

Weddings

Cut the Costs of Being a Guest

How wedding
guests can cut
costs and still attend
loved ones'
weddings

Gown Guide

How to select
a comfortable
wedding dress

Weddings and non-traditional families

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Weddings



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Did you know?

According to the 2015 Real Weddings Study from the premier multiplatform wedding resource The Knot, **the most popular month for couples to get engaged is December**. Sixteen percent of survey respondents became engaged in the final month of the calendar year. **The survey also found that the average length of a couple's engagement is now 14.5 months**. Where June once was the most popular month of the year to tie the knot, today's couples are now heading down the aisle most often in October. **Seventeen percent of weddings now occur in October, closely followed by 15 percent in September**. And at what age are couples saying their "I dos"? The average marrying age for a bride is 29 and it is 31 for the groom.



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Make proposals special and successful

A wedding proposal is a special moment in couples' lives together. It can be made even more special by following some guidelines.



A marriage proposal is a couple's first official step toward the altar. Tradition dictates that men pop the question, with their surprised — and hopefully soon-to-be-fiancées — ultimately deciding if wedding bells will be on the horizon.

Proposing marriage can be nervewracking. However, if the time seems right and love is in the air, popping the question can be exciting. Regardless of who is proposing marriage, the following strategies can help make proposals memorable and successful.

Turn the tides

An old Irish tradition known as "The Lady's Privilege" was established in the fifth century by a nun named St. Brigid. She decided to create an opportunity for women to propose marriage. This day fell on every leap year, February 29. Centuries later, women can still use this tradition as the impetus to take the marriage reins into their own hands. But women need not wait for the next leap year to propose.

Many women view proposing as an empowering action that is tied to the evolving view of independent women. Couples are negotiating more in the marriage process, and the dissolution of commonly held practices is occurring more often.

Choose a sentimental location

Couples will remember the

proposal for the rest of their lives. So choose a proposal location that has sentimental connections. Think about where the first "I love you" was uttered or where a first date occurred. These can be prime locations to pop the question.

Note her style

Engagement rings play a big role in many couples' proposals. One person's style is not necessarily what his partner will like. Bigger isn't always better. Rather, choose a ring that reflects your partner's preferences and personality. Take your partner jewelry shopping and see which types of jewelry he or she is most drawn to. Certain preferences can serve as a jumping off point for ring designs.

Ask for the family's blessing

Men no longer need to ask their girlfriends' fathers for "permission" to wed their daughters. However, asking your partner's family for their blessing is a sign of respect and can add a romantic and heartfelt touch to the proposal.

Capture the moment

Though we live in an age when every moment of people's lives is documented with videos and photographs posted to social media, proposals still stand out as extra special moments. Hire a professional photographer to discreetly capture the proposal and your partner's reaction so it can be cherished for years to come.

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Jewelry care and cleaning guidelines



Protect jewelry by cleaning it regularly and exercising caution when engaging in certain activities.

Bridal gowns and tuxedos may get their fair share of attention at weddings, but the subtle details of brides' and grooms' wedding attire also garner guests' attention.

Breathtaking jewelry worn by the bride, groom and members of the bridal party looks great on the day of the wedding and in photos couples will keep for decades to come. Naturally, engagement rings and bridal bands are the shining stars of the celebration. However, other pieces of jewelry also make for cherished accessories for weddings.

Bridal jewelry is an investment worth maintaining. According to a 2013 report by the Jewelers of America, couples spend an average of \$4,000 on engagement rings and more money on wedding bands. Considering several thousands of dollars may adorn the necks, fingers, ears, and wrists of bridal party members, individuals should learn how to keep their jewelry investments looking pristine.

Remove jewelry during hard work

Exercise caution when wearing jewelry during strenuous activities or when jewelry can be damaged. Also, watch when handling slippery substances such as soaps and oils, as jewelry may fall off and become lost. Instead, remove precious jewelry and store it in a safe location, such as in a jewelry chest or a drawer.

Exercise caution with beauty products

Apply lotion, cosmetics, perfume, cologne, and hairspray before putting on jewelry. These substances can discolor certain metals or even damage stones. Prolonged contact with perspiration and bodily oils also can cause discoloration over time. Gently wipe down jewelry with a soft cloth after wearing it to remove oils and sweat.

