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WEDDING GUIDE

Featured Stories

Cali & Tyler

An Okoboji Wedding

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Play Ball

Paige & Tyler

Magical Winter Wonderland

Proposal

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Employ Helping Hands During Wedding Planning



Accepting the honor of being in a friend or family member's wedding means more than dressing in the fancy clothing and showing up on

the designated date. The wedding party — particularly the bridesmaids and groomsmen — should understand that standing alongside the happy couple generally means doing some work during the planning period as well as on the big day. It's the wise wedding couple who can recognize the strengths of their family and friends and put those attributes to work in productive ways.

According to The Knot.com, the average wedding party includes four people on each side. That means eight extra people who can lend their eyes, ears and hands to the bounty of tasks that comprise the wedding planning to-do list. Here's how to delegate with flair.

- Ask and ye shall receive. First off, it is never safe to assume that the wedding party will be taking on extra work. Even if tradition suggests wedding party members lend a hand, it's in the best interest of the couple to graciously ask for help. This helps establish good will at the start.
- Be specific when assigning tasks. Rather than just asking for generalized help, make a list of the tasks that seem the most challenging and then delegate accordingly. If a member of the bridal party is excellent at getting travel deals, have him or her help arrange the honeymoon. Someone with an intimate knowledge of cuisine can come along to food tastings and help plan the reception menu. Friends with a flair for organization can be in charge of disseminating information to the entire wedding party or keeping a running list of gifts given at various parties so thank-you notes can be sent.
- Make wardrobe suggestions. Couples can rely on their most honest bridal party members when picking out wedding attire. These no-holds-barred individuals can set them straight on fit, look and comfort. Trust these people in helping to make the entire wedding party look stylish and feel confident.
- Extend the host/hostess duties. It can be tiring for couples to tend to the needs of all their wedding guests. Couples can enlist the help of their wedding party to ensure that elderly or disabled guests get the assistance they need. The wedding party can also step up to serve as stand-in dance partners or to help grab drinks or escort people as needed.
- Get the party started. Couples can usually count on their wedding parties to help fill the dance floor at the wedding reception — even when others have not yet built up the courage to showcase their dancing skills. Those bold and loveable friends and family members will help keep the energy up and make the wedding a blast.

Planning and hosting a wedding is a large undertaking. With the help of the wedding party, it can be that much more enjoyable. *@metrocreativeconnection*

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Factors to Consider Before Choosing a Wedding Venue

Once couples become engaged and share the good news with their friends and families, the next step is to begin planning their weddings. While couples must make a myriad of decisions during the wedding planning process, perhaps none is more significant than where to tie the knot.

According to The Knot 2016 Real Weddings Study, the average cost of a wedding for couples who married in 2016 was \$35,329. That's a sizable amount, and a big portion of that was spent on the wedding venue. The Real Weddings Study found that couples spent an average of \$16,107 on their wedding venues in 2016. That figure easily dwarfs the next biggest expense (\$6,163 for the engagement ring) for couples tying the knot.

Because the wedding venue comes with such a potentially high sticker price, couples should give ample consideration to a host of factors before choosing where to get married.

Size: Until they can agree on a guest list, couples might want to delay even looking for venues. However, some couples might want to first look at some venues so they can determine just how many guests they can afford to invite. Whether they're hosting small affairs or large parties, couples should choose venues that can comfortably accommodate all of their guests. If possible, look for venues with multiple reception areas, which might allow for some wiggle room if the guest list grows or dwindles during the planning process.

Availability: Some couples might have an ideal time of year they hope to get married. Some

even know the exact date they hope to get married. While that can help with the planning, it can also limit couples with regard to their venue options. Some venues may be booked for as much as a year or more in advance during peak wedding season. The Real Weddings Study found that

the most popular months to get married in 2016 were October and September. Couples who hope to follow in the footsteps of many 2016 brides and grooms may need to book their wedding venues well in advance. Those who can be more flexible regarding their wedding dates may find it easier to book their dream venues.

Insurance: Ask about the venue's insurance policies, including the policies the venue has to protect itself. In addition, ask if the venue requires couples to have their own wedding liability

insurance for protection in the event of injury, property damage or incidents related to alcohol. Couples may also want to make the investment in cancellation/postponement insurance, and some venues may even require it.

Financials: It's easy for couples to be focused on the bottom line when choosing wedding venues, but it's also important that they get a complete grasp of the financials before choosing a wedding venue. Ask about the amount of the initial deposit and if that deposit is refundable. In addition, ask when the deposit is due and when each subsequent payment is due until the balance is paid in full. This can make budgeting easier and planning less stressful.

Couples should have fun choosing their wedding venues while recognizing that certain factors must be given ample consideration before signing any contracts. @metrocreativeconnection



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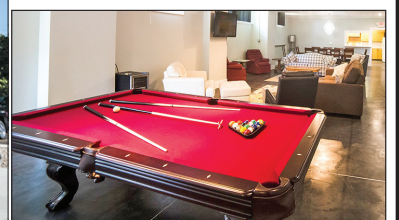
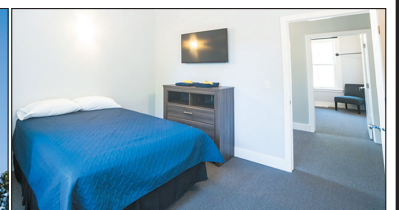
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An Okoboji Wedding

September 23, 2017, at the Waterfront Event Center on the shores of beautiful East Lake Okoboji, Cali Duggan and Tyler Solsma said their "I Dos" in the presence of over 250 of their closest friends and family. It was an extremely warm fall day but it was the most wonderful day.

