

"I Do"

A Bridal Guide

Simplifying *Ceremonies*

Tips to streamline your wedding day

Traditional *Taste*

Simple ways to add an elegant feel to a wedding

The 411 on *Flowers*

The many ways to incorporate floral arrangements

Simple touches that add an elegant feel to a wedding



The term “the perfect wedding” can be somewhat misleading. Couples have their own ideas regarding the perfect wedding, and no single vision is more worthy of that characterization than another.

Tradition plays a big role at many weddings, as couples have long embraced customs like the first dance, cutting the cake together and even tossing the bridal bouquet at the reception. Traditional weddings often are associated with

elegance, and there are many ways to create an elegant aesthetic at a wedding.

- **Consider candlelight.** Candlelight can make any space feel cozy and warm. Lit candles also create a calming and elegant vibe at a wedding. A handful of thoughtfully placed candles around a ceremony space can add a sense of elegance to a wedding. That vibe can be maintained into the reception when candles are placed on dining tables.

- **Include some vintage items.** Vintage items can add elegance because they call to mind traditional weddings of past eras. Unique vintage vases on seating tables or even as reception table centerpieces are simple to arrange and effective at adding an elegant touch.

- **Choose a signature cocktail.** The drinks guests enjoy at the reception also can add some elegance to the festivities. Ask the reception hall bartender to collaborate on a classic

cocktail, ideally one that might have been popular years ago or even a modernized version of a drink that calls to mind ceremonies of yesteryear.

- **Go traditional with wedding attire.** More and more brides are choosing wedding gowns that go beyond the classic white dress. But brides who want something elegant may want to stick to traditional attire. The same goes for grooms, who can choose a traditional black tuxedo to add some simple elegance to the big day.

- **Set your sights on seating.** There’s no area of a wedding that can’t be augmented with a little elegance, and that even goes for seating. Chair sashes complement an elegant theme, and such simple decor is easy to pull off. It also provides instant appeal and a touch of class as guests enter the venue and take a seat. An elegant wedding aesthetic makes for great photographs and adds a memorable vibe to a ceremony and reception.

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3 tips to create a reasonable wedding budget



prompting some to pay for the entire affair themselves. Couples looking to establish a wedding budget can first identify who's helping to fund it. If couples are going it alone, then this is a simple step in the process. If parents and other relatives offer to pitch in,

couples can count such offers toward the total amount of money they have to fund the big day.

Weddings are momentous occasions in the lives of couples. Recently engaged couples likely know that weddings can be expensive. The experts at the online wedding resource Zola estimated that couples would spend around \$36,000 on their weddings in 2025. If that figure produces some sticker shock, couples can rest easy in the knowledge that such estimates reflect a host of variables, not all of which are applicable to each wedding. It also can calm couples' nerves to develop a budget as the first step in wedding planning. Once a budget is worked out, couples can then use that to guide their decisions. The need to budget for a wedding may seem obvious, but couples, particularly those tying the knot for the first time, might not know where to begin. Couples facing such a situation can consider these three budget-building tips for their wedding.

1. Identify where funds are coming from. Parents of the bride were once the traditional sources of wedding funds, but that's less common than it used to be. According The Knot Real Weddings Study, the average age of marriage in 2024 was 32 years. That means many couples are now on relatively firm financial footing by the time they get married,

2. Consider working with a financial planner. Another strategy to building a budget is to work with a professional to determine how much you can afford. Many couples now live together prior to getting engaged, and Zola notes that more than half (53 percent) even shop for rings together. Advanced wedding planning can be a wise move, particularly for couples footing the bill on their own or with minimal assistance from family members. A financial planner can help couples determine what they can afford and offer tips to grow their existing wealth with an eye on paying for their wedding.

3. Identify your priorities. The Knot reports that venue and rentals accounted for slightly more than one-quarter (27 percent) of couples' wedding budgets in 2025. While venues and rentals are typically the biggest expense when planning a wedding, couples building a budget should identify their biggest priority. Some might want a stunning venue, while others might feel a backyard ceremony is perfect for them. Identifying your biggest priorities and then devoting enough funds to those areas can guide the budget-building process. Weddings can be expensive. Budgeting can help couples get the wedding they want without breaking the bank.

Did You KNOW?

Weddings are made up of various components, and coordinating those elements can be a significant undertaking.