Be careful around swimming pools, spas and the ocean

Couples should remove jewelry before partaking in water-based activities on their honeymoons.

According to jewelry retailer Zales, chlorinated water can react with the metals found in jewelry, causing color changes and even structural changes. Don't risk jewelry falling off in the ocean. Store it in a secure location before diving in.

Beware the sun, too

The Gemological Institute of America, Inc. states that sunlight can affect the durability and color of colored gemstones. Over time and in excess, the sun and heat can fade or damage some stones, such as amethyst, topaz and pearls. Other stones can darken with exposure to the sun.

Clean jewelry with care

Rely on mild detergents and a light touch when cleaning jewelry. Use products specifically designed for jewelry care, and read labels to ensure safety. The International Gemological Institute says seriously soiled jewelry should be professionally cleaned.



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Stunning engagement ring alternatives

White diamonds have been the traditional engagement ring stones for decades. While shoppers have experimented with gold, silver, platinum, and other precious metals for ring bands, the star of the show has long been that twinkling, pristine diamond. Even though diamonds may be a “girl’s best friend,” they may not fit every woman’s style, particularly the bride who likes to buck tradition and think outside the box. According to *Money* magazine, the average engagement ring costs more than \$5,800. In addition to being one of the most expensive gemstones, diamonds have become quite commonplace. Some women even eschew diamonds for moral reasons.

Whatever the driving force behind shopping for alternative gems, women who want to set themselves apart from others — and men who want to “wow” their significant others with unique and eye-catching rings — may opt for other dazzling stones.




Moissanite: This crystal naturally occurs in meteorites and is nearly as hard, dense and scuff-resistant as a diamond. Some feel moissanite offers more brilliance and fire than diamonds. Moissanite is a white-colored stone, so it can mimic the look of a diamond. And since it can be made in the laboratory at a fraction of the cost of even lab-made diamonds, it’s a frugal option. A nearly flawless one-carat moissanite gem can cost less than \$1,000.

Lemon quartz: This is the trade name for a lemon-yellow stone that is a variety of color-enhanced transparent quartz. Quartz is turned into this sunny hue through an artificial gamma ray irradiation process. Like other quartz gemstones, lemon quartz is considered to be very durable and is therefore suitable for all types of jewelry.


Sapphire: Sapphires tend to be blue stones (of varying intensity), but they also come in peach, pink, yellow, green, and white. Sapphire may not sparkle as much as a diamond or even moissanite. However, with the right cut, it can be hard to distinguish any lack of luster. Sapphires are the third hardest mineral, and at about one-third the price of diamonds, they make an ideal diamond substitute.

Morganite: According to the blog *Bridal Musings*, morganite is currently one of the most popular choices for engagement rings. Its pretty pink hue is romantic and feminine. It also sits at around the same hardness as sapphires, ensuring the rings will endure.

Vividly cut rubies, emeralds and tanzanite — all gems that are rarer yet less expensive than diamonds — can make beautiful engagement rings. Some couples also may opt for rings without gemstones, such as traditional Claddagh or “true lover’s knot” rings to signify their union.



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
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How guests can cut costs and still attend loved ones' weddings



Couples and/or their families can expect to spend tens of thousands of dollars on their weddings before saying "I do," making weddings one of the largest expenses for a couple apart from buying a house or new car.

But brides- and grooms-to-be are not the only ones who may have to invest quite a great deal on wedding days. Guests, including bridal party members, may also be responsible to pay a substantial sum. According to the 2016 American Express Spending & Saving Tracker, Americans expected to spend an average of \$703 per each wedding they attended in 2016.

Few people are willing to miss the wedding of a beloved family member or friend, even when the costs of attending the wedding can be high. Fortunately, there are ways for wedding invitees to attend the festivities without breaking the bank.

Shop around for lodging.

Many couples arrange for discounted hotel rooms for their out-of-town wedding guests. But guests might be able to save even more by shopping around for their own discounted rates at hotels and

other lodging accommodations. Websites like Orbitz and Hotels.com can compare rates at all the hotels in a given city, letting wedding guests explore all of their alternatives in a single search. Guests who are especially patient can use the Hotel Tonight app, which allows users to book heavily discounted rooms no more than seven days in advance of their expected occupancy. Guest also can try finding affordable lodging on the popular homestay network Airbnb.

