

THE ULTIMATE WEDDING GUIDE

A GUIDE TO HELP YOU TACKLE YOUR WEDDING PLANNING HEAD ON
TO ENSURE YOU HAVE THE PERFECT DAY.



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A vast amount of time, effort, emotion and money will be invested in your wedding day, but you can be sure it's all worth it. The big day is your chance to show your partner how committed you are to them and share your happiness with friends and family as well as making memories which will last a life time.

The hard part is all of the planning that goes into a wedding which can start at least a year before your actual wedding date!

Our Ultimate Wedding Guide aims to make you feel more organised, prepared and relaxed so you can take on your wedding planning with confidence.





SO YOU'RE ENGAGED, **WHAT'S NEXT?**

When you get engaged, you may feel caught up in the magical feelings that come with it. Allow yourself the time to enjoy those feelings because the length of your engagement is completely up to you. Unless you have strict plans already, there is no real rush to the wedding day and you can wait as long as you want.

There are a few things, however, that you might want to get on with straight away.



TELLING YOUR FAMILY

Before you go completely public, you might want to phone your nearest and dearest first. Your parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunties and best friends will be thrilled to have been told before everyone else, so make sure you share that special moment with them!



THE WIDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Of course, in the world of social media it has never been easier to make big announcements such as an engagement to your entire contact list. This is your chance to get creative and have some fun with it, so think about how you want to announce it and whether or not you want everyone on social media to know about it.



SIZING THE RING

Unless your partner has secretly been taking finger measurements while you sleep, there is a chance that your ring might not fit perfectly. Get the ring booked in for resizing as soon as possible so you can start wearing it with pride. You might find that resizing was included in the price of the ring at your jewellers, making this a much simpler process.



THE ENGAGEMENT PARTY

You may decide you want to throw an engagement party, but this is by no means obligatory. The engagement party doesn't need to be anything too fancy as the wedding itself will be the real party, so perhaps just invite some friends and family over for drinks and celebrate your good news.



DISCUSS WHAT'S IMPORTANT

While you may not be ready to outright plan the wedding yet, you might want to talk to your partner about what is really important to you, as this may shape the way you plan things. Just throw some ideas around and you'll start to get a picture of how your day will be.



GETTING ORGANISED – THE WEDDING CHECKLIST

Now that the excitement of the engagement has calmed down a bit, it's time to start the planning of the wedding day itself. This can seem like a mountainous task, but by sitting down together and making a written plan of action in chronological order, everything will come together nicely.

Use this checklist to get you started, but remember your wedding is completely individual, so feel free to add your own personal touches where required.

18 - 12 MONTHS BEFORE THE BIG DAY



Start researching wedding ideas. Draw inspiration from friend's weddings or bridal magazines.



Start a wedding folder which can include information from your research and important details.



Decide on your wedding budget. How much you want to spend will influence the rest of your decisions.



Decide who you want as best man, maid of honour, bridesmaids and ushers (and ask them).



Start your guest list. You will need a rough estimation of numbers to give venues and caterers.



If you want to hire a wedding planner, do it now so you can work through the rest of the list with them.



Decide on a date and book your venue. Make sure you visit a few venues before making a final decision.



Book your officiant for the day, whether they be a priest, registrar or otherwise.



Send out 'save the dates' to your guests so they know when and where your wedding is.

12 - 8 MONTHS BEFORE THE BIG DAY



Decide on your photographer and book them. Make sure to book a meeting with them before the wedding.



Decide on entertainment, whether it be DJ, live band or anything else and book them.



Send out invitations to your guests. Remember to ask for RSVP by a specific date and get dietary requirements. You might want to consider digital invitations which are cheaper and easier.



Purchase your wedding dress. You will need to do this well in advance to leave enough time for resizing and several fittings. Grooms may also want to purchase their outfit now.



