candidates a series of questions relating to how the planner would handle specific situations. This is very important because there are likely to be a few problems along the way in planning your wedding.

Finding out how the wedding planner would react in certain situations and how resourceful they are when it comes to solving problems can give you a good indication as to whether the wedding planner is capable of reacting to stressful situations. You want to ensure that the wedding planner that you hire is able to make decisions under pressure and modify the plans on the fly if everything does not go according to plan.

Your wedding planner will be responsible for the happiness of your guests at your wedding so it is important to choose a qualified candidate. A few things to consider before choosing a wedding planner are how comfortable you feel with them, their past references, the amount of time that they have to devote to your wedding and how they react in an emergency. All of

these factors will help to ensure that you choose a qualified wedding planner who can meet all of your needs.

Planning Your Wedding Budget

Money is the number one thing that married couples fight about. But do you realize that the tension surrounding money begins long before the happy couple say, 'I do?' Wedding costs can rapidly escalate out of control, which is why it's so important to begin the planning by devising a realistic budget. And once you've got the numbers crunched, it's equally important that you both stick to the budget.

And while a wedding budget doesn't sound all that glamorous, it doesn't have to be a bad thing. In fact, planning your wedding without a budget is almost guaranteed to land you into serious financial debt. What's the key to success? As it will be throughout your marriage, open, honest, two-way communication is an absolute must.

Newly engaged couples must talk about how each envisions his and her special day. Women work on the assumption that guys don't care about the details but that's not always true. It is, after all, the man's big day, too and he has a family to please as well.

Once the excitement of the engagement wears off, go somewhere quiet and talk about what's important to each of you in regards to your wedding day. Listening to your partner's opinion is as important as talking so be sure to do both. Then, make a list of what you both want (to arrive in a horse-drawn carriage, lobster, renaissance theme, color scheme, etc.) and what are absolute necessities (for example a photographer, caterer, rings, etc.). You're going to use this information when it's time to allocate your budget.

Once you both have an idea of what's important, it's time to crunch the numbers. You've got to determine how much money is available now (for example, in savings accounts, stocks/bonds, real estate, trust funds), how much you'll have to commit to saving from your regular income streams, and how much you can realistically expect others to kick in. Depending on how far out the actual wedding date is you may want to consider opening a higher-interest bearing account for the money so that it can earn interest.

When considering what others may be able to put towards the cause it's really important that you don't make unrealistic demands. Take whatever others are willing to contribute graciously and try not to belabor the issue. Getting angry or disappointed in the amounts you are being given isn't a very mature way of handling the situation.

When you know where the money's coming from and how much is coming, you'll know how much you'll be able to spend. Now make another list of all wedding-related expenses and allocate a dollar amount or the percentage you're willing to spend next to each item. This will help when you're actually contracting for these services.

Remember that if you exceed your budgeted amount in one category, you'll have to scale back another so your budget will stay balanced. Because budgeting is so very important for most

couples, you'll find that wedding budget worksheets, software and other tools are available everywhere, so go find one and start using it right now!

10 Tips for Setting a Budget and Sticking to It

Budget concerns can be one of the most prominent sources of disagreement for a couple in the process of planning their wedding. The couple may have different ideas about what type of wedding they want and also about what they can afford. It is important for the couple to discuss financial constraints before the wedding planning goes too far.

The first tip for setting a budget and sticking to it is to have a conversation regarding finances well before the wedding planning starts in earnest. It is important that everyone involved in the decision making process of the wedding understand just how much money is available to be spent on the wedding.

Another tip for setting a budget and sticking to it is to start saving early for your wedding. Putting aside a portion of each paycheck for awhile can add up to a sizable savings that can be used for your wedding. This advanced planning and saving will allow you to maximize the budget that is available to you for your wedding planning.

Once the budget has been established, set it aside for a few days and then review it again. This time away from the budget gives those involved the chance to let the information settle in and the review of the budget after this waiting period gives the participants the opportunity to verify that they understand and agree to the budget. This is important because if someone does not agree with the budget, they may be likely to overspend in one area leaving the budget in jeopardy.

After an overall budget is established it is important to divide the total amount appropriately to establish budgets for items such as the venue, food and drink, the bride's attire, the groom's attire, transportation, entertainment, photography, favors, centerpieces, gifts for the wedding party and even gifts for each other. It is also important to partition a small amount of money for incidentals to account for small, unexpected expenses.

In establishing a budget it is also important to be clear about who will be paying for what items. For example, if the groom's family offers to pay for the centerpieces and you choose to let them, this will allow you to divert your previously designated centerpiece budget to other aspects of the wedding. The key to sticking to your wedding budget is to be aware of who has agreed to pay for what.

It is important that budgets for each individual aspect of the wedding be established to enable you to follow this next tip. This tip advises the couple to be mindful of their budgets for each individual component of the wedding before negotiating contracts for services. If you know that you have allotted \$250 for entertainment you would be wise to seek out a DJ that is offering his services for approximately that amount and then negotiate your contract to ensure that you remain under budget.

Doing as many things as you can on your own is another way to ensure that you are sticking to your budget. Crafts and homemade invitations can greatly reduce the cost of your wedding. For example making your own favors or centerpieces can greatly reduce your costs and free up additional budget for other areas of the wedding.

Another tip for sticking to your wedding budget is to not view the budget as restrictive. If instead of thinking about the things that you can't afford, you focus on how you can make your wedding and reception truly unique you will be inspired to create a fabulous and memorable wedding despite your budget constraints.

Still another tip for sticking to your wedding budget is to shop around and comparison shop for services. A limousine company may come highly recommended but if they are not in your price range, don't be afraid to let them know why you are going to have to choose another company and you may be surprised at how soon they are willing to give you a different offer.

A final tip for creating and sticking to a budget is to realize that there are bound to be snags along the way. As long as you remain cognizant of your spending and realize the ramifications of your actions you are likely to realize that if you go over budget in one area, you will need to modify other areas by reducing their total budget.

A wedding budget can be a serious cause of emotional strain on a couple. It is important for them to discuss their finances and establish a budget for their wedding plans. Doing this early on in the wedding planning process can help the couple to avoid conflict during the planning phase of the wedding.

Getting Ready for the BIG DAY: Your Wedding!

It's a given that it'll take the bride-to-be far longer to prepare for her wedding day than it will the groom-to-be. The up-do, the make-up, and the manicure/pedicure all need to be done on the big day, but there's more. Getting into that mind-boggling contraption that's called a wedding dress and its associated gear can easily take up to an hour. Then of course, it's picture time. It's no wonder late afternoon weddings are so popular!

And while most of the guys probably don't have a clue how to put on their penguin suits, there's likely to be plenty of mothers and aunts around to help those needy men get ready. A splash of water on the face, a quick comb through the hair and viola! Then as long as the guys don't get lost on the way to the wedding ceremony, they've pretty much accomplished their wedding day tasks.