Book travel early. Many travelers insist the best flight deals can be found as late as six weeks before the desired departure date. But there's no guarantee that waiting that long to book flights will benefit wedding guests. If the patient approach does not pan out, guests might be forced to choose between costly flights or not attending the wedding. Budget-conscious travelers may find it less stressful to book flights as early as possible. Doing so allows guests to find flights at the times they most prefer to fly, and it also makes it possible to spread the cost of attending a wedding out over a longer period of time.

Say no to joining the bridal party. While it's an honor when brides or grooms ask certain friends or family members to be in their bridal parties, guests should not feel compelled to accept that invitation if they cannot afford it. If money is tight, explain the situation to the bride and groom, who might even offer to help cover some of the costs of the wedding. Even if couples cannot afford that gesture, they will understand if friends or family members cannot cover the additional

costs associated with being in a bridal party.

Split expenses. Another way for guests to save money is to split certain expenses with fellow guests. Single guests can share hotel rooms with fellow guests attending solo, and even couples can join up with other couples and split the cost of double rooms. Sharing expenses such as rental cars and trips to and from the airport is another way for guests to coordinate their efforts to save money.

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Treat guests to personalized vows



Couples who choose to write their own wedding vows recognize how special such personal gestures are. Writing one's own vows can impart a personalized and special touch to the ceremony. But as anyone who has stared down a blank piece of paper or blinking cursor can attest, a case of writer's block may encourage couples to abandon the idea of writing their own vows.

Writing vows can be nerve-racking. Many couples are unaccustomed to speaking in front of crowds, and then there is the challenge of turning life-altering feelings into language that will appeal to the masses.

But couples struggling with their vows need not throw in the vow-writing towel. With some practice and guidance, anyone can write cherished vows that will be remembered for all of the right reasons for years to come.

Skip the schtick. Jokes may pop up in speeches throughout the evening, but wedding vows can be your chance to truly speak from the heart. Humor may come across as insincerity. Rather, list the words that describe your feelings for your future spouse, and build on that.

Tell a story. If you need inspiration, look to a moment in your relationship when you really knew this was the person with whom you wanted to share your life. Relay the story, but keep it brief. Try to be as specific as possible, and recognize that it's acceptable to be playful with your words.

When it's really coming from the heart and not the head, you'll know it.

Borrow from traditional words. Take traditional vows and tweak them to make them your own. This works especially well for those who have trouble getting started or are unsure of which format to follow. Incorporate key words, such as "partners," "love," "friends," "joy," and "forever."

Be sure the officiant is on board. Depending on the type of ceremony, the officiant may have final say over what can or cannot be included in your vows. Religious ceremonies, for example, may be limited to certain scripture readings and traditional vows. Before you devote any time to writing vows, ensure that it's alright to include them. Otherwise, save personalized sentiments for a special toast at the wedding reception.

Decide on a mutual structure for the vows. If you and your spouse will not be writing the vows together, agree on a format that you both will follow. Otherwise, you might be writing about your unending love, and he or she may be promising to keep updated on favorite sports teams or television programs. You want the tone and style of the vows to be cohesive.

Dig deeper. Look into the future and project how you hope your life to be in 10 or 20 years. Explain all of the reasons you want to be together for the duration.



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Selecting a comfortable wedding gown

Many brides-to-be visit bridal shops with specific goals in mind regarding the style of their wedding gowns.

Some women come equipped with magazine tear-outs or pull up ideas on their mobile phones.

Others may have an entire scrapbook filled with various ideas they've been compiling for years.

Much consideration is given to wedding gowns. The cost and silhouette of the dress may garner the bulk of that consideration, but brides might want to spend more time considering comfort.

Depending on the time of day their weddings take place, brides can spend 12 hours or more in their wedding gowns on their wedding day. However, when shopping for their gowns, brides may prioritize beauty over comfort, even though it's entirely possible to find a gown that's both stunning and comfortable. When staff and friends or family who have come along to offer advice start to blush over wedding gowns, brides-to-be may feel pressured to downplay any discomfort they feel.

To make sure brides look flawless and elegant but are still comfortable in their wedding gowns, consider the following tips.

