

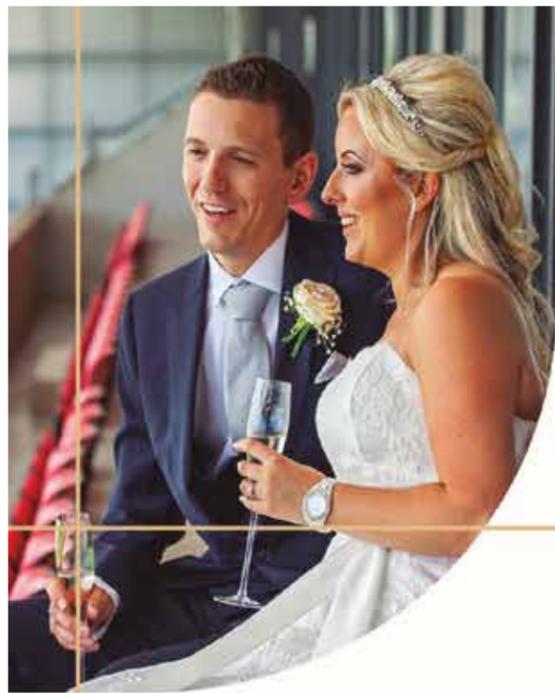
LOCAL CHOICE

WEDDING GUIDE

2019-20



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THE PLANNING

If ever an event needed meticulous planning, it is your wedding.

So much could go wrong. From the classic - best man forgetting the rings - to discovering your passports are out of date a week before the honeymoon. Careful planning is absolutely essential. Once the initial excitement of getting engaged has sunk in, the most important thing to decide is how much you can spend. This will have implications for every aspect of the wedding. With the average wedding in 2018 costing a whopping £27,000 it is vital that you decide on a budget and try to stick to it. One of the first things to do is to set up a wedding bank account and try to save as much money as you can. Perhaps set up a direct debit?

As well as the importance of the budget in planning, timing is crucial. It is no use anticipating the wedding of the year and then realising you should have booked the stretch limo months ahead, not weeks. You will be surprised how early some arrangements need to be made!! Try to pick a venue with a dedicated wedding co-ordinator who can help you plan the day, or even hire a wedding planner yourself. This may seem like a luxury, but all planners have different levels of service, so you can choose one that suits your style. Follow our checklist to make sure you have got everything under control. Enjoy your dream wedding and make the most of your special day.

With 12 months to go until the big day, it's likely you'll have an idea of what you want (and don't want) for your wedding. But working out the order in which to organise things is a little trickier. Our 12 month countdown guide is here to help.

12 MONTHS TO GO:

- Sort out the Budget
- Set the date & Secure the Venue
- Work out your guest numbers
- Choose your bridesmaids
- Plan your bridal beauty look
- Buy wedding insurance

11 MONTHS TO GO:

- Write the guest list
- Send out Save the dates
- Book your photographer
- Start shopping for your wedding outfit

10 MONTHS TO GO:

- Buy a wedding dress
- Start planning your honeymoon
- Book your entertainment

9 MONTHS TO GO:

- Plan your flowers
- Do your menu tasting
- Go Bridesmaid dress shopping

8 MONTHS TO GO:

- Choose your wedding readings and music
- Order the Wedding Stationery

7 MONTHS TO GO:

- Think about travel
- Chooses your wedding Cake
- Choose and/or order your wedding favours

6 MONTHS TO GO:

- Kit out your fiancé and ushers
- Book your hair & makeup

5 MONTHS TO GO:

- Plan your order of service
- Plan the hen & stag parties

4 MONTHS TO GO:

- Check your passport date
- Prepare for the honeymoon

3 MONTHS TO GO:

- Give Notice
- Plan a wedding rehearsal
- Attend a reading of the banns

2 MONTHS TO GO:

- Check all plans are on track
 - Do a practice run
- Book any last minute beauty treatments

1 MONTH TO GO:

- Take some time to relax
 - Pay everyone
 - Enjoy the experience

BUDGET PLANNER



Bride	<input type="text"/>	Drink	<input type="text"/>	Stationery	<input type="text"/>
Dress	<input type="text"/>	Entertainment	<input type="text"/>	Save the dates	<input type="text"/>
Veils	<input type="text"/>	Favours	<input type="text"/>	Invitations and RSVPs	<input type="text"/>
Gift for the groom	<input type="text"/>	Food	<input type="text"/>	Menus	<input type="text"/>
Groom's ring	<input type="text"/>	Marriage certificate	<input type="text"/>	Order of service	<input type="text"/>
Hair Accessories	<input type="text"/>	Photographer	<input type="text"/>	Place cards	<input type="text"/>
Hairdresser / Make-up artist	<input type="text"/>	Reception decorations	<input type="text"/>	Postage	<input type="text"/>
Jewellery	<input type="text"/>	Reception venue	<input type="text"/>	Table names and numbers	<input type="text"/>
Lingerie	<input type="text"/>	Registrar	<input type="text"/>	Table plan	<input type="text"/>
Shoes	<input type="text"/>	Table decorations	<input type="text"/>	Thank you cards	<input type="text"/>
Groom	<input type="text"/>	Thank you gifts	<input type="text"/>	Accommodation	<input type="text"/>
Wedding suit	<input type="text"/>	Videographer	<input type="text"/>	Night before	<input type="text"/>
Shoes	<input type="text"/>	Wedding insurance	<input type="text"/>	First night	<input type="text"/>
Cufflinks and accessories	<input type="text"/>	Wedding planner	<input type="text"/>	Hen and Stag Night	<input type="text"/>
Bride's ring	<input type="text"/>	Flowers	<input type="text"/>	Outfits and accessories	<input type="text"/>
Gift for the bride	<input type="text"/>	Bride's bouquet	<input type="text"/>	Travel	<input type="text"/>
Bridesmaids and Ushers	<input type="text"/>	Bridesmaids' posies	<input type="text"/>	Venue, food and drink	<input type="text"/>
Dresses and shoes	<input type="text"/>	Table centres	<input type="text"/>	Honeymoon	<input type="text"/>
Suits and shoes	<input type="text"/>	Buttonholes	<input type="text"/>	Honeymoon package	<input type="text"/>
Jewellery and accessories	<input type="text"/>	Venue flowers	<input type="text"/>	Hotel stay	<input type="text"/>
Hair	<input type="text"/>	Floral gifts for mums	<input type="text"/>	Travel	<input type="text"/>
Make-up	<input type="text"/>	Transport	<input type="text"/>	Spending money	<input type="text"/>
Gifts for bridal party	<input type="text"/>	Bride and father to ceremony	<input type="text"/>	TOTAL	<input type="text"/>
Fees, Ceremony and Venue	<input type="text"/>	Bride's mother and bridesmaids to ceremony	<input type="text"/>		
Cake	<input type="text"/>	Groom, best man and ushers to ceremony	<input type="text"/>		
Ceremony decorations	<input type="text"/>	Transport to reception	<input type="text"/>		
Ceremony venue	<input type="text"/>				
Chair covers	<input type="text"/>				

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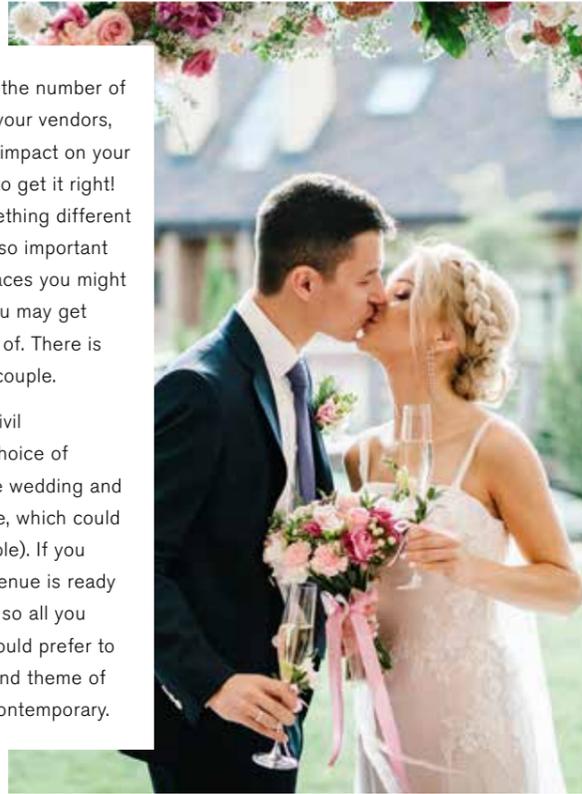
THE PERFECT VENUE

FINDING THE PERFECT VENUE IS LIKELY TO BE AT THE TOP OF ANY NEWLY ENGAGED COUPLES LIST.

With the venue playing a vital role in the success of your day, you really need to get this right. It's easy to become excited and fall in love with a place without checking that it can cater to your requirements. So, to choose the right venue, couples need to think about a wide variety of questions before booking.

The venue you pick will determine the number of guests you can invite, your decor, your vendors, your wedding date and have a big impact on your wedding budget, so it's important to get it right! Many couples are looking for something different and unique. Locations research is so important just like buying a house look at places you might not like the look of initially – as you may get ideas you may never have thought of. There is something out there to suit every couple.

Many hotels are licensed to hold civil ceremonies, so you have a great choice of romantic options (and it means the wedding and reception can be in the same place, which could be more convenient for some people). If you decide on a church wedding, the venue is ready to add sparkle to your special day, so all you have to do is choose where you would prefer to celebrate. It should suit the style and theme of your wedding, be it traditional or contemporary.



Whether you decide on a country mansion, hotel, restaurant, marquee, golf club, park, or hall you will need to book well in advance, especially if your wedding is going to be during the peak of wedding season, such as a Saturday during the summer months. Many family and friends may not live near the wedding venue, so make sure there's accommodation available either at the location or nearby. Plenty of venues hold a percentage of accommodation exclusively for your wedding party– most of the time at a discounted rate, so make sure you let your guests know. Confirm all the arrangements in writing and check that the prices given are final.