Meet with your caterers (presuming your venue provides catering, if not then book catering now) and decide on your final menu. Remember to take your guests specific dietary requirements with you.



Book your florist and meet with them to discuss your flower arrangements.

8 - 6 MONTHS BEFORE THE BIG DAY



Talk to your maid of honour and best man to discuss hen/stag do. In the modern world, it is acceptable for the bride and groom to be involved in the planning if they want to be.



Go shopping for bridesmaid dresses. Again, you will need to leave extra time for resizing and fittings but the groom may also want to take his groomsmen to get matching suits too.



Plan your honeymoon. Decide whether you want to go straight after the wedding or later on down the line.



Meet with your officiant to discuss how the ceremony will run on the day.



Book or arrange your transportation for the day, whether you are hiring a wedding car, getting a taxi or jumping in a family member's car.



Purchase your wedding rings and get them sized appropriately.

6 - 4 MONTHS BEFORE THE BIG DAY



Book your wedding rehearsal and make sure all of the important people can attend. Try to get it booked around 2 months before the wedding.



Choose your wedding cake and get it ordered. You'll need to think about who/how/when it will be collected and transferred to the venue.



If you haven't already purchase your wedding insurance policy.



Book a hair and makeup artist for the bride on the morning of the wedding.



Decide what music you would like on the day, including your first dance. If you want to hire a string quartet to go up the aisle, do so now. Send your playlist to the DJ/Band.



Give notice of your wedding at your local register office. This needs to be done at least 28 days before the wedding so it's best to get it done early.

4 - 2 MONTHS BEFORE THE BIG DAY



Order or create your own favours, if you are having any.



Make a list of all the people giving speeches and make sure the groom has at least started his!



If you are having any readings at the ceremony, finalise these now and confirm with the people giving the readings.



Finalise all details such as menu, flowers, order of service and the reception.



Meet with your photographer to discuss what exactly you would like included on the day.



Create your seating plan if you are having one.

2 – 1 MONTH BEFORE THE BIG DAY



Chase up any guests who have not yet responded as you will need to let the venue know numbers.



Send all of your final plan details to the wedding venue to ensure they can help with a smooth running of the day.



Confirm everything with each of your suppliers, including hair and makeup, photographer and catering.



Purchase gifts for the important people at the ceremony e.g. best man, parents, bridesmaids and ushers.



Ensure everyone who has a role at the wedding knows what they need to do and where they need to be.



Make as many payments to vendors as possible so you are not worrying about this after the wedding.

THE BIG DAY!



Make sure the cake has been collected and delivered to the venue.



Make sure the groomsmen all have their buttonholes.



Get someone to visit the venue early (perhaps the groom) to ensure everything is set up correctly.



Have a backup plan for transport just in case!



Get to the venue on time and enjoy your wedding!



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN...

A VENUE

Your wedding venue may differ depending on the style, size and budget of your wedding, but there are a few general considerations which need to be made. First of all, you want a venue which is ideally located close enough to you and the majority of your wedding guests so that travel is not too much of an issue. Furthermore, is there any onsite parking?

If not, where can guests park their cars?

You'll want to make sure any venue you go to view is within your budget and you should find out exactly what is included in the price. If your wedding is out of peak season, is there a reduced rate? Find out how much the deposit is and if they have a cancellation policy too.

Try to consider all practicalities when viewing the venue, such as whether or not they provide signage to direct guests, is there disabled access if required, how much space is available, is there a coat room, is there air conditioning and is there a contingency plan if there is a weather dependent outdoor area?

Ask whether or not your venue has its own liability insurance, otherwise you will need to provide your own in case someone is injured. It's a good idea to make a checklist of everything you want your venue to include in order for you to have your perfect day, so when you go to view the venue, you can ask all necessary questions.

A WEDDING DATE

The date of your wedding will impact a number of factors, including convenience, cost, weather and the amount of time you have to prepare. If you are planning a fairly big wedding, you might want to set your wedding date at least one year in the future. That way you are more likely to get the venue you want and will have more time to prepare everything else mentioned in our Wedding Checklist.

