

*A Guide to
Australian Weddings*

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Contents

Engagements	1
Announcements	1
The engagement ring.....	2
Engagement parties and teas.....	3
Thankyou card etiquette	6
Breaking an engagement, postponing or cancelling a wedding.....	6
Weddings	8
Religion and the law.....	8
Name changes.....	9
Civil ceremonies	9
Religious ceremonies	10
Paying for the ceremony	10
Subsequent marriages.....	10
Who pays?	12
Invitations.....	13
Replying to the invitation.....	16
Wedding presents	17



Who is responsible for what?.....	20
The bridesmaids	20
The best man, groomsmen and ushers.....	21
The mother of the bride.....	24
The father of the bride	25
Divorced parents	25
The wedding ring	27
What to wear.....	28
Wedding gowns	29
Accessories	32
Clothes for the groom, parents and attendants.....	34
Buying, hiring or making.....	36
Flowers.....	38
Bridal party.....	39
Ceremony	39
Reception.....	40
Music.....	42
The wedding cake.....	45



Mementos.....	46
Before the wedding.....	49
Wedding checklist.....	51
Wedding day countdown.....	53
The ceremony.....	54
Reception.....	56
The venue.....	56
Seating.....	60
Who does what when?	61
The master of ceremonies.....	61
The receiving line	66
Speeches and toasts.....	67
Hints on speech-making.....	68
The toast to the bride and groom	69
Groom's response and toast to the bridesmaids	69
Best man's response on behalf of the bridesmaids	70
A toast to the bride's parents.....	70
Response by the bride's father.....	70
A toast to the groom's parents.....	71



Response by the groom's father.....	71
Telegrams	72
Cutting the cake.....	72
The bridal waltz.....	72
Going away.....	75
Anniversaries	76

Engagements

Announcements

When announcing your engagement, traditionally the woman's family is told first, then the man's. Close friends and relatives should also be told the news before any official announcement. Once closest friends and family members have been informed, many couples now use technology to spread the happy news. Couples may also like to place an announcement in the newspaper. An announcement is normally in the name of the bride's parents:

*Ricciotti–McBride: Mr and Mrs P Ricciotti of Ocean Grove
are pleased to announce the engagement
of their daughter Francesca to David,
eldest son of Mr and Mrs J McBride of Geelong.*

If a parent is dead, divorced or has remarried, you may alter the wording accordingly:

*Ricciotti–McBride: Mr and Mrs P Ricciotti of Ocean Grove
are pleased to announce the engagement
of their daughter Francesca to David,
eldest son of Mrs C and the late Mr J McBride of Geelong.*

Or:

*Ricciotti–McBride: Mr and Mrs P Ricciotti of Ocean Grove
are pleased to announce the engagement
of their daughter Francesca to David,
eldest son of Mr J McBride of Geelong and Mrs A Townsend of Perth.*

If this is a second engagement, the following announcement is appropriate:

*Francesca Ricciotti of Ocean Grove and David McBride of Geelong
are pleased to announce their engagement.*

The engagement ring

A diamond is the traditional stone for engagement rings, but many people prefer a different stone. Generally the woman chooses the ring and the man pays for it, and some brides-to-be may also wish to buy an engagement gift for their fiancé. It makes sense to choose an affordable engagement ring, considering the expenses facing you both in the future. And remember, with luck you will be wearing the ring for the rest of your life, so choose a setting that is sturdy and not too elaborate.

Engagement parties and teas

The people you invite to your engagement party don't necessarily have to be the ones you invite to the wedding. If they are invited to both the wedding and the engagement party, some people will feel that they have to buy you two presents—that is acceptable if it is to be a long engagement. Or you may specify on the invitation that guests needn't bring a gift to the engagement party.

The engagement party is usually hosted by the bride-to-be's parents, although many couples choose to put on their own party with perhaps parents on either side contributing to catering and/or alcohol costs.

Kitchen teas or bridal showers are usually held for the female friends of the bride-to-be and should be fairly informal. These parties were designed to help the bride stock particular areas of the home, such as the kitchen, with basic utensils. Now they are more an excuse to make cucumber sandwiches, bring out the good china and have a glass of bubbly or two with good friends.



Thank-you card etiquette

Each guest who gives you an engagement present should receive a thank-you card as soon as possible (and so, of course, should the giver of every wedding present). You may have thank-you cards printed, perhaps with a picture from the wedding or engagement party; however, inside the message should be hand-written. People who have gone to the trouble and expense of buying a gift deserve your time and attention.

Breaking an engagement, postponing or cancelling a wedding

If invitations have already been sent out and for some reason you must cancel your wedding, all guests must be notified. If there is enough time, arrange for a printed card to be sent; if not, a simple hand-written note will suffice. You need give no reason or explanation for cancelling:

Mr and Mrs John Pascoe announce that the marriage of their daughter Sophie will not take place.

If there is very little time, phone calls and/or email may be necessary. If presents have been received, they should be returned with the notification. Although the ring legally belongs to the woman, it is good manners to return it.

The same rules apply for postponing a wedding, although you may like to add a brief explanation:

*Mr and Mrs John Pascoe regret that due to illness they must postpone
the wedding of their daughter Sophie
on Saturday 18 September until Saturday 20 November at 4.00 pm.*



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Weddings

Religion and the law

In Australia, you can marry at the age of eighteen. If you are younger, you will need the consent of your parents, or a magistrate, or both. You must notify the marriage celebrant no earlier than three months and no later than one month plus one day before the proposed date of the marriage. As well as the Notice of Intended Marriage form (which you can download from <http://www.australia.gov.au/296>), you need to show the celebrant your birth certificates and, if you have been married before, the final decree of your divorce or the death certificate of your spouse.