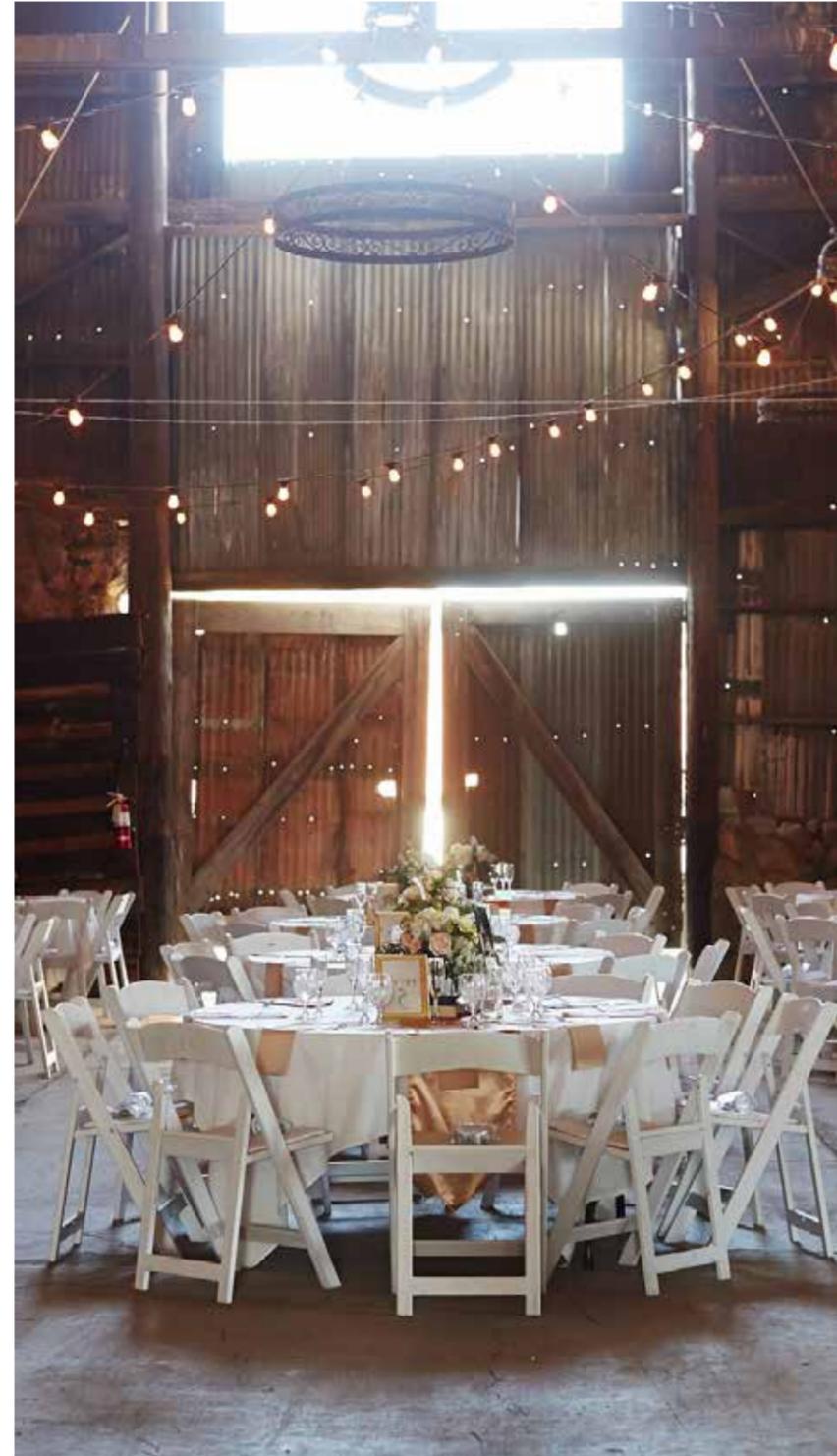
Working out the number of guests coming to your wedding should be up near the top of the "to do" list. This way, you can choose a venue that can accommodate everyone and get an idea of how much it will cost for you and also your guests.



Make a list of how many guests you wish to invite and then work out how much the food and drink is going to be. It may be worthwhile visiting a wedding fair: these are days organised by venues to which catering companies, florists and wedding cake specialists are invited, making them a great place to get information about everything you need for your big event. Even better is visiting a wedding fair at your potential venue, you can get a real idea of the atmosphere and how it looks when decorated. Often the exhibitors have a great relationship with the venue and have been involved in many weddings together – which can only be a good thing and make your day run smoothly.



Decorating the venue can be done in many ways depending on your budget. But some of the simplest and most effective are flower arrangements, balloons and lighting. You can hire people to do it for you, at a price, or you can ask friends and family to help out and do it yourself. Check out the internet for some fabulous ideas. Balloons are always a great way to decorate your venue: choose a colour that matches the theme of your wedding.



Finally, you need to decide on what entertainment you want to provide your guests with. Do you want a live band or a DJ and is there enough room to 'throw them shapes' well in to the night? Musicians usually have their own style of music that they are most comfortable with, so check that they play something that you like. If you have a DJ, you can give them a list of songs that you wish to be played and also ask them if they take requests, as I'm sure a lot of your guests will want to choose some songs that they want to hear as well. A good idea is to ask for your guests favourite party song or songs on the wedding invitation – so when they send the RSVP back, you have a great array of songs to pass on to your DJ, the perfect way to get everyone up on the dance floor.



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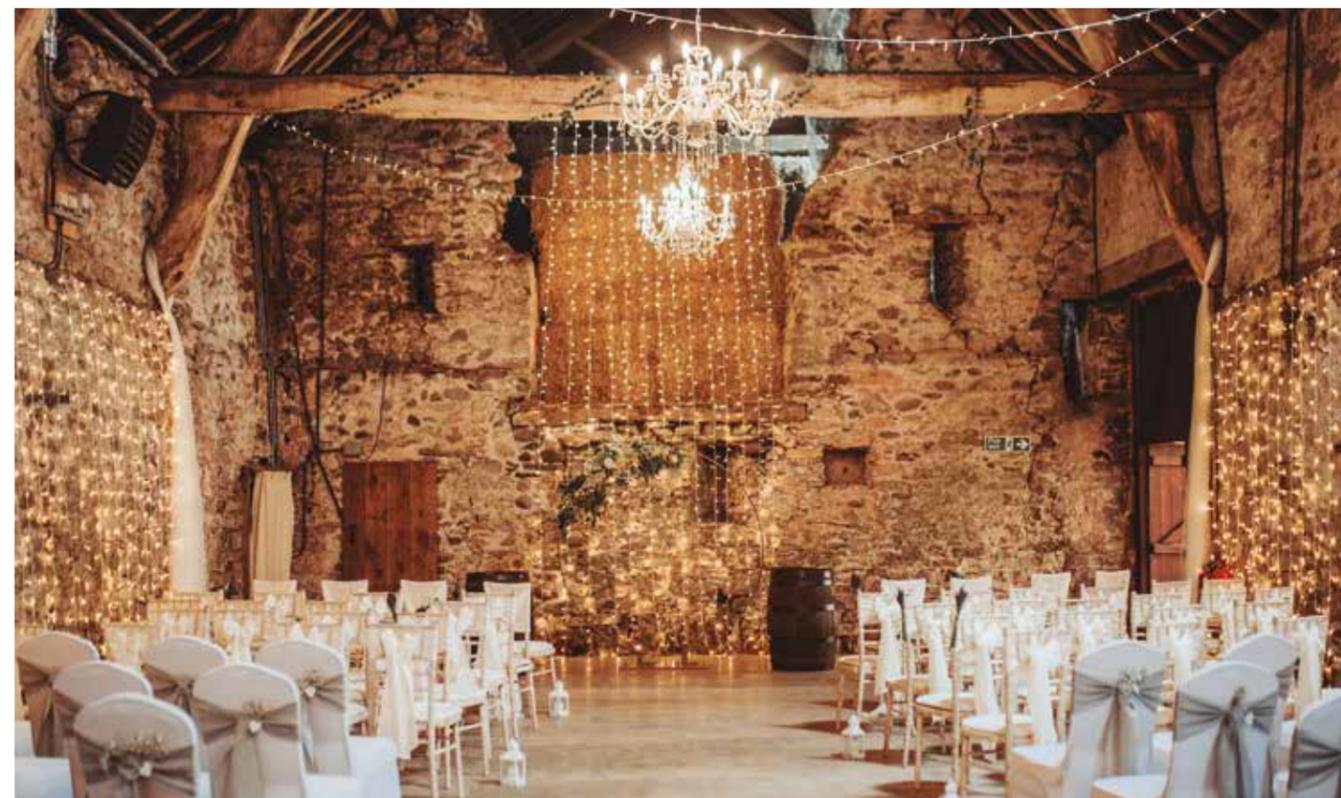
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RISE OF THE STEN PARTY!

From drawing up the guest list to choosing the perfect venue, the pressure is on when it comes to organising hen and stag parties and the cost can spiral out of hand. We all know the gender stereotypes relating to stag and hen parties, the booze filled ritual humiliation of the stag and the relaxed pamper party style of the hen. But as gender stereotypes become more undefined, mixed sex stag and hen dos are on the up.

The latest research revealed that combined 'STEN' or 'HAG' parties are fast becoming very popular. This trend has a lot to do with gender convergence: young men and women inhabit the same social spaces now. Men are now choosing to celebrate with their female friends before their big day and more and more, all-girl groups are out celebrating with the groom.

The fact that these days most couples are spending longer together before they are married renders the 'last night of freedom' concept as rather dead. Their single status and lifestyle has long since passed and some couples feel inclined to celebrate their hen and stag do together. It could even offer you the chance to save money, or combine both budgets to go bigger and better.

A sten party can also benefit your family and friends. If you've been together for a long time, chances are you have a large group of mutual friends. This means everyone can stick together and enjoy the day/evening. If, on the other hand, your friends have never had the chance to spend a lot of time together, this is the perfect opportunity for everyone to come together and mingle before the big day.

It also opens up all sorts of possibilities for fun and games. You can set your teams as hen's vs stag's or split the teams evenly, either way you'll be sure of plenty of competition and some brilliant laughs together.

Some rules and things to bear in mind when organising a sten party, you need to make sure you are doing it for the right reasons, and not because of trust issues. It should be to double the fun and definitely not just to keep an eye on your partner. Make sure it's something you both really want. If one of you is pushing the other one, it will only end up in resentment. One of, if not the most important thing, is to ensure that planning is a priority. Joining forces often means a large group, and spontaneity just goes right out the window. Finally if you like the thought of doing a sten party but you want that lad's night or girl's pamper evening, then why not have the sten party during the day and then go your separate ways in the evening, so you have the best of both worlds.



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DRESS TO IMPRESS

BUYING YOUR WEDDING DRESS IS ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING PURCHASES OF YOUR LIFE.

