

Bridal

GUIDE

Checklist List
Plan in advanced for
a perfect wedding PG 7

Budget Planner
Easily manage your
wedding expenses PG 2

2015

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Once wedding vows and rings have been exchanged, many couples join their friends and family to celebrate with a wedding reception. Many brides and grooms eagerly await the moment when they can make their grand entrance to the reception, and over the years it has become customary for couples to make a bit of a splash when making their first appearance as husband and wife. Some enter with a special song. Others prefer something a bit more theatrical. Explore these ideas for memorable wedding reception entrances.

Catch guests by surprise. Wedding guests will probably expect the wedding party to enter through a certain door and the bride and groom to follow afterward. An element of surprise, such as the couple rising from the floor or appearing from a different area in the reception hall, may not require a lot of planning but can have a dramatic effect. Unpredictable entrances also include unexpected song



Creative ways to make a grand entrance

choices or dramatic lighting to immediately draw everyone's attention.

Stick to one or two songs. Some couples think it might be fun to have each member of the wedding party enter with a different song. Not only will this take a lot of coordination on the part of the deejay, but it can make the entrance choppy as well. Introductions may go more smoothly if couples have the entire wedding party enter to a particular song that revs up the crowd and gets them excited for the grand entrance. At the height of the song, the bride and groom will enter. The entrance typically segues into a couple's first dance.

Go with people's strengths. A couple may want to showcase special skills as they enter the reception hall. There's no limit to what couples can do, from acrobatic techniques to tap dancing to juggling. If it's entertaining, it very well may prove memorable.

Make sure everyone is on board. Couples should recognize that some members of the wedding party may be uncomfortable acting like clowns in front of a crowd. Do not force anyone to participate in crazy antics if they do not want to. Find things each member of a wedding party feels comfortable

doing. Couples may want their bridal party members to enter in a more traditional way before the newlyweds do something more dramatic and humorous.

Include the entrance in your planning. If you want to follow a certain theme, such as "Star Wars" or "Mission Impossible," coordinate in advance with a deejay or band members. Talk about what, if any, props you plan to use and the type of music that will be playing. If entrances involve choreography, be certain to practice in advance of the wedding so everything will work out well and look professional. However, even stunts that go awry can be entertaining and funny for guests.

Low-key entrances are acceptable, too. Couples who aren't into much fanfare should not feel pressured to make an entrance with a dance routine or to have any stunning visual effects. If you want a low-key introduction, arrange for such an entrance with the emcee.

Wedding entrances are what a couple makes of them, and they can run the gamut from traditional introductions to theatrical skits and dance routines.

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Budget Planner

As a general guideline, allow approximately 50 percent of your budget to the reception, then 10 percent each to flowers, photography, attire and music. The last 10 percent goes to stationery, favors & misc. items.

CEREMONY & RECEPTION

	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Ceremony Location Fee	_____	_____
Officiate's Fee	_____	_____
Marriage License Fee	_____	_____
Reception Site Fee	_____	_____
Cake & Cutting Fee	_____	_____
Food & Service	_____	_____
Beverages	_____	_____
Bartender	_____	_____
Transportation	_____	_____
Reception Rentals	_____	_____

ATTIRE & ACCESSORIES

	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Groom's Tuxedo/Suit	_____	_____
Bride's Gown	_____	_____
Accessories	_____	_____
Headpiece/Veil	_____	_____
Groom's Accessories	_____	_____
Hair/Makeup	_____	_____
Bride's & Groom's Rings	_____	_____
Dress Alterations	_____	_____

FLOWERS & DECORATIONS

	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Ceremony Flowers	_____	_____
Ceremony Decorations	_____	_____
Reception Flowers	_____	_____
Reception Decorations	_____	_____
Bride's Bouquet	_____	_____
Groom's Boutonniere	_____	_____
Wedding Party Bouquets	_____	_____
Wedding Party Boutonnieres	_____	_____
Parents/Grandparents	_____	_____
Special People	_____	_____

MUSIC

	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Reception Band/DJ	_____	_____
Cocktail Hour Music	_____	_____
Ceremony Musicians	_____	_____