In addition to accommodating their own needs, couples must consider a host of variables unique to their situation, including budget. When establishing a wedding budget, couples may want to allocate a significant percentage of their funds to the reception. **According to The Knot 2025 Weddings Study, much of the cost of a wedding, which cost an average of \$33,000 in 2025, can be traced to reception-related expenses such as food and drinks, entertainment and venue.** The Knot study found that couples spent roughly 27 percent of their wedding budget on venue and rentals, 24 percent on catering (including drinks and cake) and 11 percent on music and guest entertainment.



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Tips to streamline a wedding day



Marriage is a social institution that is thousands of years old. Marriage has undergone changes over the years, but plenty of people are still tying the knot and hosting amazing wedding celebrations. A total of 2,065,905 marriages were recorded in the United States in 2022. Statistics Canada indicates 98,355 registered marriages took place in 2020. Prospective brides and grooms may be inclined to host more simplified and streamlined weddings in order to save money and time. Finding ways to streamline a wedding is not necessarily that challenging.

- Keep the ceremony short.** While this may not always be an option for couples who are having a traditional religious ceremony that is beholden to the rules of the faith, some couples can opt for a shortened ceremony that is more direct and to the point. A streamlined ceremony can stick strictly to the exchange of vows, rather than including readings, musical interludes, candle lighting ceremonies, and more. Couples who want religious ceremonies can speak with their officiants to see how they can stick to tradition, but keep the ceremony more succinct.

- Communicate roles for the wedding party.** Having designated people to handle a variety of tasks at the wedding

fosters efficiency and can save time by moving things along. It also allows for smooth transitions during parts of the ceremony. For example, the maid of honor traditionally holds the bride's bouquet during the ceremony. But other bridesmaids can be enlisted to hold items or fix the bride's train or veil as well.

- Select one venue.** Holding the wedding ceremony and reception in the same place cuts down on travel time and logistical issues for both the guests and those involved in the wedding. It also reduces necessary costs for transportation.

- Choose a nearby location.** Asking guests and vendors to travel great distances can add time to the wedding festivities. Selecting a centrally located ceremony site and reception hall will streamline many of the steps people would have to take to attend. It also might remove the need to arrange overnight accommodations for the wedding.

- Hire a wedding coordinator.** A professional planner and coordinator will keep the wedding moving along on time and ensure a smooth process. This professional can remain emotionally neutral, solve problems and ensure that everyone is in the right place.

Streamlining a wedding and making it more efficient can save time and money.



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Why it pays to trust a pro with *wedding photography*



User-friendly

technology and greatly enhanced connectivity has changed the way people approach various tasks. The do-it-yourself home improvement trend is a testament to that shift, as homeowners now have access to professional grade tools and can easily take to social media for inspiration and instructions for renovations that were once the domain of experienced contractors.

Though it can be fun and budget-friendly to embrace a DIY approach in many settings, that strategy is not ideal for every situation, including the day couples tie the knot. A couple's wedding day is one to cherish forever, which is why it pays to rely on skilled professionals. That's particularly so with wedding photography, which will serve as the official record of a day filled with love and laughs. Modern technology may compel some couples to think they can go without the services of a professional photographer on their wedding day, but there are many reasons to trust this important job to an experienced pro.

• **Photographers can get great shots no matter the conditions.** There's a difference between snapping great shots of an idyllic setting on a smartphone and

taking wedding day photographs couples will look back on for years to come. Experienced photographers have cameras capable of far more than those on a smartphone, and these skilled professionals also possess the knowledge of how to get great shots in settings that might not be so conducive to photography. A dimly lit reception hall dance floor may prove challenging for untrained amateurs, but professional photographers know what to do to get great shots in such settings. Professionals also know how to utilize natural light to their advantage when taking shots outdoors.

• **Photographers handle the details.** Couples have enough on their plate when planning weddings. Taking on photography duties requires identifying the right photo locations, knowing when to take photos to maximize surroundings, ensuring bridal party members are all ready to go so photos can be taken within tight deadlines, and post-wedding detailing. That's a lot to take on, and it's work best left to professionals.

• **Photographers free up time.** Many newlyweds note their wedding day seemed to fly by

and was over before they knew it. Such sentiments may be even stronger when couples take on too much responsibility come the wedding day. A professional photographer will coordinate shots and timelines with couples prior to the big day and take over getting bridal party members where they need to be when they need to be there. That frees up time for couples to spend more time with each other and their guests come the day of the wedding, which in turn can make it feel as though the day didn't fly by.

