

2023 Bridal Guide

Special Supplement of The News-Herald and Press & Guide Newspapers

- **Consider picking a venue before setting a date.** It can be wise to pick a reception venue first and then choose your wedding date based on the availability of the venue. This is especially important for couples who already have an ideal venue in mind, and it also provides some flexibility as couples search for the venue. For example, couples working within a strict budget may not be able to afford a preferred venue during the height of wedding season, but that venue could be less costly during slower times of year. By waiting to pick a date until you've chosen a venue, you're increasing your options.
- **Consider your guests.** Though couples, particularly those footing the bill on their own, should prioritize their desires when choosing a reception, it's important they also consider their guests before making a final decision. A venue that's accessible and located near transit hubs like airports and train stations will increase the likelihood that more people can attend. In addition, if children will be invited, a venue that includes family restrooms, including at least one with a changing table, can make parents' nights much easier.
- **Consider your budget.** The Knot 2021 Real Weddings Study found that couples typically spend around 30% of their overall budget on the venue, which makes this decision the biggest one in terms of the financial commitments a couple will have to make. Couples may be tempted to choose an awe-inspiring, costly venue for their reception, but they should consider how devoting so much of their budget to the venue will affect the rest of their big day. The best reception venue might be one that won't eat up too much of your budget.
- **Consider the package.** Venues vary in terms of their reception packages. Some may offer catering, including beverages, with each of their packages, while food and beverage might not be part of other venues' offerings. If you find a venue you love but it doesn't offer catering services, seek estimates from area caterers to determine how much it will cost to feed and serve your guests. Many couples find it more convenient and less stressful to pick a venue that offers on-site catering, though plenty of others have had no trouble after choosing a venue and separate caterer.

The bulk of a couple's wedding day and night will be spent at the reception, making choice of venue one of the more fun and important decisions they'll have to make.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

THE RISE OF THE MICROWEDDING

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been far-reaching. People from all walks of life have had to confront the pandemic and the changes it wrought, and many of those changes could have some staying power.

Wedding industry experts note that one of the more noticeable and potentially long-lasting effects of the pandemic has been the rise of microweddings. The 2020 Real Weddings Study (COVID-19 Edition) found that 58% of couples who planned to get married in 2020 ended up reducing their guest list by a significant percentage. The average reduction was 41%, and some suspect small ceremonies may be the new normal in the years ahead.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Microweddings

Microweddings are not necessarily a new trend, as couples have always had the option of getting married with only a small number of family and friends in attendance. However, microweddings could be an emerging trend, and cost may have a lot to do with that. The Wedding Planner Institute notes that microweddings cost anywhere from \$1,600 to \$10,000, though the group notes that most microweddings fall somewhere in the middle of that range. A 2020 survey from TD Ameritrade found that 47 percent of respondents felt that cost of living was the biggest threat to their financial security and long-term investments. Engaged couples confronting the well-documented post-pandemic increase in cost of living, including an unprecedented rise in housing costs, could see expensive weddings as luxuries they simply can't afford. Microweddings could be viewed as a cost-effective way to combat the rising cost of living that still allows couples to share their big day with their closest friends and family members.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

The WPI has urged wedding planners to offer microwedding packages in an effort to capitalize on this emerging trend. Data from The Wedding Report indicated that the total number of weddings would rise to 2.77 million in 2021, an increase of roughly 650,000 over the yearly average. Even if only a fraction of couples who tie the knot in 2022 opt for a microwedding, a preexisting microwedding package can help wedding planners secure their business. Couples who opt for microweddings may do so to save money, but also to avoid the effort and save the time required to plan more lavish affairs. Such couples may be especially excited to work with wedding planners who can plan their weddings regardless of how small the affair may be.

What goes into a microwedding

Nothing should be off the table when planning a microwedding. The fewer the people who will be there, the more freedom planners and couples may have. The WPI notes that microweddings afford planners and couples the chance to get personal in ways that may not be possible when organizing larger affairs. Planners can focus on small details and allow couples to make their ceremonies and receptions as personal as they would like. Couples who prefer microweddings tend to emphasize minimalism, so keeping things simple is something to keep in mind when planning microweddings.