STATIONERY

	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Announcements	_____	_____
Save-the-date Cards	_____	_____
Invitations & Envelopes	_____	_____
Reply Cards	_____	_____
Postage	_____	_____
Programs	_____	_____
Setting & Place Cards	_____	_____
Other Stationery	_____	_____

TRANSPORTATION & LODGING

	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Wedding Night Hotel Room	_____	_____
Guest Shuttle	_____	_____
Limo/Car Rental	_____	_____

PHOTOGRAPHY

	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Photographer's Fee	_____	_____
Engagement Portrait	_____	_____
Videographer Fee	_____	_____
Additional Services	_____	_____

GIFTS & FAVORS

	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Wedding Party Gifts	_____	_____
Parents' Gift	_____	_____
Favors	_____	_____
Ring Pillow	_____	_____
Unity Candle	_____	_____
Guest Book	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____

TOTAL COST

--	--

TOTAL COST

--	--

A couple's wedding day is often a whirlwind for the bride- and groom-to-be. Happy couples hope to remember every little detail, but that can be difficult when so much is going on. That is why many brides and grooms hire videographers to preserve the memories of their weddings.

Couples who fail to capture their ceremony and reception on film may feel like they missed out once their big day has come and gone. As a result, a professional videographer can be a wise investment.

Today's wedding videos have come a long way from their poorly produced predecessors. Gone are the potentially cheesy soundbites and elevator music. Many of today's videos are artfully edited and highly cinematic productions that could have couples wishing they were viewing videos in theaters. The following are some wedding video trends popular among today's couples.

Brief clips and highlights:

Few people want to sit through their entire wedding day frame-by-frame. Montages of key elements of the day are much more popular



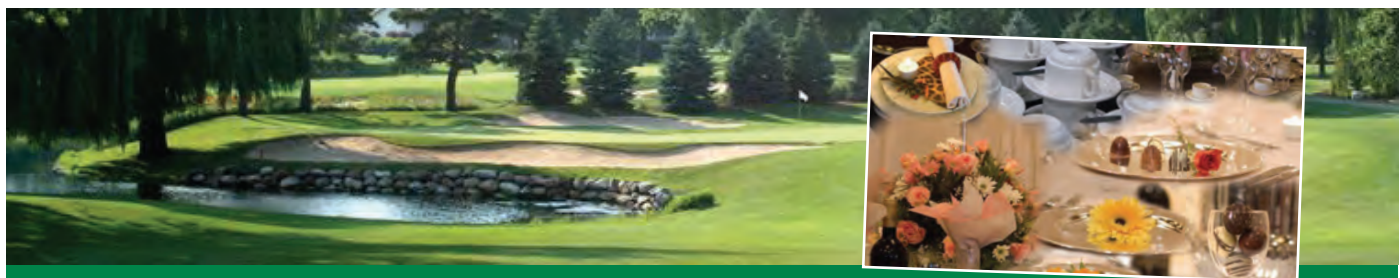
than a chronological unfolding of the ceremony and reception. Some videographers like to show snippets of what's to come at the start of the wedding video, then go into more extensive segments later on.

Special filters or film: Filters and lighting effects can give a wedding video an entirely different feel. For example, filming in 8mm can lend a grainy touch to the video and make it seem ethereal or even part of a home movie collection. However, few people want the stark reality of a high-definition camera that highlights every flaw.

Film chapters: Dividing segments of the video into different chapters allows viewers to fast forward to the parts they want to see and pass those they can skip. This saves the hassle of having to watch the video in its entirety. ▶

Modern trends in wedding

Videography



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Photography

— CHECKLIST —

PRE-CEREMONY

- Bride Looking in Mirror
- Mom Helping Bride with Veil
- Bride and Mom and Dad Separately
- Bride and Parents
- Bride & Siblings
- Bride & Family
- Bride & Bridesmaids
- Bride & Maid/Matron of Honor
- Bride Portrait Alone
- Groom and Mom & Dad Separately
- Groom and Parents
- Groom & Siblings
- Groom & Family
- Groom and Groomsmen
- Groom and Best Man
- Groom Portrait Alone