All joking aside, there are still wedding day tasks that need tending. Most have already been confirmed and reconfirmed, so really what is needed on this day is someone responsible for making sure the wedding ceremony location and reception venue are ready--that the decorations, flowers, favors, DJ, photographer and cake are all in place. Hiring a wedding coordinator for the day is always an option. Plus, it won't hurt to triple-check the transportation. It should be picking up the bridal party at least 20 minutes before the ceremony.

If the couple has paid attention to their planning checklist, the day will go off pretty much as anticipated. However, even the best laid plans are subject to falter and this is something that needs to be understood and even expected. The good news is most of the types of things that go 'wrong' aren't even noticed by the guests. Broccoli gets served instead of green beans. The DJ forgot to bring the bride's requested first dance music, but puts on a suitable substitute. The bride needs to relax and let these things go.

The best man does have a few important responsibilities. He's got to take charge of getting the groom to the ceremony. He has to make sure the wedding rings and his speech are carefully tucked away inside his pocket. He should also have the money that'll be paid out at the ceremony. And someone has to have the money needed to pay off any balances due for professional services rendered.

The bride may want to take a few moments before the wedding gets underway to sit with her parents and thank them for their help throughout her life and reassure them that her love for them is stronger than ever. And she definitely should eat. With all the anticipation and excitement of the upcoming festivities, it's easy to not feel hungry, but this is not a good idea, especially if food won't be available for several more hours.

Most importantly, remember to keep smiling. And remember that in just a few hours, you'll both be relaxing, alone, in your honeymoon suite!

Planning Your Wedding Flowers and Decorations

When it comes to wedding flowers and decorations, the key to pulling off a look that works really lies in the planning. Since there are no rules when it comes to wedding flowers, it really is all about what the couple, well mainly the bride, wants and can afford. Decorating options are limited only by the imagination and even the most outrageous floral images can be made to fit practically any budget, if you're willing to research the many options and ideas that are out there.

From do-it-yourself arrangements to using silk floral arrangements that can even be rented for the occasion, planning your wedding flowers can be a lot of fun. Involving your bridal party will help generate ideas you might not have thought about and besides, helping the bride is one of their responsibilities so why not? But forget about the groom, though. The most he'll probably care about is that you stick within the amount that has been budgeted.

You want to give yourself plenty of time so begin planning the wedding flowers at least 6 to 12 months prior to the wedding date. The flowers are one of those things you'll want to consider while you are choosing the wedding attire because most brides want the floral arrangements to complement the overall color scheme and theme of the wedding.

Bridal magazines are full of pictures of bouquets so that's a good place to go for ideas. Also think about the types of flowers that will be in season at the time of your wedding. Choosing flowers that are readily available is one way to keep costs under control.

Besides boutonnieres and bouquets for the wedding party, you can also make flowers and decorations part of the wedding ceremony and reception. Pew bows, arrangements for the altar, head table, cake table and gift table, as well as centerpieces for all the guest tables should be considered. These will definitely add to your costs, but they're also areas where you can really get creative.

If cost-control is an issue, why not have the bridal bouquets do double-duty as head table decorations or perhaps the gift or cake table? Once the formal photographs are over, no one will be carrying their bouquets around anyway. Or why not use less expensive balloons or candles as centerpieces? Pew bows are very easy to make, even for 'craft-challenged' brides. Another idea is to add more 'filler' to your floral arrangements by using more greenery, baby's breath and tulle.

As you can see, it really is all in the planning. Once you've got the wedding flowers and decorations figured out, you need to find a florist capable of turning your thoughts into reality. It's important to select a florist early on because there's a limit to how much even the best florist can handcraft. Go over the contract with a fine-toothed comb before signing to make sure the number and type of arrangements, including the flowers being used, are clearly specified along with delivery details. Record the deposit amount and delineate the payment schedule.

Learn to Delegate Wedding Responsibilities

Many women have been dreaming of their wedding day since they were little girls. A bride to be may have clear ideas of how she would like every detail of her wedding to be like. While it is important to know exactly what you want, it's also important to realize that planning a wedding is a major responsibility and that it's entirely too stressful for the bride to take care of every detail herself.

Many brides have a difficult time relinquishing any responsibilities involved with planning her wedding for fear of losing control but it's really in her best interests to learn to delegate responsibilities. The maid of honor, parents of the bride, parents of the groom and even the groom are probably all eager and willing to help out with the wedding plans and it is important to let them do so. The key to delegating responsibilities is to entrust others to take control of areas that you may not be especially particular about.

For example the favors are a very important part of the wedding and the bride most likely wants to shop for and choose the favors herself. Her maid of honor or soon to be husband may accompany her on this shopping excursion for support and to offer their opinions but this is not likely a task that the bride will want to relinquish. Conversely, the bride may not be too particular about how the place cards are written out so this might be an example of a responsibility that can easily be delegated.

While the bride wouldn't want to allow another member of the wedding party to choose her wedding dress, she may be interested in delegating other responsibilities related to her dress. For example the bridal shop probably sent the wedding dress out to be steam cleaned

subsequent to the bride's final fitting and it would be acceptable for the bride to entrust a trusted friend or family member with picking up the wedding dress and storing it wherever the bride will be dressing for the wedding. Although the wedding dress may be one of the most important items to the bride, she will likely not mind having someone else run out to retrieve the dress because it gives the bride just one less thing to worry about.

The bride may wish to work on the design and layout of the reception area but once all of the planning has been done, it is wise to delegate the responsibility of actually setting up the room to another friend or family member. The bride may wish to draw up exact specifications to demonstrate the look that she wants but she will surely be able to trust a family member to follow her directions and prepare the room to her expectations.

As the reception area likely has to be set just prior to the reception it is really not feasible for the bride to be completing this task as she will most likely be needed elsewhere for photography sessions.

Still another aspect of the wedding that it may be wise to delegate is the addressing of thank you card envelopes. Once the guest list has been finalized and the guests have all RSVPed, it can be assumed that you will need a thank you card for each guest who responded affirmatively. The bride is likely to have no particular opinion on how the envelopes should be addressed so this is a perfect task to delegate. This is a menial but time consuming task that doesn't directly affect the wedding so it is a prime candidate for delegation by the pastor.

The stresses of planning a wedding can be extremely overwhelming for a bride who has not learned to delegate responsibilities to friends and family members who are likely standing by eager to help in any way possible.

While it is understandable that a bride may wish for everything to happen according to her vision, it is also important to realize that although you may want to control every aspect of the wedding and the wedding planning; sometimes it is necessary to delegate responsibilities. Sharing certain responsibilities not only makes the bride feel less overwhelmed but also gives her more available time to focus on the critical aspects of her wedding planning.

Best Man's Role in a Wedding

The best man plays a very important role in the wedding. While he may not be as involved in the wedding plans and preparations as the maid of honor is but he does participate in his own way. The groom is less likely than the bride to feel that it is very important to have his best friend in on every decision so the majority of the responsibilities of the best man take place either at the wedding or in the few days prior to the wedding.