Microweddings are an emerging trend that make for a realistic option for couples and the people they hire to help them plan their big day.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

POPULAR AND LASTING WEDDING TRADITIONS



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Weddings are steeped in tradition. Some of those traditions may be exclusive to particular families, but many others are embraced by families of various backgrounds.

Couples needn't feel beholden to popular wedding traditions, but some may feel that these customs make their weddings more fun and serve as a great way to connect their ceremonies with those of their parents, grandparents and possibly even their ancestors.

Old, new, borrowed, blue

The rhyme "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue" is likely familiar to people about to get married. This traditional rhyme has existed for centuries and refers to items a bride should wear and keep with her on her wedding day. The old alludes to a bride's past, the new refers to her future, the borrowed is intended to be something borrowed from a married couple or bride, and the blue is a symbol of purity, love and fidelity. These items are traditionally given to the bride-to-be by family members or female friends who are already married.

Bridal veil

It's now up to brides if they want to wear a veil on their wedding day, but it was once a tradition all brides adhered to. Some trace the tradition back to ancient Greece, while others suggest the tradition began in the days of the Roman Empire. Veils were believed to shield brides from evil spirits on her wedding day, thus paving the way for a healthy and happy future. Many brides still wear veils today, though likely due more to their aesthetic appeal than out of a belief that the veil will ward off evil spirits. Some brides still use veils to cover their face as they walk up the aisle, while others flip the veil over their heads.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Gifting knives

Perhaps one of the lesser known superstitions surrounding weddings, gifting knives as a wedding gift is a no-no for some people. The origins of this superstition are uncertain, but people who abide by this tradition feel that knives are symbolic of a broken relationship. That would likely come as a surprise to the many engaged couples who have a set of knives on their wedding registries.

Carrying the bride over the threshold

Historians trace this tradition, which Hollywood has undoubtedly helped to keep alive, all the way back to medieval Europe. Also inspired by a bride's perceived vulnerability to evil spirits, the tradition of a groom carrying his bride over the threshold into their new home was believed to keep the spirits from entering the home through the soles of the bride's feet.

Breaking glass

Couples break glass for different reasons on their wedding days. Within the Jewish faith, one member of the couple will stomp on a carefully wrapped glass to serve as a reminder of the destruction of the Jewish temples and to inspire reflection among those in attendance. Italian newlyweds also may smash glass, but they'll do it with a little more gusto. Local tradition in Italy dictated that, at the end of the wedding, the newly married couple would smash a wine glass. Folklore suggests that the number of pieces the glass breaks into indicates how many years the couple will stay together.

Tradition is part and parcel of many weddings. Some traditions are more solemn than others, but all can add something meaningful, dramatic and even a little fun to the ceremony.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

the knot
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HOW TO BUILD A WEDDING BUDGET WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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."



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

- **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% 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, and then build your budget accordingly. This can help you avoid sticker shock and going over budget. Notable expenses to budget include the venue, attire (i.e., wedding dress and tuxedo rental), hairstyle and makeup, entertainment, 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.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

HOW TO PICK THE PERFECT WEDDING DRESS



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Planning a wedding requires making many different decisions. The choice of wedding attire is among the most crucial decisions that couples must make. Whether the wedding is traditional or customized to suit couples' personalities, brides and grooms want to look their best when they say, "I do."

Many brides-to-be spend a significant amount of time looking for their ideal wedding dresses. What defines the right gown depends on personal preference and is unique to the person doing the search. For example, a dress that sets a fairy tale scene for one bride may not necessarily align with the tastes of another. According to Bridal Atelier, the average bride-to-be tries on three to seven dresses before finding the right one. The following tips can help those shopping for dresses find a look that makes their big day even more special.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

1. Don't get hung up on perfection

Many brides get caught up as they search for the one dress they consider perfect. No dress is likely to check every box. Getting hung up on a desire to find a dress that has it all may make it hard to see the beauty in other dresses. Remember, with the talents of an experienced tailor or seamstress, most dresses can be tweaked to suit your vision of the ideal gown.

2. Consider the season

Getting married during the hazy and humid days of summer is an entirely different experience than tying the knot during the heart of winter. The fabric of the wedding dress should complement the season, whether it's lightweight and breezy for a warm day, or more substantial and cozy when darting to the ceremony in snowfall.