A Declaration of Marriage must also be signed before the wedding and the marriage must be witnessed by at least two

people (as well as the celebrant) who are over the age of eighteen. Apart from that, you can marry on any day of the week at any time and place.

Name changes

Today more women choose to keep their own name rather than taking their husband's when they marry. If you do not wish to change your name, you do not have to take any special action although, to avoid confusion with family, friends and business colleagues, you may wish to make a brief formal announcement or clarify the issue when you send out thank-you letters with your own signature at the bottom.

Civil ceremonies

Civil ceremonies include everything from weddings in registry offices to those on mountain tops. The former are the easiest and least expensive, but if you want an unusual wedding you will almost certainly be able to find a celebrant who will oblige. Celebrants are listed with the Attorney General's Department and in the Yellow Pages.

When deciding on a celebrant, you should first make an appointment to discuss the type of wedding you would like—you are free to make it as simple or as elaborate as you wish—and decide if he or she is the sort of person you want to lead the ceremony. The celebrant should handle all the official paperwork involved in registering the marriage.

Religious ceremonies

Each religion has its own special requirements, so contact your religious representative early and arrange to discuss the service and any prerequisites, such as classes or counselling.

Paying for the ceremony

Any fees for the ceremony should be paid before the wedding day or by the best man on the day of the wedding. Ask the celebrant what is the preferred payment method.

Subsequent marriages

If one or both of you is divorced and you wish to have a religious wedding, you will have to consult your religious

representative to see if the institution has any objections to divorced people marrying. Registry office and civil celebrants do not discriminate against divorcees.

Discuss the financial arrangements with each other and your family. No family should be expected to finance two weddings; however, if one party has never married before, or if your family would like to contribute, then they may wish to pay for some or all of the costs. Normally, with subsequent marriages the bride and groom share the costs.

As for a bride walking down the aisle in a traditional white wedding dress the second time, it is your day—so wear whatever you and your partner want, be it white, black or coloured.

Widowed people who wish to remarry face no exceptional legal requirements; however, there are certain rules of etiquette that they may wish to follow: they should remove original wedding rings before the ceremony, and if the bride took her first husband's name she should marry under that name.

Who pays?

Different people have different ideas about who pays for what at weddings, but traditionally the bride's family pays for almost everything. Of course there are many different arrangements in practice, and today some couples may wish to pay for their own wedding or at least contribute to the costs.

As a guideline, the bride's parents have traditionally paid for: the wedding invitations, announcements, photographs, the ceremony (fees for celebrant, church, musicians, decorations, and so on), bridesmaids' bouquets, transport for the bridal party to the wedding ceremony and from there to the reception, and all the costs of the reception (rental, food, drinks, music, flowers, decorations, etc.).

The bridegroom pays for: the bride's ring and wedding gift, the marriage licence, the bride's bouquet, corsages for both mothers, and buttonholes for the best man, groomsmen and fathers.

The bride pays for: gifts for the groom and bridal attendants, accommodation for the bridesmaids if the wedding is some

distance from their homes, and the bridesmaids' dresses if she wants a style that they are unlikely to be able to wear again (if not, the bridesmaids usually pay for their own dresses).



Invitations

The bride's family should draw up the invitation list, incorporating a guest list supplied by the groom and his parents. This can then be used as a checklist of who has accepted or declined the invitation. All the invitations, in the

name of the bride's parents, should be sent out at the same time, about six weeks before the wedding.

If her parents are divorced or one or both are dead, issue the invitations in the name of the parent who brought up the bride or the surviving parent or the parent hosting the wedding. Alternatively, invitations can be issued in the name of the bride and groom. A traditional invitation is worded as follows:

*Mr and Mrs P Ricciotti
request the pleasure of
the company of*

*at the marriage of their daughter
Francesca to David McBride
at St John's Church, Geelong,
on Saturday 20 November at 4.00 pm
and afterwards at 'Fotheringay',
Mallop Street, Geelong.*

*15 Fairview Street
Ocean Grove*

*RSVP
20 October*

If the bride's parents have remarried and are going to host the wedding together, the first line would change to:

Mrs G Shaw and Mr P Ricciotti

If only one remarried parent (with present husband or wife) hosts the wedding:

*Mr and Mrs G Shaw
request the pleasure of
the company of*

*at the marriage of
her daughter ...*

If only one parent is hosting the wedding:

*Mrs P Ricciotti
requests the pleasure of
the company of*

*at the marriage of
her daughter ...*

If the bride and groom are hosting the wedding themselves, then the wording changes to:

*The pleasure of
the company of*

*is requested at the marriage of
Francesca Ricciotti
with
David McBride*

Many couples like to personalise their invitation, adding quotes or poems. Always consult with the hosts of the wedding before deciding on the wording and format of the invitation.

Replying to the invitation

Guests should reply to wedding invitations as quickly as possible so that seating and catering can be arranged. Formal invitations are answered in the third person:

*Mr and Mrs A Cornwell accept with pleasure
Mr and Mrs Ricciotti's invitation to the marriage*

*of their daughter Francesca to David McBride at
St John's Church, Geelong, on Saturday 20 November
at 4.00 pm and afterwards at 'Fotheringay', Mallop Street, Geelong.*

If you cannot attend, reply promptly and include a reason. If, after you've accepted an invitation, circumstances prevent you from attending, you should notify your hosts immediately by letter or telephone.

Wedding presents

Traditionally, wedding presents were intended to help the couple set up house together, and they still serve the same purpose for many couples. If the couple has been living together for some time or it is a second wedding for one or both parties, choose your present accordingly—rather than something practical, which they may already have, you might choose a luxury item or something ornamental. Many bridal couples indicate on their wedding invitation that, instead of presents, guests may contribute money via a wishing tree, which allows the purchase of a large household item, such as a home entertainment system or white goods.