Planning the bachelor party, organizing tuxedo rental and returns, organizing the groomsmen, holding the ring during the ceremony and offering the first toast at the reception are just a few of the responsibilities that the best man bears in a wedding.

Organizing the bachelor party is one of the biggest roles that the best man plays in a wedding. This party is typically a night for the groom and his friends to share one more night of bonding before the wedding. While bachelor parties used to take place exclusively on the night before the wedding and involve large quantities of alcohol and women of ill repute the modern best man tends to venture away from tradition in planning the bachelor party. As one of the closest friends of the groom, the best man is able to choose a time, location and activities for the bachelor party that the groom will enjoy.

The best man also plays a role in choosing and arranging for the tuxedo rentals for himself and the groomsmen. The best man usually accompanies the groom to choose styles and colors for the tuxedos to be worn by the best man and the groomsmen. Once the styles and colors have been chosen the best man is responsible for reserving, picking up and paying for his own wedding attire.

Additionally, the best man also informs the groomsmen of the tuxedo choices and organizes a time for the other groomsmen to visit the rental shop to have their measurements taken and reserve their own tuxedos. After the wedding the best man is responsible for returning his own tuxedo and if the bride and groom are leaving immediately after the reception for their honeymoon, the best man will take care of returning the groom's tuxedo as well.

Another role that the best man plays is to supervise and coordinate the groomsmen. The best man takes on the responsibility of ensuring that all of the groomsmen are aware of when they need to be somewhere and what they need to be doing. Taking on the role of coordinator for the men in the wedding party unburdens the groom of this task. The groom no longer has to worry about making multiple phone calls every time there is a slight change of plans.

He can simply call his best man and then rely on the best man to make everyone aware of the situation and expectations. In general the best man is there to be the groom's friend and help to alleviate his fears and to make things easy for him. Knowing that the best man will take care of organizing and coordinating the groomsmen and will always be there to listen allows the groom to relax and trust that none of the details will be overlooked.

In addition to all of his pre-wedding preparations, the best man also plays a couple of roles during the wedding ceremony and the reception. During the ceremony the best man lends his support by standing beside the groom in a display of solidarity. The best man also safeguards the rings during the ceremony until they are requested by the officiant. This is imperative because the groom is likely to be nervous and may forget where he put the rings for safekeeping. Entrusting the rings to the best man, however, ensures that the rings will be kept safe and not misplaced.

One of the most important responsibilities of the best man is to offer the first toast to the bride and the groom at the reception. In this role the best man is not only offering his sentiment to the new couple but he is also expressing the feelings of all of those in attendance. While everyone at the reception may wish to convey their feelings of good will, it is the best man who is able to do so publicly.

In general the role of the best man is to support the groom and to act in the best interest of the groom. Although there are certain responsibilities such as planning the bachelor party,

safeguarding the wedding rings, coordinating the groomsmen and offering the first toast at the reception, the biggest role of the best man is to be a friend to the groom.

Maid of Honor's Role in a Wedding

The role that the maid of honor plays in the wedding depends largely on how much responsibility she is willing to take on and also how much responsibility the bride is willing to delegate. In general the maid of honor was chosen because she is one of the bride's closest friend and her duties as a maid of honor do not differ that much from her duties as a friend.

The role of the maid of honor is not to simply walk down the aisle ahead of the bride and stand beside her during the ceremony; she also is one of the most supportive assistants to the bride during the wedding preparations. Although there are some responsibilities that she takes on such as hosting the bridal shower and bachelorette party and helping to choose the bridesmaid's dresses, she is also just there to be supportive of the bride and to be a friend and confidant and to help her in any way possible.

Hosting the bridal shower and the bachelorette party are two of the main responsibilities of the maid of honor. Since the maid of honor is probably one of the bride's closest friends it stands to reason that the maid of honor is the ideal candidate to host these two gatherings. It is the maid of honor who will know best what type of party the bride is looking forward to, what she will enjoy and what types of gifts are most appropriate for the bride's taste.

The bridal shower and bachelorette party are also typically parts of the wedding preparations that the bride does not have any direct control over but she usually does not stress about these activities because she has faith that her maid of honor will hold her best interests in mind when planning these parties.

The maid of honor also plays a large role in choosing dresses for the wedding. The maid of honor typically chooses her own dress for the wedding from a selection provided by the bride. Once the color and style of the maid of honor's dress has been established, the maid of honor works closely with the bride to choose a style and color of dress for the bridesmaids that will look good on each of the bridesmaids and also complement the maid of honor's dress.

The maid of honor also plays a role in assisting the bride in choosing her own wedding dress. While there may be many other friends and relatives who shop with the bride for her dress, it is the opinion of the maid of honor that is generally most valued by the bride.

The wedding day is a very busy day for a maid of honor. Although she has supported the bride throughout the planning process, her most important responsibilities take place on the actual wedding day. Besides simply walking down the aisle and standing on the altar beside her friend the most important roles that the maid of honor plays is to keep the bride calm and to handle and problems that may arise.

Very few weddings actually go exactly as planned and it is the maid of honor's job to make sure that small setbacks do not unnerve the bride. The maid of honor should also have a stash of

emergency supplies on hand such as extra stockings, lipstick in the shade the bride is wearing, tissues, safety pins and hair pins. All of these items can come in handy if the bride has any trouble with her attire, hair or makeup. The maid of honor plays the important role of ensuring that the bride is looking her best even after hours of dancing and talking to friends and family members.

Perhaps the most significant role that the maid of honor plays is to be a friend to the bride. The planning and preparations and the actual wedding itself can be very stressful and emotional for the bride. The one thing that the bride needs more than anything else at this time is someone to talk to who will understand her concerns and give her practical advice and this is the most important job of the maid of honor.

The maid of honor plays a much more important role than just walking down the aisle before the bride and holding her flowers during the ceremony. Throughout the planning the maid of honor is involved every step of the way from choosing a dress and location to helping to wrap favors and set up for the reception. As the bride's best friend the most important role the maid of honor can play is to be supportive and understanding of the bride.

Selecting the Location of the Wedding Ceremony

The wedding ceremony is where two individuals unite to become one. Choosing the location for this event would seem a simple task, but it's actually one that requires much planning and coordination, especially if a non-traditional ceremony is being planned.

Many couples will hold the wedding ceremony at a house of worship, usually one that the bride, the groom, or some other family member attends. When this is the case, selecting the location is fairly easy, provided the date is available. But what happens when the bride- and groom-to-be are of different denominations? More tricky still, how is the situation handled when the couple doesn't have any religious affiliation?

That's when the couple needs to get together to discuss their wedding ceremony location options. And there are many. Selecting the location of the ceremony should happen well in advance of the wedding date, up to 12 months if possible. If you wait too long to reserve the location, you may find it's already booked.