Tyler and Cali met in October of 2012, at a UNI football game. Introduced by mutual friends, the relationship just seemed to be a perfect fit from the moment they met. While both enjoy a good game of golf, the Iowa Hawkeyes, and professional football, it was on the golf course where the surprise proposal took place on July 15, 2016. Tyler and Cali were golfing with Cali's family at Bunker Hill Golf Course in Dubuque, where Cali played many rounds of golf growing up. It was on the 9th hole where Tyler got down on one knee and asked for Cali to spend the rest of their lives together.

With Tyler growing up in Spirit Lake, and Cali in Dubuque, the decision had to be made as to where the wedding would take place. It didn't take long for them to decide that it would be an Okoboji wedding as the colors of fall are just beginning to show. Cali instantly fell in love with Okoboji when she came back home with Tyler for the first time, and she wanted all her friends and family from Dubuque to see for themselves how awesome it is in Okoboji. Then the fun of planning their special day began.

Cali purchased her wedding gown, at Brides and Wedding in Manchester, Iowa. The colors of black, ivory, gold with a hint of blush pink set the tone for the wedding party. The Maid of Honor and five of the bridesmaids wore long sequin gold dresses, the 8th bridesmaid and sister of the groom, Elli

Carney, wore a blush pink dress. The Groom and Grooms-men wore classic black tuxedos with bowties and suspenders rented from Evans Tuxedos in Spirit Lake.

Classic and elegant shown throughout the ceremony. White ranunculus boutonnieres and bouquets made of the same were the flowers of choice. Cali said that Hy-Vee floral in Spirit Lake was an easy decision as Amber and her team were so easy to work with. Both Grand Occasions and Elements Design Studio did some of the décor, but Laura Duggan, sister of the bride and Maid of Honor was instrumental in most of the decorating at the reception. "I couldn't have planned our special day without the help of Laura", mentioned Cali. She helped so much and kept me calm throughout the 14 months leading up to our wedding day.

Memories of their special day were very important to both Tyler and Cali, as they heard from so many of their friends that "the day seems to go by so fast, so slow down and take time to enjoy it". So in addition to their photographer, Jen Pruss, of Studio 1328 in Spirit Lake, they also hired Complete Entertainment of Sioux Falls as their Videographer to capture special moments throughout the day. They also provided the music for the wedding and the DJ Service at the reception.

The Waterfront catered the meal which consisted of grilled chicken breast with Parmesan garlic sauce, pork tenderloin, roasted mixed vegetables, Parmesan garlic mashed potatoes, and lettuce salad.

Instead of a traditional rehearsal, the bride and groom chose to have the Grooms Dinner and rehearsal early Friday afternoon. The dinner was at The Waterfront as well, where they enjoyed the famous pizza from the Blue Water Flatbread Pizza Co. That evening, the parents of the Groom, Jason and Jantina Carney, entertained the wedding party and all who traveled in to town for the wedding on The Kon Tiki which was rented from Okoboji Boat Works. "It was a great way for all of them to see the lakes and how beautiful it is in Okoboji", said Cali.

Cali had many favorite moments throughout the day, but the father/daughter dance was one that will always remain. Instead of one song, they danced to a combination of four songs her dad had picked. It was a very special moment, very special for the both of us, Cali said. As for Tyler, it was when he could finally relax a bit, and enjoy their time with their wedding party and closest friends after the ceremony aboard

the Barefoot Barge, where they spent an hour or so cruising the lake, while those back at The Waterfront enjoyed happy hour. For me, the mother of the groom, that was a wonderful hour to have so we could say hello to all of our friends and family and just mingle and unwind a little.

Tyler and Cali's advice would be to "enjoy it, embrace it and hey, if a little glitch happens, it's okay. Don't stress too much about it".

As this goes to print, Tyler and Cali are enjoying their honeymoon in Mexico. They decided to wait until it was cold here and with Tyler being a landscaper, fall is a busy time to try and get away. Tyler and Cali reside in Cedar Falls, where Tyler works for Wapsie Pines Landscaping and Cali is a RN at Covenant Medical Center in Waterloo. — by Jantina Carney



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Did You Know?

Food can make or break a wedding reception. Couples researching potential reception sites for their parties should be sure to schedule tastings and confirm how the foods will look upon being served. In addition to the taste of the food, couples may want to consider which menu items are offered — particularly those that align with the latest trends in wedding reception catering. Based on data compiled by The Knot, She Knows, Delish, and various food bloggers, the following food trends are worthy of notice.