FORMALS

- Bride's Parents Alone
- Groom's Parents Alone
- Signing of Marriage License
- Bride, Groom, & Bride's Siblings
- Bride, Groom, & Bride's Family
- Bride, Groom, & Bride's Parents
- Bride, Groom, & Groom's Siblings
- Bride, Groom, & Groom's Family
- Bride, Groom, & Groom's Parents
- Bride, Groom, Best Man & Maid of Honor
- Bride & Groomsmen
- Groom & Bridesmaids
- Bride, Groom, & Entire Wedding Party
- Bride, Groom, & Bride's Grandparents
- Bride, Groom, & Groom's Grandparents
- Close-up of Rings

CEREMONY

- Grandparents Being Seated
- Parents Being Seated
- Parents Lighting Candles
- Bridesmaids/Couples Entering
- Bride Being Escorted Down Aisle
- Groom Waiting for Bride
- Bride Being Given Away
- Readers
- Exchange of Vows/Kiss
- Lighting of the Unity Candle
- Bride & Groom Coming Down Aisle
- Couples in Wedding Party Exiting
- Receiving Line/Dismissal of Guests

RECEPTION

- Cake/Cutting of Cake
- Bride & Groom Feeding Each Other Cake
- Best Man Making Toast
- Maid of Honor Making Toast
- Group Photo of Each Table
- Bride & Groom's First Dance
- Attendants' Dance
- Father/Daughter Dance
- Bride Tossing Bouquet
- Groom Removing & Tossing Garter

Cinematic styling: Instead of a stationary camera on a tripod, this method of filming incorporates different angles and close-up shots to give the video a modern feel. It's shot more like a movie than a documentary, allowing viewers to feel as though they're really experiencing the event.

Artistic, indy feel: Film buffs may want a wedding video that breaks the mold. Ask videographers to create something that would fit in at the Sundance or Tribeca film festivals.

Same-day editing: Want to revisit the ceremony at your wedding reception? Some videographers will edit portions of the ceremony and preparations for the big day in the time between the ceremony and reception. This gives all guests, including those who may not have been able to make the ceremony, the chance to view the nuptials.

Unobtrusive technology: This trend relates to the equipment used to capture wedding memories rather than the actual finished product. No one wants their view of the ceremony or reception to be marred by a big, bulky camera. Smaller video cameras enable videographers to seamlessly blend in and perhaps capture shots that larger cameras could not.

Preserving wedding memories takes on new meaning when couples explore the growing trends in wedding videos.

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Hot trends in wedding cuisine

Once a couple has officially tied the knot, the newly recognized man and wife and all of their guests will retire to a party room where they can mingle, dance and enjoy a good meal.

In the past, standard fare like prime rib and roasted chicken dominated wedding menus. But today's weddings cater to people of various culinary tastes, and couples and their guests can expect more upscale and creative cuisine to be rolled out for wedding receptions. The following are a handful of the more popular trends with regard to wedding cuisine.

Miniature bites

Many people say good things come in small packages, and when it comes to miniature versions of favorite foods, they may be right. Instead of large meals that fill guests up fast, they can munch

on smaller bites of their favorite dishes. How about a piece of meatloaf topped with whipped mashed potatoes? A cherry tomato with a small piece of mozzarella cheese makes a mini caprese salad. Turning favorite foods into bite-sized adventures can add a touch of whimsy to the reception.

Breakfast for dinner

Some couples are circumventing high price tags for their weddings by choosing to hold the festivities at less expensive times of day. Brunch-themed weddings are a big hit with those who would much rather dine on a stack of pancakes than a dish of pasta. Omelet stations, croissants and a bevy of other breakfast table fare can be enjoyed any time of the day.

Gourmet comfort food

People love familiar comfort

foods, but now gourmet comfort foods are shaking up wedding receptions. Mac-and-cheese with gouda and brie or chicken pot pie with a puff-pastry crust are a few offerings that can add glamour to down-home cooking.

Food with a show

Instead of passed foods or buffet stations, couples are opting to make food an experience for guests. An oyster bar with a chef serving fresh seafood or a dessert master whipping up flambé is a feast for the eyes and mouth.

Interesting buffet stations

Keep guests on their toes with various meal stations. A bountiful display of artisanal cheeses, fruits and breads will be a cheese lover's dream.