Every bride wants to walk down the aisle feeling gorgeous, glamorous and relaxed – and that means choosing exactly the right dress for you. But with all the pressure to find ‘The One’, dress shopping can be stressful.

Choosing your wedding dress can be one of the hardest parts of planning a wedding – there are so many styles and trends to consider. When searching for your perfect wedding dress, you need to consider crucial things like whether it will suit your shape and if it's the right style of dress for your wedding – there's no point falling for a full skirted wedding dress with sleeves if you're planning a beach wedding in the Caribbean.



Remember to Sit Down

When you try on your wedding dress, it's very likely you'll be stood in front of a full-length mirror but remember, you will spend a high percentage of the day sitting down, so you must make sure your dress is comfortable to sit in. Check that the boning of the dress allows you to breathe comfortably when you're sitting, and if you'll be kneeling during the wedding service, practice that too: a large hooped underskirt could cause an embarrassing situation if it lifts when you kneel and exposes your underwear!

Think About Your Venue

Plan through your day in your mind before buying your dress. If you are marrying in a small church or chapel with a narrow doorway or aisle, a wide dress won't make an elegant entrance very easy. If your reception venue has a lot of steps, how easy will they be to tackle in a figure hugging fishtail gown?

The Length of the Dress

Make sure the length of your wedding dress is just right. It's a common misconception that your wedding dress should scrape the floor - If it's

too long at the front you'll end up kicking it, or worse, tripping over, and there's nothing worse than a bride having to hitch her dress up all day. Even if your wedding dress comes with a train, make sure the front of the gown skims your shoes, not the floor.

Wedding Dress Fabrics

When you are picking your wedding dress, think about the fabrics. The fabric used can completely alter the feel and appearance of a dress, and can impact how practical it is. Synthetic linings can often make a bride too hot and uncomfortable, but if you do decide against natural fabrics, a small hoop can help air circulate under the dress, which will keep you cool.

Take Accessories with You

Try on your potential wedding dress with the shoes you want to wear for your wedding – and if you don't know which shoes you'll be wearing, go for a style you think you're likely to wear. Take nude, strapless underwear with you so even if it's not right for the dress, it's the least noticeable. If you plan on having a spray tan for your wedding, get one before going dress shopping, as a white dress might not look great with your natural skin tone, but with a tan you'll be able to carry off a crystal white gown.



Make Sure Your Dress is Authentic

Some brides try a dress on in a shop and then try to find it much cheaper online, but often they are buying counterfeit dresses and they will have no recourse if it doesn't fit or is damaged. If the price of a dress sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Make sure you buy your wedding dress from a reputable bridal wear shop or designer to avoid being conned.

Be Flexible

When choosing your wedding dress, the most important factor is to be flexible. Nothing should be set in stone. You might think you hate a certain style, but you can only make a sensible decision once you've tried it on. A good bridal consultant will look at your bust, hips and waist and help you to choose the most flattering style. And it helps if you're honest about your figure: say which bits you don't like, and your consultant can help you celebrate the bits you love.



Be Careful Asking Family and Friends for Help

Even if your maid of honour is a pro when it comes to making catwalk-worthy outfits, think carefully before asking her to make your dress. Will you feel obliged to say you love it, even if you don't? And could she deal with the pressure of making a wedding dress as well as fulfilling bridesmaid duties? If you do decide to ask someone close to you to make your dress, make sure you trust them completely. You'll never get exactly what you want. If a professional gets it wrong, you can demand changes without any awkwardness or arguments: it's hard to be a stroppy diva with someone you love.

Consider Who Comes With You

You might be excitedly planning a dress shopping trip with your mum and bridesmaids, but think carefully about the personalities of the people you take dress shopping with you: Your mum might have strong or traditional opinions, and your bridesmaids will be thinking about how they're going to look next to you. It's better to take someone impartial who will give fashion advice you trust.

THE FABRIC

Satin

Satin is one of the most common, most versatile and most durable wedding dress fabrics. Satin has a smooth finish with a lot of body, making it perfect for more structured gowns. It's a supportive fabric that works with every body type and is a good choice for ruched, draped and ball gown styles. And because it tends to be a thicker fabric, it's also a good choice for cooler weather weddings, particularly duchess satin. Most bridal satin tends to be 100 percent silk.

Charmeuse

Charmeuse is a light, rich fabric with a lovely drape and a glossy sheen. It is usually made of silk, but can also be made from synthetic fibres. Charmeuse has a gorgeous liquid effect that's slinky, but it's not so forgiving. Most often cut on the bias (diagonally across the grain to encourage it's drape) and used in column dresses, charmeuse is incredibly luxurious, but it does show every flaw.

Chiffon

Incredibly sheer and lightweight, chiffon is a light woven fabric. Because it's so sheer, it's often used in layers or as an overlay for a more substantial fabric. This delicate fabric has a floaty, weightless look, but it does fray and snag easily.

Organza

Organza is a sheer, lightweight woven fabric traditionally made from silk. Organza, however, is much stiffer than chiffon. Whereas chiffon drapes, organza is more structured, though still light and ethereal, making it perfect for warmer weather weddings. It, too, is a very delicate fabric, so watch out for snags and pulls.

Tulle

You know the light, netlike fabric that ballerina's tutus are made of? That's tulle. Tulle is sheer with an open weave that looks like netting. The fabric can incorporate lace designs, as well. A ball gown style made of tulle will have a diaphanous, airy feeling, but ruching it will give it more structure. Either way, it's an incredibly delicate fabric, easily snagged on jewellery.

Lace

Lace is one of the wedding dress materials that adds so much grace to any gown. Most often used as an overlay or detail, lace comes in a startling variety of styles. As with tulle, the open weave makes it susceptible to snags. Lace is typically named for the city where they it was originally produced. Some of the more popular varieties of lace are:

Chantilly: A very detailed, open lace with a defined border.

Alençon: A lace featuring bold motifs on the net, and trimmed with cord.

Venise: A heavier and more textured lace that is often used in winter weddings.





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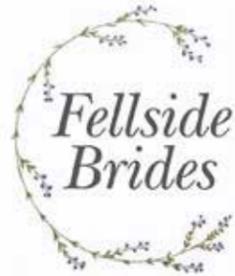


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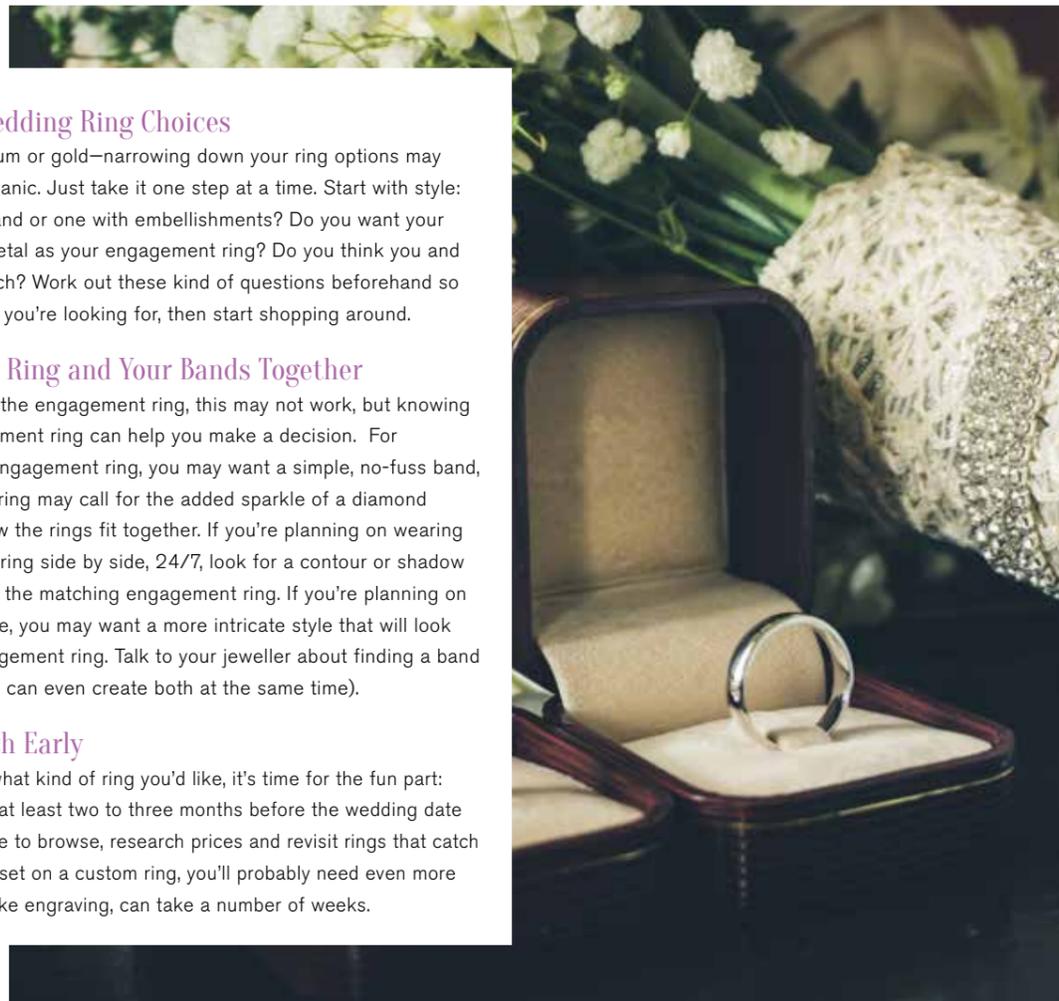
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1. Narrow Down Your Wedding Ring Choices

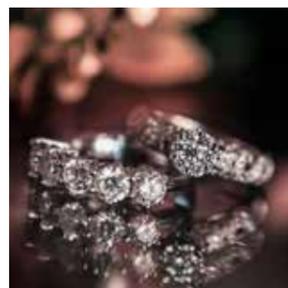
Diamonds or gemstones, platinum or gold—narrowing down your ring options may seem overwhelming, but don't panic. Just take it one step at a time. Start with style: Are you envisioning a simple band or one with embellishments? Do you want your wedding ring to be the same metal as your engagement ring? Do you think you and your partner's rings should match? Work out these kind of questions beforehand so you can zero in on exactly what you're looking for, then start shopping around.