Know what to highlight and what to cover up. No two body types are the same, and many women feel certain parts of their bodies are their best assets while they want to downplay others. Try on gowns that play up your best features. If you have shapely legs, consider a dramatic gown with a slit to show them off. Certain gowns can enhance the décolleté or show off an hourglass shape.

Remember, many gowns can be modified so that you feel secure and confident. Sleeves can be added or fabric placed to cover up any perceived flaws. Confidence and pride are important parts of the comfort factor.

Get sized correctly.

Bridal gown sizes do not coincide with

street sizes. Depending on the manufacturer, brides may have to select gowns that are several sizes larger than they would normally wear. This should not be a cause for alarm. Brides should go by their measurements. Attempting to squeeze into a dress that is too small will only lead to discomfort on the wedding day.

Purchase the right undergarments. Improperly fitting bras, shapewear and other undergarments can lead to discomfort as well. Some seamstresses can sew in supportive cups to remove the need for separate bras. Brides can explore various options to reduce the visibility of certain accoutrements.

Move around in the gown. Brides should not just stand in front of the mirror and smile when trying on gowns. Put them through their paces. Try sitting, bending and even a little dancing. Make sure the dress is comfortable to move around in.

Try different options. The gown brides have in mind may not be the one they ultimately go home with. Explore different styles and materials. Choose cooler, breezier fabrics and lightweight gowns, like crêpe, georgette or organza, for summer weddings. Heavier fabrics, such as brocade, may be more comfortable in the winter.



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Glamour Me and Make Me Beautiful

Different roles for the father of the bride



Popular movies and television shows give the impression that the job of the father of the bride in a wedding is ultimately about making sure the festivities are adequately funded. In the movies, fathers fret about the costs of everything from flowers to photos.

But gone are the days when the father of the bride bankrolls his daughter's entire wedding. The Knot's "2014 Real Wedding Survey" reported that, on average, the bride's parents contribute 43 percent of the total cost of a wedding; the bride and groom contribute another 43 percent; the groom's parents spend 12 percent; the remaining 2 percent of the budget is paid for by family members or friends. That frees up Dad for other roles in wedding planning. With some creativity, couples can find ways to incorporate the father of the bride into the festivities in even more productive ways.

Wedding sites:

Assign dear old dad the important task of looking at potential wedding reception sites prior to visiting them yourself. He may have certain connections through work or attended business or leisure occasions at catering halls and other venues. Dad's connections can pay off. Let him impart his negotiating skills and find the best deals with the ideal backdrop for the festivities.

Wardrobe: Let your father assist the best man and other groomsmen in securing their tuxedos or other wardrobe essentials. Dad also can step in and return rented items following the wedding.

Beverages: Dad may be fitting to keep tabs on what is occurring at the bar during the reception, ensuring that guests' needs are

being met. He also can keep an eagle eye trained on anyone who may have overindulged and needs to take a break.

Speech: Give your father an opportunity to shine by letting him make a speech. Remember, this is a momentous day for Dad as well, as he may be trying to come to terms with his daughter starting a new life.

Father-daughter song: Let Dad pick father-daughter song, and go with his choice even if you had something else in mind.

Ceremony: Even if you prefer a less traditional wedding ceremony, let your father walk you down the aisle. This will likely be a moment he'll remember for years to come.

Expand the father of the bride's role in the wedding by assigning him tasks where he can put his style, experience and excitement to good use.

Tips for a special mother/son dance



Grooms are the unsung heroes of weddings. They often put others first, including letting their own mothers shine on the dance floor.

Weddings celebrate the unions of happy couples ready to pledge their lives to each other. In theory, the wedding day spotlight should be shared equally by brides and grooms. But brides often eclipse their grooms, as guests are drawn to stunning bridal gowns.

Though grooms might play second fiddle for much of their wedding days, there is one moment when all eyes are on the groom and a special lady in his life. The mother/son dance is a wedding tradition that many grooms embrace as their opportunity to show their mothers how much they love and appreciate them. The mother/son dance is an ideal time to create a special moment, and the following are some tips to personalize the dance.

Precede the bride and her father. Make your own tradition and switch up the timing of the dances. Be the first to take a spin on the dance floor and set the tone for the other traditional songs to come.