Family style

Rustic and informal weddings have

grown in popularity. Rather than food being brought to the guests or participants lining up in buffet lines, family-style dining allows guests to share conversation and pass the peas at the same time. Larger, rectangular tables allow more guests to sit with one another and serve themselves food from community plates located in the center of the tables.

Nontraditional 'fake' cakes

Instead of a multi-tiered cake or the cupcake fad that is starting to fizzle, couples are now opting for something new. Desserts that mimic the look of cake, but aren't quite that combination of sponge and frosting are trending. Crepes, pies, cookies, and doughnuts are acceptable and can add a creative spark to the cake-cutting ceremony. When offered along with dessert stations, guests can certainly get their fill of sweet delights.

Vegan and gluten-free options

Chances are one or more people attending the reception will be on a restricted diet. Rather than relegate these guests to dining on side dishes and patchwork meals, certain couples are building entire offerings around vegan and gluten-free foods.

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Checklist for a perfect wedding

12-18 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- Research
- Select your date
- Choose the style of wedding
- Determine your budget
- Consider hiring a wedding consultant
- Research & book ceremony & reception sites
- Book caterer & choose menu
- Choose bridal party members
- Compile a guest list, gather addresses
- Interview vendors
- Book photographer & videographer

9-12 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- Order wedding cake
- Order dress, veil, shoes & accessories
- Order bridesmaids' dresses & shoes
- Plan honeymoon & make reservations
- Arrange for time off work
- Research a wedding insurance policy
- Book florist

6-9 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- Have engagement photo taken
- Send engagement announcement to newspaper
- Have an engagement party
- Reserve any rental equipment needed
- Select color scheme
- Book wedding singer/musicians
- Order invitations, announcements, programs, napkins and stationery
- Order unity candle
- Reserve accommodation for out-of-town guests

3-6 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- Choose favors
- Purchase or reserve groom's attire

- Choose groomsmen, flower girl, and ring bearer attire
- Plan new living arrangements
- Book a room for wedding day
- Arrange transportation for wedding
- Choose and order wedding rings and engraving

2-3 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- Purchase gifts for wedding party
- Check state/county marriage license requirements
- Complete guest list
- Mail invitations
- Have a wedding shower
- Attend premarital counseling
- Discuss service with officiate
- Schedule rehearsal time & rehearsal dinner
- Renew or get passports
- Give photographer "must take" photo list
- Deliver song list to DJ
- Write your own vows, if you choose
- Choose your readings for ceremony
- Try out makeup and hairstyle

2 WEEKS IN ADVANCE

- Give caterer final head count
- Begin seating chart, write place cards
- Write toasts for rehearsal dinner
- Address announcements
- Review final RSVP list - call unaccounted for guests
- Final fitting for groomsmen

1 WEEK IN ADVANCE

- Finalize seating arrangements
- Pick up dress
- Confirm last-minute details with each vendor
- Get your marriage license
- Confirm honeymoon arrangements
- Pack for honeymoon

- Buy a guest book
- Have ceremony programs printed
- Notify post office of address change
- Prepare name change document
- Contact newspaper regarding announcements
- Confirm details with bridesmaids
- Confirm details with groomsmen
- Attend bachelor/bachelorette parties
- Get last pre-wedding haircuts
- Have final gown fitting

2-3 DAYS IN ADVANCE

- Have your gown pressed or steamed
- Groom: final fitting, pick up tux
- Check that groomsmen have picked up attire
- Determine wedding party positions during ceremony and during recessional/processional
- Give place cards, etc. to

- reception site
- 1 DAY IN ADVANCE**
- Pack a ceremony/emergency bag
- Attend rehearsal / rehearsal dinner
- Present attendants with gifts
- Give marriage license to officiate
- Confirm all transportation for ceremony/reception
- Have a manicure and pedicure
- Prepare checks still due to vendors

WEDDING DAY

- Present each other with gifts
- Give wedding bands to best man/maid of honor
- Take it all in and enjoy your day!

POST-WEDDING

- Prearrange for someone to return rental
- Designate someone to return tuxedo
- Have bride's gown taken to be cleaned
- Drop off your bouquet for preservation
- Deliver thank you notes to vendors

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Wedding day checklist

survival kit

No matter how many wedding magazines or planners you read, you are bound to forget some aspect of your planning. Remember all the last minute things you might need for your big day.