In terms of cost, your wedding date will influence how much you are going to pay, especially when it comes to your venue. Saturdays in the summer will be the most expensive time of year to get married, so if you want to cut the cost a bit, opt for a winter wedding. You can also make substantial savings by opting for a weekday instead of a weekend, however this might put some people off attending your wedding, especially those who live far away and will need to book a few days off work. If a mid-week wedding is going to be too inconvenient for many of your guests, you might want to consider waiting a bit longer so you can save up more money to afford a weekend wedding.

Finally, you shouldn't be too reliant on having good weather. Even a mid-summer wedding can pour with rain all day, so don't pick your date solely on the hope of a sunny day. Most venues will have a contingency plan if part of the wedding reception is located outdoors so make sure you discuss this when you visit your venue.

A BEST MAN

If you're lucky enough to have more than one person in line to be your best man, you're going to want to make the right choice. The first thing to consider is which of your potential best men is the most organised. They will need to be able to organise the stag do, look after the rings, give a speech and help out on the day of the wedding, so you want someone reliable and well organised to ensure they do you proud.

You also need to be sure that your best man is going to be confident enough to give an entertaining speech, but understanding enough to know that this speech will be heard by all your family and friends, so it might need to be censored a bit. Try to choose someone who plays an active part in your life and takes an interest in your fiancée as they will be playing an important role for both of you on the day.

If you or your partner has a brother, this can make your choice much easier. None of your friends will be insulted if you choose your brother as your best man, and he will probably be honoured to be part of your special day (not only that, but who knows you better than your brother?). Finally, remember that if traditions aren't that important to you, then there is no reason why your best man shouldn't be a best woman! If your best friend is a woman or you want your sister to take the role, then go ahead!

A MAID OF HONOUR

Choosing a maid of honour can be just as difficult as, if not more difficult than choosing a best man. The maid of honour will need to help keep the bride calm throughout the wedding build up and on the big day, so it's important to choose someone the bride feels completely comfortable with.

The maid of honour also needs to be well organised and authoritative as she will be 'in charge' of the other bridesmaids. You need to be sure that the maid of honour won't be influenced by the opinions of your friends and family and that she will stick to the plans you have discussed together.

Most importantly, your maid of honour should be a true, trusted friend whom you feel you can confide in. She will be there at all the important stages of the wedding and the build-up so choose someone who can support you and don't feel pressured to pick someone you don't want just because you have known them longer or they are a family member.



THE WEDDING ROLES

In order to choose your wedding party and make an informed decision, you need to know what each person is meant to do. Here are the general roles and responsibilities of the main members of your wedding party.



BEST MAN

- Organising the stag do
- Giving the best man speech
- Being the ring bearer
- Getting the groom to the ceremony on time
- Taking charge of the ushers
- Being the grooms right hand man
- Ensuring guests are entertained and happy
- Signing the marriage license



MAID OF HONOUR

- Organising the hen do
- Adjusting the brides dress on the day
- Leading the bridesmaids up the aisle
- Being the brides right hand woman
- Providing bubbles in the morning
- Dress shopping with the bride
- Directing the bridesmaids
- Keeping the bride calm



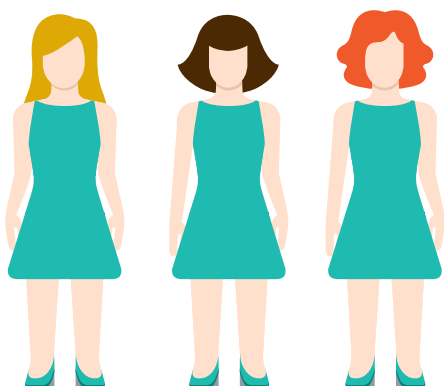
FATHER OF THE BRIDE

- Helping to pay for the wedding
- Getting the bride to the ceremony on time
- Walking the bride down the aisle
- Giving the father of the bride speech
- Giving the bride away
- Sharing a father-daughter dance
- Thanking guests for attending
- Keeping the bride's mother calm