- **Food stations:** Food stations encourage interaction between a chef/server and the guests. Food stations can include a ceviche bar, fondue cart, quesadilla maker, or custom sliders station.
- **Colorful foods:** Guests are often first tempted by the appearance of foods, and bold colors can set dishes apart.
- **Brunch items:** Recognizing that daytime weddings can be much less expensive than evening affairs, couples may want to have brunch-themed weddings, featuring omelets, pancakes, French toast, and other tasty breakfast foods.
- **Fancier "ordinary" fare:** Although chicken fingers and meatballs aren't normally given gourmet status, they can be dressed up and repackaged for weddings. Whole-grain breadings, Kobe beef meatballs and Asian dipping sauces give foods some flair.
- **Family feel:** Some weddings are now served "family style" where guests can share from larger passed plates. This serves to connect everyone at the table and encourages conversation, helping to establish a warm atmosphere.
- **Food trucks:** Trendy couples can treat guests to another special component toward the end of the reception. A takeout style food truck order can serve as a fourth or fifth course.

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“When the right pitch comes, be prepared to run the bases!”



Rachel Gerking grew up in Spirit Lake playing every sport she could. The jockette excelled at playing softball, basketball and tennis in high school. Rachel went on to play softball at the University of Northern Iowa. All the time she was “scouting” for her lifelong teammate.

Little did she know that Andrew Fisher was “on deck” and living a parallel life in Blakesburg, Iowa. He was also a jock playing baseball, basketball and running cross country in high school. Andrew went on to play basketball at William Penn University.

After college, they both took fitness oriented jobs in Spirit Lake. Rachel became the District Office Athletic Assistant and varsity softball coach. Andrew became the Physical Director at the Bedell Family YMCA. Their circles of work responsibilities and friends overlapped “off the field.”

Eventually the two bumped into each other and they hit it off! Their first dating “line ups” included listening and dancing to country music at his house and talking the night away. “It was pretty unreal how well we connected from the beginning,” Rachel said. They agreed the other was a “great catch!”

Andrew purchased the engagement ring during their trip to Minneapolis, to watch a Twins game. But he was waiting for the right moment to pop the question. He pulled off an unexpected “change up” when he proposed to Rachel in his hometown of Blakesburg. It felt like a “grand slam home run” when Rachel said, “Yes!”

They set the wedding date of April 15, 2017, and Rachel’s mom, Jill, went to work planning the wedding. The theme rustic chic was chosen along with yellow and gray as the

wedding team’s colors.

The “warm up,” rehearsal dinner was at the Oakwood Inn, with food catered by Tweeter’s.



When the time came to “go to bat,” Rachel chose a Chantilly lace wedding dress from Chrysalis Bridal Salon, in Orange City, Iowa. Her nails were done at Cali Nails, her hair at Bella Via Salon and her make-up at Okoboji Skin Care.

The champagne-colored bridesmaids’ dresses also came from Chrysalis, with each gal choosing her own style.

Andrew and his team of groomsmen got their shirts, pants, ties and suspenders from Kohl’s.

Heart ‘n Home florist, in Laurens, Iowa, provided the flowers and decorated the Crosswinds Church wedding location and the Rolling Oaks Barn (now the Barn at Okoboji) reception location. “I had a picture from Pinterest of a bouquet and the florist made mine look EXACTLY how I wanted it,” Rachel said. “She also helped get a vision of what the barn should look like and decorated it even more beautifully than we envisioned.”

The reception’s music was done by DJ, Brett Groen. The “concession stand” food included a taco, nacho and baked potato bar by McKeen’s Pub and Grill. The cake was done by Kim Ingwersen Cakes and dessert by Hey! Good Cookies. The day was captured in photos by Studio. 1328 and in video by Emma Dau Photography. The day went off without any hitches or “extra innings.”

Rachel and her dad, Todd, danced to the song “Cinderella” by Steven Curtis Chapman. “The only time I cried was during the father/daughter dance when my dad was telling me stories of when I was a little girl playing sports around the house and being super competitive,” Rachel said.

Rachel and Andrew honeymooned in Cancun, Mexico, to relax on the beach. They returned to their newly purchased “home base” in Spirit Lake. Rachel is now the Athletic Director at the high school and Andrew is the CEO at the YMCA.

Their love soon “doubled” when they found out they were expecting identical twin girls. But their joy soon faded when they found out the babies had Twin-to-twin Transfusion Syndrome. Procedures were performed to correct this, but