FIRST AID

- Bandages
- Painkillers
- Sleeping Pills
- Antacids
- Eye Drops
- Tampons
- Pepto-Bismol

BEAUTY

- Hair Pins
- Lip Gloss/Chap Stick
- Dental Floss
- Tissues
- Concealer
- Tweezers
- Nail File
- Powder
- Perfume

- Cotton Swabs
- Hand Lotion
- Small Mirror
- Dryer Sheets
- Razors
- Vaseline
- Hand Sanitizer
- Q-Tips
- Baby Powder

'OH NO' MOMENTS

- Clear nail polish (for stocking runs)
- Hem Tape
- Small Sewing Kit
- Safety Pins
- Crazy Glue
- Extra Panty Hose
- Lint Roller

FOOD/DRINKS

- Bottle of water
- Champagne
- Mints/Breath spray
- Banana or Granola Bars

EXTRAS

- _____
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Popular and modern first dance songs

A couple's first dance as man and wife is a cherished wedding tradition. While the first dance can help set a positive tone for the reception, it also can negatively impact the festivities if a poor song is chosen.

Couples may feel pressure to choose the perfect song. Yes, this is a song that the couple has selected to represent their love for each other, but it also should be one that will speak to the masses and can be thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Couples want to avoid a song that does not seem to fit with the festivities. For those couples who need a little musical inspiration, turn to many of the modern hits you're bound to hear on the radio which may help you to shine in that first dance.

Music

- Prelude Song _____
- Processional Song _____
- Ceremony Song _____
- Recessional Song _____
- Music During Cocktail Hour _____
- Music During Cocktail Hour _____
- Bride & Groom Entrance _____
- Wedding Party Entrance _____
- Bride & Groom First Dance _____
- Bridal Party Dance _____
- Father/Daughter Dance _____
- Mother/Son Dance _____
- Cake Cutting _____
- Favorite dance songs _____

Do NOT play list



A Thousand Years
by Christina Perri:
"Twi-hard" fans enjoyed this romantic song during the pivotal wedding scene between Bella Swan and Edward Cullen in the popular "Twilight" movie "Breaking Dawn." Couples looking to recreate the magic of these star-crossed lovers can embrace Perri's delicate tone and tender lyrics.



Better Together
by Jack Johnson:
Johnson is known primarily for his soft rock and acoustic guitar work blended with catchy lyrics. Also an accomplished surfer, Johnson's work is enjoyed by many but may be especially prized by couples who want to their reception to be a laid back affair full of fun and whimsy.



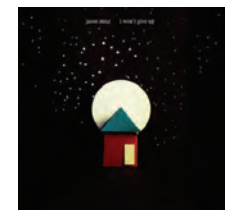
I Don't Dance
by Lee Brice:
Speaking of country influences, couples who want a little twang in their first dances can choose Brice's breakthrough hit. Romantic lyrics about spinning his partner around in circles despite not liking to dance illustrates what one partner will do for the other when in love.



All of Me
by John Legend: It's been hard to escape this popular love song by R&B artist John Legend. An ode Legend wrote to his wife, this song has quickly become a popular choice for a couple's first dance.



I Choose You
by Sara Bareilles:
This peppy song by singer/songwriter Sara Bareilles is a good choice for couples who prefer being nontraditional. It's faster paced and less sentimental than many other wedding songs.



I Won't Give Up
by Jason Mraz:
Another acoustic ditty, this song has a country influence and talks about not giving up and staying in a relationship for the long haul.

13 songs that make a Grand Entrance

More, Usher
Feel This Moment, Pitbull
featuring Chistina Aguilera
Evacuate The Dance Floor,
Cascada
On The Floor, Jennifer Lopez
featuring Pitbull
Hey Baby (Drop it to the Floor),
Pitbull featuring T-Pain

Crazy In Love, Beyonce
Party Rock Anthem, LMFAO
Good Feeling, Flo Rida
Wild Beats, Tone Loc
Viva La Vida, Cold Play
Sledgehammer, Peter Gabriel
Beautiful Day, U2
Bittersweet Symphony,
Vitamin String Quartet

