

The

# Ultimate

Wedding Guide



Wedding Planning  
Timeline, Wedding  
Etiquette and  
Advice, Maid of  
Honor Duties, and  
More

# ***The Ultimate Wedding Guide: Wedding Planning Timeline, Wedding Etiquette and Advice, Maid of Honor Duties, and More***

Copyright © 2014 by Prime Publishing LLC

Cover photograph by [Anastasiya Belik Photography](#)

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Trademarks are property of their respective holders. When used, trademarks are for the benefit of the trademark owner only.

Published by Prime Publishing LLC, 3400 Dundee Road, Northbrook, IL 60062 [www.primecp.com](http://www.primecp.com)

**ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS**

"Do It Yourself Ideas For Your Special Day"



[Free DIY Wedding Ideas](#)

**ALLFREECROCHET** 

"Free Crochet Patterns For Happy Hooking"

[Free Crochet Projects](#)

**ALLFREEKNITTING** 

Free Knitting Patterns For Happy Stitching

[Free Knitting Projects](#)

**FAVEQUILTS** 

Quilts, Fabric and More

[Free Quilt Projects](#)

**ALLFREESEWING** 

Free Patterns To Keep You In Stitches

[Free Sewing Projects](#)

**ALLFREECROCHETAFGHANPATTERNS**

Your #1 Source for Free Crochet Afghan Patterns

[Free Crochet Afghan Patterns](#)

**ALLFREECHRISTMASCRAFTS** 

Create The Christmas Of Your Dreams

[Free Christmas Crafts](#)

**ALLFREEJEWELRYMAKING** 

Your Go-To Source for DIY Jewelry Inspiration

[Free Jewelry Projects](#)

**AllFreeHolidayCrafts** 

Creations and Celebrations for Every Occasion

[Free Holiday Craft Projects](#)

**favecrafts** 

[Free Craft Projects](#)

**ALLFREEKIDSCRAFTS** 

Explore. Imagine. Create.

[Free Kids' Crafts](#)

**ALLFREEPAPERCRAFTS** 

"Nothing Is A Waste Of Paper"

[Free Paper Crafts](#)

## Letter from the Editors

Dear Brides to Be,

AllFreeDIYWeddings is ready to revolutionize the wedding planning industry by transforming it into a stress-free, fun, positive experience. Are we recommending you hire a wedding planner? Only if you're rolling in the dough. Contrary to popular belief, there *is* a way to make the process enjoyable and (dare I say it?) easy without paying the big bucks: *The Ultimate Wedding Guide: Wedding Planning Timeline, Wedding Etiquette and Advice, Maid of Honor Duties, and More*. This comprehensive guide to breathing easy will take you step by step through the wedding planning process in an easy-to-follow way.

To make your life even easier, this entire collection is printable for easy access and convenience. Thanks to its price tag (free, of course), you can print copies for every member of your wedding party without worrying about putting a dent in your budget. This book is especially useful for Maids of Honor as it clearly outlines Maid of Honor duties, gives amazing tips for Maid of Honor speeches, and gives in-depth advice for being the ideal Maid of Honor, so you can breathe knowing that your BFF has got it covered.

The top two biggest concerns brides have are amply covered in this book: budget and timeline. Within these magical pages, you'll find a printable wedding planning timeline to keep yourself on track and a printable wedding budget breakdown so that you keep your spending under control. If you start with these guides on your side, you're guaranteed smooth sailing throughout your wedding planning.

From wedding etiquette for the happy couple to wedding etiquette for guests, wedding advice that will save you from embarrassment to wedding tips that will ensure a stand-out wedding, this free wedding eBook will be your best friend for the 12 months until you say, "I do."

Perhaps the best part of the entire deal is that if you have any questions whatsoever, AllFreeDIYWedding's editors are always available to answer questions. Contact us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#), or [Google+](#), [email us](#), or [leave a comment on the site](#), and we'll get back to you within one business day. Think of us as your free wedding planners; can't beat that!

To Happily Ever After,

*Jaelyn Holtzman, Editor, AllFreeDIYWeddings.com*

Our eBooks, like all of our craft projects, are absolutely FREE to members of our crafting community. Please feel free to share with family and friends and ask them to sign up at our website for our free e-mail newsletter, *The Wedding Planner*.

# *The Ultimate Wedding Guide: Wedding Planning Timeline, Wedding Etiquette and Advice, Maid of Honor Duties, and More*

## **Table of Contents**

PRINTABLE WEDDING PLANNING TIMELINE .....	5
<b>WEDDING PLANNING ADVICE .....</b>	<b>6</b>
5 BRILLIANT WEDDING PLANNING TRICKS .....	6
8 WEDDING PLANNING HACKS.....	8
POSITIVE (AND SECRET!) WAYS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO PLAN YOUR WEDDING.....	10
14 HIDDEN WEDDING COSTS .....	12
5 THINGS THAT MUST BE PHOTOGRAPHED ON YOUR WEDDING DAY.....	14
THE TOP 3 GUEST FOOD COMPLAINTS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM .....	18
<b>WEDDING BUDGET BREAKDOWN .....</b>	<b>20</b>
WEDDING BUDGET BREAKDOWN .....	20
FOOD BUDGET BREAKDOWN .....	23
<b>MAID OF HONOR .....</b>	<b>25</b>
MAID OF HONOR DUTIES .....	25
MAID OF HONOR SPEECHES .....	27
8 SECRETS FOR BEING A SANE MOH.....	28
<b>WEDDING ETIQUETTE .....</b>	<b>30</b>
HOW TO ADDRESS WEDDING INVITATIONS.....	30
HOW TO HANDLE DIETARY RESTRICTIONS .....	34
HOW TO MAKE A WEDDING SEATING CHART: IDEAS AND ETIQUETTE .....	35
<b>WEDDING ETIQUETTE FOR GUESTS .....</b>	<b>37</b>
WHAT TO WEAR TO A WEDDING.....	37
GIFT-GIVING ETIQUETTE .....	39

# Printable Wedding Planning Timeline

## 12 months before

- book venue
- create budget
- engagement party
- make guest list
- register
- create inspiration boards
- choose wedding party
- begin looking for vendors
- book officiant
- book rehearsal dinner
- dress shop
- hire a wedding planner

## 9 months before

- take engagement photos
- block hotel rooms
- plan honeymoon
- secure all vendors
- choose centerpieces/ flowers
- choose attendant attire
- book transportation
- gather all addresses of guests
- pick a dress/ arrange fittings
- select and order invitations



## 6 months before

- finalize all details with vendors
- send save the dates
- order wedding cake
- plan bridal shower
- plan bachelorette party
- purchase wedding bands

## 4 months before

- hair and makeup trials
- pick stylists
- order favors
- finalize guest list
- finalize invitations
- begin writing vows
- finalize catering menu
- finalize honeymoon details



## 2 months before

- mail invitations
- finalize vows
- purchase accessories
- check in with wedding party



## 1 month before

- get marriage license
- name-change documents
- make a song list for DJ
- make must-have photos list
- make final vendor payments
- send rehearsal dinner invites
- make reception timeline
- pick up rings
- call anyone who hasn't RSVP'd
- have final dress fitting w/shoes
- bridal shower
- make seating chart



## 2 weeks before

- bachelorette party
- pick up gown
- pack for honeymoon

## 1 week before

- get facial/waxings
- finalize headcount
- finalize seating chart

## 2 days before

- have nails done
- wrap all gifts
- get tips ready
- assign people to take home gifts/ belongings
- arrange return of groom's tux
- lay out all wedding-day items



## day before

- rehearsal dinner
- give wedding party gifts
- confirm flight
- put together emergency kit
- compile list of vendors w/ contact info



# 5 Brilliant Wedding Planning Tricks

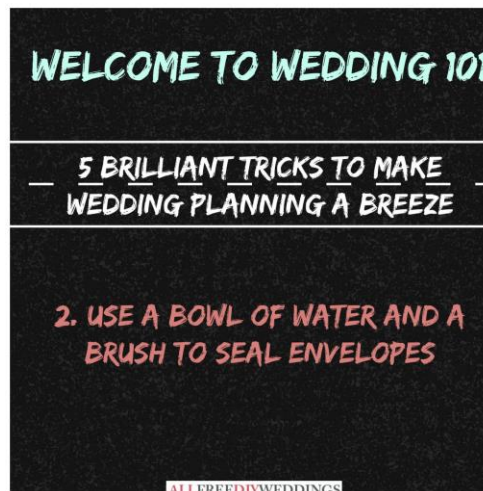
By: [Events by L for AllFreeDIYWeddings](#)

“It’s all in the details.” When it comes to planning a wedding, this cliché could not be more accurate. There is a frighteningly long list of horrors that can occur on your wedding day and throughout the planning process, so you might want to check out this list of brilliant tricks to avoid those nightmares. These ideas are simple, but if you are like many of our VIB’s (Very Important Brides), odds are you haven’t thought of these seemingly no-brainer tips. Check out these solutions that will no doubt make your wedding day go much more smoothly and ease up your planning along the way.