Create a photo montage. Work with an entertainment company or photographer to create a slideshow of images showing you and your mother together and separately. If possible, include some photos that were shot during the wedding ceremony, asking the photographer to capture the look on your mother's face during pivotal moments of the ceremony.

Show off your dance skills. One increasingly popular wedding trend is for fathers and brides to choreograph the father/daughter dances. Grooms and their mothers can follow suit, particularly if you both have some stellar dance moves.

Let Mom choose the song. Give your mother the opportunity to express her sentiments to you, as mothers of the groom do not typically toast their sons during weddings or even rehearsal dinners.

Invite other son/mother duos up. If the idea of dancing alone with your mother is a bit intimidating, give other mothers in attendance an opportunity to share the spotlight. Celebrate all mothers in attendance, encouraging any mothers and sons who are present to dance together.

Wedding transportation tips



Weddings are momentous events for the couple tying the knot as well as all of the friends and family invited to share in the big day.

Before couples can tie the knot and cut a rug at their receptions, everyone, couple and guests included, must arrive at the location (or locations if the ceremony site differs from the reception area). Though arranging wedding day transportation can be difficult, there are ways to make the process go more smoothly for guests and bridal party members.

Determine your needs

Before a transportation plan can be made, couples must first map out their needs. Everything should be built around the ceremony. Once the ceremony time has been set, the rest of the day can be arranged around that time.

Determine how much time is needed to travel from the ceremony to the reception area. Allocate enough time before the cocktail hour to allow for traffic, photos and any other needs that may take up time. Couples do not want anyone, included themselves, to feel rushed.

Once the timing has been orchestrated, couples can figure out exactly which types of transportation will be required.

Book personal transportation first

Happy couples must make their own transportation their top priority. Arrange for the couples' transportation between five and seven months in advance of the wedding. It could be preferable to book it even further in advance if a couple is getting married around a holiday

or during prom season when limousines and party buses are in high demand. Remember, unless the bride-to-be plans to be seen by her groom, couples will need separate transportation to the ceremony site. Factor multiple vehicles into the wedding transportation budget.

Explore your personality

Brides and grooms have many transportation options at their disposal. If a limousine doesn't add the spark of creativity they desire, they can opt for a VW bus or a retro roadster. Outdoor enthusiasts might want to ride off on horseback, while easy riders might prefer to rev up the engine on a Harley-Davidson. Couples should never feel penned in by tradition, especially when something else makes them feel remarkable and the budget allows for it.

Have your getaway car ready

Couples generally opt to arrive to the wedding and reception in style, but take their own vehicles or cabs home afterward. This requires some advanced planning. Enlist the help of friends to park the return-trip car in a convenient location. Check with the catering hall to see if a vehicle can be left in their lot overnight. Otherwise, arrange to grab a ride home with friends or family.

Consider others' needs

Have the names and phone numbers of taxi or ridesharing services available for those who may not be able to drive after the party. Elderly or disabled guests might appreciate prearranged transportation as well. Although couples can arrange for transportation as a courtesy to others, they don't need to make arrangements for everyone.

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Successful toasts help shape social events

A toast is a drink raised in the health or honor of someone. Such salutes are typically accompanied by some heartfelt words or tokens of advice. Toasts are a common component of social gatherings, including retirement parties, milestone birthdays and weddings.

Toast of the town

It's difficult to pinpoint who originated the practice of toasting. Several ancient societies would raise a glass in honor of deities or special guests. Ancient Greeks offered libations to the gods as a part of ritualistic practices and also as a point to drink to each other's good health. Ancient Romans at one point instituted a practice that all people must drink to Emperor Augustus at each meal.

The term "toast" has an interesting history. Dating back

to the 16th century, "toast" refers to a piece of toasted bread. A piece of toast was commonly added to wine during this time because wine was quite inferior in quality then compared to modern vintages. Stale bread was placed into the jug to soak up acidity and improve the flavor. The wine also improved the palatability of the old or spiced bread. According to *National Geographic* magazine, by the 18th century, the term "toast" had been transferred from the floating piece of bread to the person honored by the toast. Eventually, "toast" represented the drink raised or the words offered with the gesture.