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Contact list

Role	Contact Name	Phone	Arrival Time
Bride	_____	_____	_____
Groom	_____	_____	_____
Bride's Parents	_____	_____	_____
Groom's Parents	_____	_____	_____
Maid of Honor	_____	_____	_____
Best Man	_____	_____	_____
Bridesmaids	_____	_____	_____
Groomsmen	_____	_____	_____
Ushers	_____	_____	_____
Officiant(s)	_____	_____	_____
Florist	_____	_____	_____
Photographer	_____	_____	_____
Videographer	_____	_____	_____
Hair & Makeup	_____	_____	_____
Reception Hall Manager	_____	_____	_____
Car/Limo Service	_____	_____	_____
DJ Service	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____

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Cake-cutting etiquette

The presentation of the wedding cake marks the culmination of the day's festivities and a final symbol of a happy couple's new partnership. Many people eagerly await the cake as much as they may anticipate catching a glimpse of the bride in her beautiful gown. While the cake in all its finery can be a beautiful sight to behold, a cake can only last so long before its fate as a delicious dessert is sealed.

As is the case with many wedding traditions, there is some established etiquette with regard to cutting and serving wedding cake. If you plan on putting your cake on display, be sure it is made with a frosting and filling that can endure room temperature. Certain creams may sour if not refrigerated, and you do not want anyone becoming ill. If you have your heart set on perishable fillings, keep the cake refrigerated and then have the big reveal right before it is cut.

The cake cutting usually comes near the end of the wedding reception. Schedule the cutting so that older guests or young children can leave without feeling as if they would be offending anyone. The emcee of the evening typically announces the cake cutting, and the band may play a quirky tune or revisit the wedding song while the first slice is being cut.

A bride should hold the cake knife with her right hand, while the groom places his right hand over hers before they proceed to slice down together. If the cake has a foam or cardboard support, be careful not to cut through it. Use a cake server to grab the first piece.

Traditionally the newly

betrothed will feed each other a bite of the cake to symbolize their first meal as a couple. Couples can feed each other a small amount, taking care not to spill any. Many couples no longer embrace the once-popular tradition of smashing cake in each other's faces, but whether or not couples follow this tradition is up to them.

Some couples like to serve their parents a piece of cake. Traditionally the bride should serve the groom's parents and the groom the bride's parents.

If there is a groom's cake, guests may prefer a slice of both cakes. Guests may also want to take home a slice of the groom's cake. Tradition states that a piece of the groom's cake should be presented to an unmarried woman attending the wedding. The woman is not expected to eat the cake, but rather to put it under her pillow. Superstition held that this tradition would help an unmarried woman find a husband. Make arrangements for proper packaging of the groom's cake, so guests can take home a slice if they so desire.

The waitstaff typically handles the slicing of the cake. The uppermost tier is reserved for the couple to save, and the remainder of the cake will be served.

Recognize that not all guests like cake, but it's better to err on the side of caution and have a cake that will feed all of the guests. You also may want to offer a dessert bar for guests who prefer another type of sweet treat. However, this is a luxury, not a necessity.

The cake-cutting ritual at weddings has withstood the test of time, and many couples still prefer to present the cake with fanfare and excitement.