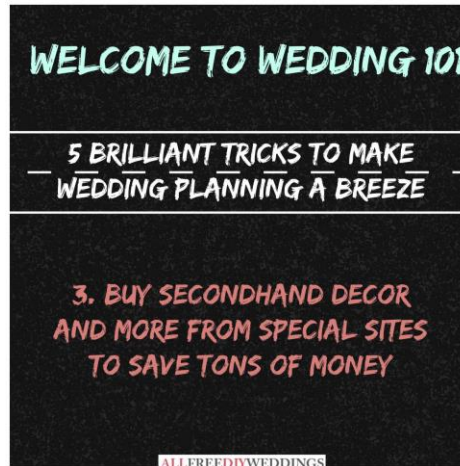
1. **Number your RSVP cards so each one corresponds to a guest.** Odds are you will have at least one RSVP come back illegible or filled out incorrectly. Do yourself a favor and mark each card with a number, letter, or something fun that pertains to your theme. If you want to be incognito, pick up an invisible ink pen.



2. If you forgot to pick up a handy little envelope sealer from your local office supply store, all you have to do is take a **bowl of water and a foam brush** or sponge, and you can save your tongue the awful envelope glue flavoring.



3. Go green and save the Earth and your wallet by **purchasing secondhand wedding items** from a site like Recycle Your Wedding. You can find décor, favors, dresses, and much more. After your wedding, you can re-list your items and get back some of your money.



4. **Pick up some tiny veil weights** to keep your headpiece from flying away and possibly ruining your gorgeous hairdo!



5. If you are receiving cash gifts or money for the honeymoon, be sure to **educate yourself on your bank's policies** for cashing and depositing checks for a joint checking account. It would be pretty awful to receive checks that you can't deposit and then have to ask the guests to rewrite a new one.



# 8 Wedding Planning Hacks

Let's curb bridezilla right from the start by easing the anxiety that inherently accompanies wedding planning. If you begin your journey with these key tips in mind, you're guaranteed to enjoy the planning process, resulting in an unforgettable wedding. Do not let the little things get to you because, in the end, what matters is saying, "I do." Even still, it is rare to find a bride who *isn't* obsessed with the small details of her big day, and the secret to relaxation is consulting websites like [AllFreeDIYWeddings.com](http://AllFreeDIYWeddings.com) that'll do the hard work for you.

ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS

8

## Wedding HACKS TO HELP YOU BREATHE

One of the biggest sources of stress during wedding planning is money, and these tips focus on helping you save it. For more in-depth budget planning tips, visit our general [wedding budget breakdown](#) as well as the one [specifically regarding catering](#). From helping you save green to helping you save face, these wedding planning hacks will help get you through, keeping you sane, sweet, and civil the whole time.



**ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS**  
EASY WEDDING HACK #1

**NUMBER** YOUR RSVP CARDS AND  
MAKE A CORRESPONDING  
SPREADSHEET IN CASE ANYONE  
FORGETS TO WRITE HIS OR HER  
NAME.

**ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS**  
EASY WEDDING HACK #2

**MAKE LABELS** WITH YOUR  
NAME, ADDRESS, EMAIL,  
AND WEDDING DATE WHEN  
ATTENDING BRIDAL EXPOS  
TO EASILY ENTER ALL  
SWEEPSTAKES.

**ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS**  
EASY WEDDING HACK #3

**ORDER A CAKE**  
INSTEAD OF A  
WEDDING CAKE  
AND YOU'LL GET A  
BETTER DEAL.

**ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS**  
EASY WEDDING HACK #4

**VISIT** LESSER-KNOWN  
WEDDING SITES FOR  
THE MOST ORIGINAL  
IDEAS.

WWW.FAVECRAFTS.COM/BLOG/FC/G-AMAZING-WEDDING-WEBSITES-YOU-DONT-KNOW-ABOUT/

[See the sites here.](#)

**ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS**  
EASY WEDDING HACK #5

**USE EQUAL PARTS**  
VEGETABLE OIL AND  
BAKING SODA TO REMOVE  
LABELS FROM JARS FOR A  
CLEAN CRAFTING  
SURFACE.

**ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS**  
EASY WEDDING HACK #6

**REUSE RENTALS** THROUGHOUT  
THE EVENT TO SAVE MONEY.  
FOR EXAMPLE, TRANSFORM  
YOUR COCKTAIL-HOUR TABLES  
TO A DESSERT BAR.

**ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS**  
EASY WEDDING HACK #7

**SAVE MONEY** BY AVOIDING  
SERVING FAMILY STYLE.  
THOUGH SEEMINGLY  
CHEAPER, IT REQUIRES MORE  
DISHES BE RENTED.

**ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS**  
EASY WEDDING HACK #8

**AVOID LINES** AT THE BAR  
BY HAVING WAITERS PASS  
BEVERAGES AS GUESTS  
ARRIVE. THERE SHOULD  
BE ONE BARTENDER FOR  
EVERY 50 GUESTS.

# Positive (and secret!) Ways to Use Social Media to Plan Your Wedding

By [Jen Carreiro for AllFreeDIYWeddings](#)



As a wedding blogger, I'm constantly active on all social media channels, posting, reading, interacting, planning, and getting inspired. I've spent the last four years honing my social networking skills and have developed quite the understanding of this new digital dimension. In this article I'm going to be sharing my best tips on how to use social media in both positive and secret ways to help you plan your wedding. We are going to touch on each platform and how you can take advantage of all its features.

First thing to mention: follow your vendors on your favorite social media channel! This will help you get to know them while being able to regularly see the work they are producing. You might even get inspired by something they've recently been a part of... and who better to reproduce than the people who did it first?

## Facebook.

Facebook is a wonderful resource because almost everyone is active on it, everyone gets their notifications instantly on their phones, and it's easy to use.

**Facebook Groups.** Using FB 'groups' is awesome; it's basically a private news feed for a select group of people. Make a Facebook group and include your bridesmaids, maybe your wedding planner, your mom, aunt, or whoever is helping you during your wedding planning journey. You can share, discuss, plan, create events and documents, and easily keep everyone on the same page all in one place. It's extremely easy to use, and you can keep everything private. Yes, there is an option to keep your group completely secret, and you should. All the information is stored within the group so that you and your besties can easily go back and check on the information shared.

**Facebook Events.** These can be public or private. Easily create an event to host a bridesmaid craft night or maybe a shopping day. Add event information, time, and get RSVPs right on the page.

**Create an interest list and look at it often.** If you spend time on FB, this is the perfect inspiration tool. "Like" your favorite wedding publications such as magazines, companies, and blogs, and then add them to a specific interest list. When you view that list, it's a news feed of all your favorite wedding brand posts all in one place. Watch out: it's like Pinterest and easy to get lost in for hours!

## Twitter.

Twitter is a great place for instant news. You can follow your vendors, follow wedding blogs, and even local weather and news reporters for day-of happenings like rain and traffic. This is also the best place to find out about awesome wedding giveaways! Many publications host wedding giveaways and ask you to 're-tweet' to win. If you search #weddinggiveaway once a week (or more!) and enter, you are bound to eventually win something!

## Pinterest.

**Think** about your pinning; do you want *everyone* to see what you are pinning and planning? If not, **start a 'secret board'** to pin your favorite wedding inspiration to so that there is still a little mystery for your guests when the big day finally arrives. These secret boards can include other Pinners! Easily add your bridesmaids and others to your secret (or public) boards so that they can see what you are planning.

**Use Pinterest like a registry!** Start a 'registry' board and pin you favorite gift items from all over the internet into one place. That way your friends who are following you on Pinterest have a great option for buying you a bridal shower or wedding gift. The same is true for a 'dream home' board. If your family and friends that are following you can see a well-defined home style, it might make gift buying a little easier for them and better for you!

## Instagram.

Last, but certainly not least. It's becoming everyone's favorite social media channel because it's just so awesome. If you're not on it, you should be. **Follow your vendors** and your favorite wedding bloggers and brands and look forward to loads of information and inspiration in your home feed.

Did you know that you can **send people private pictures** on IG? If you are looking at bridesmaids' shoes and want to send a picture to all your girls secretly, you can do it! Then everyone can react and respond all in one place. If you want to share a picture of a table setting idea with your wedding planner, that works too, all while no ones knows about it.

**#Hashtag your wedding.** Major trend alert. Couples come up with a unique hashtag for their wedding day like #mikeandjengetmarried or #mrmrscarreiro and then ask guests to tag every picture taken at their wedding with that hashtag. Once clicked, everyone can see all your wedding pictures taken on Instagram, all in one place, instantly. You know your guests will be taking and posting pictures anyway, so you might as well take advantage. Make cute signs and display them around your event to remind your guests of your exact #hashtag. Since it usually takes at least six weeks to get your wedding pictures back, it's so fun to be able to visit this hashtag and see all your guests' fun candid images. It's the new disposable camera!

We hope these tips have inspired you to use each social media channel to the best of its abilities during your wedding planning journey. These features are all currently available and they're all free so you might as well take full advantage of them!

Happy Wedding Planning!

# 14 Hidden Wedding Costs

Photograph by [Frenzel Studios](#)

Budgets are key to successfully planning a wedding; everyone knows that. But what everyone doesn't know is that there are tons of hidden fees sprinkled throughout wedding planning that can put you way over budget if you're not careful. You must be aware of these hidden fees and factor them into your allotted budget for each category or you'll end up paying around 30% more than you intended. Ouch.