Besides a house of worship, wedding ceremony locations can be practically anywhere--at home, at a country or yacht club, outdoors at a local, national or state park, on a yacht, on a tropical island, at a mountaintop retreat, in a medieval castle, at Disney World--you name it, it's probably capable of accommodating a wedding ceremony.

Before selecting a location, however, you've got to make sure it'll accommodate your needs. Is the location large enough to accommodate all your guests? Are dressing rooms available? Are there electrical outlets for acoustics and/or music? Is the location easily accessible, especially for those with special needs? Can you find someone to officiate at the location?

The amount you'll pay will vary from location to location. When you're finding out the costs, be sure to ask what is included with the price. Make sure the items mentioned are written out on the contract, too. You'll likely be asked to provide a deposit to reserve the date. This needs to be reflected on the contract as well as the balance amount and due date.

There's more to consider about the wedding ceremony than just the location. The music and the vows need special attention, especially if you wish to break out of the 'traditional' mode. The music may be included with the location. For example, oftentimes a church will use its own organist.

However, if your budget allows, you may wish to write your own wedding songs and hire a soloist and accompanist to perform them. Or you can hire musicians to match the theme of your wedding. If these types of arrangements are in your budget, be sure to reserve the talent far in advance, right after you've secured the wedding ceremony location.

You can also write your own vows or make modifications to traditional vows. This puts a truly personal touch on the event. Just be sure to give a copy of your version of the vows to the person officiating so that everyone knows what to say.

Choosing the Perfect Wedding Location

The location of the wedding is critical because it can play a key role in setting the mood for the wedding. There are a number of ways to choose a potential location for your wedding including choosing a location where you have previously attended a wedding, shopping around and visiting multiple venues and seeking suggestions from trusted friends or relatives. Once you have narrowed your choices down to a few options it is important to consider a few additional factors such as price, seating capacities and services available.

There may be a wide variety of suitable wedding venues available but you could greatly reduce the number of venues that you are required to visit by choosing only locations that come highly recommended from a trusted source. This will save you from having to visit every venue in town to determine whether or not it is an acceptable location. Seeking input from others can greatly reduce the amount of venues that you need to visit.

The location of your wedding can play a key role in the style of your wedding. Some couples opt for a ceremony at a church followed by a reception at a catering hall while others may wish to hold the ceremony outdoors but have a reception at an indoor location. Still others choose to hold both the ceremony and the reception at a catering hall.

Whichever option you choose for your wedding it is important to ensure that the location you choose has all of the elements that you were seeking in a wedding location such as ambiance, seating capacity, a dance floor or anything else that you require.

Price is one of the most important considerations in choosing the perfect wedding location. There may be many locations where you wish to hold your wedding but if they are out of your price range you may have to eliminate them from your list if you are not able to successfully

renegotiate the asking price. Whether you are being charged a price per guest or a flat fee for a set duration of time, if you simply cannot afford the location it is not right for your wedding. Fortunately most cities have a wide variety of options available so it is extremely likely that you will find a suitable venue that is within your price range.

Maximum occupancy is another important consideration when choosing the perfect wedding location. While you may really like the intimacy that a quaint location that seats only 50 guests affords, this is not a feasible option for a couple who has invited over 300 guests to their wedding. Likewise a large reception space that is capable of seating 500 people is not a good option for a couple who is planning a small wedding with only a handful of close friends and family members.

It is important to choose a wedding location that is capable of accommodating the number of guests that you have invited without being large enough to accommodate almost twice as many people that you have invited. Choosing a venue that is either too small or too big is not feasible because a venue that is too small will be cramped and may not fit all of your guests while a venue that is too big will be a waste of money because large spaces often include a minimum number of guest required and you may wind up paying for more guest than you actually have in attendance.

The services that are offered may also factor into choosing a wedding location. Many catering halls may also have staff available to provide entertainment or floral designs. If you find a facility that is capable of either performing additional services or recommending service providers you might want to consider choosing this venue to eliminate the amount of services that you have to account for. Consolidating in any way possible can greatly reduce the effort that is required of you to complete you wedding planning.

Choosing the perfect location for your wedding may seem like an impossible task especially if you live in an area that has a number of options. Setting strict criteria for evaluating locations can save you a lot of time and effort. Only visiting venues that meet these criteria will greatly reduce the number of locations that you need to visit.

Destination Wedding Ideas

A destination wedding is a wedding that takes place in a location that is not home to either the bride or the groom or their families. Couples may choose a location that they have always wanted to visit for the location of their destination wedding. The couple may also opt to have their wedding in the location of their honeymoon so that their honeymoon will start immediately after the wedding.

There are certain advantages and disadvantages to having a destination wedding. One of the most defining advantages is the ability to have a wedding in a beautiful and exotic location. Another advantage to a destination wedding is that if you choose to honeymoon in the same location you will first of all already be at your honeymoon location at the conclusion of the wedding and furthermore you will likely receive a discount on your honeymoon stay because you have already had your wedding at the location.

One of the distinct disadvantages of a destination wedding is that the planning process can be difficult and that you are often unable to fully enjoy the planning process. Another disadvantage to destination weddings is that they are typically not well attended due to the fact that travel is expensive. A destination wedding can be used as the opportunity to enjoy a long weekend with close friends in a convenient location. The following are a few tips for turning your destination wedding into a fun-filled extended weekend for your guests.

Choosing a scenic location such as Colorado for your destination wedding can offer your guests a variety of fun activities to participate in either before or after your wedding. The couple could choose to have their wedding on a ranch or at a ski resort and there are a wide variety of activities available for the couple to participate in. Some of these activities include skiing, mountain biking, rock climbing and hiking.

Las Vegas is another popular destination wedding location. The lure of a Las Vegas wedding is that there is so much to see and do in this city. Guests can choose to spend their free time gambling, taking in shows or visiting the many famous restaurants in the area. Guests can also choose to visit some of the extravagant and world famous hotels in the area.

Another popular destination wedding location is Mexico. This is a popular location for a couple of reasons. Many couples choose to honeymoon in Mexico so that reason alone makes it an ideal destination wedding location. Also, the warm weather and beautiful white sand beaches provide a beautiful setting for a wedding.

Guests who arrive early or choose to spend a few extra days in Mexico will not be disappointed with the available activities. Scuba diving, snorkeling, fishing, sunbathing and travel to ancient ruins are just a few of the activities that the guests can enjoy while in Mexico.

New York City is still another popular destination wedding location. Guests who travel to a destination wedding in New York City have a variety of activities to choose from while they are vacationing. Museums, plays, operas and sporting events are just a few of the available activities that guests may choose to partake in.

Besides these activities, New York City also has some of the best people watching available in the world. The city is literally teeming with interesting characters that delight visitors with their idiosyncrasies. Additionally there are many nightclubs and restaurants that are definitely worth trying.

A destination wedding is basically a wedding and vacation combination. The key to hosting a great destination wedding is to choose a location that provides your guests with a beautiful background as well as a wealth of activities to keep them entertained for at least a few days. Although a destination wedding may sound perfect, it is important to realize that there are a few downsides to hosting a destination wedding.