USHERS

- Assisting the best man
- Directing people to their seats
- Helping to plan the stag do
- Supporting the groom
- Looking after the wedding guests
- Helping guests with limited mobility
- Helping guests to find parking
- Minimising disruption from latecomers



BRIDESMAIDS

- Lead or follow the bride up the aisle
- Help choose bridesmaid dresses
- Help to plan the hen do
- Assisting the maid of honour
- Keeping the bride calm
- Help to organise photography
- Get on the dance floor after the first dance
- Greeting guests and encouraging mingling



WHAT TO ASK YOUR WEDDING PLANNER

You might decide that you want to hire a wedding planner to tackle the organisation of your big day. Wedding planners are great for those who have limited spare time (or patience) as they can do all of the time consuming tasks that go into organising a wedding. Not only that, but they have insider industry knowledge and can find the best deals from the best providers. If you are the type of person who likes to have total control, then a wedding planner isn't for you. You should also bear in mind that it will be an additional cost to hire their services.

If you do decide to go with a wedding planner, here is what you should be asking them:

BEFORE HIRING

Are you available for my wedding date?

What are your costs?

What services do you offer?

How does the process work?

How often will you be in contact?

What are your strengths?

How many other weddings are you working on?

Do you have any case studies or references I can look at?

WEDDING BUILD UP

Can you create a wedding timeline so I can track progress?

Do you have any wedding venue suggestions?

Which theme do you think will work with our venue?

Where should we get our wedding stationary?

What should be included in the invites?

Do you know of any appropriate musicians?

Do you know of any reputable florists?

Do you know of any reputable caterers?

Do you know of any skilled photographers?

Is there anything you think our wedding is missing?

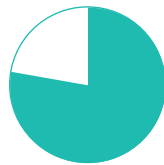
ON THE WEDDING DAY

On the day of your wedding, you shouldn't need to ask your wedding planner anything as everything should already be in place to ensure you have the perfect, stress free day. You should see the wedding planner rushing around making sure there are enough wine glasses, the decorations are all looking fantastic and that everyone is where they should be. A wedding planner can certainly make everything run a bit smoother, but make sure you are asking questions throughout the planning process to make sure it is all running the way you expected.



10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN PLANNING YOUR WEDDING

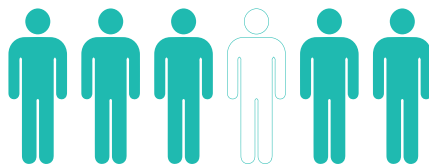
Using the results from a survey we recently conducted asking people their views and opinions on weddings, as well as further research, we have compiled a list of ten things you need to know before your wedding day. Hopefully this list will help you to evaluate your decisions and give an insight into what makes a successful wedding.



#1 - 78% OF MARRIED SURVEY RESPONDENTS ALLOWED CHILDREN AT THEIR WEDDING

With the majority of our married survey respondents agreeing to have children at their wedding, this is something you really should consider. One respondent said it “Would be weird if there weren’t kids at a wedding” and another said “A wedding isn’t a wedding without children there”. However, this is a personal choice, as one respondent says “I think it

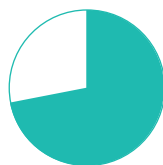
depends on the day itself. If it's a very formal occasion kids can create havoc and it can be stressful for their parents and other guests but if you are having a relaxed day it's great to spend time with younger people who get to celebrate as a family".