Check out our [Ultimate Wedding Budget Breakdown](#) to first decide the exact amount you're allotting to each category.

Then, factor in these hidden fees to decide how much you actually have left to spend.

**1. Taxes, service charges, and gratuity.** Tax varies from county to county, but you can expect to have a service charge of 20% or more on all food and beverage prices and get taxed 6% or more on food, beverages, and rental fees. Sometimes, you will even be taxed on the service charge, increasing costs more. Find out if your service charge is taxable at your venue, and make sure it is spelled out in the contract. Taxes and tips will be about 1/3 of your budgeted amount. That means that if you don't factor these in ahead of time, you can pay 1/3 more than you intended. Remember, you're going to be tipping just about everyone (the limo driver, the bartenders, etc!) and paying

taxes on **everything**. If you wish to tip on top of the service charge, you must budget for that as well.

**2. Set-up and breakdown fees.** These are normally included in venue rental, but if you are having special chairs or linens brought in, this fee can be several hundred dollars. (e.g. \$300 to bring in special chairs for 175 guests at an averagely priced venue.) Florists will charge delivery fees and set-up fees (can be around 30%, called a service fee) and bakers may as well (around \$50 for a cake delivery). There may be extra fees if your venue is not on the first floor and there is no elevator available.

**3. Extra DJ equipment.** This can cost anywhere from \$50 to several thousand dollars depending on the upgrades. Sometimes it's a few extra speakers and other times it's multiple speakers, lights, etc. There may also be an extra charge for smaller equipment if you're using the DJ or band during the cocktail hour and/or ceremony. This will cost several hundred dollars up to several thousands.

To avoid this, bring a floorplan of your venue to your meeting. The entertainment company can then plan ahead for exactly what they need and can let you know if any extra equipment is necessary.

**4. Overtime.** DJs charge about \$100/ half hour of overtime (and that's on the low end). Venues charge thousands of dollars for overtime because this includes extending their workers' hours as well, not just use of the room.

Decide what time you want the party to be over, and get out of there. It's a lot less expensive to add an extra hour into the contract than to pay overtime charges the night of.



5. **Meal choices.** Another extra fee is giving guests the option of a plate. Some venues will charge around \$2/plate for this and most likely will also charge each guest for the higher-priced plate.

If you're really worried about pleasing everyone's palettes but don't have it in the budget, consider a buffet.

6. **Unapproved vendors.** Some venues will charge big bucks for using vendors other than who they offer. Decide if that cake is really worth it or try to get the approved baker to replicate it. Bringing in your own cake will not only result in an extra fee, but venues will charge around \$3 for every slice of cake they cut from an unapproved vendor. This includes cakes you or a family member made. If you know you are bringing in a cake, negotiate with the venue before signing a contract.

7. **Alterations.** Keep this in mind for both your dress and bridesmaid dresses. You may want to pick a less expensive dress for your girls knowing that alterations will be necessary, and the same goes for your gown. Alterations can cost hundreds of dollars. Find out your store's alteration policy *before* buying the dress. If it seems outrageous, find the dress elsewhere.

8. **Permits.** While having an outdoor wedding may initially seem cheaper, keep in mind that you may have to get permits to hold your event. Add on rentals (for a tent, heater, generator, etc.) and things can start getting costly. Some indoor venues will also require a permit if you choose to use candles or other non-approved details. Inquire about these before signing a contract.

9. **Postage.** When budgeting your stationery, remember that you're not only paying for the invitations to be sent out, but you're also providing stamps for the RSVPs.

To keep costs down, avoid bulky or large invitations and use RSVP postcards rather than letters.

10. **Rentals.** Be sure to ask your venue what is included in the package. You may only be renting the room (sans chairs or tables) if you're not careful, and getting those in the space can be quite costly. Most chairs will run you about \$5/chair, but some fancier seating options can run upwards of \$30/chair. Double check that the venue offers table settings, too. These can cost up to \$75 extra per person if rented.

11. **Welcome Bag Fees.** Though they probably won't mention it, most hotels will charge a fee if you ask them to deliver welcome bags to out-of-town guests. Ask about this ahead of time, and if there's a fee, have a bridesmaid deliver them or hand them out at the rehearsal dinner.

12. **Parking.** Make sure you discuss parking options with your venue. Figure out whether it's cheaper to have valet or a shuttle.

13. **Cocktail hour.** A lot of brides opt to have a cocktail reception for about an hour before the actual party begins. Be sure these prices are included in all of your contracts, catering, venue, entertainment, rentals, etc.

14. **Corkage fees.** If you bring your own alcohol to avoid the venue's costs, you may still rack up a similarly priced bill. You will be charged corkage fees, set-up fees, and maybe even glass rental fees.

As always, everything completely depends on state, venue, company etc. Some will include all of this in the contract, others won't.

Overall, just be aware. If you're trying to cut corners and avoid costs, chances are you'll be charged for it if it's not spelled out in the contract.



# 5 Things that MUST Be Photographed on Your Wedding Day

By: [Chris Humphrey Photographer for AllFreeDIYWeddings](#)



Every photographer gets the groom's reaction to the bride, but what about the bride first seeing him?

We're all familiar with the handy shot list that every bridal magazine has been reprinting for us for the last forty years. That can be useful, but to truly capture the magic of a wedding day, your photographer must get these:

## The Details



[See more from this spectacular wedding!](#)

A wedding is a big day made up of a lot of little things. On the day after the wedding, those things are all gone, so if they're important enough to be a part of your wedding, they're important enough for a photo.

## Family Having Fun



Sure, the group photos are fun, but I'm talking about real, spontaneous moments of fun. Get grandma cutting a rug with her son or grandson. Grab mom and dad laughing with siblings or good friends. I know the bride and groom are important, but a wedding is about families coming together. If you can tell that story with photos, you'll have something really special to share.



## Casual Groups



Grouping a few friends at the reception is easy, but how about all the cousins or even the entire extended family? It sounds challenging, but if you work together, you should be able to knock this baby out in a few minutes. Here's my foolproof formula: Appoint a family organizer. I prefer an aunt or uncle (you know, the bossy one) to gather everyone EXCEPT the bride and groom at a designated spot. Once everyone (except the B&G) is present, the photographer can group everyone together and then go grab the newlyweds, pop them into the assembled group, click, click and everyone is happy – especially the couple who didn't have to spend time away from the party for more family photos.

## Expressions



This is a big one for me because it's about timing and anticipation – like a sporting event. Capturing the laughter, the tears, the subtle looks and the raw emotion of a wedding is what wedding photography is all about. Take that away and all you have are the team photos. You need the game!

## The Story



THIS is the game! When you go back and look at your wedding photos two months, two years, even two decades later, you want to feel the emotion of the day through your photos. This means the little moments in between the big ones. The real moments behind the scenes. These are the triggers that cause people to say, “I remember that!” and actually feel the same things they felt that day.

Every photographer wants to hear ideas from their couples, but few really want “the big list” of must-have shots (especially the ones from the magazine). Don’t be afraid to ask tough questions when choosing your photographer, and you should feel comfortable talking to them as much as you’d like before the wedding, BUT on the wedding day, let them do what they do best and you focus on having fun and enjoying your day as much as humanly possible.

# The Top 3 Guest Food Complaints and How to Avoid Them

Based on interview with Brian Kiefer, [Food for Thought](#)



Learn how to throw the best wedding ever by avoiding gripes and guaranteeing grins. Not only will you learn what to avoid, but you'll also hear the best wedding ideas regarding catering. Blow away your guests with a fantastic meal that doesn't put you over budget.



## Complaint #1: **Not enough hors d'oeuvres**

Solution: Kiefer suggests that hosts should order at least 5 pieces of hors d'oeuvres for every head. If you know that your family loves appetizers, play it on the safe side and order 8 per head. Guests are more likely than not to come to a wedding hungry, so you want to ensure each guest feels amply fed when entering the reception hall. Otherwise, they're going to starve their way through the speeches, begging for some kind of nourishment.



### Complaint #2: Lines at the bar(s)

Solution: For every 50 guests you should have one bartender. Kiefer explained that many couples are wrongly informed that there should be one bartender for every 75 guests and insists that this will lead to unhappy and empty-handed guests. Brilliantly, Kiefer suggested that if all guests are arriving to the reception location at the same time, drinks should be passed in the same way that appetizers are. This will ensure that every guest has a drink in his hand within 10 minutes. Keep in mind that the same server-to-guest ratio should be maintained when drinks are being passed.