One problem is that many guests will decline your invitation because they are either unable or unwilling to travel for the wedding. This can also work to your advantage by limiting the number of guests as well. While you may be disappointed if close friends decline your wedding invitation, you are likely to be relieved that you do not have to pay for distant relatives or

casual acquaintances at your wedding.

The advantage, however, to a destination wedding is that the couple does not have to travel for their honeymoon and that the guests have the luxury of spending a few day in an exotic location.

Selecting the Perfect Wedding Reception Location

Choosing a wedding reception location involves more than just making sure all your guests can fit comfortably into the space. This location is where the majority of the wedding day festivities will take place so there needs to be enough room to accommodate eating, dancing, socializing, and all the other fun activities that happen at receptions like cutting the cake and throwing the wedding bouquet.

Many couples choose larger-sized hotels or function halls for their wedding receptions because typically, everything they need to pull off this memorable event is right there on-site. As an added bonus, these types of wedding reception locations usually include the services of a wedding coordinator who will work with the couple to meet their every need. And the great thing about having a reception in a hotel is that overnight accommodations don't require any extra planning.

Selecting the wedding reception location as soon as possible is highly advisable, especially if you need to accommodate a large number of guests and especially if your wedding will be held during the busy season. Although you do not need a firm head count, you will need an estimate. A medieval castle on a lake may not accommodate 250+ guests. Also, determine your wedding reception budget beforehand, as this likely will have an impact on your wedding reception location options. You may want to consider arranging your wedding off-season when rates on reception locations will typically be much lower.

You will be required to make a down payment to reserve the space and date and this typically will be non-refundable. You'll want to make sure you understand the cancellation policy as it may involve more than losing your deposit. Also discuss arrival and departure times to make sure all the elements you have planned can be accommodated during this timeframe.

Besides the types of venues already mentioned, plenty of other wedding reception location options are available, and they'll each vary in terms of space, price and amenities, so it's important to pay close attention when visiting the ones you're considering. Smaller gatherings can be held at places such as at home, a museum, a botanical garden, or a park. Although these may be smaller in size, the details will still need to be coordinated by someone so don't forget to ask for help, even if that means hiring a wedding coordinator.

When you're looking at wedding reception locations, try to plan out the space, much like you would if you were buying or renting a home. Where will dining and dancing take place? Where will the guest book and place cards be located? Is there a secure area for wedding gifts? Will you need a stage for your musicians?

Are there electrical outlets for the DJ? Your photographer will want to know about the lighting and whether there's a suitable location to take wedding party photos. Is there a way to control the temperature? If the reception will be outdoors, you'll need a back-up in the event of uncooperative weather, which may add to your costs.

Hosting a Wedding in Your Home

Large venues such as catering halls make an elegant wedding location but for a more intimate gathering you might want to consider hosting your wedding either at your own home or the home of a close friend or relative. A wedding hosted at a private home can be a lovely and memorable affair that is sure to be enjoyed by all of the guests.

There are plenty of advantages to hosting your wedding in a private home including having increased freedom in making choices and providing your guests with a warm casual atmosphere. The downside of hosting a wedding in a private home include the inconvenience and strain placed on the owner of the home and limitations on the number of guest that you can accommodate as well as whether or not it is feasible to hire a caterer.

One of the distinct advantages to hosting a wedding in your home is that there is more freedom in decorating and food choices. Many catering halls have a few options for linens, china and decorations and a limited menu but you are limited by their pre-existing constraints. While sometimes it is easy to simply go along with the template offered by the catering hall, it just doesn't give the couple much creativity in planning their wedding.

In a private home you are free to buy or rent any decorations, linens and china that you choose and use these to set the atmosphere for your wedding. You are also free to hire your own caterer or even take care of food preparations yourself. This freedom gives the couple the opportunity to allow the wedding to truly reflect their personalities. They can opt to have the wedding be as formal or casual as they wish and they may choose to incorporate any imaginable theme in their wedding.

The other advantage to hosting a wedding in your home is the warm casual atmosphere that it provides for your guests. The formality of catering halls makes some people very uncomfortable. Furthermore they often feel obligated to dress formally for an event that is held at a catering hall. While the couple may still opt for a certain degree of formality, many of the guests will feel more relaxed at a wedding hosted in a private home.

While they may still dress formally, the absence of a doting wait staff and other stuffy personnel allows the guests to relax more and enjoy the wedding. Informal seating such as couches and loveseats in a living room lend even further to the idea that guests are meant to relax.

One distinct disadvantage to hosting a wedding in a private home is that although the homeowner originally agreed to host the wedding, they may feel increased pressure as the wedding approaches. The homeowner may begin to feel a great deal of stress related to preparing the home for the wedding. The homeowner may feel obligated to partake in rigorous cleaning efforts or purchase additional decoration items in preparation for the wedding.

One way to reduce this stress is to enlist the assistance of a cleaning service so that the homeowner does not continue to worry about the cleanliness of the home. You also may want to speak to the homeowner to let them know that you appreciate their efforts but that you are perfectly happy with the home just the way it is and you don't wish them to go to anymore trouble to prepare for the wedding.

Another disadvantage to hosting a wedding in a private home is that the size of the home may restrict the number of guest. While it is true that most catering halls have maximum occupancy restrictions as well, most of these commercial venues are capable of seating far more guests than even the most extravagant home.

If you have a large family or many friends and plan to have many guests then hosting your wedding in a private home may not be a feasible option. However, if you plan on having only a small number of guests then a wedding in a private home may be a wonderful option. The size of the home also factors into your decision to hire a caterer. A home with a small kitchen could be problematic if the caterers intend to prepare all of the food onsite.

Hosting a wedding in a private home can be a wonderful idea. This type of wedding works best if you have a relatively small number of guests and are looking for a casual atmosphere that provides endless decoration possibilities. On the other hand hosting your wedding in a private home may not be feasible if the homeowner is neurotic about cleaning or if you are planning to have a large number of guests in attendance.

Wedding Attire for Groom and Bride

The guys have it easy. Pick up the tuxedos they rented months ago right before the wedding, put them on and then be sure to return all the pieces in decent condition right after the wedding. The women, however, don't get so lucky. For the bride, her quest for the perfect wedding dress means hours poring over bridal magazines in search of the perfect look and months of agonizing dieting and humiliating dress fittings. Plus she needs all the accessories. Unfortunately, selecting wedding attire for both the groom and bride is something that cannot be avoided, unless they're headed to Las Vegas or the county courthouse.

Wedding attire is one of those wedding tasks you need to tackle well in advance, especially if you're planning your wedding during the height of the season. Almost as soon as you announce the wedding date, but only after you have put together a wedding budget, you need to begin planning the attire. Now that's not something you have to tell most women. Many already know the type of wedding dress they want because they've been planning this big day for most of their lives! But still, most brides will spend 4 to 6 weeks shopping, trying on and pondering wedding attire before it's even purchased.