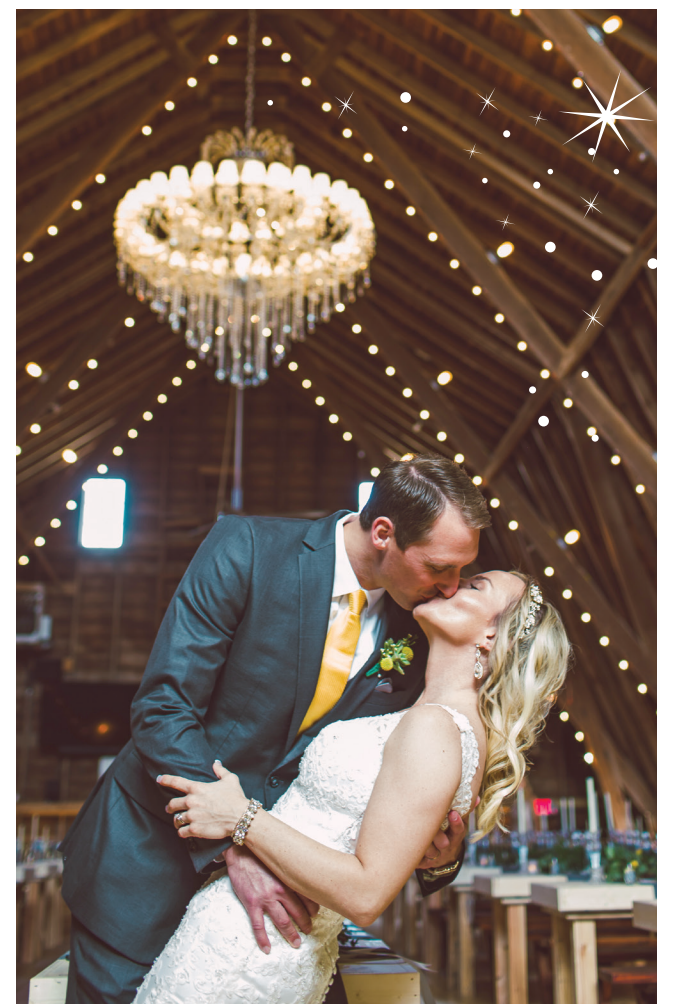
life threw them a “curve ball.” Their daughters, Harper Carli and Arrie Mykal Fisher, were born on December 29th, over three months early. Unfortunately the girls did not survive.

With heavy hearts Rachel and Andrew returned to their daily lives. But they look forward to growing team Fisher in the future, knowing their angelic cheerleaders will be cheering them on from above.

Congratulations Rachel and Andrew! May your life together be richly blessed with many innings of love and happiness for years to come.

“Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game.”

– by Mary Meinking Chambers



Planning Tricks The Professionals Use

Wedding planning can be an exciting undertaking, but couples who have already walked down the aisle can attest that wedding planning also can be stressful. Ensuring all of the details come out right can prove overwhelming at times. Hiring a wedding planner is one way to alleviate some of the stress associated with wedding planning. Couples who do not have the money to hire wedding planner can borrow some of the tips and tricks professionals rely on when planning weddings.

Make guests the first priority: Even though it may seem like weddings should be geared around couples tying the knot, many wedding planners advise couples to focus on accommodating their guests. Having a handle on the number of people who will be attending, any of their specific needs (allergies, mobility issues, etc.), providing a comfortable environment (addressing bugs, weather, seating shortages), and knowing how much space guests will require can make choosing a venue that much easier.

Rent what you don't have: Renting rather than purchasing items can save couples money. Wedding planners do not

stockpile items such as tables, chairs and decorations. Instead, they rely on rental companies to provide what is necessary. According to Minneapolis-based professionals The Wedding Guys, even couples working with small budgets can enhance or elevate their weddings by working with rental companies.

Flush out foliage: Wedding planners know that flowers cost a great deal of money, especially flowers that are not native to the region where couples are getting married. The process of making arrangements can be time-consuming. Also, many flowers no longer produce strong scents because they're bred for longer stems and a lengthy vase life. Interspersing potted plants with arrangements that are lighter on blooms and heavier on filler can help cost-conscious couple stick to budget.

Trust vendors' advice: Wedding vendors tend to know



one another and can be good sources of information. A wedding photographer, for example, may be able to tell couples which reception venues photograph particularly well, and a reception manager may know which DJs or bands are best at getting guests on the dance floor.

Negotiate before signing the contract: Wedding planners understand that vendors may be more willing to offer perks or extras rather than adding up a la carte pricing before the contract is signed. This way they secure the reservation on good will. Negotiating for more later on may be difficult.

Get organized: Organization is key. Brides- and grooms-to-be may want to enlist friends or relatives with a flair for organization to help with details.

Borrowing tricks from wedding planners can help couples save money and avoid stress. *@metrocreativeconnection*

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Magical Winter Wonderland Proposal

Paige Krause and Tyler Lynn first met and fell in love when they were in high school. Their story began as “young love,” with dinners and movies, and double dating with mutual friends. As Paige and Tyler grew, so did their love for each other. Fast forward 6 1/2 years, to June 3, 2017, when they said their “I dos”.

One evening in December 2015, the couple decided to go out for dinner and exchange Christmas gifts. After dinner, Tyler “remembered” he had to do farm chores on the family farm.

After Tyler and Paige got to the farm, Tyler disappeared and was gone a very long time. After finally returning, Tyler told Paige, “Alright, let’s go. Bring the gifts.” Tyler walked Paige down into the grove of evergreens that were beautifully lit with lights, a fire burning and hay bales and blankets to sit on. After exchanging gifts, Tyler got down on one knee,

with an engagement ring in hand, and asked for Paige’s hand in marriage. “The proposal was Tyler to a T,” stated Paige.

When planning the wedding, Paige’s mother was a huge help. Paige remarked, “My mother was a saint. She remembered all the little things I still needed to do and would send me reminders on what we needed to get done. We focused on vendors that were local.”