2. Consider Buying Your Ring and Your Bands Together

If you prefer to be surprised by the engagement ring, this may not work, but knowing what bands go with the engagement ring can help you make a decision. For example, if you have a unique engagement ring, you may want a simple, no-fuss band, whereas a simple engagement ring may call for the added sparkle of a diamond pavé band. Also think about how the rings fit together. If you're planning on wearing your engagement and wedding ring side by side, 24/7, look for a contour or shadow band designed to interlock with the matching engagement ring. If you're planning on wearing your wedding ring alone, you may want a more intricate style that will look great with or without your engagement ring. Talk to your jeweller about finding a band that works with your ring (some can even create both at the same time).

3. Start Your Ring Search Early

Once you have a basic idea of what kind of ring you'd like, it's time for the fun part: trying them on! Give yourselves at least two to three months before the wedding date to ring shop. You'll need this time to browse, research prices and revisit rings that catch your eye. If you have your heart set on a custom ring, you'll probably need even more time. And keep in mind extras, like engraving, can take a number of weeks.



4. Mix It Up

Don't fret if you like platinum and your partner likes yellow gold. There's no rule that says you have to choose the same metal or even style. You could compromise with braided bands that blend the two metals together or just be totally different—the key to finding something you both love is choosing wedding bands that reflect your individual styles.



5. Set a Budget

Shop with the assumption that you'll spend about 3 percent of your total wedding budget on the rings. Even plain gold or platinum rings can be quite costly. Embellishments, like diamonds or engraving, will quickly add to the cost, so factor that into your budget if you plan to personalise your rings with any of these extras. The price of engraving is usually based on the number of characters, the font used and whether it's engraved by hand or machine (hand is usually pricier).

6. Keep Your Lifestyle in Mind

Remember: You're going to wear this band every day, so the goal is to choose something that seamlessly becomes a part of your life. If you play sports or an instrument, a slimmer ring with rounded edges (appropriately called the "comfort fit") may make the best choice. If you work with your hands, you may want to search for a simple, solid metal ring and avoid gemstones that can come loose or carvings which can trap dirt. If you're super active go for platinum, which is extra durable (when scratched, the metal is merely displaced and doesn't actually wear away).

7. Try Something Different

You may love the idea of a braided rose gold ring or a diamond eternity band, but once you get to the jewellers, try some rings that aren't on your inspiration board. Chat with the jeweller, then let them make suggestions based on what you like and don't rule anything out. Just like with wedding dresses, you may end up loving something you never thought you would. Wear it for a few minutes and, while you have it on, try writing and texting as a comfort test.

8. Think Long Term

While you shouldn't be afraid of being trendy, make sure the style you choose is something you'll want to wear for, say, the next 40 years. Just don't stress too much... You're not married to the ring and can always make changes to it (add diamonds or go from white gold to platinum) later on to mark a special anniversary.

9. Consider the Maintenance

To keep a wedding band with stones clean and sparkling, you'll need to wash and soak it in warm water, then gently brush it with a soft toothbrush or eyebrow brush (too much pressure can loosen the stones from their setting), rinse it and pat it dry with a soft lint-free cloth. Sound like too much upkeep? You may want to opt for a fuss-free gold or platinum ring—simply rub it with a soft, lint-free cloth (chamois works well) and you're good to go.

10. Size It Right

Most people rarely take off their wedding bands; they wear them through summers, winters, exercise, pregnancies—all times when your fingers swell and contract from heat, cold, water retention or weight gain.

To find the right size that will best weather all of those changes, schedule your final ring fitting at a time when you're calm and your body temperature is normal. That means you should never finalise first thing in the morning (you retain water from the night before), right after you've exercised (fingers swell) or when you're extremely hot or cold (which can cause your hands to expand and shrink).



11. Check for Quality

Quality control applies to all rings, not just your wedding bands. Make sure the ring has two marks inside the band: the manufacturer's trademark (this proves they stand behind their work) and the quality mark, 24K or PLAT, for example (this proves the metal quality is what the retailer says it is).

You have the ring of your dreams... Now how will you present it on your big day?

You don't see many ring cushions any more.

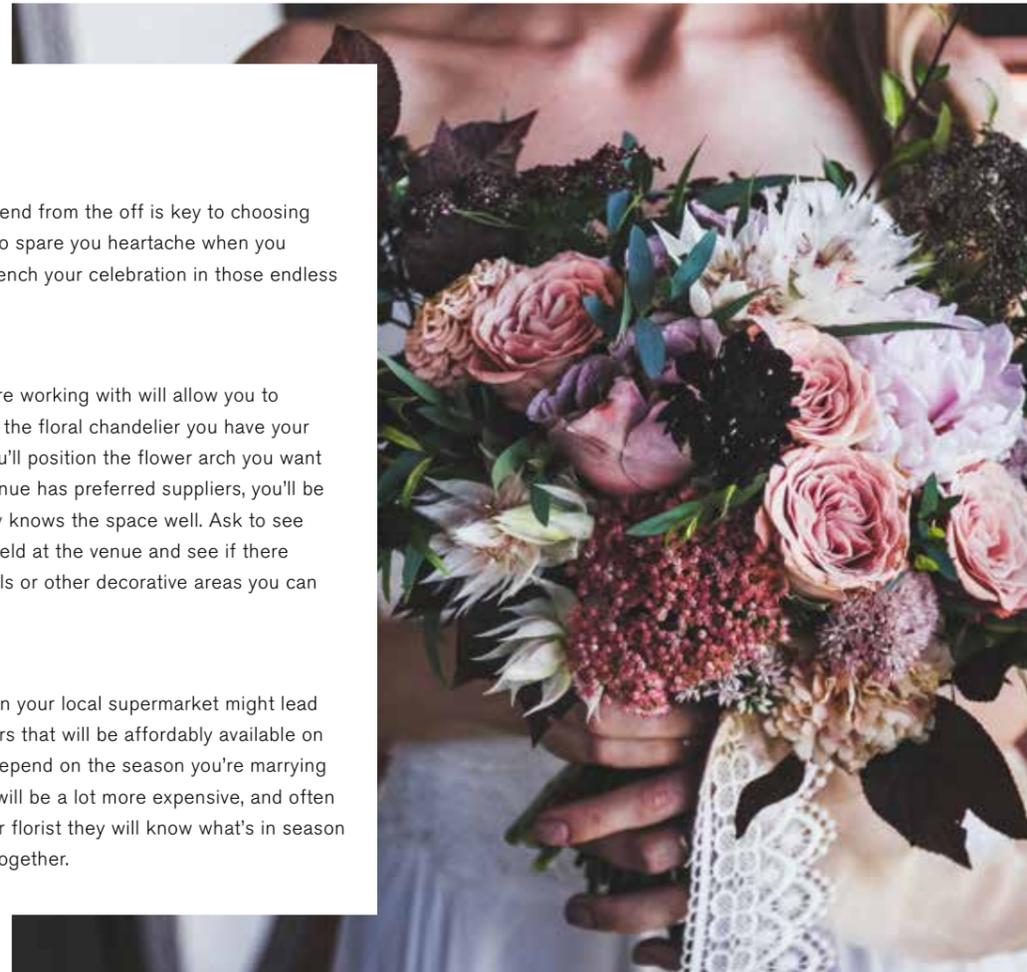
These days, the classic pillow has been replaced by marble dishes, personalised wooden cases or pretty velvet boxes and this also creates a lovely wedding keepsake with whatever vessel they choose for getting their rings up the aisle that they can treasure.

We do have a few tips though. If little hands will be carrying your ring pillow or ring dish, do make sure you get one with ribbons so your precious new wedding rings don't get lost! Likewise if you're choosing a decorative box that will be on display at your ceremony, maybe recruit someone to add the rings at the last minute, so they're not sitting out unsupervised and finally, for something you'll treasure, but also get use of, maybe choose a ring dish that you'll travel with or keep by your bed, so you'll have something to keep your rings safe, but that also brings a smile to your face and reminds you of your wedding day, every time you see it.

BRIDAL BLOOMS

FOR MOST BRIDES, FLOWERS ARE A HUGE PART OF THE WEDDING.

Whether you choose to just have a bouquet and buttonholes or to decorate your entire venue, your wedding flowers will set the tone and theme for the day. Deciding on flowers that fit your style and match your colour palette isn't always easy—especially if you don't know a rose from a ranunculus or what's in season.



Some key factors to think of:

Your budget

Knowing how much you have to spend from the off is key to choosing your wedding flowers - and will also spare you heartache when you realise you might not be able to drench your celebration in those endless flowers you originally imagined.

Your venue

Knowing what kind of space you are working with will allow you to picture how things will look: where the floral chandelier you have your heart set on will hang, or where you'll position the flower arch you want to exchange vows under. If your venue has preferred suppliers, you'll be working with someone who already knows the space well. Ask to see photos from weddings previously held at the venue and see if there are any clever uses of ceilings, walls or other decorative areas you can incorporate into your day.