### Complaint #3: Crummy food

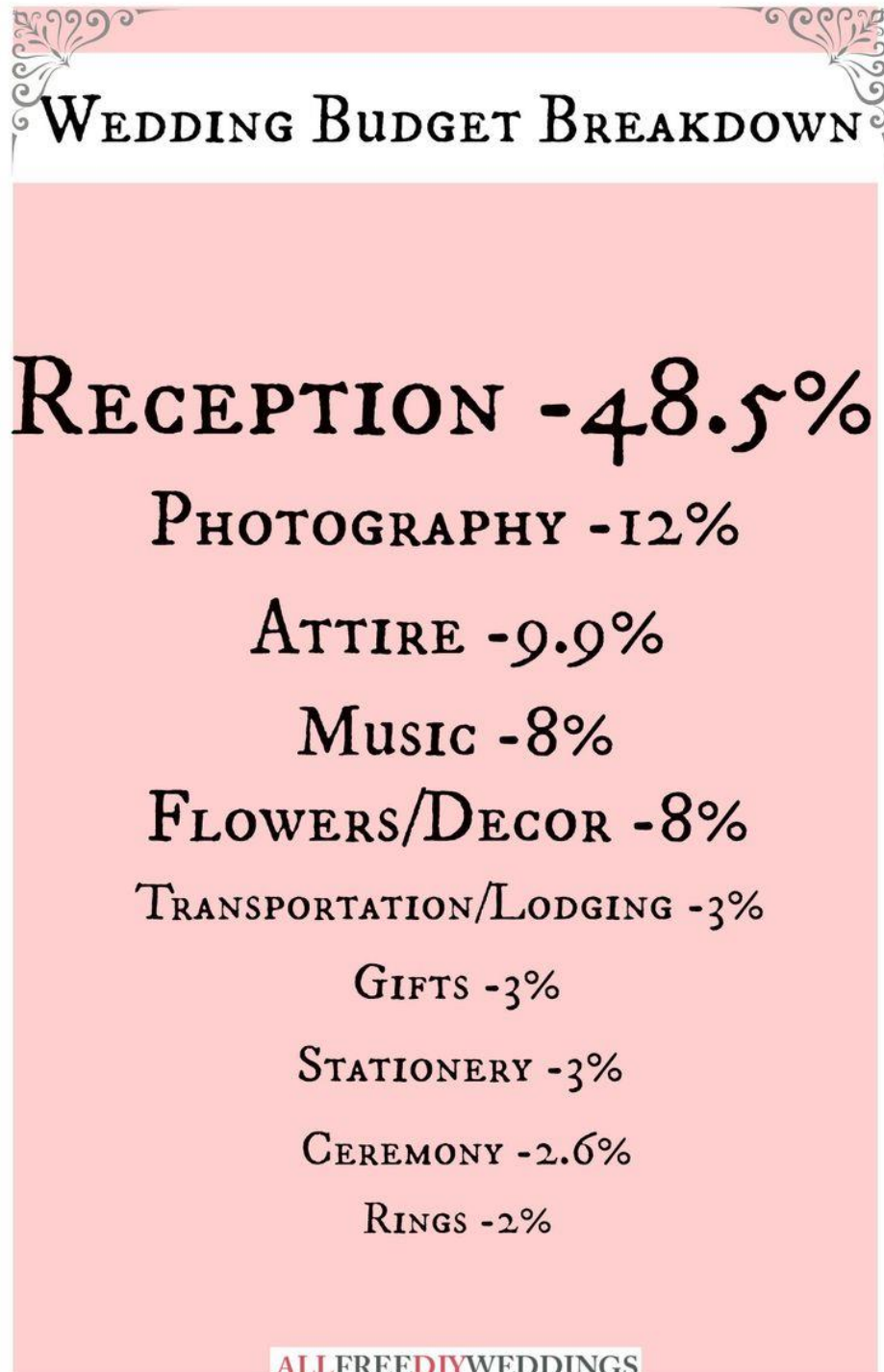
Solution: More staff. Chances are the reason for the crummy food is that there isn't enough staff. Whether that means there isn't enough manpower to cook the food on site or there aren't enough hands to get the food out quickly enough, Kiefer maintains that this will lead to unsatisfactory meals. Kiefer's company, Food For Thought, cooks everything on site, and as soon as the food is cooked, it's carried to the table. This requires enough staff to be able to grab a dish as soon as it's completed. Kiefer also explains that if the kitchen is on a different floor than the dining room, more staff is needed to be able to get the food out efficiently. If it takes the servers longer to bring the food to the table, more meals will be sitting on the line for an extended period of time. This will lead to cold, "crummy" food. Kiefer declares, and rightfully so, that when it comes to wedding catering, you get what you pay for.

Everything comes down to budget. There are places to put your money and places you can save. It is more important to have sufficient staff than it is to have the top-of-the-line steak. Caterers can create an absolutely divine meal out of beef medallion; they simply use their knowledge to marinate it the right way to make it melt in your mouth. They will work with you to cut down costs in creative ways so that you can put your money towards avoiding the big three complaints.

## Wedding Budget Breakdown

# Wedding Budget Breakdown

The scariest part of wedding planning is the budget. No matter who is paying, a budget is necessary to stay organized and to avoid spending more than intended. While you can allow yourself some wiggle room if you wish, sticking to a budget is a surefire way to successfully plan a wedding. Here is a rough wedding budget breakdown to get you started. If one aspect of the wedding is extremely important to you, consider transferring some percentage points from a less important category.



### **A few notes to keep in mind:**

\*If you decide to have a wedding coordinator, set aside funds. He or she may be able to get you discounts from vendors, and that extra money will cover coordinator costs.

\*If you spend less than estimated in a certain category, set those funds aside as miscellaneous. Lots of little things will pop up.

\*Be sure to always factor in tax and tip.

Let's break it down further:

### **Reception -48.5%**

#### **Venue and Rentals 8%**

-This includes any delivery costs for the rentals and set up and breakdown fees for the venue.

#### **Food 30%**

-This includes taxes and service fees.

#### **Beverages 8%**

-This includes tips and set-up fees for bartenders.

#### **Cake 2.5%**

-This includes any cutting fee from the venue or baker and delivery and set up fees.

#### **Ceremony -2.6%**

#### **Location 1%**

-This includes cost to rent the location as well as the cost of an altar, chairs etc.

#### **Officiant 1%**

-This includes any travel reimbursements, meals, lodging, and rehearsal fees.

#### **Miscellaneous .6%**

-This includes details like the flower girl basket, ring bearer pillow, and signs.

### **Attire -9.9%**

#### **Bridal Gown and Alterations 6%**

-This includes any cleaning or shipping fees.

#### **Veil 1%**

-This includes any cleaning fees.

#### **Bridal Accessories 1%**

-This includes jewelry, shoes, and undergarments.

### **Hair and Makeup .5%**

#### **Pampering .5%**

-This includes any spa visits, teeth whitenings, etc.

#### **Groom .9%**

### **Flowers and Decor -8%**

#### **Bridal Bouquet .75%**

#### **Bridesmaids' Bouquets 1%**

#### **Boutonnieres .2%**

#### **Flower Girl Flowers .15%**

#### **Additional Corsages or Boutonnieres .5%**

-These may be for other attendants, parents, or grandparents.

#### **Centerpieces and Additional Flowers 4%**

-This includes any extra flowers in the reception room e.g. flowers for the guestbook table, dessert table, and escort card table.

**Ceremony Flowers 1.4%**

\*If you are using extra lights that don't come with the venue or DJ, those should be included in this category.

**Rings -2%**

**Transportation and Lodging -3%**

**Hotel Room for Bride and Groom .5%**

-This includes any extra fees, taxes, and room service.

**Guest Shuttle/ Parking 1%**

**Limo 1.5%**

**Gifts -3%**

**Attendants' Gifts 1%**

**Favors 1.5%**

**Parents' Gifts .5%**

\*Any out-of-town welcome bags should be factored in here.

**Music -8%**

**Ceremony 1%**

-This includes playing while the crowd loads in and out in addition to the music during the actual ceremony.

**Cocktail Hour 1%**

**Reception 6%**

-This includes overtime fees (be careful to check the terms on this carefully), set up, and breakdown.

-This could also include extra lighting, as sometimes DJs provide this.

**Video and Photography -12%**

**Photography 6%**

-This includes negatives, any travel reimbursement, and assistant fees.

**Video 5%**

**Miscellaneous 1%**

-This includes extra prints or video copies, albums for relatives, and slideshows for the reception.

**Stationery -3%**

**Invitations and Replies 2.5%**

-This includes postage, return postage, and calligraphy.