• **You get a professionally finished product.** Amateur photographers simply won't produce as stunning a finished product as professionals who take and touch up photos for a living. A wedding day photo album is a keepsake couples will look back on for years, so it's best to ensure its contents include photos taken and touched up by a skilled professional. Couples can find ways to cut costs with their wedding budgets. But it's best to avoid cutting corners regarding photography, as there's no way to turn back the clock and get better shots if the efforts of amateurs fall short of expectations.

A checklist of vendors to *facilitate wedding planning*



- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wedding venue | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jeweler |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reception venue | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caterer | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hotel |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bakery | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Salon/Hairdresser |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photographer | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Makeup Artist |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Videographer | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wedding Planner |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Florist | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bridal Gown Retailer |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Officiant | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Groom's Attire |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Favors Vendor |

Planning a wedding is a significant undertaking. Though many tasks associated with wedding planning are enjoyable, the number of variables that must be coordinated can make the process feel a little overwhelming at times. Staying organized can make wedding planning a lot easier, and this checklist of vendors can be utilized by couples looking to stay calm as they plan their big day.

Responsibilities

typically delegated to notable
bridal party members



arise in the hours before the ceremony so the bride can relax. For example, a maid/matron of honor may work to ensure the bride is shielded from issues affecting hair and makeup, the venue, last-minute gown concerns, and other unforeseen problems that can arise. A maid/matron of honor may need to do some delegating of her own prior to the ceremony, asking fellow bridesmaids to help coordinate party plans.

- **Bridesmaids:** Bridesmaids can help a bride when she's choosing her gown as well as the dresses bridesmaids themselves will wear. Bridesmaids also help the maid/matron of honor coordinate the bachelorette party and pitch in to help address any issues that arise on the day of the ceremony.

- **Groomsmen:** Groomsmen can be tasked with helping the best man coordinate a bachelor party. Groomsmen also can be asked to schedule their tuxedo fittings to afford enough time for alterations and orders to be completed in time for the big day.

- **Parents:** Parents' roles have changed considerably in recent years. While the parents of the bride traditionally paid for the wedding and grooms' parents were tasked with bankrolling the rehearsal dinner, many modern couples now foot some, if not all, of those bills themselves. Parents can still be asked to lend some financial assistance. In addition, couples can seek input from parents regarding reception traditions like father/daughter and mother/son dances.

Many bridal party members are willing to do whatever it takes to make a couple's wedding day as special as possible. Couples are still urged to discuss responsibilities with bridal party members prior to delegating tasks.

Engaged couples tend to ask their closest family members and friends to be in their bridal parties. Such requests are an honor and bridal party members tend to be excited to play such a significant role on a couple's wedding day. But bridal party members also do much to help engaged couples before the big day.

Couples can choose to delegate as many tasks as they desire to bridal party members. Before delegating, couples can look to tradition to guide them in regard to asking their bridal parties to lend a hand.

- **Best man:** The best man toast at a wedding reception tends to be a jovial part of the festivities that couples and guests look forward to, so asking a best man to give such a speech is customary. Best man responsibilities also may include organizing a bachelor party or a similar type of get-together with fellow groomsmen and other guests prior to the wedding. A best man also may coordinate a gift for the groom if the groomsmen want to give the groom an item that requires pooling resources.

- **Maid/matron of honor:** A maid/matron of honor typically delivers a toast at the reception prior to the best man's speech. A maid/matron of honor also may coordinate a bachelorette party and bridal shower in the weeks or months before the wedding. A maid/matron of honor tends to play a significant role on the wedding day as well. A maid/matron of honor may handle any problems that



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Your Wedding Timeline Guide

Wedding planning involves many movable pieces that ultimately need to come together on the big day. Planning is typically a months-long process, and adhering to certain monthly benchmarks can help couples stay the course.

Brides magazine offers that **the perfect engagement period is 12 to 14 months**,

which affords ample time to get organized and work with vendors. With that in mind, here's a 12-month timeline for couples getting ready to say "I do."

>> 12 months out

At the start of the planning process, establish your budget, hire a wedding planner (optional), choose the wedding party, pick a date, and start to assemble a cursory guest list. This also is a great time to begin touring venues to get a feel for potential ceremony and reception locales.

>> 11 months out

Now is the time to get a firm handle on the theme and scope of the wedding. Start picking wedding colors and overall design. Also, interview and hire vendors, such as photographers, bands and videographers. These vendors tend to book up quickly as wedding season draws near, so it's never too early to book them.