And after this 1-2 month period, brides still need ample time for special ordering and custom fitting. They'll need about 3 separate fittings so that the wedding dress looks absolutely perfect on the big day. It's a good idea to allow extra time for unexpected delays and emergencies.

Most brides devote a considerable chunk of the wedding budget to the dress and accessories. It certainly doesn't need to be this way, and there are plenty of options for looking stunning without spending thousands. How much will be spent is a really important point to discuss beforehand, agree on, and follow through with. The bride will be center stage, lots of photos will be taken, and it's normal to want to look better than ever.

To help the discussion along, begin with talking about the type of wedding you both want ñ elegant, informal, themed, seasonal, outdoors, or something else. The wedding attire that the groom and bride select is going to set the tone for every other aspect of the wedding including what others wear, the color scheme, decorations, invitations, flowers, venues, transportation, everything.

And in addition to the wedding dress, the bride needs accessories including the veil, headpiece, train, shoes, undergarments, stockings, garter, handbag, and jewelry. Much of it can be ordered along with the wedding dress, but other accessories will have to be purchased over the coming months. Be sure to factor in the costs for these accessories when planning the wedding attire budget.

And as was mentioned in the beginning, men's wedding attire follows the lead of the bride's. Men need only locate a tuxedo rental outlet 6-12 months before the date, get fitted and pick up their tuxes, which come with all the accessories they'll need ñ cummerbund, bow tie, vest, even shoes!

Who Will Be Attending the Wedding?

Probably no other part of wedding planning causes as much frustration and ill-will as the guest list. Just who will be present to bear witness to the big event is something that no family has ever been able to totally agree on. Sure there are those fairy-tale weddings where money is no object, but even those weddings have their limits.

More often than not, it is the case that some of the prospective guests never actually make it onto the final guest list. And you know what? As devastating as it may seem at the time, it really isn't the end of the world for those who don't get invited.

When should the couple put together the guest list? Although it doesn't have to be set in stone, a fairly approximate head count is needed early on in the wedding planning stage. The number of guests invited to your wedding will have a considerable impact on your wedding budget. Remember, they're your guests and you'll need to accommodate each and every one of them!

You'll need a venue large enough to hold all your guests comfortably, you'll have to feed them, they'll need invitations, and if they're coming from out of town, they'll likely need overnight accommodations. With an average cost of \$25 per guest for food, every 4 guests will cost approximately \$100 just to feed!

But every wedding needs guests (unless you're planning to elope) so let's think about whom will be attending. You and your mate will be there, of course. After that, add your immediate family

to the guest list. Notice I say 'immediate' and not 'extended' family. Mothers, fathers, step-parents, brothers, sisters and grandparents are absolute musts, unless personal situations dictate otherwise. According to the above estimate, you're already spending about \$300 for food just on this group! That should make you rethink your grand illusion of 250 guests!

It is tradition to have wedding attendants and they should be added to the guest list next. A maid or matron of honor and the best man are absolute minimums. From there, the number of bridesmaids and ushers is purely a personal choice. But remember, even though the attendants will be paying the costs for their attire, the number of wedding attendants will have an impact on your budget.

Why? First, they'll be at the rehearsal dinner and they'll expect to eat for free. Second, the bride and groom traditionally give each of the attendants a gift as a way of showing their appreciation, so the more attendants, the more gifts you buy. And something that's not always considered, a large number of attendants may increase your transportation costs.

With the basics in place, it's time to add friends, co-workers, extended family members, your parents' friends and business associates, your realtor, the butcher, and on and on. Put everyone you can think of on the list and see where you're at. Then, if necessary, take the red pen and start cutting until you're down to a figure that manageable and that fits into your budget.

Wedding Transportation for Today's Bride and Groom

Most soon-to-be-married couples don't think outside the box when it comes to wedding transportation. They open the telephone directory, search for limousines and then start calling around to find out which company is the least expensive. While a limousine is quite appropriate, it's also so very common.

If you want your wedding day to stand out, you've got to get creative. Here are some transportation issues to consider beforehand and some alternative transportation ideas you may not have thought about.

Transportation is one wedding issue you want to tackle early on, six months to a year in fact, before the big day. On your checklist, it would happen after you've selected the venues for the ceremony and the reception, and after you've confirmed the number of wedding attendants you will have. Why? Because a big part of wedding transportation involves logistics, in other words, how many people can be transported to and from point A to point B and then to point C and how long will it take.

Begin with transporting the bridal party from the place where they will dress to the wedding ceremony. It is customary to transport all women (and girls) involved as well as the bride's parents. If the bridal party is so large that everybody cannot fit into the vehicle, it is possible to make multiple trips provided they are coordinated and discussed with the service provider beforehand. The groom and groomsmen arrange their own transportation to the ceremony and this is not something that typically is contracted out.

After the ceremony, anything goes. Many couples choose to have the entire wedding party transported from the ceremony to the reception, but it's acceptable to transport only the bride and groom, or the bride, groom, best man and maid of honor. If you'll be transporting the whole gang, again, multiple trips or multiple vehicles may be necessary. Once everyone is present and accounted for, the topic of transportation is over.

With that logistical information figured out, you're ready to begin your search. First, double-check the wedding budget worksheet to see how much money has been allocated for transportation. Your options can get pricey. Besides limousines, you can make a grand statement by being transported in a stretch Hummer or SUV, either of which can transport large groups.

Classic or vintage cars are a stylish option. Other ideas include a party bus, a horse-drawn carriage, a boat, a snowmobile, motorcycle and side car, hot air balloon, or anything really that fits in well with the overall theme of the wedding. Of course a personal vehicle is always a fine option and is the least expensive.

Be sure to ask about wedding package deals like a free bottle of champagne, or transportation at the end of the evening. And always carefully review the contract before you sign. Make sure it states date, pick-up times, total costs and payment schedule, any extras you've agreed to, the driver's name and what he or she will wear, and the cancellation/refund policy.

Transportation: Arrive at Your Wedding in Style

Although the bride and groom traditionally arrive at the ceremony in separate vehicles, they travel to the reception together. There are many options that the bride and groom may consider when choosing their transportation to the reception. These options encompass a wide variety of sentiments. They can vary from traditional, to magical and even outrageous. Just a few of the transportation options available for a bride and groom are a limousine, a horse drawn carriage, a motorcycle, a bus or even a sports car.

A limousine is one of the more traditional ways for a bride and groom to arrive at their reception. There is a wide variety of limousines available today including stretch versions of popular sport utility vehicles. The bride and groom may opt for a simple limousine for just the two of them or they may choose to arrive in a stretch sports utility vehicle that can transport the entire wedding party and contains outrageous features such as a hot tub and a dance floor as well as a bar.

Although limousine companies are beginning to offer more outrageous models, the limousine is still considered to be the most traditional way for a bride and groom and their wedding party to arrive at the reception.