**Other .5%**

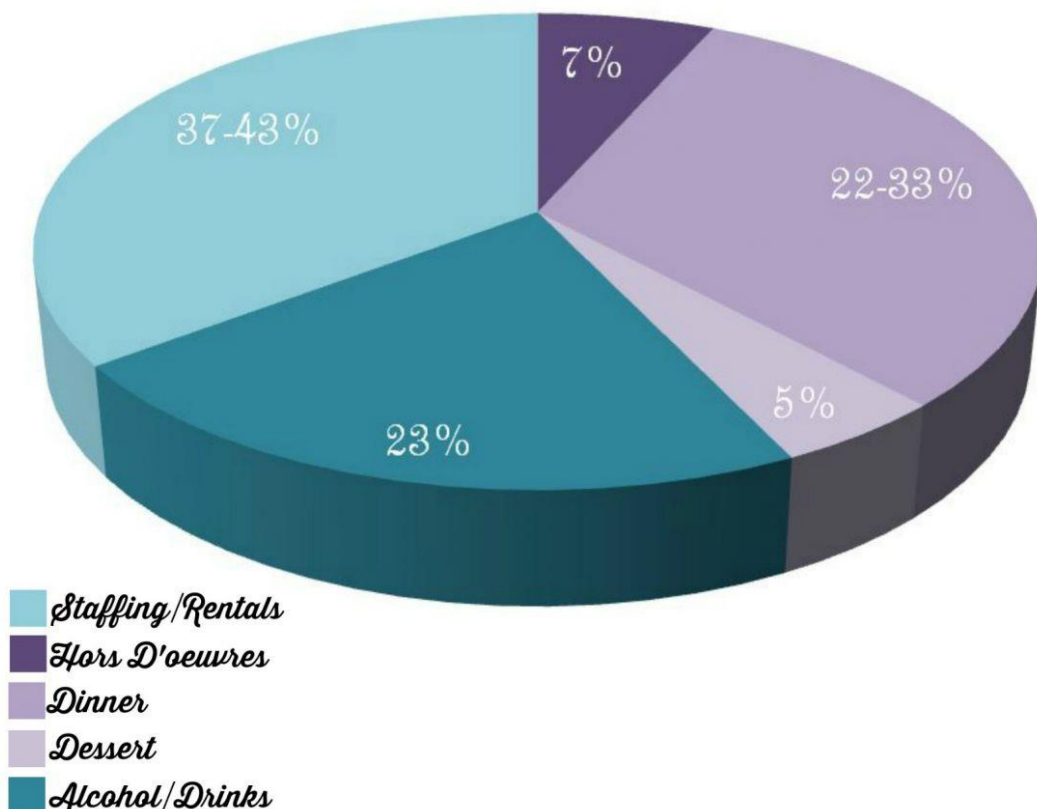
-This includes place cards, escort cards, thank you notes, engagement announcements, and save the dates.

# Food Budget Breakdown

Based on interview with Brian Kiefer, [Food for Thought](#)

It is important to note that there are so many variables, so no percentages are definite. The food or reception budget, including your venue, should be about 48.5% of your overall budget, according to [this complete wedding budget breakdown](#). If your celebration is at a hotel or somewhere similar where rentals are not necessary, those percentage points can be allocated to the venue budget.

## *How to Break Down Your Wedding Food Budget*



ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS

Now that you have these (very) general numbers, let's get a bit more specific. Keep in mind, again, that the numbers given are estimates and averages.



**Staffing/Rentals:** 37-43% of your food budget. This includes front-of-house staff, kitchen staff, bartenders, and any rentals that need to be acquired.

**Hors D'oeuvres:** 7% of your food budget. These typically cost about \$11.50/person.



**Dinner:** 22-33% of your food budget. The first course should cost about \$6-\$8/person and entrees will cost anywhere from \$20 for poultry to \$36 for high-end fish. Bread will cost about \$2.25/person and coffee about \$2/person.

**Dessert:** 5% of your food budget. Each person typically eats about \$7 worth of dessert.

**Alcohol/Drinks:** 23% of your food budget. This includes all drinks and dinner wine.



## Maid of Honor

# Maid of Honor Duties

Photograph by [Anastasiya Belik Photography](#)



You're the MOH; what a compliment! Being named the right-hand woman is quite a testament to your character. You are organized, loyal, and reliable enough for the bride to trust you as her voice of reason. She will, no doubt, turn to you in happy moments and in sad, and it's your job to know how to handle it all. Chances are you know your bride inside and out, so you'll know best when to chime in and when to hold back, but she will definitely be looking to you for opinions, support, and stress control. She'll also trust that you know exactly what your duties are. Pretend you do, and then consult this amazing guide to keep everything under control. Here you'll find all of your maid of honor duties, including your very own checklist that will bring you to the big day with a sound mind.

Keep in mind that being the maid of honor can get a bit costly. You are expected to help fund the bridal shower and the bachelorette party, give gifts for the shower and the wedding, and pay for your entire ensemble.

# Maid of Honor Duties Checklist:

## *Before the wedding day:*

- Be accessible; no matter how many times the bride calls you in tears about the napkins, listen and console her. Try to come up with solutions to fix the issue; you want to make her wedding as stress free as possible
- Create inspiration boards for the bride
- Attend any meetings the bride requests; cake tasting, florist, catering etc.
- Go dress shopping with the bride and bridesmaids
- Spread the news of the couple's registry
- Make your contact information accessible for out-of-town guests for any last-minute emergencies
- Keep track of the bridesmaids throughout the entire planning process and on the day of; make sure they have their dresses, shoes, and jewelry on time and know where to be for all events
- [Help address envelopes](#), pack favors, craft etc.
- Plan a bridal shower about two months before the wedding
- Record all gifts given at the shower
- Collect the bows from the gifts to make a "bowquet" for the rehearsal
- Throw a [bachelorette party](#)

## *The day of:*

- Handle any last-minute crises; make sure that these all go through you, not the bride!
- Have an [emergency kit](#) containing bobby pins, acetaminophen, lotion, tissues, a copy of her vows, mints, stain remover, mascara, face wipes, oil blotters, lipstick, fabric tape, antacids, floss, and deodorant
- Have contact information for all vendors and bridesmaids
- Make sure all bridesmaids are at the venue and made up correctly on time
- Help the bride dress
- Wrangle up the bridal party and make sure everyone is where they need to be before the ceremony begins, this includes the flower girl and ring bearer
- Bustle the bride's train once she is situated
- Hold the groom's ring during the ceremony
- Hold the bride's bouquet during the ceremony
- Sign the marriage license as a witness
- Stand in the receiving line, if the bride requests
- Direct guests as needed and collect any cards or gifts that aren't placed on the [gift table](#)
- Enter the reception hall with the rest of the bridal party
- Give a toast
- Dance and encourage others to do so!
- Make sure the bride eats and has a good time
- Help the bride change out of her dress, and have her honeymoon bag ready

# Maid of Honor Speeches



1. **Keep it Short.** Ideally between two and three minutes. Practice beforehand and time yourself.
2. **Write out your speech.** It's easy to lose track of time and difficult to maintain a storyline when you're nervous. When you give yourself bullet points or write out the speech word for word, you'll only say what you intend.
3. **Boldly demand attention.** It can be difficult to get the room, rightfully full of bustling energy, to settle down for a speech. Confidently begin speaking. Any faltering or nervousness in your voice will go easily ignored.
4. **Introduce Yourself and Let Everyone Know Why They Should Listen Up.** Do you know secrets they'd love to find out? Did you introduce the couple? Were you there when the bride said she found the man she was going to marry? Just like they taught you in school, start with an attention grabber. Let the guests know your relation to the couple, and then take it a step further to let them know that you're about to reveal some fun tales they don't know.
5. **Tell a story (that everyone will understand).** Make sure the story is structured as such, with a beginning, middle, and end. It keeps listeners engaged and keeps you on track. Talk about something that most guests wouldn't know. Ideally, pick a story that involves the bride and groom. Perhaps how they met, or what the bride came home and gushed to you after meeting her prince charming. Don't overload the speech with inside jokes; relay a funny or sentimental story that reflects the couple's relationship. If you choose a story just about the bride, explain how that translates into her happily ever after.
6. **DO NOT EMBARRASS THE BRIDE OR GROOM.** Avoid talking about drunken outings, ex-flames, or rough patches in the relationship. It's a happy day; keep it that way.
7. **End with a toast.** That's what it is, after all!



# 8 Secrets for Being a Sane MOH

By: [Jen Carreiro for AllFreeDIYWeddings](#)



Being the MOH isn't always flowers and smiles; sometimes it can be quite the challenge to emerge from the wedding with your sanity. A worst-case scenario is hilariously explained in the true story "[The Dirty Truth about Being a MOH.](#)" Below are eight tips on dealing with similar situations should they arise:

1. First and foremost, **remember that it's not your wedding.** Nothing that the bride wants or does has any reflection on you either creatively or as a person. Let her do whatever she wants. If she loves it, you love it too... don't rain on her parade. If she asks your opinion about something, share it – otherwise don't. It's the most important day of her life and all you are there for is support. Remember, this is your best friend... and every bride gets a little crazy, so give her a little slack.
2. **Have no expectations.** The higher you set your expectations, the farther you have to fall when they aren't met. For everything from how the bride will treat you personally to what she's going to allow you to help with is all on her. If you expect to play a huge role in the event and she doesn't allow you to, you will be heartbroken. Go into the journey with no expectations and you'll start fresh. When things go poorly (or well) you'll be able to roll with it because you had no expectations.
3. **Be honest about the time you are willing to give and money you are willing to spend.** If you are upfront with the bride about how much money you have budgeted to spend on specific wedding items, there will be no room for her to get upset that there wasn't more done; she might even pitch in or tell you that's too much to spend. Same thing with your time. Being upfront, honest, and clear about these two things will help you through everything.



**4. Understand that it's not you – it's them.** When people are bullying, putting you down, or blaming certain situations on you, most of the time it has something to do with their own actions, shortcomings, or inferiority issues. Stay as far away from these people as possible and don't initiate interaction. If something is truly your fault, own up to it ASAP and apologize with a smile on your face. Everyone appreciates and respects honesty.

**5. When in doubt, stay sober.** If you are in any type of escalating situation with all the bridesmaids, be the one who stays sober and encourage less drinking among the group. It's always the best choice to have your wits about you when things are going awry. You'll be glad you did, and so will everyone else.