Prepare for a toast

Toastings can be off-the-cuff remarks shared in the moment, but for many special events, they should be prepared well in advance. Nowadays,

some toast-givers devote extra time to preparing toasts, particularly because they know these sentiments can live on indefinitely on social media. Giving a toast can induce anxiety, but some nerves can be relieved simply by doing one's homework and not procrastinating.

Writing tips

A person giving a toast is trying to gain the attention of a group of people who may not be very attentive. These tips can improve the content of the toasts and their delivery.

Keep 'you' out of it. This toast is not about you. It's about the person you are honoring. Therefore, do not put any self-congratulatory messages in the toast. Make it all about the person — even beginning the toast with that person's name.

Hook people in. Open the toast

with a good joke or anecdote that will help introduce the person of honor. For example,


Jake is a great guy because he's the type of person who will offer to meet you at your dorm room at 2 a.m. with pizza and beer to get you through a study session. Too bad he has a horrible sense of direction and repeatedly shows up at the wrong door.

Tell a story. Reference the person in the toast, other audience members, and even yourself if you can be painted in a self-deprecating light.


Keep it short. This is a toast, not a monologue. Be brief so that the audience doesn't lose interest. Set a five-minute limit.

Wrap it up. Conclude the toast by tying the story back to the introduction and making sure to include the audience once more. This will help you get the biggest laughs and applause.

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Weddings and nontraditional families

Families come in all shapes and sizes. During special events — particularly those steeped in tradition, such as weddings — blended families may have to employ certain tactics to ensure the events go off without a hitch.

When planning their weddings, couples must give consideration to the needs of their families. Even though a wedding is about the union of two people, oftentimes couples engaged to be married must contend with the politics of divorce or other familial issues. This includes if and how to incorporate stepparents and stepsiblings into the ceremony and celebration.

There are no traditional rules regarding how to handle blended families, so brides- and grooms-to-be can customize their decisions based on their own unique situations. Even when families have been happy through the years, the unique circumstances and traditions surrounding the nuptials can dredge up former insecurities, and certain aspects may require extra patience and tact. Here's how to navigate the process.

Consider stepparents and stepsiblings VIPs. Brides and grooms who are not particularly close to their stepfamilies still have to recognize the role they play in the family dynamics. These people are still family, so respect and courtesy should be offered. If there is any lingering animosity, extend the olive branch on this day and try not to let anyone be made to feel as if they are unimportant. A simple announcement of who stepparents are at the wedding reception or inclusion of their names on wedding itineraries can help smooth over any potential bumps.

Put others' needs before your own. While the wedding may be about you and your future spouse, you must consider the feelings of others. Biological



parents and stepparents may act defensively if they feel uncomfortable or hurt, and that can create an air of negativity to the day. Try to avoid this by considering potential areas of conflict. For example, mothers might be hurt if their ex-husbands' new girlfriends are asked to be in a group family photo. Instead, select separate times to have everyone included. Remember to give parents and stepparents priority seating as well, and they each should be seated next to someone they love and someone with whom they can converse comfortably. You may think everyone can play nice, but it's best not to push the issue just to make a point at the wedding.

Recognize that some families break the mold. Recently, a father made waves on the Internet when a video of him pulling the bride's stepfather up to assist in walking her down the aisle went viral. This was a wonderful image of families making it work despite their differences or the awkwardness that can result when brides or grooms have parents and stepparents in attendance. Although this scenario might not play out for all, find ways to impart a special touch, especially if you're close to both your biological parents and your stepparents. For example, your biological father may walk you down the aisle, while your stepfather may enjoy the first dance.

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Wedding anniversaries provide opportunities for couples to reflect and relive the excitement of their wedding days. Anniversaries can easily be forgotten amid the hustle and bustle of daily life, but many couples are making concerted efforts to ensure their anniversaries are celebrated as the special occasions they are.

A first wedding anniversary is a special one. Some couples celebrate their first anniversaries by enjoying a piece of wedding cake that has been properly preserved in the freezer. Couples may also dance to their wedding songs or enjoy a nice dinner at a favorite restaurant. The first anniversary also is a time to pull out the wedding video or photo album and reminisce about the wedding day.

Anniversaries are a great way for couples to celebrate their time together by stepping away from emails, text messages, work obligations, and even mundane everyday tasks to once again remember a day and moment that changed their lives forever. Those who may need

a little inspiration celebrating their anniversaries can consider these suggestions.