After meticulous planning down to the very last detail, Tyler and Paige were married in a beautiful ceremony at First Lutheran Church, in Milford, Iowa.

The rehearsal dinner was held at Arrowwood Resort and consisted of a delicious pasta bar. Arrowwood’s entire staff was a pleasure to work with.

Paige chose their wedding colors of plum, blush and ivory. She wore a strapless, drop waist gown, which she purchased from Elegance Bridal, in Okoboji. Paige carried a bouquet of blush and ivory colored peonies and garden roses. She wrapped a handkerchief, made from her grandmother’s wedding dress, around her bouquet. All the flowers came from Ferguson’s Floral and Garden Center, in Spirit Lake. Paige remarked, “They were all just beautiful.” Her six bridesmaids wore long plum gowns with keyhole backs, which were also from Elegance.

Tyler, the six groomsmen and ushers all wore dark grey tuxs with plum accents.

Paige and her bridesmaid’s hair were styled at Aspasia Salon. Paige’s makeup was done at Boji Breeze, in Spirit Lake.

The reception took place at The Roof Garden, in Arnolds Park, and was beautifully decorated. Each table featured different and unique centerpieces. They were of various sizes and types of vases, placed on silver platters, with different types of flowers and greenery. The backdrop for the head table, from Grand Occasions in Spirit Lake, and was just beautiful!

Hi-Lo Club out of Lakefield, Minnesota, catered the delicious food. Owner Nadine Malchow was “basically a wedding planner as well as a caterer and she made our day worry-free when it came to food.” The wedding cake and cupcakes were from Playful Cupcaketions. Paige remarked, “they were the best cupcakes I have ever had!”

The wedding photography was done by Rachael Wester-

gard and Emma Dau, both of whom grew up with Paige. They kept things moving and took wonderful photos. Their

DJs were Stovetop Productions, of Sheldon, who kept the guests on the dance floor all night long. They also provided a photo booth that added to the celebration.

The couple honeymooned in Breckenridge, Colorado, for 11 days, where they enjoyed the scenery and relaxed. Tyler works for Beck Engineering and Paige is a second grade teacher at Sibley-Ocheyedan Schools. They make their home in Spirit Lake.

— by Janie Eick







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What To Consider When Shopping For Rings

Engagements precede wedding dresses, flower arrangements, limousines, and even a couple's wedding vows. And no proposal is complete without a ring. Knowledge of rings and stones is essential for those who plan to propose in the near future.

A recent survey from the wedding resource The Knot in which 12,000 brides and 1,200 grooms in the United States were asked about their rings, found that people spend an average, of \$5,978 on engagement rings. Recognizing the potential cost of engagement rings can help ring shoppers prepare for their purchases.

In addition to considering costs, couples can employ the following tips to shop with confidence.

- Cut costs with style. Engagement rings can be costly, but many couples feel they are worthwhile investments. According to In Style magazine, a ring with a classic solitaire of one carat weight can cost thousands of dollars, while a band covered in just under one carat of tiny pavé diamonds will offer plenty of sparkle for a lot less money.

- Know your settings. How the diamond is framed can affect how big it looks and even how much it sparkles. Gems framed with a bezel can give the illusion of a larger stone.

- Get the desired cut. A skilled jeweler knows how to properly cut a stone to bring out its best

radiance. From round to princess to emerald to marquise cut, cut styles can affect how the stone looks as well as the price.

- Know ring metals. Platinum and gold are some of the most popular ring setting metals. Platinum costs considerably more than gold or silver, but is long-lasting. Couples should weigh the cost versus benefit of splurging on a more expensive metal, or speak with a jeweler about a suitable substitute.

- Investigate personal style. Men should pay attention to the jewelry their girlfriends wear so the engagement rings complement their style. Some women love modern jewelry, while others gravitate toward vintage pieces.

- Come in under carat. Buying just shy of the next carat weight can save between 20 and 30 percent, offers The Knot. Plus, the size discrepancy probably will not be visible to the naked eye.

- Think about trading up. Some couples like to replace engagement rings with a more elaborate ring for a big anniversary. Some jewelers will accept the purchase of the engagement ring toward the price of a future ring.

Jewelry stores are in the business of developing relationships with their customers. When purchasing engagement rings, couples can discuss their desires in regard to a ring, as well as their budgets. *@metrocreativeconnection*

Did You Know?

In adherence to traditional wedding wardrobes, brides wear white and veils to complete their ensembles. While many people may view veils as a symbol of purity and chastity, various sources indicate veils had a more prominent purpose. Cosmopolitan magazine indicates that veils first became popular in ancient Roman times, when brides were covered head-to-toe in a red sheet called a flammeum. The sheet was intended to scare off any evil spirits that might ruin the wedding. Veils eventually replaced the flammeum to disguise the bride from those naughty spirits. Veils also were used to hide brides' faces from grooms in an era of arranged marriages when grooms had never seen their brides before their wedding days. Thankfully, today's veils are more about fashion than function. *@metrocreativeconnection*