>> 10 months out

This is a good time to start shopping for a wedding gown because it might take some trial and error to find the perfect dress. You also can start shopping for wedding party attire at this time. Check with formalwear vendors to see how long it will take for the gowns to arrive in the shop for alterations. If you haven't already done so, be sure to book the wedding venue.

>> 8 months out

Reception halls may have their own schedules, but you should think about setting your menu at this time, including deciding if you will host a seated dinner, a buffet or something else.

Eight months out also is a good time to finalize the guest list and send save-the-date cards.

This also is a good time to visit stores to create registry gift lists.

>> 6 months out

Meet with potential florists and other vendors, like transportation companies and hotels, to secure these arrangements. Your place of worship also may require certain classes or preparatory meetings, so be sure to inquire about these.

Meet with a makeup and hair stylist and book a trial. Choose attire for groomsmen and give them a deadline for fittings and orders. If you will not be getting married in a place of worship, hire an officiant at this time.

>> 4 months out

Grooms traditionally arrange the honeymoon, so this is a fine time to get those travel plans in order. If you need passports, you should secure them as early as possible, and no later than four months prior to the wedding to ensure processing times. Book cake tastings and order the cake if it is not part of the venue food and beverage package. If you haven't already done so, the bride should have an initial gown fitting, and wedding invitations should be ordered at this time.

>> 2 months out

Secure your wedding license and buy wedding party gifts. Address and mail the wedding invitations. Undergo a second gown fitting and work with the seamstress for the final fitting date just before the wedding. Finalize any song selections with the DJ or band.

The final details will occur in the last weeks before the wedding. Buy all the small accessories and items, undergo final fittings and check in with all vendors for final payments and to ensure they are on schedule. Notify the reception hall of the final guest count.

Once the wedding day arrives, couples who have done their best to stay on schedule can relax and have a great time with family and friends.



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The many ways to incorporate floral arrangements

Flowers showcase the beauty and pageantry of the natural world. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “The earth laughs in flowers,” and Lady Bird Johnson is quoted as saying, “Where flowers bloom, so does hope.” Flowers are inextricably tied to some of the most important events in a person’s life. Flowers wish people well, console those who are mourning, and symbolize love and affection. Flowers are an

essential component of wedding day celebrations. Flowers symbolize love, fertility and new beginnings. According to The Knot 2025 Real Weddings Study, the average cost of wedding flowers in 2025 was \$2,723, which serves as a testament to how important flowers can be on these special days. Flowers are incorporated into many facets of a wedding. Couples planning their weddings can give thought to the many

Bouquets

Wedding bouquets are some of the first arrangements people think of when planning a wedding. Historically, wedding bouquets contained herbs that were designed to ward off evil spirits. Today, one is much more likely to find a gathering of many beautiful flowers tied at the stems with ribbon. Bridesmaids carry bouquets as well, and flower girls toss flower petals along the aisle during the processional. Bouquets typically coordinate to the theme of the wedding and the color scheme. A bride’s bouquet tends to be similar in design to her bridesmaids’ but may feature more muted colored blooms to complement her gown.

Boutonnieres and corsages

Boutonnieres and corsages are customarily bestowed upon wedding party members and the parents of the happy couple. They also may be gifted to additional special people attending the wedding, such as grandparents or other guests of honor.

Altar arrangements

Floral decorations also may be placed around or near the altar for the wedding ceremony. Jewish celebrants may place flowers on a chuppah to add beauty and elegance. Flowers also are commonly used in Muslim wedding ceremonies, appearing in floral arches or even as a stunning floral wall during the Nikah to separate the bride and groom. During religious ceremonies, couples should heed the requirements of the house of worship and ensure that flowers are modest and within the parameters set for the faith.

Aisle decorations

Flowers may be used on the seatbacks or on the sides of pews. Small flowers, ribbons and greenery are hung to enhance the ambiance of the space.

Centerpieces

Flowers are a focal point during wedding receptions, taking up prime real estate in the center of tables. Knowledgeable florists can create pieces

that are beautiful and will not obstruct the view or comfort of guests when seated. Additional floral arrangements may be included to enhance additional areas of the reception space, such as floral arches for photographs, vases placed near the seating chart and even flowers in the restrooms to make these spaces even more inviting.

Toss bouquet

If a couple decides to adhere to traditional wedding customs, the bride will toss a smaller bouquet to eager single women ready to catch it. A tossed bouquet may feature fresh flowers or artificial silk flowers. This decoy bouquet enables the bride to return home with her actual bouquet to preserve it, but still participate in this classic tradition.