**6. Ignore the outspoken and give them attention on the sly.** If there are loud, boisterous bridesmaids to deal with, try your hardest to ignore their forceful behavior when they are acting out – think of them as little kids in those moments. This behavior is usually a sign of insecurity; they need attention and approval from the group, so give it to them when they least expect it. When others aren't listening, give them a compliment. If there is a topic you know they are well versed on, bring it up so they can strut their stuff. Encourage positivity.

**7. Know that you need to play the best friend /MOH role to a "T".** Pretend like you are an actress playing a role if you have to. Be gracious, courteous, kind, thoughtful, helpful, and classy at every single wedding event. From the engagement party to the grand exit, being the MOH requires you to be the #1 go-to-gal for everything. Keeping this in perspective, knowing the role you need to play, and remembering that it's all about the bride and groom will help you along the way.

**8.** If there is a guest (like drunk uncle) who won't leave you alone, **it's actually the job of the groomsmen to help you** out with that. Identify one who is particularly kind to you and tell him you might need him as your bodyguard. If it's a groomsman that won't leave you alone then you might need to go to your family or the bride's family for help on that one!

## Wedding Etiquette

# How to Address Wedding Invitations

Don't stress about offending guests with wrongfully addressed invitations. Instead, breathe easily knowing that your event announcements will only make the best of impressions after consulting this guide. On the next couple of pages, you'll find examples of how addressed invitations should look as well as a comprehensive, printable list of outer and inner envelope etiquette.



Before diving in, here are a few important notes to keep in mind:

### Notes:

- If you are putting a middle name, spell it out. Do not just include an initial.
- The word **and** used to only apply to married couples. It is no longer this way. However, if you would like to stick with tradition, you can put the two names on separate lines without an **and**.
- The male's name usually comes first unless the female outranks the male. You can also put the names in alphabetical order, if you would rather.
- Outer and Inner envelopes are an old-fashioned tradition that is getting less common. Inner envelopes are used so that the guest receives a fresh envelope should the outer envelope get dirty or torn in transit. The outer envelope gives all information needed by the Postal Service, and the inner envelope spells out who is invited. If you are only using one envelope, include all guests. For example:

Ms. Jaclyn Beth and Guest  
2456 Spring Street  
Davenport, Iowa 45454

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Shime  
Brad, Daniel, and Junior  
698 South Market Street  
Burbank, Illinois 67945

- Guests over 18 should receive their own invitations, even if they are living at home and their parents are invited.
- The inner envelope can also use first names. For example: Frank and Samantha Shime or Frank and Samantha
- If you cannot fit both names on one line, use the and before the second name on the next line and indent it.

# Wedding Etiquette: Addressing Invitations

Unmarried Female Over 18

  
*Ms. Jaclyn Beth*  
 2456 Spring Street  
 Davenport, Iowa 4545

*Ms. Beth*

Married Guests - Different Last Name

  
*Mr. Frank Shime and Mrs. Jane Bez*  
 45464 Fox Drive  
 Hiramport, Mississippi 34678

*Mr. Shime and Mrs. Bez*

Unmarried Female or Male + Guest

  
*Ms. Jaclyn Beth*  
 2456 Spring Street  
 Davenport, Iowa 45454

*Ms. Beth and Guest*

Unmarried Couple Living Together

  
*Mr. James Apton and Ms. Stella Mackey*  
 356 Elm Avenue  
 Pease, Minnesota 12468

*Mr. Apton and Ms. Mackey*

Unmarried Male

  
*Mr. Clay Matthew*  
 6542 Fall Lane  
 Palo Alto, California 98076

*Mr. Matthew*

Divorced - Kept Married Name

  
*Mrs. Jazline Frank*  
 14 West First Street  
 St. Paul, Minnesota 87965

*Mrs. Frank*

Married Guests - Same Last Name

  
*Mr. and Mrs. Frank Shime*  
 4598 South Market Street  
 Burbank, Illinois 67945


*Mr. and Mrs. Shime*

Divorced - Changed Name

  
*Ms. Jazline Wargio*  
 45694 Juniper Lane  
 Menarch, South Carolina 35777

*Mrs. Wargio*

Married Guests - Same Last Name  
 With Children

  
*Mr. and Mrs. Frank Shime*  
 4598 South Market Street  
 Burbank, Illinois 67945

*Mr. and Mrs. Shime  
 Brad, Daniel, and Junior*

Widowed

  
*Mrs. George Francis*  
 3433 Under Road  
 Maui, Hawaii 12345

*Mrs. Francis*

ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS

# Wedding Etiquette: Addressing Invitations

## Part II

Same Sex Couple

  
Mr. Scott Hamilton  
and Mr. Sean Hert  
4584 Polly Lane  
Northbrook, Illinois 60062  
Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Hert

  
Miss June Lovely  
4447 Young Drive  
Anchorage, Alaska 13577  
Miss Lovely

Married Couple,  
Both Doctors

  
The Doctors Applebaum  
Seventeen South Maine  
High, Georgia 34627  
Doctors Mark and Julie Applebaum

Married Couple, Husband is  
a Commissioned Officer

  
Colonel and Mrs. Joe Oh  
Nine Kloss Drive  
Pineknayville, Michigan 32467  
Colonel and Mrs. Oh

Married Couple, Both  
Doctors, Different Last Names

  
Doctor Laura Dornier  
and Doctor Joe Oh  
74626 One Drive  
Yakala, Wyoming 47281  
Doctor Dornier and Doctor Oh

Married Couple, Husband is  
a Judge

  
The Honorable and Mrs. Joe Oh  
1239 Lay Avenue  
Moon, Florida 67896  
Judge and Mrs. Oh

Married Couple,  
Wife is a Doctor

  
Doctor Laura Oh and Mr. Joe Oh  
45 Amami Road  
Huntington, Wisconsin 54678  
Dr. Oh and Mr. Oh

Married Couple, Wife is a  
Judge

  
The Honorable Laura Dornier  
and Mr. Joe Oh  
94 Lake Street  
Glenview, Kentucky 33424  
The Honorable Dornier  
and Mr. Oh

Married Couple, Wife is a  
Commissioned Officer

  
Captain Laura Oh and Mr. Joe Oh  
57895 Linc Road  
Great Rapids, New York 56845  
Captain Oh and Mr. Oh

ALLFREEDIYWEDDINGS

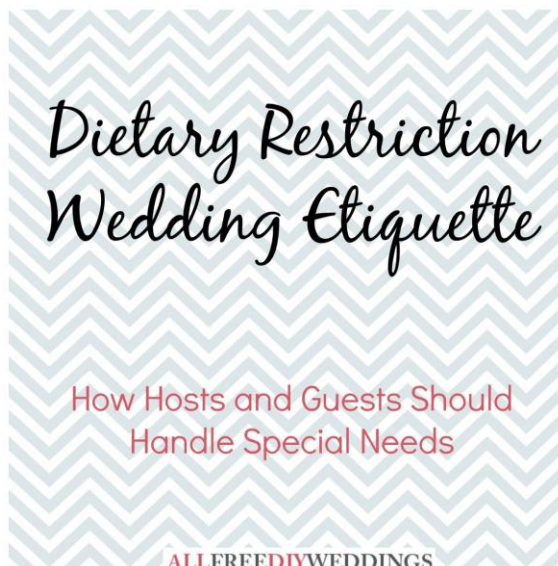


# Printable Guide to Addressing Wedding Invitations

Guests	Outer Envelope	Inner Envelope
Unmarried Female Under 18	Miss Jaclyn Beth	Miss Beth
Unmarried Female	Ms. Jaclyn Beth	Ms. Beth
Unmarried Female with Guest	Ms. Jaclyn Beth	Ms. Beth and Guest
Unmarried Male	Mr. Clay Matthew	Mr. Matthew
Unmarried Male with Guest	Mr. Clay Matthew	Mr. Matthew and Guest
Unmarried Couple Living Together	Mr. James Apton and Ms. Stella Mackey (male first) or Mr. James Apton Ms. Stella Mackey (listed alphabetically)	Mr. Apton and Ms. Mackey
Divorced Woman Keeping Married Name	Mrs. or Ms. Jazline Frank	Mrs. or Ms. Frank
Divorced Woman Changed Name	Ms. Jazline Wargio	Ms. Wargio
Widow	Mrs. George Francis or Mrs. Jane Francis	Mrs. Francis
Married Couple with Same Last Name	Mr. and Mrs. Frank Shime	Mr. and Mrs. Shime
Married Couple with Same Last Name and Children	Mr. and Mrs. Frank Shime	Mr. and Mrs. Shime Brad, Daniel, and Junior
Married Couple with Different Last Names	Mr. Frank Shime and Mrs. Jane Boz	Mr. Shime and Mrs. Boz
Married Couple with Different Last Names and Children	Mr. Frank Shime and Mrs. Jane Boz	Mr. Shime and Mrs. Boz Brad, Daniel, and Junior
Same Sex Couple	Mr. Scott Hamilton and Mr. Sean Hert	Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Hert
Married Couple, Both Doctors	The Doctors Applebaum	Doctors Mark and Jill Applebaum
Married Couple, Both Doctors, Different Last Names	Doctor Laura Dorner and Doctor Joe Oh (female first)	Doctor Dorner and Doctor Oh
Married Couple, Wife is Doctor	Laura Oh and Mr. Joe Oh	Doctor Oh and Mr. Oh
Married Couple, Wife is a Commissioned Officer	Captain Laura Oh and Mr. Joe Oh	Captain Oh and Mr. Oh
Married Couple, Husband is a Commissioned Officer	Colonel and Mrs. Joe Oh	Colonel and Mrs. Oh
Married Couple, Husband is a Judge	The Honorable and Mrs. Joe Oh	Judge and Mrs. Oh
Married Couple, Wife is a Judge	The Honorable Laura Dorner and Mr. Joe	Judge Dorner and Mr. Oh

# How to Handle Dietary Restrictions

When throwing a party with hundreds of guests, you're going to be dealing with hundreds of palates. While you obviously cannot accommodate every single like and dislike at your celebration, it is nice to be able to provide options for your guests. After all, you don't want to pay for a dish that someone cannot eat because of a food allergy; that leaves you out \$100 and them hungry.