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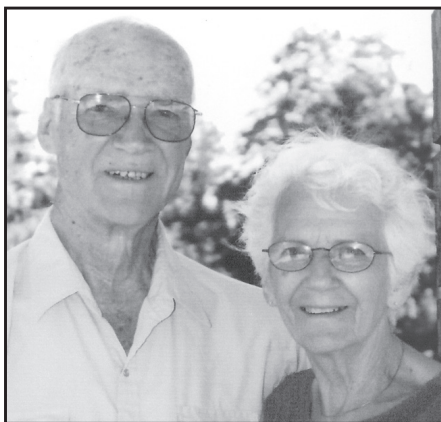
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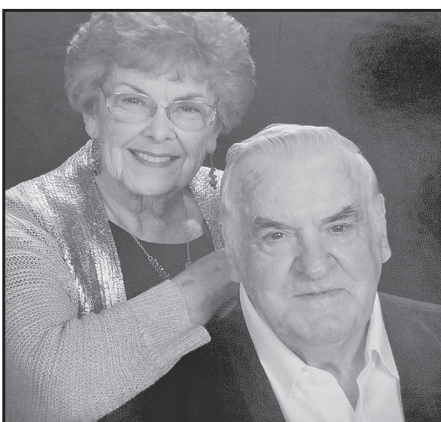
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Did You Know?

Engagement rings can be quite expensive. Online wedding resource The Knot says the average ring costs more than \$5,000. To protect their purchases, consumers can listen to experts and ask their jewelers to mark stones with an identification number so lost or stolen rings can be identified and potentially returned. The diamond can be laser-inscribed with the diamond's certificate number or a jeweler's designation. Such inscriptions are only visible under magnification and can cost between \$40 and \$200. Some insurance carriers also will offer discounts on policies insuring inscribed diamonds, so it can be well worth the extra investment ©metrocreativeconnection



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Tying the Knot

The phrase "tying the knot" is synonymous with getting married. Although the words can represent the symbolic joining of two lives together, in some cultures, getting married actually requires tying a knot. The custom traces its origins to an ancient Babylonian tradition in which threads from the clothes of both the bride and groom were tied in a knot to represent the couple's union. Other cultures have embraced this tradition, and couples tie ceremonial knots during their wedding ceremonies. metrocreativeconnection.com



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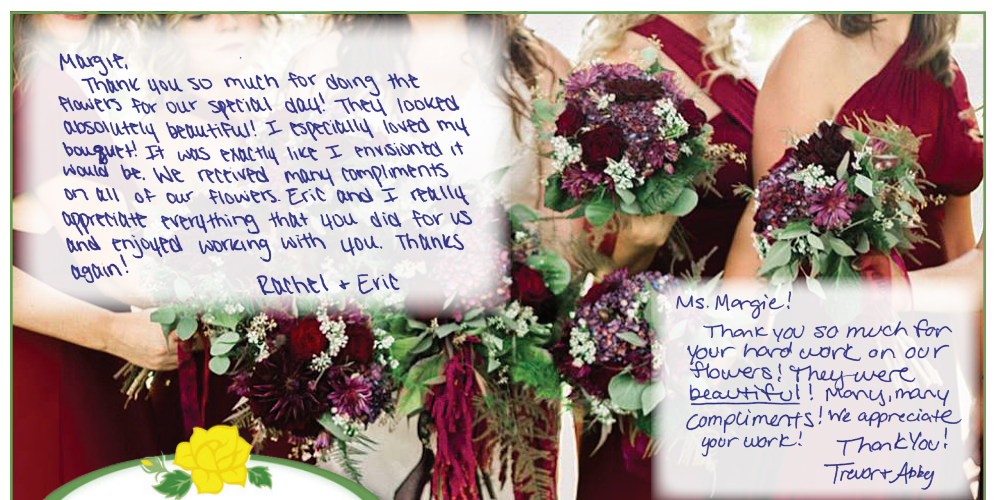
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Unique Groomsmen Gift Ideas

Weddings are steeped in tradition, and one of the more enjoyable ones is the custom of gifting members of the bridal party. With regard to picking out tuxedos and planning the wedding, grooms may not spend as much time with their groomsmen as brides do with their bridesmaids. But that does not mean grooms don't want to go above and beyond when gifting their groomsmen. The following are a handful of unique groomsmen gift ideas.

• **Guys' day out:** While it's customary to gift groomsmen with mementos of the wedding that they can keep for years to come, there's no law forbidding grooms from gifting an experience. Grooms can book a guys' day or night out for after the wedding, buying each groomsmen a ticket to a ballgame and paying for dinner for the whole crew. Or consider a more adventurous outing, such as a group bungee jump or whitewater rafting trip. Provide a memento by ordering a handful of specially designed commemorative T-shirts.

• **Commemorative photo:** Many grooms ask relatives and friends they have known for much of their lives to be their groomsmen. So it's not uncommon for groomsmen to know each other very well. If each member of the party has known one another for years, grooms can try to find a photo of all of them together when they were much younger. Have the photo professionally framed, noting the date of the wedding with an engraving on the frame. If each groomsmen is from a different period in the groom's life, then the groom can find a photo from early in each relationship to present as a gift.