3. Flatter your figure

Chances are brides-to-be know which cuts and styles are most flattering. Mimic those style choices in the wedding dress. If you want to take focus off of full hips, choose a basque or asymmetrical waistline. Gowns with substantial straps or higher necklines may be better if you have a larger chest. Sheath and mermaid style gowns are options if you are confident with your figure and want to show off your curves.

4. Try a bit of this and that

Don't go into a wedding dress appointment with firm parameters. Although you may have a ball gown style in mind, after trying on other options something with a less voluminous silhouette may actually catch your eye. Many brides also automatically defer to strapless gowns, when various straps and sleeves can be very appealing.

5. Arrive with a firm budget

Weddings can be costly. It's important to set a budget for the wedding dress just as you will with other expenses. There are plenty of dress designers across a wide spectrum of price points. A willingness to consider and ultimately purchase a less costly dress can help you stay on budget. Browsing through magazines and looking online can provide wedding dress inspiration as well. Also, when in doubt, defer to the experts at bridal shops who have experience choosing dresses that brides are inclined to love.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

TIPS TO HELP MASTER YOUR WEDDING GUEST LIST



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Weddings are such momentous occasions that it's no wonder couples want to share their big days with as many people as possible. Though a wedding where all friends, family members and acquaintances are in attendance may be a dream scenario, reality often calls for a more carefully curated guest list.

Data from The Wedding Report indicates that the average cost of a wedding is slightly more than \$20,000, though that figure could be substantially higher, or even lower, depending on where couples tie the knot. Both The Wedding Report and The Knot report that a wedding venue and catering make up a significant percentage of the overall cost of a wedding, with some figures indicating that these expenses account for around 65% of the final price tag. The number of guests couples will host on their wedding day will affect which venue they book and how much food and beverages they'll need to satisfy guests. Couples who hope to stay within budget can consider these tips as they try to build a guest list that won't break the bank.

- **Accept input.** Parents may no longer foot the entire bill for their children's weddings, but couples who are accepting some financial help from parents must also accept Mom's and Dad's input regarding the guest list. Even if parents' desired guests do not ultimately make the cut, it's best to respect their wishes and consider who they want to invite. Couples who are financing their own weddings without outside help need not feel beholden to invite anyone who does not meet their invitation criteria.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

- **Make a preliminary list without regard to budget.** Couples can have fun making preliminary guest lists without considering their budgets. A preliminary list can serve as a solid starting point, and couples may even realize that their list is within budget. Once the preliminary lists have been created, couples can categorize guests (i.e., distant cousins, coworkers, etc.) and then work together to determine if any categories can be eliminated from the invitation list. For example, couples who may be going over budget with their guest lists can each agree to remove distant cousins from their prospective invitees.
 - **Seek advice.** Many couples face difficult decisions regarding their wedding day guest lists, so it can be helpful to speak to a recently married friend or relative to see how they handled paring down their guest lists. Some might have done it by category, while others might have limited guest lists to local friends and family. When taking this approach, couples can speak to friends about how they approached handling people who were surprised that they were not on the final list of invitees.
 - **Throw a less formal party down the road.** A less expensive backyard barbecue within weeks of tying the knot can serve as a less costly alternative to a large wedding reception. Couples who take this approach can keep their wedding day guest lists to a minimum, but invite everyone they hope to see to a post-wedding day backyard barbecue or potluck picnic so they can celebrate with everyone they love.
- Curating a wedding day guest list is no small task. However, couples can try various approaches to keep a guest list more manageable and less expensive.
- Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection
- ### HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT WEDDING RECEPTION VENUE
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- Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection
- Every decision engaged couples make in regard to their weddings is significant, but some may affect the day more than others. Perhaps no decision will help couples set the tone they hope to establish more than their choice of reception venue.
- Reception venues are where couples and their guests will spend the vast majority of their time on the wedding day, which is why choice of venue bears such significance. With that in mind, couples can consider these tips as they look for the perfect place to host their receptions.
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- Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection
- **Decide what you want out of a venue.** Prospective brides and grooms may have vastly different ideas regarding how they want their weddings to go, and it's imperative that couples discuss their ideal weddings prior to looking for a venue. Do you want to get married in a place of worship? Or do you prefer a venue that can host both the ceremony and reception? Do you want an indoor, outdoor or hybrid ceremony and reception? Define what you both want before looking for a venue and make the necessary concessions if you have different ideas in mind.



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