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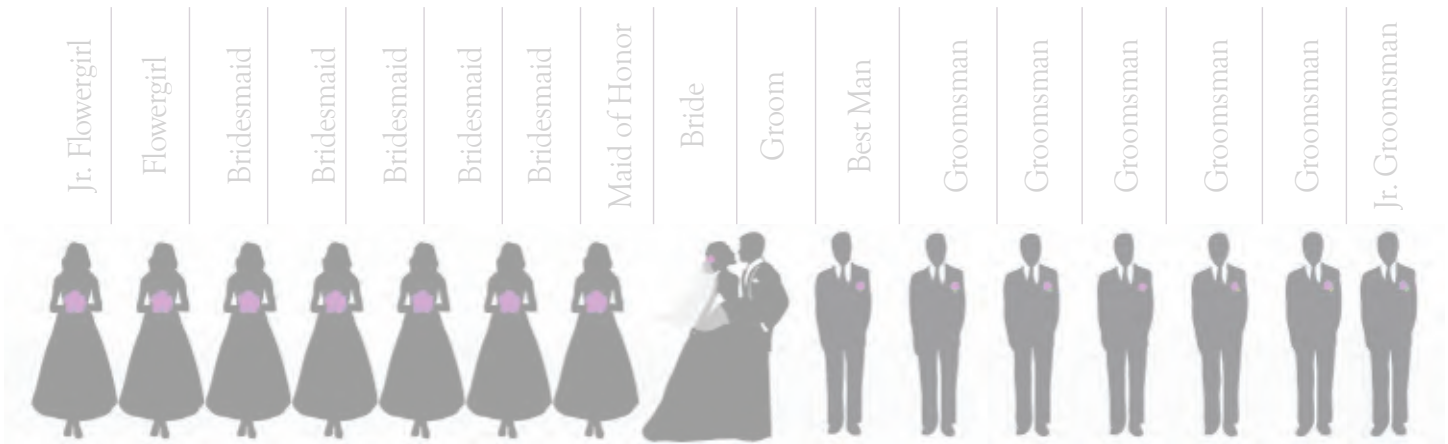
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Wedding Party line-up



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10:00 <i>am</i>	_____
10:30 <i>am</i>	_____
11:00 <i>am</i>	_____
11:30 <i>am</i>	_____
12:00 <i>pm</i>	_____
12:30 <i>pm</i>	_____
1:00 <i>pm</i>	_____
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Hidden expenses

that can sink your wedding budget

In the days of yore, the responsibility of paying for a wedding fell to the bride's parents. But that tradition has largely fallen by the wayside in recent years, when more and more couples have used their own savings to finance their weddings. Few couples enter the process of planning their weddings unaware of just how expensive weddings can get, but costs can easily begin to escalate if couples are not careful.

Couples know that certain wedding expenses, such as the cost of booking a reception hall, will eat up a large portion of their budgets. But there are some hidden expenses that couples must build into their budgets to avoid finding themselves in debt as they walk down the aisle as husband and wife.

Taxes: Sales tax might not seem so significant when you're buying everyday items, but the taxes add up quickly when paying for a wedding. Depending on where you live, state and local sales tax can exceed 9 percent in the United States, and some Canadians pay as much as 15 percent in combined sales taxes depending on where they live. Before signing contracts with any vendors, couples should get the price including sales tax written into their contracts, as failing to do so may result in a several thousand dollar surprise when the time to pay up arrives.

Gratuities: Gratuities are another potentially hefty expense that often takes engaged couples by surprise as they start to plan their weddings. Some reception halls build gratuities for staff into their estimates, and these tips for the staff can be as high as 25 percent at some venues. But even if gratuities for reception hall staff are already accounted for, don't forget to include tips for additional vendors the day of the wedding. Couples may be expected to tip the florist, photographer, band or deejay and even the reception hall maitre d' if his or her gratuity is not included in the aforementioned staff tip. Brides-to-be typically tip their hairstylist and makeup artist on the day of the wedding as well.

Postage: Couples who plan to invite guests via email or online invitations can skirt the cost of postage. But many couples still prefer traditional paper invitations, which include return envelopes that tradition suggests should also be stamped. Save-the-date cards have grown in popularity as well, and these cards must also be stamped and mailed. Depending on the size of your guest list, postage can cost several hundred dollars before you mail your last invitation. And don't forget to save some money for postage to mail thank-you cards once the big day has come and gone.

Overtime: Overtime fees for reception hall staff and additional outside vendors are typically written into contracts, but few couples imagine needing more than the predetermined allotment of time noted in their contracts. But it's better to be safe than sorry, as unanticipated events such as a misplaced wedding license or heavy traffic on the way to the venue can force the party to start late and thus extend past its deadline. Set aside some money for overtime so you don't find yourselves scrounging for dollars or charging the extra few hundred dollars on your credit cards.

Weddings are expensive, couples who build such fees into their budgets will find it easier to avoid breaking the bank than those who don't.

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Dreaming of an outdoor wedding



Outdoor weddings are romantic when done right, and a growing number of couples are exchanging vows amid an expansive garden or with the splendor of the pounding surf providing a picturesque backdrop. If Mother Nature cooperates, outdoor weddings can go smoothly. But even if the weather does not cooperate, there still are ways couples can enjoy a memorable ceremony.