• **Commemorative beer:** Many grooms and groomsmen bond over beer, so grooms who have raised many a pint with their groomsmen might want to create their own commemorative beers to show their love and appreciation for their best guy friends. Many craft breweries offer brewing classes that teach beer aficionados the finer points of making beer. Grooms can attend such classes on their own and create their own batch specifically for their groomsmen or pay for the whole group to attend the class together.

• **Movie poster:** Grooms with a creative side and a love of movies can create movie posters that mimic those of iconic guy films like "Goodfellas" or "Animal House," swapping out images of the film's stars with likenesses of themselves and their groomsmen. Have the finished products framed before presenting one to each groomsmen. *@metrocreativeconnection*



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Various Ways to Preserve Wedding Memories

Couples' wedding days are momentous occasions, and couples want their memories of the day they tied the knot to endure long after the final guest has departed.



Weddings can be amazing, but they only last a few hours. Memories can be forever if they are effectively documented. The following are some ways for couples to permanently memorialize their wedding days.

- Dry the bouquet. Wedding bouquets can be freeze-dried and/or chemically preserved so that the colors, textures and the volume of the blooms can appear just as vibrant as they were on couples' wedding days. After preservation, the bouquet can be displayed in a vase or in a specially prepared shadow box with other mementos.
- Create a custom locket. Brides can wear a piece of their wedding gown day after day with a custom necklace or locket. All they need to do is trim a small piece of the lace or other embellishment from the gown and enclose it in the locket. Jewelry designers also may be able to convert a section of the gown pattern into metal through a casting process.
- Have guests sign the label. Purchase a special bottle of wine or champagne and ask guests to sign the label or the bottle itself. Store the bottle until a special occasion, such as a memorable anniversary, and then toast to a happy marriage.
- Make a cake replica. Ask an artist to make a miniature replica of the wedding cake out of pottery. Put the clay cake out for display or ask for it to be made small enough to serve as a Christmas tree ornament.
- Teddy bear transformation: Have tuxedo fabric or wedding gown material turned into a keepsake teddy bear. Bowman Bears produces such bears, which can be passed down to future generations.
- Create bouquet jewelry. Encapsulate favorite wedding flowers into a resin pendant, bracelet or earrings.
- Frame the invitation. Display the wedding invitation in a beautiful frame with custom matting.
- Revisit the site. On their anniversaries, couples can visit their ceremony site or have brunch or dinner at the venue where the reception took place. Take an "after" picture to display with the "before" shot from the wedding day.
- Make an invitation ornament. Cut the wedding invitation into strips and place it inside of a hollow glass ornament. Seal the top and hang with a ribbon.
- Design a greeting card scrapbook. Turn all of those special handwritten messages and well-wishes into a scrapbook so that memories can be revisited time and again.

The planning may take months and the wedding mere hours, but well-documented wedding day memories can last forever. [metrocreativeconnection](http://metrocreativeconnection.com)



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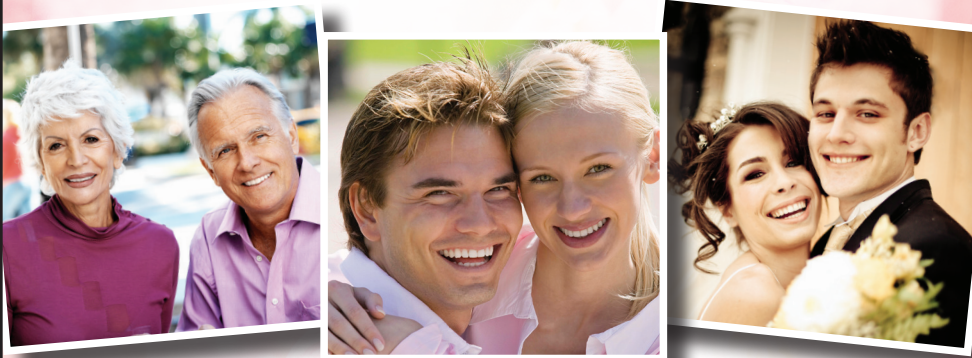
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Tips for Choosing a Honeymoon Destination

Once couples have tied the knot, hit the reception dance floor and thanked their friends and family for joining them, their thoughts might start looking ahead to their honeymoons. Statistics vary in regard to how much couples spend on their honeymoons, but those heading overseas can expect to pay thousands of dollars on such getaways.

Couples planning their honeymoons want to get the most for their money while also ensuring their first trip together as newlyweds is as memorable as possible. The destination couples choose can go a long way toward making that happen, and couples can consider various factors as they work together to choose a locale for their honeymoons.

Activity level: Some couples might want their honeymoons to be filled with activities, while others might prefer more low-key trips spent relaxing at seaside resorts. Couples can discuss which types of trips they prefer and be willing to compromise if their desires differ.

Travel: Some couples may prefer to travel

throughout their honeymoons, while others may want to stay at the same resort for the duration of their trips. Couples who want to travel may find a backpacking trip to Europe is a romantic way to indulge their sense of adventure, while those who prefer something more quiet may find a beach resort more to their liking.



Budget: Budget is a strong consideration for many couples as they plan their honeymoons. Because honeymoons can be expensive, couples who don't want to sacrifice on

their first trip together as a married couple can begin planning their trips early, even looking for ways to cut costs on their ceremonies and receptions if their honeymoons are a bigger priority.