Flowers enhance a wedding with their beauty, symbolism and aroma.





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Unique locations to tie the knot



Couples must make a multitude of decisions when planning a wedding. One of the more significant decisions concerns where to tie the knot. The decision of where to get married was once a given. Indeed, the majority of weddings used to be held in houses of worship. A 2020 report in the *Church Times* estimated that 85 percent of all weddings in the early twentieth century were religious ceremonies. Many faiths require those seeking a religious wedding to get married in a house of worship, so one can reasonably conclude that a significant percentage of married couples in the early twentieth century said “I do” within a house of worship. The *Church Times* report indicated that percentage dipped to 49 percent by the late 1970s, and a recent report from The Knot indicates that 16 percent of couples who wed in 2023 did so in a religious institution or house of worship. Many couples still prefer to get married in a house of worship, but those with no such preference can consider a wide range of venues when trying to decide where to tie the knot.

• **Rustic setting:** The popularity of the rustic aesthetic boomed in home interior design in the early decades of the twenty-first century, and that appeal also seems to have affected couples deciding where to get married. The Knot reports that more couples tied the knot in barn

wedding venues (17 percent) than houses of worship in 2023, making these charming and often scenic venues worthy of consideration.

• **Historic locales:** History buffs may feel there’s no greater place to say “I do” than a location that calls to mind bygone eras and notable events. Estates dating back centuries that feature expansive and awe-inspiring landscapes or mansions built during the Gilded Age can make for unique settings to tie the knot and celebrate into the wee hours.

• **Oceanfront venues:** Perhaps no backdrop makes for more awe-inspiring wedding photos than the ocean. Beautiful photos, not to mention pleasant temperatures and laid back vibes, undoubtedly contribute to the appeal of oceanfront weddings. Couples considering oceanfront venues may be surprised to learn that just 5 percent of weddings took place on the sand in 2023, which could make it easier than some think to book these idyllic locales.

• **Botanical gardens:** Floral arrangements feature prominently in many weddings, but what about saying “I do” in a venue where nature serves as your florist? Botanical gardens offer numerous spots for stunning photographs, and a formal garden can make for an impressive backdrop for the wedding ceremony. There’s no shortage of stunning locations for couples to tie the knot. Before choosing where to say “I do,” couples can explore a wide range of prospective venues.

Here comes the bride

It’s customary for a bride-to-be to make a grand entrance on her wedding day, and for many that involves the processional song “Bridal Chorus,” commonly referred to as “Here Comes the Bride.” The song is from the 1850 opera “Lohengrin,” which was composed by Richard Wagner. In the opera, the women in the wedding party sing the song as they escort the bride, Elsa, to her bridal chamber. The original lyrics included, “Faithfully, led, you go...” and referred to the joy of the couple’s new life together. After Princess Victoria, the daughter of Queen Victoria of England, used the song for her 1858 wedding procession, the music became a wedding staple across Europe and America. While the instrumental version is widely used for a bride’s walk down the aisle, some religious institutions prefer couples choose another song because of the music’s secular origins.



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Questions to ask when interviewing caterers

A wedding reception is a joyous occasion that affords newlyweds and their guests an opportunity to celebrate into the evening. Various components combine to ensure a memorable reception, but food is a major highlight of the festivities for guests.

That places a significant responsibility on couples to find a reception center or third-party caterer who can dish up food that will have guests saying “I do” to a great meal. These considerations and questions can help couples find the right caterer for their weddings.

Does my venue mandate use of a particular catering service?

The wedding planning website Zola advises that many wedding venues require couples to use a specific catering service. They may have an arrangement with a particular caterer who they trust, or the venue has in-house chefs and servers. In the earliest planning stages after the wedding date has been set, a couple should be sure to pick a venue that will serve the best food possible. Couples who have a specific caterer in mind may need to shop around for a venue that will allow outside vendors.

Identify your preferred meal

First and foremost, a couple should know how they want to have their food served and inquire with potential caterers about their standard options. Service types often include a formal sit-down dinner reception, a buffet dinner service, a family-style dinner, or a more minimal cocktail offering without a full dinner. The couple can cross out prospects that don't offer the type of service they desire most.

Ask what's included

A couple should determine if a catering service offers food prepared by professionals, the amount of flexibility related to menus, if table settings are included, and if cleanup is part of the fee. Full-service catering typically includes all of this, while more limited service may be food brought in that requires the venue's own staff to serve and clean.