Have dinner at your reception site. Find out if the reception site, which may be a catering hall or restaurant, serves dinner or brunch. Make a reservation and enjoy celebrating in the spot where the memories all began.

Take a second honeymoon. Honor wedding memories by booking a second honeymoon at a special location.

Throw a party. Use your anniversary as an excuse to have friends or family over for a party. Be sure to include your wedding song on the music playlist.

Create a romantic evening. Rekindle the romance by pulling out all the stops, complete with a nice homecooked meal, candles and mood music.

Wedding anniversaries present ideal opportunities for couples to reminisce about their trip down the aisle and all the entertaining moments from the wedding. They're also opportunities to connect as a couple and focus on each other.

Determining wedding day dress codes



Black tie weddings require men to wear tuxedos.

of the wedding, are spelled out on the wedding invitations. However, invitations can sometimes leave guests confused about the appropriate style of attire for the occasion.

Even though wedding invitations rarely offer specific information regarding attire, chances are the wording will provide clues that can help guests interpret the desired dress code.

Casual

If the invitation mentions casual attire, it's important to

tops are unacceptable unless otherwise noted. Err on the side of caution and go with business casual, which includes chinos, slacks, a polo shirt or button-down shirt for men. Women can wear a sundress or slacks or a skirt and an attractive blouse. If the invitation mentions beach casual, shorts and even sandals are likely acceptable.

Semiformal

Semiformal dresswear, sometimes referred to as "dressy casual," is a step up from casual clothing. Cocktail dresses or a more elegant skirt and top are the norms. Gentleman generally wear a suit and tie. Coordinate the colors of clothing to the time of day. Fabrics should represent the season. For example, a linen suit will not pass at a winter wedding.

Formal

Formal attire is the default dress code for the majority of weddings. When the invitation does not specify a dress code, it is safe to assume formal attire is expected. Men can choose among a dark suit and tie or a tuxedo. Women can opt for a formal cocktail-length dress, a classic suit or a long dress. Select among tones that are gray, black or brown.

Black tie

Black tie events also require formal attire. Black tie typically goes hand-in-hand with an evening wedding. Black tie is more rigid for male guests, who should wear a tuxedo, black bow tie, cummerbund, and patent leather shoes. Women have a little more leeway with their attire at such gatherings. A long evening gown might be preferable. However, a chic cocktail dress also can be acceptable, and darker, neutral colors are most appropriate. Some invitations may reference "Black Tie Preferred." While men may opt for a tuxedo, a black suit also can be worn.

White Tie

The most formal of occasions will request white tie attire. Ball gowns and tuxedos with tails are the norm, as are dramatic jewelry and hairstyles. White tie attire is akin to what one might see worn to awards shows.

When attending a wedding, it is always better to be overdressed than underdressed. Guests can consult with fellow guests or the bride and groom if they are unsure of the dress code.

Wedding invitations do more than merely announce that a celebration is on the horizon. Invitations provide key information about the ceremony and festivities to follow. Many details, including the location, time and date



realize that everyday casual is different from wedding casual. Jeans, shorts and tank

Did you know?

Longevity in marriage is something to be celebrated. Couples who reach fiftieth and sixtieth wedding anniversaries often commemorate those anniversaries with big parties. But there are some around the world who would consider golden anniversary celebrants to still be newlyweds. In December 2015, Karam Chand, 110, and his wife, Kartari Chand, 103, from Bradford, West Yorkshire (originally from India), celebrated their 90th wedding anniversary, becoming the world's longest-betrothed couple. In America, John and Ann Betar, ages 104 and 100, respectively, have been married 83 years as of 2016. The couple eloped in 1932. They have been named one of America's longest-married couples by the Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

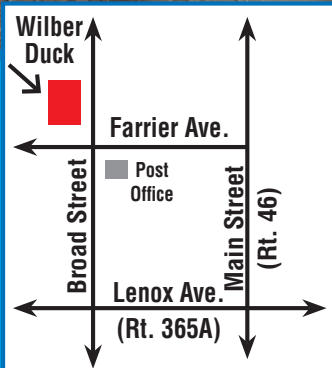


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