Preparation and planning help keep outdoor weddings moving along. Weather can be unpredictable and unforgiving, so it is always best to account for various scenarios. The following are some tips to consider.

Be mindful of hot weather.

Many outdoor weddings occur when temperatures are at their warmest. As anyone who has had to sit outdoors in the blazing

sun for an extended period of time can attest, it can grow quite uncomfortable, especially when everyone is dressed to the nines. Advise guests in advance that the wedding will be taking place outdoors and to dress accordingly. Arrange to have shaded areas for guests who may struggle with the heat. Keep chilled bottled water nearby so guests can stay cool and refreshed. Ask the officiant to keep the ceremony brief so that guests are not melting away in their seats.

Keep wind in mind. A stiff breeze can upset tents and wreak havoc on hairstyles. Be sure everything outdoors is properly secured and weighted down. Avoid light fabrics on a wedding gown that will get swept away by wind. A short, blusher veil may be more appropriate than a sweeping train. Couples should advise their hairstylists that they will be getting married outdoors, and looks should be well secured by bobby pins and gel to keep hair in place. Stick to real dishes for food service, as plastic or lightweight materials may get blown away.

Check for power sources. Choose a wedding location with easily accessible power outlets. Guests will certainly want to hear the vows, and that may require the use of microphones and a sound system. Having power available also makes it easier for bands and musicians to set up their equipment for an outdoor reception. If the wedding will be stretching into the evening hours, electricity will be needed to power supplemental lighting that illuminates the festivities.

Ensure accessibility. Outdoor terrain can prove tricky, especially for older guests or those with mobility issues. When scouting locations, select a wheelchair-accessible spot that can be easily traversed. Understand that turf can become water-logged and challenging to walk over should it rain the day of the wedding or prior. Plastic

or fabric runners may make things easier. Also, choose a location that isn't too far off the beaten path. It should be close enough to a parking lot and not require guests to have to take an extended hike through nature.

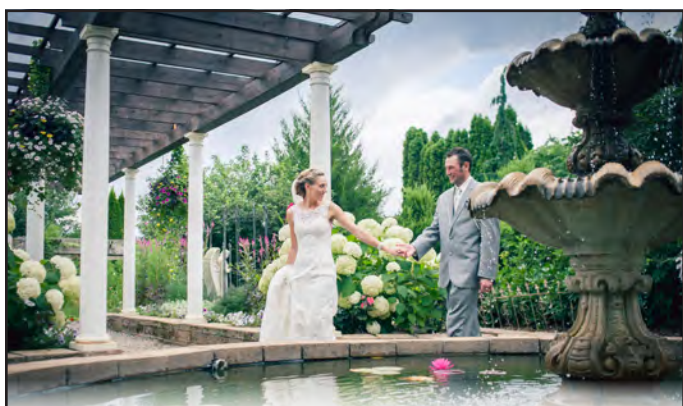
Face away from the sun. Glares can make it difficult for guests to see the ceremony. Be sure to arrange seats so that guests do not have to look into the sun. This is best achieved by having the sun behind everyone for the ceremony. It also ensures that you won't end up with washed-out photos or pictures of everyone squinting.

Ensure food is properly chilled or heated. Dining outdoors means keeping food safety in mind. Food that is supposed to be kept cool should remain on ice or be refrigerated until served. Hot foods should remain hot. Food in chafing dishes or served buffet-style also should be protected from insects. Improper handling of food can result in foodborne illnesses. No one wants to remember a wedding for intestinal discomfort.

Use fresh flowers in potted plants. Cut flowers tend to wilt prematurely in hot weather. Rather than waste money and beautiful flowers, choose potted plants that will thrive if well-tended. Guests can then take the plants home and continue to cherish the wedding long after it is over.

Mix up the candles. Intersperse citronella candles with the decorative ones to help keep bugs at bay. You can also consider placing small bottles of insect repellent on the tables. Guests will appreciate the gesture when biting flies or mosquitoes want to join in the fun.

Make sure Mother Nature doesn't rain on your outdoor wedding. Plan for all the possibilities so that an outdoor ceremony or reception goes as smoothly as possible.



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