Compile the right questions

It's important to ask caterers some key questions to narrow down prospects. Some of these include:

- Are you a participant in any local business

associations?

- What events with a similar concept have you catered?
- How many weddings do you book each year?
- Will my wedding be the only event you cater on that day?
- How many guests can you accommodate?
- Do you handle special food requests, such as gluten-free or kosher meals?
- How many chefs and cooks prepare the meal, or are meals exclusively prepared by the business owner?
- Do you allow substitutions or customization to a set menu?
- Do you have references for other events you have catered?
- Do you have any preferred vendors?
- What do we need to know and do regarding delivery?

Keep location in mind

The distance a caterer has to travel to cater the wedding will affect the price. It's helpful to find a caterer who knows the venue or has had experience with a similar place.

What are the contingency plans?

When interviewing caterers, Cvent, an event management software company, suggests asking about any last-minute changes they've dealt with to gauge how the caterer handles problem-solving. Inquire about how they adapt if a certain menu item is no longer readily available or what they do if a piece of equipment breaks down the day of an event? Answers to these types of questions can separate seasoned professionals from those caterers who may not be as experienced.

Food is a vital component of a wedding reception, which underscores the significance of finding a talented and experienced caterer.



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How to build a wedding budget without breaking the bank

Wedding planning is a unique experience unlike any endeavor most couples will ever encounter. Much effort goes into planning a wedding, and that includes building a budget that ensures the big day will be fun without breaking the bank.

Most couples planning a wedding have never tied the knot before, so it can be difficult to determine a reasonable amount to spend. It's easy to go overboard when planning a wedding, and couples may find their list of wants and, consequently, their expenses, growing as they get into the weeds of wedding planning. Though it might require some difficult decisions, couples can keep these tips in mind so they can build a wedding budget that won't land them in debt after saying, "I do."

• Determine funding.

The days when a bride's parents would finance the wedding entirely on their own are largely a thing of the past. According to a recent WeddingWire Newlywed Report, parents now pay for 52 percent of wedding expenses. As couples begin establishing a wedding budget, it's imperative that they first

determine who, if anyone, will be helping them finance the big day. Fifty-two percent of wedding expenses is a significant amount of money, but in that scenario, couples will still need to come up with roughly half of the money needed to fund their weddings. Couples without substantial savings may be forced to cut back in order



to avoid beginning their life as a married couple in debt.

• **Make a list of potential expenses.** Location will be a significant factor when determining potential expenses. For example, a 2022 ValuePenguin analysis of data from The

Wedding Report found that the average wedding in Massachusetts cost roughly \$30,500 in 2020, while couples tying the knot in Arkansas spent around \$12,500 on their weddings. With such wild fluctuations, it's important that couples get an accurate estimate of how much it may cost them to get married in a given city. Couples who met in a city and still live in a city but grew up in a suburb might save a considerable sum by getting married in their hometowns. Compare and contrast prices in locales you're considering,

photography, and transportation, among others.

• **Make a list of what's most important.** Most couples will have to compromise in order to avoid taking on debt to finance their weddings. An earnest discussion about what's most important to each person can ensure you both get what you want. Each person can make a list of their priorities, ranking them from most important to least important. Once lists are shared, couples can see where their priorities converge and where they diverge. Any items that rank low on each person's list of priorities can be afforded less funding, while those that are high on each list can take up more of the budget, if necessary.

• Commit to a limit before spending a dime.

Committing to a limit before spending a dime can help couples keep wedding costs more manageable. Once that number is defined, couples can then work within its parameters, which can make potentially difficult decisions a little easier by narrowing options at a time when options can seem endless.

A well-planned budget can be just what couples need to begin married life on strong financial footing.



Did You Know?

Weddings are made up of various components, and coordinating those elements can be a significant undertaking. In addition to accommodating their own needs, couples must consider a host of variables unique to their situation, including budget. When establishing

a wedding budget, couples may want to allocate a significant percentage of their funds to the reception. According to The Knot 2025 Weddings Study, much of the cost of a wedding, which cost an average of \$33,000 in 2025, can be traced to reception-related expenses such as food and drinks, entertainment and venue. The Knot study found that couples spent roughly 27 percent of their wedding budget on venue and rentals, 24 percent on catering (including drinks and cake) and 11 percent on music and guest entertainment.



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