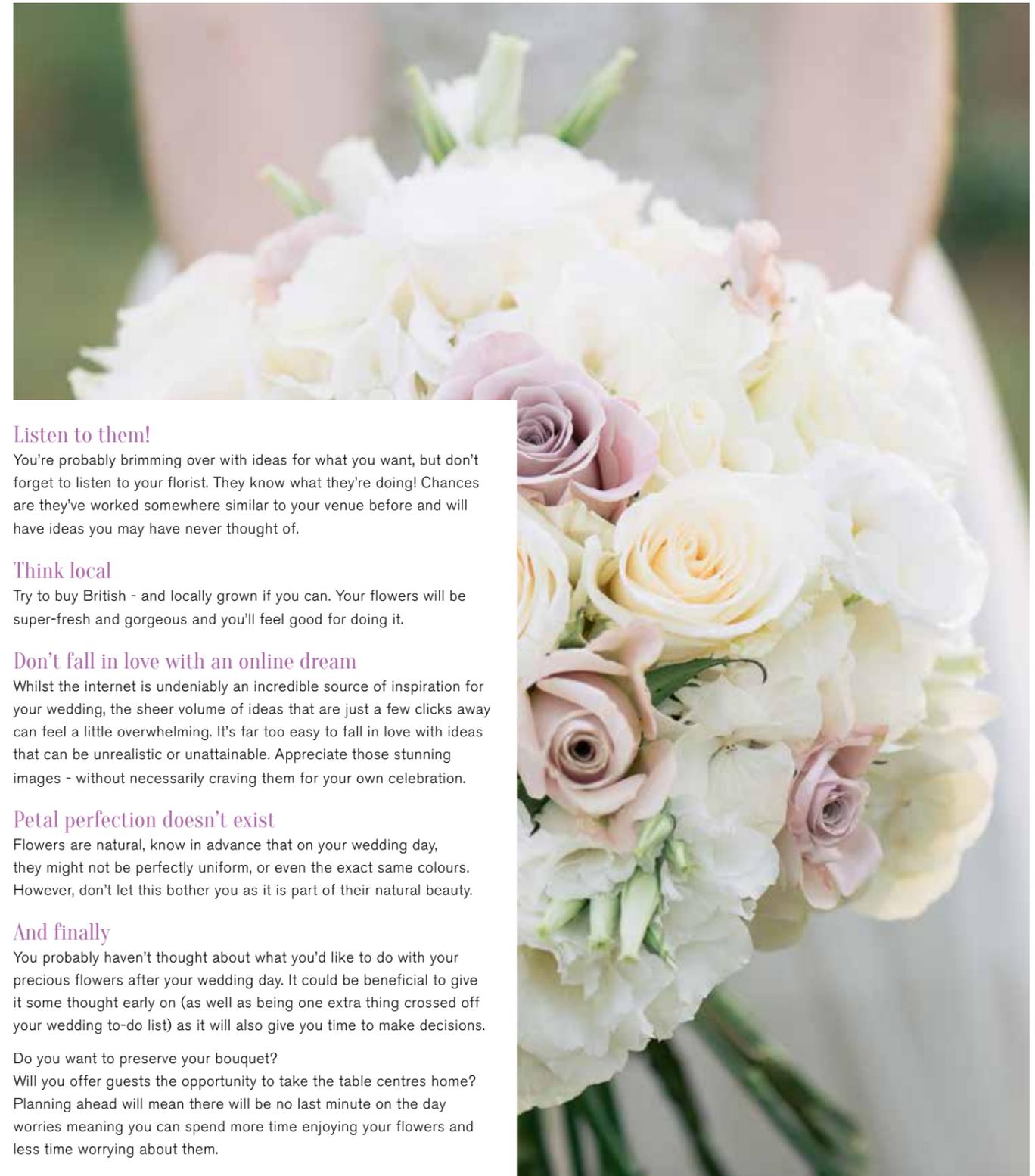
The season

Whilst the assortments on display in your local supermarket might lead you to believe otherwise, the flowers that will be affordably available on your wedding day will most likely depend on the season you're marrying in. Flowers that are out of season will be a lot more expensive, and often lack quality - discuss this with your florist they will know what's in season and what combinations work well together.



Then pick a florist you gel with.

Choosing a florist who you like and can communicate with easily will make things a lot simpler - as with your other suppliers, rapport is key! They'll want all of your floral dreams to come true as much as you do, so trust them. Create a shortlist of maybes and find as many examples of their work as possible, from shots they're tagged in on social media to galleries on their website. Then, arrange an initial consultation to discuss your requirements.



Listen to them!

You're probably brimming over with ideas for what you want, but don't forget to listen to your florist. They know what they're doing! Chances are they've worked somewhere similar to your venue before and will have ideas you may have never thought of.

Think local

Try to buy British - and locally grown if you can. Your flowers will be super-fresh and gorgeous and you'll feel good for doing it.

Don't fall in love with an online dream

Whilst the internet is undeniably an incredible source of inspiration for your wedding, the sheer volume of ideas that are just a few clicks away can feel a little overwhelming. It's far too easy to fall in love with ideas that can be unrealistic or unattainable. Appreciate those stunning images - without necessarily craving them for your own celebration.

Petal perfection doesn't exist

Flowers are natural, know in advance that on your wedding day, they might not be perfectly uniform, or even the exact same colours. However, don't let this bother you as it is part of their natural beauty.

And finally

You probably haven't thought about what you'd like to do with your precious flowers after your wedding day. It could be beneficial to give it some thought early on (as well as being one extra thing crossed off your wedding to-do list) as it will also give you time to make decisions.

Do you want to preserve your bouquet?

Will you offer guests the opportunity to take the table centres home? Planning ahead will mean there will be no last minute on the day worries meaning you can spend more time enjoying your flowers and less time worrying about them.



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A SLICE OF LOVE

TRADITIONALLY, WEDDING CAKES USED TO BE THREE TIERED AND WERE COVERED WITH ROYAL ICING.

Nowadays, there are hundreds of cakes that you can choose from, which vary in design, look, as well as taste. You can even get a wedding cake customised to your own unique design and have just about anything you can imagine. How about a “naked” cake, a drip cake or even a doughnut tower? Maybe lots of cupcakes with fresh flowers or sugar paste? Maybe you want savoury instead of sweet – what about using cheese or a wedding pie. The choices are huge and diverse!

Once you have made up your mind what design you would like, look around for a designer who will be able to create your masterpiece. Research is important, check out websites and Facebook. Also, look in local newspapers and ask family and friends for recommendations. Visit a few shops and look at their style and maybe sample a few. (Not too many though... you don't want the dress taking out a size!) Ask for prices, this will depend on the size of the cake you need, the labour and the cost of ingredients. Some designers start filling up around a year in advance, so bear this in mind if you want someone specific.

While it is important that a wedding cake appeal to the visual senses, it is even more important that it tastes good- no one wants an inedible wedding cake. Choose from the regular vanilla or chocolate, fruit cake or sponge cake, cheesecakes and even wedding cakes with a mousse filling. If you are tempted by different flavours and can't make up your mind, you can have different tiers in different flavours! Many cake designers will give you an opportunity to taste your wedding cake prior to baking. If undecided they may offer a tasting session to decide what flavours you want.



Once you have made your decisions, then book this around 6-8 months before the day. Provide them with as much information about your wedding as you can: The colour scheme, the flowers, and the location - this will help with the design. To ensure you get exactly what you want, check that all the details, including the date, place and time of the wedding, plus the style and flavours of the cake, are in your contract with the designer. Your baker should update the contract anytime you change your mind, and as you choose further details. Whether it's with a written description or a sketch, it should be clear exactly how your cake will look on the wedding day.

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

If you've booked a wedding venue that doesn't provide the catering, or you're hiring a marquee and need to provide all the food for your wedding yourselves, then the best way to feed your guests is going to be hiring a professional wedding catering company.

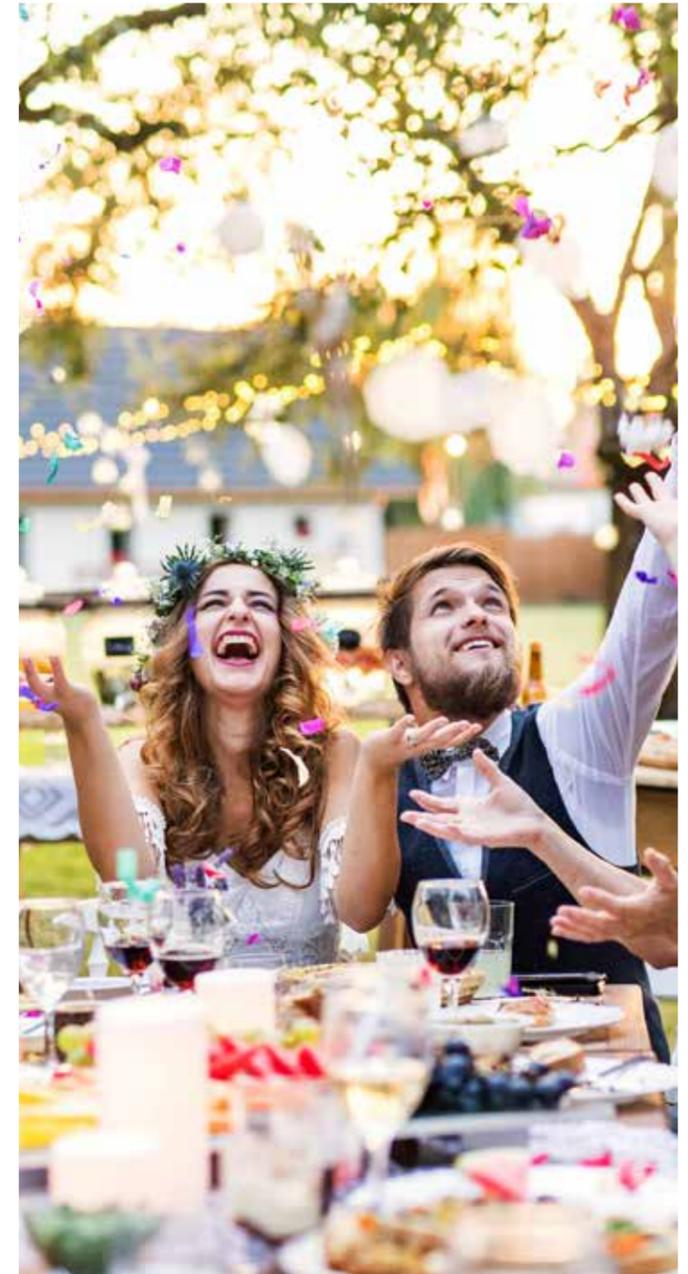
Food stations, be they dessert tables or snack buffets, have really taken off in wedding catering over the past few years and it's easy to see why! Your wedding day will probably stretch on for 12 to 16 hours and you don't want to hear stomachs rumbling during the speeches! Wedding food stations, a delicious trend that's infinitely customisable - you can go fancy with sushi or Italian with pizza, or hark back to a simpler time with some nostalgic treats from your childhood.

Whatever your budget, external caterers or food stations will be able to offer expert advice on various options to make every penny count, ensuring the festivities are worthy of the occasion.

When choosing, seeking recommendations from family and friends is always a good idea; it is often difficult to judge the standard of service on offer just by looking at brochures. Caterers can usually supply table linen, crockery and cutlery, and can often also provide drinks. If the caterers are supplying the drinks they may only charge for bottles opened, but if you provide the drinks they may charge a little extra to serve them. Most caterers will clear away afterwards, so discuss when the clearing away will be done and let them know if serving staff will be required after the meal to serve drinks.

The wedding breakfast is an important part of your wedding day, and something you and your guests will remember. The key is to find the caterer who will create the perfect menu, at the right price for you.

The catering and refreshments will very much depend on the venue and type of reception you've decided on. Many venues recommend caterers, or may even insist that you use a particular one. However, for the marquee in the garden, local restaurants, bakers, off-licences and even supermarkets will be more than willing to quote.