A horse drawn carriage is becoming another popular way for a bride and groom to arrive at their wedding reception. This mode of transportation creates a fairy tale image that has a feel of magic. This is a way for the bride and the groom to have an opportunity to spend some time alone in between the ceremony and the reception.

They typically travel in the carriage without the accompaniment of any of the members of the wedding party, so it is a quiet time for the couple to relax together before the excitement of the reception. The other advantage to arriving at the reception in a horse drawn carriage is that the fairy tale connotations make the night seem truly magical.

An adventurous couple may choose to ride a motorcycle to their reception. This unique mode of transportation for a wedding is sure to gain quite a bit of attention. Even people who just happen to be passing by are bound to notice an elegantly dressed bride riding on the back of a motorcycle. One advantage to riding a motorcycle to your wedding reception is that, depending on the policies of the hall, the couple may be able to drive the motorcycle directly into the reception hall as they are introduced to the guests.

A bus is another popular way for the entire wedding party to arrive at the reception. A couple that is interested in getting the party started immediately after the ceremony may opt to rent a bus to transport the entire wedding party from the ceremony to the reception. This is a great way for the couple to have some time to mingle with their closest friends before the reception.

Once the couple arrives at the reception they will have the responsibility of mingling with all of the guests and thanking them for their attendance and may not have time to spend with the wedding party so it is important to have this time just before the reception to spend time with them and thank them for all of their efforts. The other advantage to this option is that it supplies all of the members of the wedding party reliable transportation to the reception and ensures that no one is left behind.

An extravagant sports car is another popular way for the bride and groom to arrive at the reception. Whether it is rented, borrowed or owned by the couple an expensive sports car is always an admired mode of transportation. Most sports cars only seat two passengers so this is an excellent way for the bride and groom to travel to their reception because it gives them the opportunity to spend some quality time together before the chaos of the reception.

They can take a few moments to enjoy each others company and reflect on the preceding ceremony. This short amount of time will be greatly cherished by the bride and the groom.

The bride and groom have a wide assortment of options for arriving at their wedding reception. Each option has its own distinct advantages and disadvantages and it is difficult to compare the options. Choosing a mode of transportation is a personal choice that the couple has to make based on their own preferences.

Accommodating Out of Town Guests

Recently the number of out of town guests attending weddings has been on the rise. Years ago, young people grew up and got married in the town they had lived in all their lives but nowadays couples are attending out of state colleges and accepting jobs far away from their hometown. This travel leads to more and more out of town guests attending weddings as the couple may have friends from their hometown, friends from college and friends from the new area where they live and work.

Wherever the couple opts to get married there are bound to be a number of guests who are traveling from out of state for the occasion. As the attendance of out of town guests is a relatively new phenomenon, there are not many established traditions regarding out of town guests and the couple has some leeway to deal with the situation as they see fit.

It has become commonplace for the couple to reserve a block of rooms at a hotel that is near the wedding location for their out of town guests. Many hotels will offer a discounted rate if you block out a certain number of rooms. Knowing that you can assure the hotel of a number of guests, gives the hotel the ability to offer a lower rate because they are assured a certain number of booked rooms.

Out of town guests will appreciate this gesture because they are receiving a lower rate than they would have found on their own plus they are spared the hassle and inconvenience of trying to find a hotel in an unfamiliar city.

One increasingly popular trend for accommodating out of town guests is to prepare a package featuring brochures and information regarding some of the points of interest in your city and mailing this package out to all of your out of town guests a few weeks before the wedding. Since many out of town guests may try to schedule a vacation around the wedding, this package offers them a good starting point in their research by highlighting some of the tourist attractions in the area. You could also include a listing of local restaurants and personal recommendations for your guests.

Guests who travel from out of town to attend your wedding are making a sacrifice to do so and it is important to let them know that you appreciate the effort they are making to attend your wedding. There are a couple of ways to do this. One way to do this is to find out where your out of town guests will be staying and when they will be arriving. Once you have this information you can prepare a welcome bag for the out of town guests and drop them off at the hotel and instruct the staff to give them to your guests upon their arrival.

As your guest are likely to be tired from their trip, some suggestions for items to include in these welcome bags may include a light snack featuring local specialties and relaxation items such as bath salts and candles. This small gesture really lets your guests know that their presence is appreciated.

Another option to consider for accommodating out of town guests is to include them in the rehearsal dinner. This is a lovely gesture because it sends the message that you are glad that they have traveled to attend your wedding and that you are interested in spending additional time with them.

If it is not economically feasible to include all of your out of town guests at the rehearsal dinner you should consider making another effort to spend some additional time with them such as inviting them over for drinks and hors d'oeuvres or even making a concerted effort to spend quality time with them at the reception. Although the reception can be hectic and virtually fly by, it is important to spend a little extra time with your out of town guests who have made a sacrifice to attend your wedding.

The secret to accommodating your out of town guests is to make every effort to ensure that they know their attendance is greatly appreciated. Small gestures such as reserving a block of hotel rooms or putting together a list of tourist attractions as well as more significant gestures such as preparing welcome baskets and making an extra effort to spend time with your out of town guests all contribute to making your out of town guests feel appreciated and welcomed. It is important to let your out of town guests know that you realize that they have made sacrifices to travel to your wedding and that you appreciate them just for being there.

Wedding Considerations When It is a Second Marriage

Second marriages require a host of issues that differ from the preparations for a first marriage. In addition to all the logistics relating to party plan that plague a first wedding, second time brides and grooms deal with additional issues. Some of these issues include legal issues, determining who pays for the wedding, deciding what type of attire the bride and groom will wear and possibly even dealing with having your own children involved in the process if either of you already have children from a previous marriage.

The most important wedding consideration in a second marriage is the legal documentation. It is imperative that you obtain certifiable proof that you are no longer legally married to another person before you enter into a second marriage. If your previous spouse is deceased a death certificate would serve as proof. If your previous spouse is still alive, you will need to acquire a divorce decree as proof that you are no longer married.

The subject of the cost of the wedding and who bears the financial burden is an important consideration if you are dealing with a second marriage. The bride's parents typically pay for a first marriage but if this is the second marriage for the bride, the parents may not be willing or able to pay for a second wedding. In this situation the couple themselves will usually shoulder the financial burdens of the wedding.

This is not a cause for concern because when the wedding is for a second marriage, the event is usually not as extravagant as a wedding for a first marriage. If the couple is paying for the wedding themselves, they should focus on setting a budget beforehand and ensuring that they do not exceed their budget constraints. However, if this is a second marriage for the groom but the first marriage for the bride, the bride's parents may be excited to help in paying for the wedding. Even though the bride's parents are paying for the wedding, the couple may still opt for a simple wedding that does not put a financial strain on the parents.

