

Planning The Wedding Of Your Dreams

There are a few things where weddings are concerned that cannot be predicted or controlled. What Mother Nature will do on the day is one of them.

However, there are many items that are well within the control of the bride and groom; proper planning can help ensure the wedding of their dreams.

One of the best ways to ease wedding-day nerves is for the couple to get organized and begin planning their event the moment the engagement period begins.

The earlier preparation starts, the better the chance vendors will be able to provide what's needed, or changes can be made when unforeseen events pop up.

By making a list of things to do, couples can allot time in their schedules for each task — and they can feel a sense of accomplishment and relief each time an item is ticked off the list.

—Decide on the wedding date — Couples should select a date for their wedding soon after becoming engaged. After all, it is the countdown to this day that will help organize and determine planning schedules.

—Reserve a ceremony location — Traditional weddings take place in a house of worship. It's best to meet with a pastor, rabbi or other officiant to see if the ceremony site will be available for the wedding.

This person will also help guide couples through any religious requirements needed prior to getting married there, as well as any rules and regulations for the ceremony site.

—Book a reception site — After securing the ceremony location, couples will have peace of mind

knowing they can now book the place where their party will take place.

This may be a catering hall, hotel, cruise ship, or even someone's backyard. Sometimes the ceremony site is also the reception site, as is the case in many second weddings.

Catering directors are typically on hand to talk about pricing and options. They will work closely with the couple to plan and execute the reception.

—Select a photographer — Photographers tend to book very quickly, particularly if they are well recommended. It pays to research and choose one early in the wedding-planning process. Every photographer has a different style.

The couple should select one who will accommodate their wishes, but also suggest ideas that may not have been considered — such as artistic black and white prints or photo journalism-type images. The photographer's personality is very important.

He or she will be spending the entire day with the couple and should be liked and personable.

Couples should find out if the photographer they speak with at the studio will be the one shooting the wedding. Some companies have multiple staff on hand.

—Book a band or DJ — Another vendor that tends to have a busy schedule will be the wedding entertainer.

Early booking ensures your date will be available. Couples should talk about musical selections and the ways to engage the various generations attending the reception in the fun.

—Choose a florist — Flowers add

an elegant touch to the wedding day.

A florist will provide flowers for the ceremony and the reception in many cases.

The couple should select a florist who offers them helpful, creative ideas about bouquets, corsages and centerpieces — and will deliver in a timely manner.

—Select and order dresses — Wedding and bridesmaid gowns can take several months to order and be tailored.

It can also take some trial and error finding a dress shop that meets the needs of a bride and her attendants.

So it's best if this fun part of wedding planning is done early on. While there are no set rules for gown selection, it may help if the bride and her attendants all use the same shop so that styles will be complementary and service and alterations can be organized with minimal fuss.

—Order invitations — With a bevy of styles of invitations there will be many ideas to consider.

Couples should leave ample time to look through invitation sample books or do research on the Internet.

They should decide on a style that best suits their wedding, based on its formality, the time of day and the wedding colors.

—Choose transportation — Many couples forget to factor limousine or car rentals into their wedding-day plans.

Whether it's a limo, Rolls, horse-drawn carriage, or a party bus, the bride and groom should arrange for transportation for themselves and their attendants to and from the church and reception site.

—Find formal wear — Tuxedo rentals are quite popular for weddings. If the wedding is taking place during a peak party season, such

as prom time, it pays for couples to reserve tuxes several months in advance of the wedding.

All of the groomsmen should rent from the same shop to be uniform.

With these important decisions

made, the bride- and groom-to-be have only a few things left to do as their wedding draws nearer.

This includes selecting wedding favors, addressing the invitations and purchasing thank-you gifts for their wedding party.



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