Your caterer will need to know the date, time of reception, number of guests, level of hospitality you wish to provide and your limit on charges per head to supply you with ideas and quotations. Costs are usually quoted per 'head'. Always ask for quotes and confirmation of everything in writing.

The caterer should also visit the site of the reception prior to the wedding day to decide what further equipment and facilities they will need to bring with them. For a small buffet, they will bring the food already prepared and may only need washing up and coffee making facilities, whereas a larger event may mean the caterer needs to bring larger items. It's important to give yourself enough time to get estimates and compare catering services, facilities and costs if necessary. Remember that caterers tend to get booked up months in advance.

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Wedding photos last a lifetime so it's essential to choose the perfect wedding photographer to suit your style and budget. But how do you know which photographer is right for you?

The quality of a photographer's portfolio should be the first thing that captures your attention. Every photographer will have his or her own style of capturing the happiness and fun of the day, so you need to ensure that it fits with your vision of the event. Early booking is essential, as the best photographers are in demand, and when talking them through your day, make sure you are clear about the kind of shots you do and don't want. If the photographer knows the venue already, then they know where to get the best shots. If they don't, ask them to check it out beforehand.

If you are drawn to a particular photographer, make sure you ask to view all of their images (not just the favourites they pick for their websites!) so that you can check the image quality is consistent throughout. You put a lot of trust and faith in your wedding photographer. In order to get the best images and a true account of the most important day of your life, it is essential that you feel comfortable and relaxed in their presence. Some photographers offer test shoots as part of their package – this is beneficial to you as well as the photographer. Being photographed can be quite a self-conscious and vulnerable experience so building a rapport with them is imperative to get the best from your wedding photography.

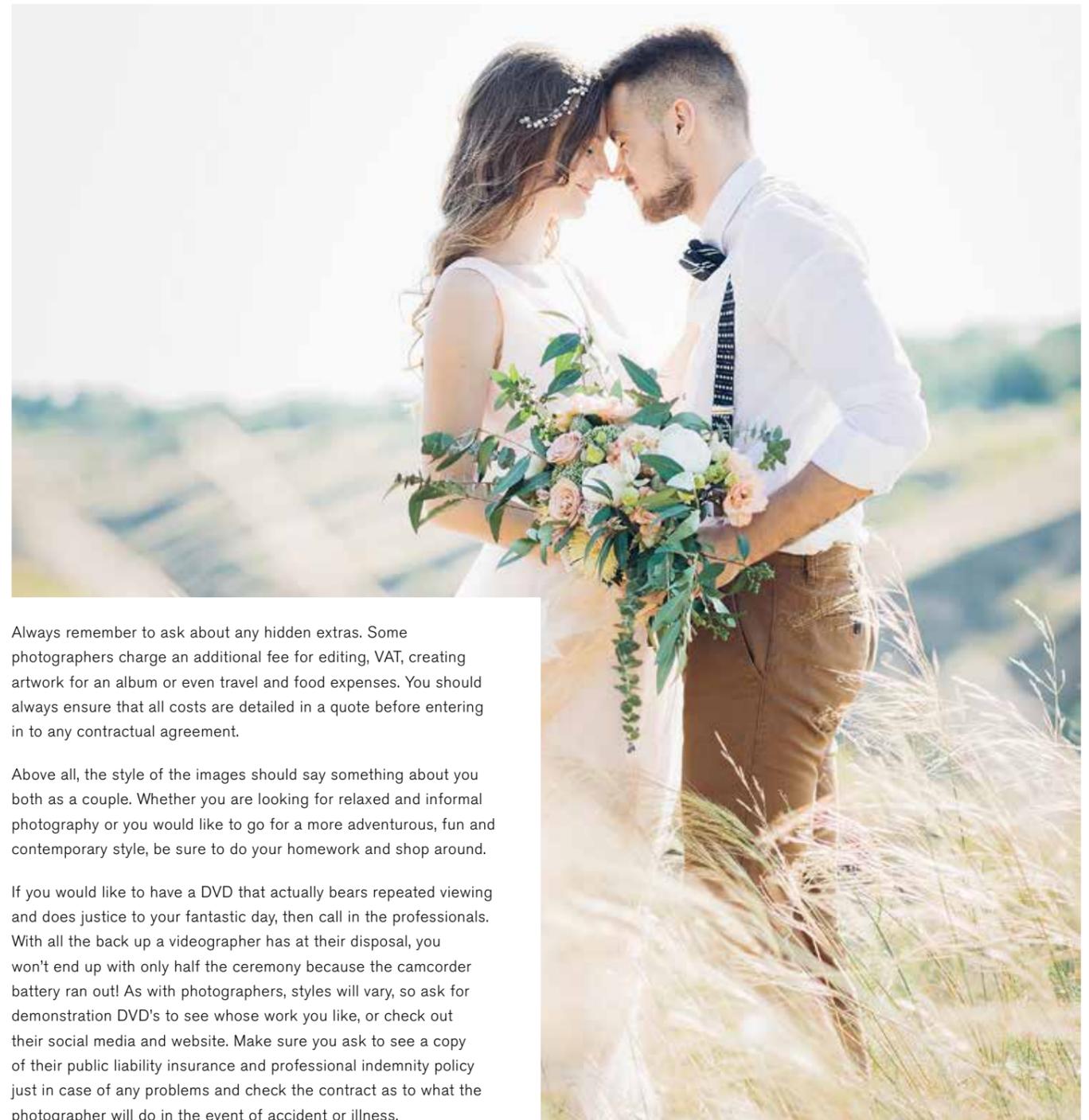


Also, think of your guests. If your wedding photographer is approachable, friendly and down to earth, your guests will be at ease allowing the photographer to blend in and capture the day as it naturally unfolds.

Standard poses, such as the wedding party line up, or the cutting of the cake are always very nice, but you could always try and make your album unique by doing something creative and different! You could freeze-frame it! Still life pictures can record special wedding day details and capture the mood. The photographer could, for example, snap your dress on the hanger, your old trainers tossed next to the wedding shoes, the bridesmaid's bouquets resting on a table, place cards lined up, and so on.... First look wedding photos may not be the newest trend in wedding photography, but they're still a hot topic. The time honoured practice of not seeing the bride until she walks down the aisle is more of a good luck superstition and many couples are still sticking to it, while others are opting for a first look. As your big day approaches, you're probably wondering whether you want first-look wedding photos or whether you want to wait until you walk down the aisle for your big reveal.



A photographer should be open about their pricing structures and in turn, you should be clear on your budget. Neither one of you wants to waste any time, so being clear right from the beginning will resolve this. Your photographer should offer a variety of packages to suit all and should always be flexible with pricing and what is included within each package. Your photographer is providing a service and each couple will have different expectations and requirements so do make sure that your photographer can tailor make a package to suit your needs.



Always remember to ask about any hidden extras. Some photographers charge an additional fee for editing, VAT, creating artwork for an album or even travel and food expenses. You should always ensure that all costs are detailed in a quote before entering in to any contractual agreement.

Above all, the style of the images should say something about you both as a couple. Whether you are looking for relaxed and informal photography or you would like to go for a more adventurous, fun and contemporary style, be sure to do your homework and shop around.

If you would like to have a DVD that actually bears repeated viewing and does justice to your fantastic day, then call in the professionals. With all the back up a videographer has at their disposal, you won't end up with only half the ceremony because the camcorder battery ran out! As with photographers, styles will vary, so ask for demonstration DVD's to see whose work you like, or check out their social media and website. Make sure you ask to see a copy of their public liability insurance and professional indemnity policy just in case of any problems and check the contract as to what the photographer will do in the event of accident or illness.

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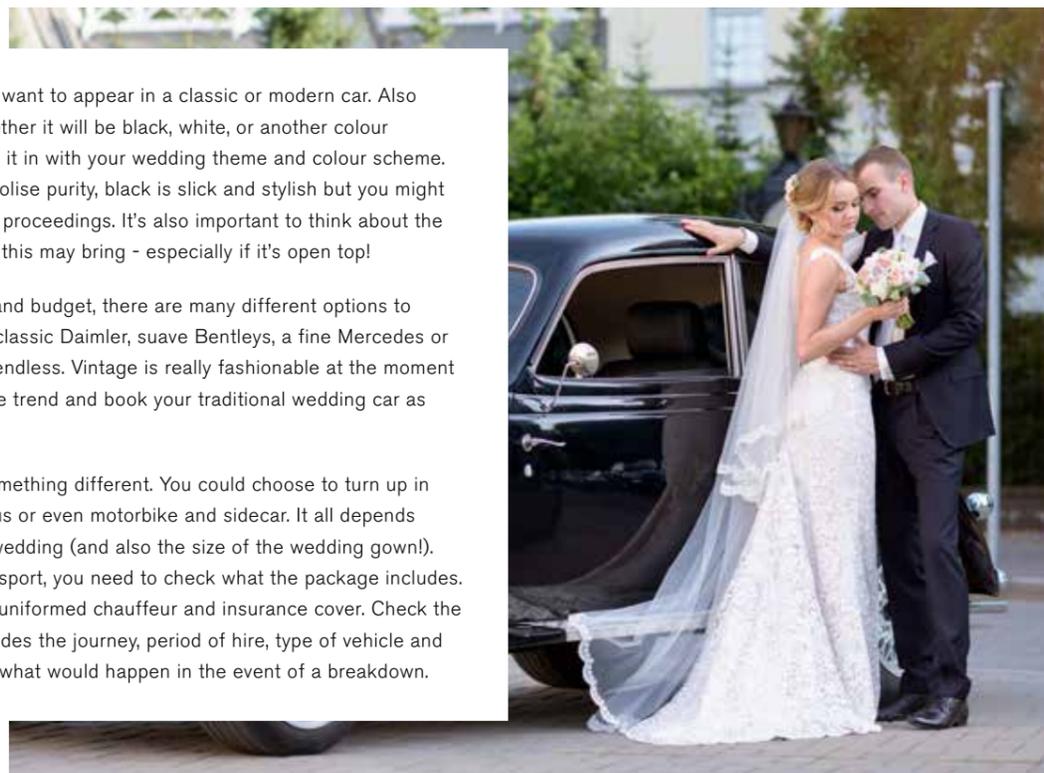
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ARRIVE IN STYLE

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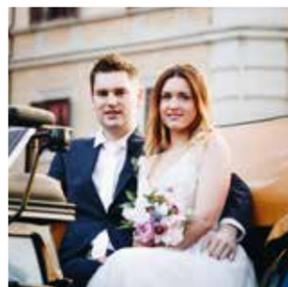
Choosing your wedding car can be tricky as you and your intended will more than likely have completely different ideas – boys and their toys. You may like the traditional vintage car or you may want to drive away as husband and wife in a classic or modern sports car. There are so many different ways of arriving to your big day, varying from horse drawn carriages, wedding limos, helicopter, vintage VW campers, coaches and more. Your transport will more than likely be part of your wedding photography, so make sure you think about this as well as the practicality of getting from one place to another.