#2 – SOMEONE WILL PULL OUT LAST MINUTE

Very few weddings get a 100% attendance rate. If you are having a wedding with around 75 – 100 guests, you should plan for around 5 – 10% of people to pull out at some point and not attend. One of our survey respondents said "Some guests pulled out late which is annoying because then you have to either invite people late so they know they were a last choice or have empty seats". Another respondent even had an important member of their bridal party drop out, as they said "My bridesmaid let me down and didn't turn up".

Be prepared for any eventuality and don't panic if someone does pull out, just let the venue know and they can move things around so there aren't any empty seats.



#3 – 72% OF MARRIED SURVEY RESPONDENTS SAID THEY WORRIED ABOUT WHO TO INVITE

For many couples, deciding who to invite to the wedding can be one of the most difficult and stressful parts of the planning. Couples don't want to miss anyone out, but they also don't want to invite anyone who might cause friction or act inappropriately. Try not to stress about your guest list too much. If there are people you cannot invite due to budget restraints, just tell them and if they are a real friend, they will understand.



#4 – GETTING QUOTES FROM VENDORS MAY TAKE LONGER THAN EXPECTED

The reason why most couples start planning their wedding at least a year in

advance is because a lot of the planning involves waiting on other people. One engaged person who answered our survey said that one of the issues they were having with their wedding planning was ‘Caterers and entertainment confirming quotes’, while another said “Getting quotes and bookings” was an issue for them. This is why it’s a good idea to get all your vendor bookings done early.



#5 – DON’T GO OVERBOARD ON THE ENTERTAINMENT UNNECESSARILY

Sometimes couples can overthink the entertainment, worrying that their guests will be sitting twiddling their thumbs and getting bored. However, in most cases guests can quite easily entertain themselves. Nearly all of our survey respondents stated the three magical ingredients to keep guests entertained; music, alcohol and food! With these three things, you can be pretty sure that your guests will keep themselves entertained and have a great time.



#6 – BREAKFAST IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY

This one might seem obvious, but many couples find themselves too nervous to eat anything before their wedding. This is a huge mistake though, as having something to eat can help to settle your stomach and prevent you from feeling light headed. You might also decide to have a glass of champagne before the ceremony to help with the nerves, so breakfast is even more important to ensure you don’t get too drunk!



#7 – ONLY 47% OF COUPLES OPTED FOR WEDDING INSURANCE IN 2011

A survey conducted in 2011 revealed that only 47% of couples took out a wedding insurance policy in 2011. This is despite the fact that the average cost of a wedding insurance policy in 2011 was as low as £24.23! The value of your wedding insurance is there in case something goes wrong, with weddings being such expensive events, it can certainly be worth taking out a policy for peace of mind.



#8 – SATURDAYS IN AUGUST ARE THE MOST POPULAR TIME TO GET MARRIED

According to the Office of National Statistics, August is the most popular month for people to get married and Saturdays are the most popular day to get married. If you want a summer weekend wedding, you'll need to get your bookings done even earlier than normal. Alternatively, you could opt to have your wedding during the least popular month which is January on the least popular day which is Wednesday, which will most likely save you some money.



#9 – THINGS CAN GO WRONG

Couples need to be prepared for any eventuality as things often don't go entirely to plan when it comes to weddings. You might want to have a backup plan just in case something does go wrong or be prepared to carry on with your plans regardless. One of our survey respondents told us about her experience of something going wrong, as she "Had to postpone (the) wedding due to a family bereavement then partner had to take a pay cut at work so we were worried about paying for everything after deposits had already been paid".



#10 – THE AVERAGE UK WEDDING COSTS £12,059

One thing you really need to be prepared for if you are planning a fairly big event for your wedding day is that it will cost a pretty penny. Research suggests that the average cost of a wedding day in the UK is £12,059, with the biggest costs being the catering (on average £2,552) and the venue (on average £1,517).

WEDDING ADVICE

After conducting a survey of married couples, divorcees and people who have attended weddings, we are left with a lot of advice and tips for anyone planning a wedding. Below you will find some of the best tips, quotes and revelations from these people to give you an idea of what works and what doesn't work on the big day!