When planning their honeymoons, couples also can take steps to save money. For example, delaying a trip until a few months after the wedding can help covers get back on their financial feet and enjoy their dream getaways. Couples visiting resorts also may want to opt for all-inclusive packages, which can provide great value, particularly on food and beverages.

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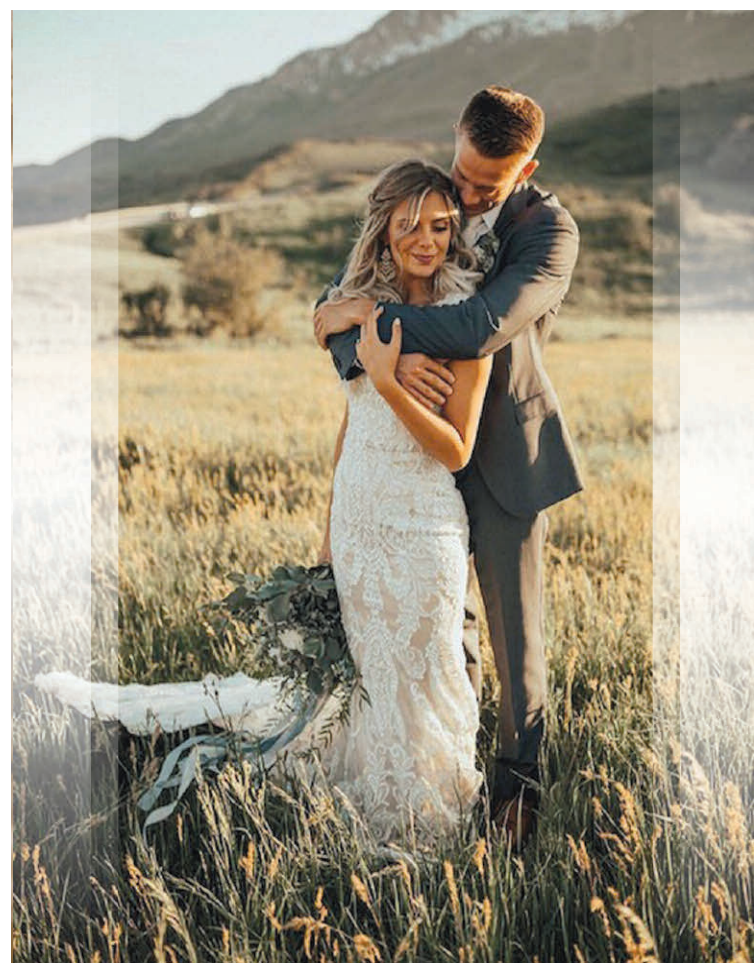
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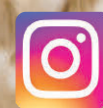
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Get A Grip On Your Guest List

Cooperation is key for couples planning their weddings. Compiling the guest list is one area of wedding planning where couples oftentimes must embrace both cooperation and compromise.

Putting together a wedding guest list can cause some tension. That tension may be confined to couples, but it may even occur between couples and their families. Getting a grip on their guest lists may be one of the more difficult tasks couples encounter when planning their weddings, but there are ways to make creating the guest list go smoothly.

- Recognize the need to compromise. Couples who recognize the need to compromise in advance of compiling their guest lists may find it easier to pare down that list if the initial number of guests is too high. Couples can create lists of people they want to invite, breaking these initial lists down into categories such as "friends," "family," "acquaintances," and "coworkers." Couples may not want to compromise on inviting friends and family, but each person should be willing to remove some coworkers and acquaintances from their final lists.

- Don't succumb to parental pressure if mom and dad are not paying the bills. Couples who are financing their own weddings

should not feel beholden to their parents' wishes when compiling their wedding guest lists. Politely explain to parents you're working on a budget and that you have a predetermined number of guests you're capable of inviting. Couples can appease their parents by encouraging them to compile a list of people they hope to invite, and then telling them these people will be invited if other guests are unable to make it. Couples whose parents are footing some or all of the bill must be more receptive to their parents' wishes than those paying for their own weddings.

- Agree on a kids policy. A policy regarding kids may help couples as they create their guest lists. Couples working with tight budgets may decide that the only children who will be invited are their nieces and nephews. Young cousins likely won't feel slighted if they don't make the cut, and their parents may even appreciate a night out without the kids in tow.

- Employ the "future versus past" formula when paring gets tough. When all else has failed, couples faced with difficult decisions regarding their wedding guest lists can ask themselves if prospective guests are people they expect to see again in the future or if they are people from their past. Including



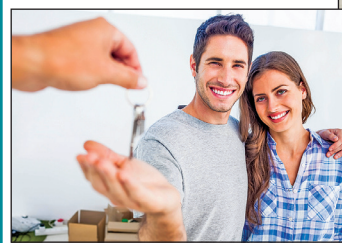
the former might be a good idea, while removing the latter may also make sense, especially if it's been a long time since couples have seen people who fall into the "past" category. Creating the guest list is one of the more difficult parts of planning a wedding. But couples willing to compromise may find the process goes smoothly. *@metrocreativeconnection*



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