You need to choose whether you want to appear in a classic or modern car. Also choose the colour of the car, whether it will be black, white, or another colour altogether. Maybe you want to tie it in with your wedding theme and colour scheme. White is usually on show to symbolise purity, black is slick and stylish but you might want to add a splash of colour to proceedings. It's also important to think about the time of the year and the weather this may bring - especially if it's open top!

Depending on your preferences and budget, there are many different options to consider. Vintage Rolls Royce, a classic Daimler, suave Bentleys, a fine Mercedes or classy Jaguar – the choices are endless. Vintage is really fashionable at the moment for wedding transport so head the trend and book your traditional wedding car as soon as possible.

Or buck the trend and choose something different. You could choose to turn up in a fire engine, an old fashioned bus or even motorbike and sidecar. It all depends on your personality and style of wedding (and also the size of the wedding gown!). When booking your wedding transport, you need to check what the package includes. These are normally; an umbrella, uniformed chauffeur and insurance cover. Check the contract and make sure this includes the journey, period of hire, type of vehicle and what is expected on the day and what would happen in the event of a breakdown.



For some brides and grooms the only way to travel to and from their wedding is by helicopter. You need to be aware of the obvious extra cost and fit that into your wedding budget! But flying sky high after your wedding can be a magical and stylish way to travel to your reception. Check the company's policy on cancellations – they can't fly in certain weather conditions but may be happy to transfer the booking for an anniversary flight instead. Also check that your venue has grounds suitable for landing – and have a backup plan.

It's also important to think about your guests, your ceremony may be in a different location to the reception. Are you going to put transport on for them? A vintage bus, coach or party bus would be perfect. If you can't transport everyone all at once, make sure that there's something planned on either end of the trip or even on the journey itself, what about a cute party bag for each guest and include some snacks and a mini bottle of Prosecco for them to enjoy on the journey.

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Hair

A special wedding hairstyle is fundamental for your special day. Once you have booked the date for your big day, make sure that you have all necessary appointments made with a professional stylist that you trust. Even if the wedding itself is a year or more away, top bridal hairdressers can be booked up that far in advance, so check their availability, even if you haven't decided on the style you are after - that will depend on your headress or tiara and jewellery. Your bridal hairdresser should be someone you connect with - they'll be with you on the morning of your big day! Find out who specialises in wedding hair (not all hairdressers have had training) and ask to see their portfolio of real brides. Show them images of styles you like, along with your dress. The best bridal hairstyle is the one that suits and reflects your personality the most. Naturally you want to be a beautiful bride, but you don't have to conform to a stereotype - if you've never liked your hair up, you don't have to wear it that way on your wedding day. Decide on your hair colour around three months before the wedding day and stick with it. Your final colour should be applied one to two weeks before. Consider a course of conditioning treatments up to six months in advance. In preparation, regular washing and conditioning, along with an invigorating scalp massage and deep conditioning treatment (about 4 weeks prior to the big day) not only feels good, but stimulates the hair follicles and encourages the growth of healthy hair. It is a good idea to have it cut about a week before the wedding day, so that it still retains its shape but has had time to settle. Make sure you have at least one trial with your hairdresser to be 100% sure of your chosen style. On your wedding day, the one thing we strongly advise is not to use conditioner. Your hairdresser needs to have total control and conditioner can make it unmanageable. They will bring their own hair products designed to hold the style whilst adding shine.



Skin

Make sure you cleanse, exfoliate and moisturise your skin everyday in the run up to the wedding, to keep it glowing and healthy. Remember to drink plenty of water too, as this will keep your skin hydrated. If you are prone to spots, use an aqueous (water-based) cream which you can get from your local pharmacy. This way you are not putting oil into your skin, which can increase the chance of spots, but you are still hydrating the skin and encouraging it to heal and clear. Facials and face masks will also help to remove any blemishes and impurities in the skin, as well as feeling and smelling luxurious, but be aware that having one a few days before your big day might lead to a blotchy face on the actual day! Always do a patch test in the crook of your elbow before using a face mask to make sure you are not allergic to it - you don't want a blotchy peeling face on your big day!



Nails & Hands

There's more to nailing the perfect wedding manicure than choosing between gel or regular polish. Gel is a great idea for your wedding day as it won't chip or smudge like a lacquer manicure might - It will also last up to 2 weeks which means you'll have perfect nails for your wedding day and possibly honeymoon too! It's all about feeling comfortable with the length of your nails on your wedding day. You don't want to go and get incredibly long extensions the day before if you're not used to them as you'll feel clumsy and awkward...and you certainly don't want to rip your dress! Aim for medium length, almond-shaped nails, which look elegant and elongate the fingers. Getting regular manicures way before the big day to ensure your nails are in tip top condition can also help, as can getting your manicure done the day before your wedding, if you aren't getting gels, to ensure your manicure is at it's best.

Looking after your nails before your wedding shouldn't just stop at your manicure. Get into the habit of moisturising your hands with a good quality hand cream and cuticle oil. Don't forget to cream your hands on the big day too, for younger looking glowing hands especially for ring and bouquet picture close ups.

Eyes

Eye drops are always a good way to emphasise the whites of your eyes and really brighten them up for your big day. Use these before applying your make-up for an added soothing affect. One trick that does really work is applying white eyeliner in the waterline to open up your eyes! It instantly makes your eyes appear bigger and more awake. If you want a less 'traditional' bridal look then try a flesh coloured liner for a subtle effect. Believe it or not, well-shaped eyebrows really do give the eyes more definition. It is important for your brows to look natural yet defined on your wedding day, be careful not to use a colour that is darker than your natural brows and try not to alter the shape too much either. False lashes can be as natural looking or dramatic as you like. They are the perfect way to thicken your natural lashes and add definition to your lash line. During the days before the wedding steer clear of too much salty food, which can cause eyes to look swollen.



Legs & Feet

Your wedding dress might have your legs covered but that's no reason to ignore them! Shave only after you have softened the skin with warm (not hot) water and use a moisturising shave cream. One of the simplest rules for keeping them smooth post-shower, apply a rich moisturiser while legs are still damp, or about a week before the wedding, book yourself in for a leg and bikini wax so you can forget about having to de-fuzz on your honeymoon. Also applying a light fake tan on your legs a couple of days before your wedding can help emphasis your legs for that all important garter photo shot!

Use a pumice stone or foot rasp daily to scrub away dry, cracked skin on heels and toes. Feet should be damp, not completely wet - a soaking wet foot is too slippery to be properly exfoliated. Then treat your feet while you sleep. Slap on a thick layer of moisturiser and slip into a pair of cotton socks, which will retain body heat and help seal in moisture overnight. Dependant on your shoe style - a pedicure can emphasize your toes either natural colours or matching your colour scheme.

Lips

There are so many things to look forward to on your wedding day. One of the highlights? Your first smooch as husband and wife! For best results, start prepping those lips at least 1 week before the wedding day, though the experts say the sooner the better so you get in the habit early on! To avoid chapped lips, one of the most important things to do is exfoliate right when you get out of the shower. You want to take a washcloth and use either a facial scrub or the washcloth alone and rub back and forth over your lips. A teaspoon of olive oil and a dash of sugar act as alternative, natural exfoliators. Dab on a wash cloth and wipe your lips to remove any chapped skin. Certain products both nourish and plump the lips. Look for the ingredient Resveratrol which is a super-moisturising anti-oxidant which also provides age-defense. Just as you would cover your face with an SPF to prevent sun damage, you should also give your lips the same special treatment - at least SPF15. You can wear it alone or under lip stick or gloss. Just be aware-you should wear SPF even during the winter months and on cloudy days!

Teeth

Make sure your teeth are looking white for all those beautiful photographs you are going to be posing for! Most toothpastes on the market include whitening ingredients, but for better, faster results choose one specifically targeted at whitening. Teeth whitening is an alternative with plenty of options from whitening strips and whitening kits to local dentists offering professional services. Be careful not to overdo it though as some treatments can make your teeth very sensitive to hot & cold - and you want to be able to enjoy that celebratory cool fizz at the reception!

FINISHING TOUCHES

CHURCH? DONE! RECEPTION? DONE! BUT WHAT ABOUT ALL THE LITTLE THINGS WHEN IT COMES TO PLANNING A WEDDING?

Personalising your wedding can be one of the most fun parts of wedding planning, and much easier than you may think. Every couple's wedding is unique to them, and the list of ideas are endless, so it is difficult to put into words exactly what final touches you will need to take care of... but we hope we can give you some inspiration!

Sweet Tables

These are becoming more and more popular for adults and children alike! There are so many options available to create the perfect sweet table! Simply put – the table consists of jars of sweets on a table with optional bags & serving tongs. The tables can be as basic or as extravagant as you want them to be dependant on your budget! Or alternatively there are companies available who hire out traditional looking carts with sweets, personalised bags & accessories – you just tell them the sweets you want and they do the rest!



Casino

Wedding receptions are a great relief for everyone involved in the wedding because it means the most stressful part is over and its party time!! Casinos at a wedding are a great, fun alternative with fake money so it doesn't even affect your bank balance! They are a great way to bring guests together either throughout the night or break up the gap between the wedding reception and evening party, bringing out guests competitive sides to be the winner of the night!



Fireworks & Sparklers

If you are looking to really impress your wedding guests at the end of the night, then why not book a spectacular firework display. Although they are not always cheap, a firework display can be the perfect ending to your dream wedding day. However it's worth checking beforehand that your venue will allow a display to take place.

Another lovely idea is to use sparklers to bring an added touch to your big day (evening). Wedding sparklers are cheap, easy to find and everyone loves to feel like a little child again. Not to mention the fact that the photos can be spectacular!

Wedding Photo App

Previously disposable cameras were left on the tables for guests to take photos of the party so the bride & groom could see everyone celebrating at the evening celebrations. This is a costly exercise as you have to consider the cost of printing all the photos – some of which might be poorly developed. With the ever increasing technology and more and more people using their smartphones as cameras, wedding photo apps are becoming more popular!