The subject of wedding attire is another important consideration when planning a wedding for a second marriage. It's important to remember that although some people may disapprove of a bride wearing white when it is her second marriage it really doesn't matter what others think. The most important thing is that the couple themselves feel comfortable with their choices.

If the bride wants to wear white even though it is her second wedding, she should go ahead and do so. Whether the couple chooses to walk down the aisle in traditional wedding attire or jeans and sneakers is completely up to them. They should not let the potential of disapproval by others affect their attire choices.

If either the bride or groom has children from a previous relationship, the couple will have to deal with issues relating to the children. The couple will want to discuss their wedding plans with the children early in their engagement to give the children plenty of time to adjust to the idea that their parent will be remarrying. It's important that you inform your ex-spouse of your wedding plans at the same time as your children so that you are not putting your child in the difficult situation of keep a secret from their other parent.

Once your child has been informed of the wedding plans, discuss the planning with them and ask them how much they would like to be involved. If they are not comfortable with the plans they may not want to be too involved initially but this may change once the planning starts to get more exciting.

Children can be involved in the wedding in a number of ways. Depending on their age they can serve as flower girls and ring bearers or bridesmaids and groomsmen. Children can also play a role in the planning process by helping with decorations, favors and decisions that need to be made. The more involved they are, the less likely they are to feel left out and resentful about the wedding.

Planning a wedding that is a second marriage for either or both members of the couple involves a few extra precautions and issues. Having your legal documentation proving that you are no longer married is the most important issue in a second marriage. Beyond that other issues relate to finances, attire and children.

The Official Business that Goes Along with Marriage

Weddings are many things. They're fun, they're expensive, they require a lot of planning, but a wedding is also first and foremost a legal matter. And as such, there are steps the couple must take so that the union is recognizable in the eyes of the law. They'll need a marriage license, but before that, the bride must make an important decision--to take her future husband's surname or continue to use her maiden name.

You'd think that a name was just a name and changing it wouldn't be such a big deal, but it really is. During previous generations whether or not a woman changed her last name was something that wasn't given a second thought. The woman took her husband's name and that was that. But recently, women have challenged this tradition. There is no law that says a woman's last name must change in marriage, so really this decision is a matter of personal choice.

For those women who do opt to change their last names, the process to change isn't difficult, but it can be time-consuming. Besides making the change with the federal Social Security Administration, which really where it all begins, a woman must also change the name on her driver's license and registration, her credit card accounts, her bank and other financial/insurance related documents, utilities, property deeds, clubs at which she is a member, and at her place of employment--not only for Human Resource and income tax purposes, but so that a new email address and new business cards can be created.

And while you're going through the process of changing your name, you might want to consider changing your address, too. You've just got to double-check the timing. If it doesn't work out right, you can pick up a change of address kit easily enough and complete this when you return from the honeymoon. It's not really necessary to begin the process of changing your name until about 2 weeks before your wedding, so do whatever makes most sense.

One other aspect of the name change process that requires careful timing is planning your honeymoon. You might be better off making your reservations using your maiden name if you won't have official identification (or an updated passport) with your new name ready before you leave. You don't want to experience any unnecessary delays.

When dealing with the marriage license, be sure to check the requirements in your state of residence ahead of time. Each state will vary with some states requiring one or more witnesses and others requiring blood tests and/or physical exams, and others requiring something else such as a waiting period.

Regardless of the state, expect to pay for a marriage license. Costs will range from a low of \$25 to a high of \$100 or more. You'll both need to be present and you'll likely need to bring a birth certificate and proper identification.

Then breathe a sigh of relief, because you're almost there!

Crunch Time: 1 Week to Wedding Day

The final week before your wedding day can be a stressful time filled with many details that need to be confirmed. Some of the last minute details that need to be completed in the week before your wedding include confirming the details of your honeymoon, packing for your honeymoon, giving the caterer a final count for the number of guests, confirm details with the photographer, florist, DJ or band and the limousine driver.

If the couple is hosting the rehearsal dinner, now is also the time to confirm these arrangements. It's important to attend to all of these tasks but it is also important to take some time to get some rest and relaxation as well. If you have friends and family members who are willing to help out, you can delegate many of these tasks to reduce the stress of the final week before your wedding.

As your wedding day approaches it is important to begin making preparations for your honeymoon. Early in the week before your wedding you will want to confirm all of your honeymoon arrangements such as transportation, hotels and any other special plans you have made for your honeymoon destination such as excursions, dinner reservations or lessons.

You may also want to pack for your honeymoon during this time to prevent you from feeling overwhelmed and trying to pack the day before or even the day of your wedding. Getting the packing out of the way early will help to alleviate any concerns you have over being prepared for the honeymoon and gives you something to look forward to. If you procrastinate with your packing you may find yourself dreading even talking about your honeymoon because doing so

makes you realize that you are not yet prepared for the honeymoon.

Most caterers also require a final count for the number of guest in the week preceding your wedding. If all of your guests have not yet responded to your invitation, you might want to consider calling them instead of assuming that they will not be coming to the wedding. These phone calls can save you the embarrassment of not being prepared for additional guests. Having a confirmed response from all of your invited guests will ensure that you give the caterer an accurate number of guests.

Now is also the time to confirm the final details with all of your service providers such as your photographer, florist, DJ or band and transportation provider. It's important to confirm details such as times and expectations to ensure that there are no misunderstandings and that you will have all of the services that you are expecting at your wedding. You might also want to make arrangements to pay your balances with each of these providers if you have previously only left a deposit.

While you may be hesitant to provide payment in full before the service is rendered and most of these services providers don't require you to do so, you could make arrangements to leave the balance with a responsible friend or family member who will ensure that they are all paid on the wedding day. Many of these agencies will only accept cash or certified checks so you will have to provide the balance in either of these forms in individual envelopes to your trusted friend.

The rehearsal dinner is usually held the night before the wedding so it is important to confirm the details of the rehearsal dinner in the final week before the wedding. Whether the couple themselves is hosting the dinner or another person is taking on the responsibilities of the event, it is still necessary to confirm all of the details such as time, location and number of guests.

Also, since the couple typically uses the rehearsal dinner to thank their parents, the wedding party and anyone else who has supported them in the wedding planning, now would be the time to plan out exactly what you plan to say during this offering of thanks. While it is important to speak from the heart, it's also important to make sure that no one who has really gone out of their way to assist the couple is left out of the thank you speech.

Finally, while there are many details that require your attention in the final week before your wedding it is also important to take some time for yourself and do something that you consider relaxing. Whether you go to a spa to get a massage or spend an evening at the movies, it's important to take some time to just relax before your wedding day to ensure that you are not completely frazzled by the time your wedding day arrives.

The final week before a wedding can be extremely harried and filled with last minute details but it is important to take some time to relax during this week. It's important to ensure that everything is in place for the wedding and that nothing is overlooked but it's also important to remain calm and not get caught up in the details of the wedding. Allowing yourself some relaxation time will ensure that you are well prepared for your wedding and that you have fully enjoyed the planning process.

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