## If You're Hosting a Wedding:

### ...with a buffet

- Put a line on the RSVP card for any food allergies or dietary restrictions. (The language used may elicit different responses i.e. "food allergies" doesn't take preference into account and may result in fewer varieties needed.)
- See if your caterer can prevent cross-contamination and ensure an allergy-free dish. If so, put one or two on your menu. If not, let the guest know that he or she may want to bring snacks or eat beforehand.
- Provide a vegetarian option.
- Provide a protein, preferably without dairy.

### ...with a sit-down meal

- If there are multiple meal options, list them on the RSVP. The more specific you can be, the better. If you know that an option is nut-free, dairy-free, gluten-free, etc. place that next to the meal option.
- Place lines next to the meal options so that guests can check off, initial, or number which they'd like.
- It is up to you whether or not you want to put a separate line asking for any dietary restrictions.

## If You're a Guest With a Dietary Restriction:

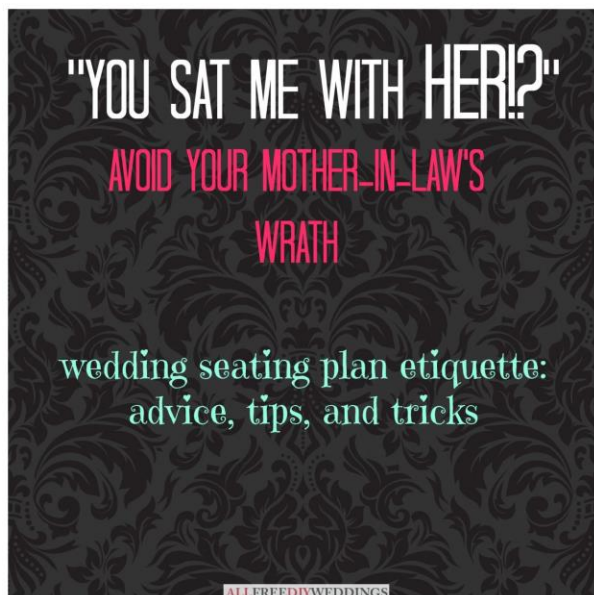
- If there is a place to note your allergy or restriction do so.
- If there is not a place to do so and you aren't sure whether the meals will be okay for you to eat, see if you can contact the caterer. You may be able to do so by contacting the venue, giving them the name of the wedding, and asking for the caterer. If this information isn't available, leave a note on the RSVP.

-Only leave a note if your restriction will prevent you from eating an entire plate of food. If you can pick around something, try not to bother the hosts.

-If you must leave a note, say "Whichever plate is gluten-free" or put a number next to your preferred item and say "if gluten-free; if not, whichever plate is gluten-free."

-If you feel more comfortable contacting the host directly, do so. Ask, **do not demand**, if any of the plates are okay for you to eat. If not, and the host doesn't offer to customize a plate for you, bring snacks or eat beforehand.

# How to Make a Wedding Seating Chart: Ideas and Etiquette



Wedding planning can be a stressful process with big decisions to make, etiquette to follow, and friendships to keep in tact. Turning to experts for advice, tips, and tricks will take some pressure off, knowing that you're doing things the right way. Assigning seats can be one of the most anxiety-producing procedures in wedding planning because it's a last-minute task. You must wait until your RSVP cut-off date before making a wedding seating chart, which means that you'll be frantically shuffling names just weeks before the wedding. This guide on how to make a wedding seating chart, including ideas and etiquette, will make the process go more smoothly. Heck, you may even enjoy making your wedding seating chart once you know all the secrets. We've answered all of your assigned seating questions so that you'll feel confident as you plan your wedding reception seating arrangements.

## Should We Have Assigned Seating?

First thing's first: you must decide if you want to have assigned seating at your wedding. If your celebration is a casual get together, you may opt out of assigned seating. However, if you are having a sit-down dinner, experts suggest assigning tables at the very least. This prevents 15 people squeezing onto one table and one lone guest with no where to go. More formal events go a step further and have assigned seats. This is a good idea if guests had a meal choice so that the serving staff knows what goes where. This is also a nice way to ensure that each guest has someone to talk to.

*Keep in mind*, if you are assigning both tables and seats, you must have escort cards as well as place cards.

Escort Cards- direct guests to their assigned table; they are usually located near the entrance

Place Cards- direct guests to their specific seat; these are placed on table settings ahead of time

If you are solely assigning tables, only escort cards are necessary. Some even opt to hang a glorified version of the wedding seating chart outside of the reception rooms for guests to see to which table they are assigned. Here are some wedding seating chart display ideas.

## How Many Tables Should We Have?

Before you begin making your wedding seating chart, you must determine how many tables are required. Note that standard round tables are 60" and seat 6-10 adults. Eight adults fit the most comfortably. Similarly, standard rectangular tables are 6' x 30" and fit eight adults if two chairs are put at the ends or six if not. Further, experts advise leaving 60" between each table in order for waiters to fit through and chairs to be comfortably pushed out. Determine the size of your reception hall, and with a bit of math, you should know how many tables are needed.

## How Do I Make a Wedding Seating Chart?

Once you have decided how many tables you will have, it is time to actually make your wedding seating chart. You can either do this manually with a hand-drawn wedding seating chart poster or electronically with a wedding seating chart maker. You can also find a wedding seating chart template that you can print out, though these aren't always as customized as you may like. I prefer doing it the old-fashioned way with a poster, markers, and color-coded post-it notes.

### Where Should Everyone Sit?

**The bride and groom** - There are a few options here, but no matter which you choose, position your table in a central location so that all guests can see you.

**Sweetheart Table** - a table for just the bride and the groom. Usually these are placed at the front of the reception hall with both sitting on the same side, facing the guests. This is not as common anymore but is a good solution if you can't decide with whom to sit or if you're afraid of offending anyone.

**Bridal Party Table** - the bride, groom, and all attendants. This can be difficult with a large bridal party because people tend to include attendant's dates at the table. If your party is a manageable size, it can be fun to sit all together. The bride sits to the groom's left, the maid of honor sits to the groom's right, and the best man sits to the bride's left. The male-female pattern continues around the table with the remaining attendants. If your bridal party is large, you can sit with just the maid of honor and best man and their dates. You *can* have a table with the bridal party sans dates and place the dates at a separate table, but this is more passé.

**Family Table** - the bride, groom, and both sets of parents. This is a good solution if there are no divorced parents.

**If you don't sit with the bridal party**, place them at a table all together with their dates or scatter them around the party.

**If you don't sit with the parents**, they can either all sit at a table together with grandparents and the officiant or they can each host tables. The latter is an especially good option for divorced parents. When hosting tables, the couple or single parent can pick who sits at their table; usually it's close family members from their side.

**The kids** - if there are enough kids for a kids' table, go for it. Make sure to keep them busy with activities like the "I Do" Printable Activities for Kids. If there are not enough kids or they are especially young, sit them with their parents.

**DO NOT HAVE A SINGLES TABLE.** It is outdated and embarrasses single guests. If you have friends you'd like to set up, put them at the same table but include friends of each at the same table. It is always nice for each table to include a mix of guests who know each other and guests who you think would get along.

Arrange the rest of the guests so that everyone has someone she knows and someone she doesn't know at her table. Organize tables by age and interest.

*Cheers to a great tip:* Conduct toasts during dinner. Encourage guests to continue eating while the toasts are going on. This cuts down on awkward conversation with full mouths.

**Remember**, guests are only at their tables for a small portion of the evening, so a boring or awkward table isn't the end of the world. If they are truly there to celebrate your union, they'll simply be happy to be there.



## Wedding Etiquette for Guests

# What to Wear to a Wedding

Photographs by [Sweet Little Photographs](#) and [Anastasiya Belik Photography](#)

Don't risk the embarrassment of walking into an event under or overdressed, causing an upset bride and an uncomfortable evening. Get the facts straight with this helpful guide to wedding guest attire. Find out what black tie *really* means to guarantee you blend in perfectly with the rest of the crowd.



that....

**...is black tie:** contrary to popular belief, you don't have to wear a floor-length gown to a black-tie wedding. However, if you do wear a shorter frock, be sure it is extremely dressy: a cocktail gown that's not provocative in anyway. If the invitation says black tie, go black tie. You never want to be underdressed. If you have to ask yourself, "Is this fancy enough?" it probably isn't.