**WHAT DO YOU
THINK IS THE MOST
IMPORTANT THING
FOR KEEPING GUESTS
ENTERTAINED?**

“Making sure there is no empty moments. Food always helps!”

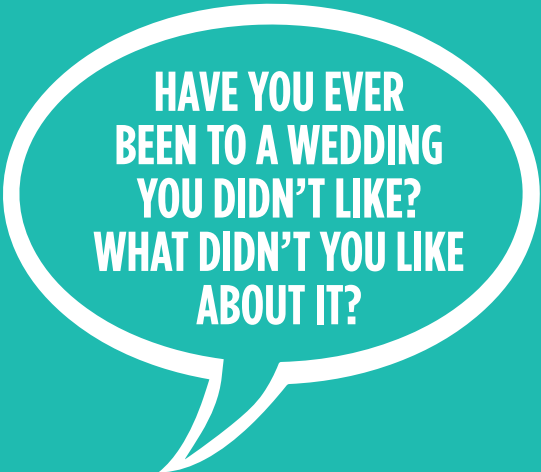
“Not too much downtime without something to occupy guests. Imperative to also have great evening entertainment”

“Clear structure to day and reasonable pace between parts of the day”

“Sitting them with likeminded people”

“Kept informed of what time everything is happening and flow of drinks“

“Music, a dance floor, wine flowing, laughter and atmosphere”



**HAVE YOU EVER
BEEN TO A WEDDING
YOU DIDN'T LIKE?
WHAT DIDN'T YOU LIKE
ABOUT IT?**

“There was a long wait between the ceremony and the meal. Kids were getting fractious, adults were hungry and it was all a bit unnecessary”

“No disco/dancing afterwards”

“Yes, all outdoors in rain and wind”

“I went to a morning wedding at 10am and was invited back for the evening at 6pm it was a very long day out in an area not close to home and the reception”

“Yes. It was very phoney. We got the impression they were showing off their wealth rather than having a genuine day that was theirs”

“A long wait between arrival at venue and wedding breakfast - not enough food/drink to occupy people”



**DID YOU
ENCOUNTER ANY
ISSUES WHEN
PLANNING
YOUR WEDDING?**

“Timescale - we arrange it all in only a few months so it was tight to get everything sorted in such as short space of time!”

“Wedding planner leaving, hairdresser dropped out 2 weeks before wedding”

“Seating plans - due to family rifts”

“Catering amends, potential weather issues (weather was bad until last minute and there was no plan b), cost escalations”



**DID
ANYTHING
GO WRONG
AT YOUR
WEDDING?**

“The venue was very near deep water. Parents of small children spent a lot of time worrying about their kids going too near”

“Mother in law passed out during the groom’s speech!”


“The people who were meant to dress the venue didn’t turn up on the morning of the wedding so the groom and the bridesmaid dressed the venue”

“An older family member fell ill on the day and said it was due to food poisoning....however nobody else had any issues with the food”

“I (the bride) could not go in the car I had planned because the 3 year old bridesmaid would not go in the other car without her mother. We had to swap cars and I arrived in a red car, not the white one as planned”

“Yep! Wedding cake was a disaster”

“Best man late, best man’s speech”



**WHAT
IS YOUR
FAVOURITE
MEMORY OF
A WEDDING?**

“Being about 6, sitting under a table, hidden by the table cloth, sharing a big plate of food from the buffet with a dog”

“Walking down the aisle with my dad and my daughter being able to follow me too”

“My old boss taking over the mic at the reception and singing love songs like it was karaoke night”

“We made pants for the groom on the hen do, which the groom then wore on his wedding night. They were black boxers with animals on that said ‘welcome to the jungle’”

“We got married outdoors in great weather it was really nice to spend the day chilling outside with our guests followed by a great band at the reception”

“A surprise firework display was very spectacular”



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