With all guests being given a login (once they have downloaded the app) all the photos can be uploaded as the day & night goes along allowing the bride & groom then able to have a permanent reminder of their guests photos and also the option to print any of their favourites!

Photo Booth & Selfie Mirror

Your wedding is one of the most special days of your life and one that you will want to remember forever. There's no better way of capturing the fun and enjoyment you have on this special day with your friends and family, than hiring a photo booth or selfie mirror. A general photographer can't get the fun and exciting images at the reception that you can get in a booth. Nothing can beat a brilliant photographer at your ceremony, but this is the best way of capturing your guests on camera and video. Photo booths & mirrors have become a very popular addition for this reason.

Casino

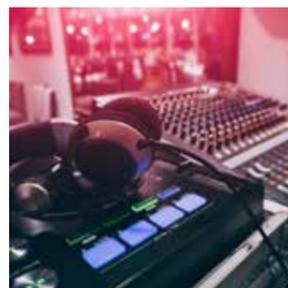
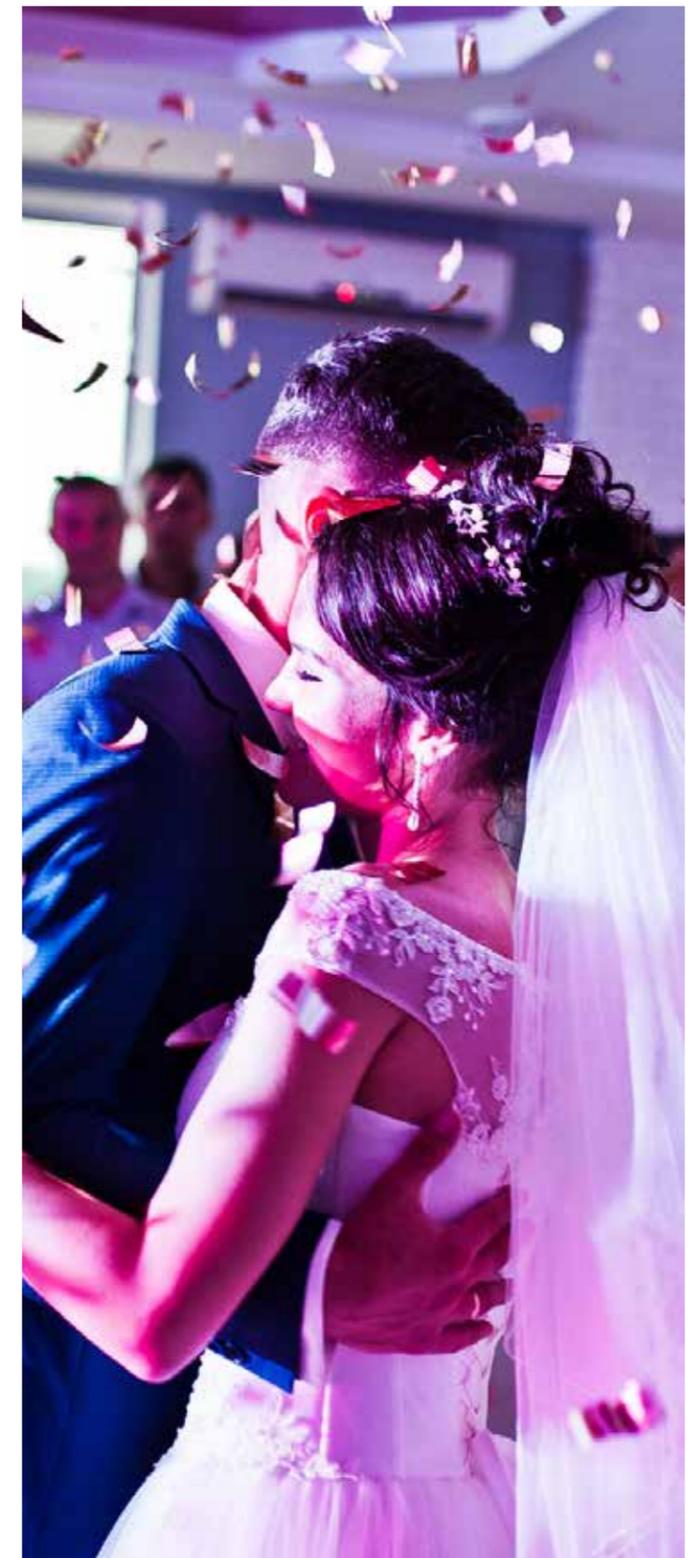
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Caricature

When you hire a Caricaturist for your wedding, it is the perfect entertainment for between proceedings, during the photographs or at the wedding reception. If you hire a Caricaturist not only will it serve as a fantastic ice breaker for guests, it will entertain everybody and provide a great talking point and, in addition, it will also leave guests with a cherished memento of your special day.

Magician

A professional magician is a great addition to any wedding. They will get your guests talking and laughing and will provide lots of memorable moments and wonderful photo opportunities as people react to the magic. By searching online you will be able to find the perfect experienced professional magician who will wow and delight your guests and will add something extraordinary to the day.



Wedding Playlist

Your wedding music playlist will quite literally be the soundtrack to your wedding night and it's fair to say that picking the right music can be an incredibly personal, yet difficult process. You want your guests to hit the dance floor, so why not suggest your guests choose the songs for you? On your invites, ask them to choose a song they would dance with you to on the night. Not only is it a great conversation-starter but it means they have no excuse not to have a boogie!

Favours

Your wedding favours are a way of saying thank you to your guests; a small token of your appreciation for their sharing in your special day. Traditionally guests would receive a small bag or box containing 5 sugared almonds representing the five blessings of Wealth, Health, Happiness, Long Life and Fertility. Now, of course, your wedding favours can be almost anything to reflect your own taste, budget and personality.

Popcorn - Give your guests little boxes of this much loved treat for them to take away. If you're planning to have vintage wedding décor, then you could even serve the popcorn in retro stripy boxes to suit the theme.

Scratch cards - Feeling lucky? If you are then share your luck with your guests by giving them a scratch card. This is a fun and affordable favour idea that could lead to some big wins!

Bubbles – another affordable favour idea. The bottles can be personalised or left blank & not only are they a cute novelty they also look great on photos too!!

Spirits – miniature bottles of spirits or wines etc. can all be personalised with the details of the wedding day and left for the adults to enjoy on the day or take home as a permanent reminder of your wedding.



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LEGALITIES & CONTACTS

LEGAL FORMALITIES

Before you can get married; there are certain legal formalities to be fulfilled. Both bride and groom must attend the register office in the district where you live to individually inform them of your intention to marry, a process known as 'giving notice'.

It doesn't matter if either of you move, although you must have lived in the district for the preceding seven days. You must do this personally, and it is advisable to make an appointment to do this, as it takes about half an hour.

You must also then make arrangements with the district where you wish to be married. Giving notice can be undertaken up to a year before the wedding, to show that you are both free to marry. You will need to provide your passport, birth certificate, proof of address and driving licence. You will be asked about you and your partner, including full names, addresses, ages, occupations, nationalities and whether you've been married before.

If either of you are under 18, there will be some forms that must be completed by your parent or guardian. After giving notice, there must be at least fifteen clear days before you can marry.

Remember that even if you are retreating to a romantic hideaway to get married, on the day of the wedding you will need at least two people to witness the marriage and sign the register for it to be official.

CHARGES

You will have to pay fees for each individual part of your marriage, each district has different prices, so check with your local register office for more information. Be sure to include these fees when considering your overall budget, as well as any other costs that arise when booking a church or other ceremonial venue.

RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES

If you are planning a Church of England wedding, visit the vicar of the church where you live. The vicar will register the marriage for you so that there is no need to involve the local superintendent registrar.

Usually, you must live in the district where you plan to marry, unless the building is your usual place of worship. Please check fees with the vicar where you are planning to marry, as prices can vary enormously depending on location, accessibility, popularity and size.

CIVIL CEREMONIES

At a register office, you need to arrive fifteen minutes before the ceremony. The registrar will then ensure that all information is correct on the day, they will see you and your partner separately, in order to confirm the details.

At approved premises, the ceremony is similar to a register office marriage, but any additional vows may be added and non-religious music and poetry can be included, but there are certain words and phrases that must legally be included.

REGISTRATION OFFICES IN LANCASHIRE

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Mechanics Institute, Willow Street, Accrington BB5 1LP
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BURNLEY - 0300 123 6705
Lyndhurst House, Todmorden Road, BB10 4AB
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CHORLEY - 0300 123 6705
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registrarsLancaster@lancashire.gov.uk

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THE HONEYMOON

Many people think this is just a case of picking a remote island and flopping onto the beach! But couples nowadays are looking for more than just two weeks in the sun. Many honeymooners are now over the age of 30 and have already seen lots of different places, so are looking for something more exciting, which can range between anything from backpacking to "mini-moons" for people who are short of time.

Make sure that you plan well in advance so that you put as much preparation into it as possible - remember that the planning element of your honeymoon should be a romantic and enjoyable experience for both of you. Leave it too late and it will simply increase your stress levels as you get involved with all the other wedding arrangements that need to be organised.

The first thing you need to do is talk to each other and decide what it is you both want out of the honeymoon. Is it just sand, sea and seclusion that you are after, or are you looking for something more adventurous, such as exploring and trekking through the jungle?

When you have decided what it is you want from your honeymoon, your next step will be to set a budget. Once you know how much you have available to spend then the serious planning can begin! Make sure that you include spending money in your budget and not just the cost of the actual holiday!

SOME QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELVES BEFORE YOU FINALLY DECIDE ON THAT DREAM HONEYMOON:

- How many weeks holiday can you take?
- Which part of the world do you want to visit?
- Think about what time of year you are getting married!
- Will the weather at your honeymoon destination be what you want at that time of year? Is it hurricane season? Do you wish to delay your honeymoon until the weather is better?
- What type of accommodation are you looking for? Hotel, self-catering etc? And what level of facilities will you need?
- How are you going to travel? Land, sea or air?
- Will you need any permits, visa's or medical vaccinations for your chosen destination?
- Most importantly of all... is your passport up-to-date? (Don't forget to change your surname prior to departure if you want to travel in your new married name)



Visit travel agents and scour the internet to find out as much information as possible on your chosen destination. Many tour operators offer honeymoon packages, which save you time planning your own itinerary, or can offer you a tailor-made holiday. If you mention you are on honeymoon during your flight, they may even upgrade you to business-class or first-class seats!

HAPPY HONEYMOON!



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