**...is white tie:** here's where the mandatory floor-length gowns come into play. Though you don't have to wear a ball gown, your dress must cover your legs. We're not talking summer maxi-dresses here, either. These full-length dresses must be red-carpet worthy.



**...doesn't specify:** if the invitation doesn't call out the dress code, take hints from the location, time of the event, and knowledge of the couple's style. If you're still stumped, ask one of the bridesmaids to fill you in. Chances are, if the event is in the evening at an indoor venue, the couple is expecting formal wear. That means short cocktail dresses for the ladies and a suit and tie for men. Men may take off their suit jackets after the ceremony.

**...is on a beach:** feel free to get a bit casual here, but don't go overboard. A nice sundress would be perfect for the women, and khakis and a button up are ideal for men. When in doubt, men, wear a tie. You can always remove it.

**...is in a barn:** again, don't get too casual here, but you need not wear a cocktail dress. A flowy, pastel frock would be perfect for this rustic wedding venue.

**...is in the winter:** wear an outfit that fits the dress code and then throw on a jacket to match. If the event is black tie, please don't throw a fleece over your gorgeous gown. A fur coat or shawl would be much more appropriate. Scarves, hats, and gloves are also wonderful ways to keep warm. If you must, wear snow boots and bring your heels to change into.



**...is a brunch:** you can wear nice black slacks and a fancy top but, chances are, you'll be much more comfortable in a semi-casual dress. Wear something you would wear on Easter Sunday or to meet your significant other's parents.

**...is themed:** follow the theme, or you'll most likely feel left out. If you really don't feel comfortable, wear an outfit that alludes to theme but doesn't go all out. For example, lots of couples are jumping on the Great Gatsby bandwagon. You don't have to arrive with a feather in your hair, but you can wear an art-deco dress.

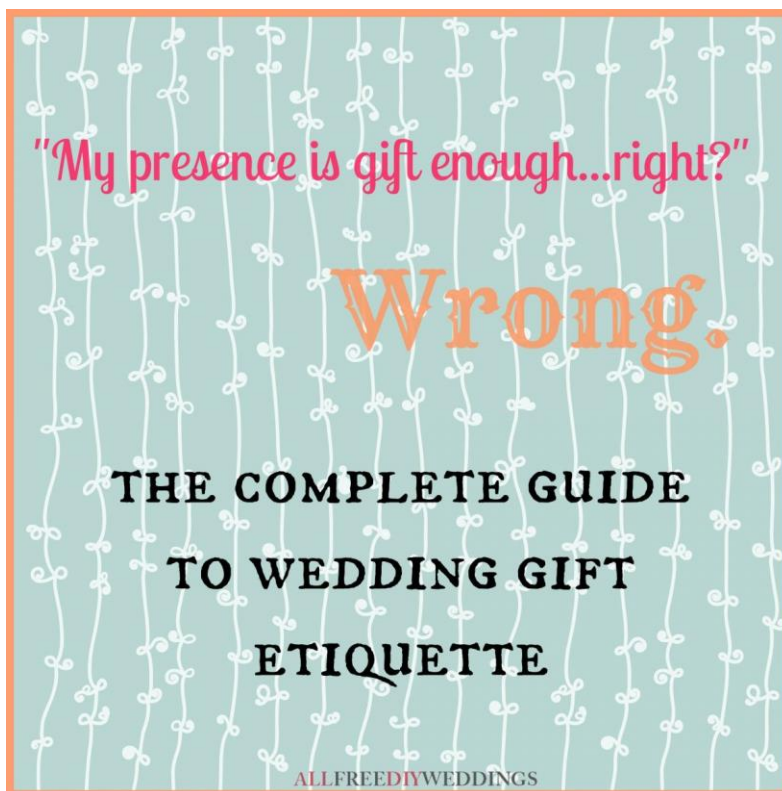
#### Overall rules:

- Never wear white.
- Ladies, make sure you bring a shawl or cardigan to cover up if the ceremony is in a house of worship.
- Don't go too sparkly unless it's a New Year's wedding. You don't want to outshine the bride.
- You're better off being overdressed than underdressed.
- Bring a pair of flats so that you can dance the night away!
- Don't wear anything too short or too low cut.



# Gift-Giving Etiquette

We're here to dispel some rumors, myths, and outdated suggestions and give you the real scoop on wedding gift etiquette. We've surfed the Web, consulted your most trusted wedding experts, read your feedback, and grilled brides to bring you this complete guide to wedding gift etiquette. Consult this handbook for any wedding gift questions, and you'll be fully versed on gift giving etiquette. With the expertise of AllFreeDIYWeddings.com behind you, you can sleep soundly knowing that the gift you sent over to the happy couple is exactly what they were hoping for.



## Wedding Gift Amount

- So you've been invited to a wedding, or two, or seven. Keep in mind right off the bat that weddings can get expensive, not just for the bride and groom or the bridal party but for guests too. If your budget can't fit a wedding, generously decline the invite. You are, however, still expected to send a gift. This gift, though, can be less than what you might have spent had you attended.
- It used to be said that guests should estimate how much it will cost the couple per person, and the gift should be worth that much. (If the cost is \$100 per person and you are attending with a plus one, the gift should be worth \$200.) We think your best bet is to figure in budget, relationship with the couple, and any travel or lodging expense, and to go from there.
- Keep in mind that in urban areas, more money is spent on gifts. Similarly, more affluent areas, of course, have a higher spending average. For more formal events, guests tend to give on the high side of the scale.
- If you are in the bridal party, you are still expected to spend the same amount you would have if you didn't accept the invitation to be in the bridal party. If you are strapped for cash, you can always give something less expensive but meaningful.
- Experts strongly suggest spending at least \$50



Here is the suggested **total** wedding gift amount:

Co-workers/Distant Family \$50-\$75

Friends/Family \$75-\$100

Close Friends \$100-\$150

Close Family \$150+

If you are invited to multiple events, follow this breakdown of the wedding gift amount:

20% Engagement Gift

20% Bridal Shower

60% Wedding Gift

### **Bridal Shower Gift Etiquette**

Unless you are told otherwise, bridal shower gift etiquette requires you bring a gift if you are attending. If you decline the invitation, you are not required to send a gift. The purpose of a bridal shower is to shower the bride or couple with gifts that will help them get started in their new life. Sometimes there will be a separate bridal shower registry. Otherwise, there will be less expensive, less fancy options on the registry, like pots and pans. These are proper for a bridal shower. Using the registry, will help you pick out what the couple actually needs. Sometimes, the shower will have a theme, and the registry or suggested gifts will reflect that theme. If the shower is clearly labeled a kitchen shower, be sure to bring an appropriate gift.

### **What to Give**

**Ask someone in the bridal party if there is a registry.** If the couple has a registry, use it! Some call it lazy gift giving, but really it's giving the couple what they want. There is nothing wrong with using the registry to guide gift giving. If you can't choose what to give off of the registry, you can also **give a gift card** to the store. If you'd rather get creative, you'd better know what the couple would like. For instance, **arrange a gourmet gift basket** reflecting one of their interests (this is a good way to save a bit of money while still giving a meaningful present). Remember, giving them something they can't use is a waste of *your* money. On that note, **always include a receipt.** If you are partial to giving the couple **cash or check**, that is accepted as well. These days, it is becoming more common for a couple to have a registry or fund for their honeymoon. You may contribute to that as well.

### **When to Give Your Gift**

Though this varies by culture and area, it is usually customary to send your gift ahead of time to the couple. Registries will typically specify where the couple would like the gift sent. If giving cash or check, you can send it, or if you feel more comfortable, you can bring it to the reception where there will be a card box. You can give a gift up to three months after the wedding. The one-year limit is a myth. Unless there are serious budgetary restrictions, the gift should be given as soon as possible.

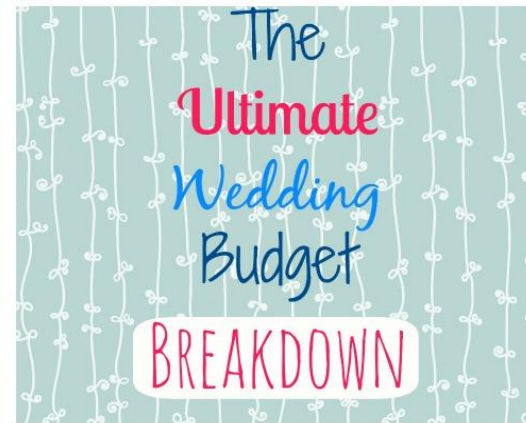
### **Destination Wedding Etiquette**

If you are spending a lot of money to get to a wedding (transportation and lodging), it is okay to spend less on the gift. How much less is up to you. It is still expected that you give a gift, though.

### **Wedding Etiquette Plus One**

When attending a wedding with a guest, it is customary to give a gift worth a bit more. Since the couple will be paying for each guest individually, experts suggest the gift be more generous. Some propose double, though we don't think that is completely necessary.





# The Ultimate Wedding Guide

Sign up for our free eNewsletter, The Wedding Planner, and receive scores of creative wedding ideas, DIY wedding projects, and much, much more!

## Included in this eBook:

