



# *the ultimate* bridesmaid guide

Tear this out and give it to your wedding VIPs.

BY HALLIE GOODMAN

Congrats! You're a bridesmaid! So now what? First things first—don't panic. Sure, you've got a lot on your plate—but trust us, it's a lot of fun stuff (well, mostly). To help make sense of it all, we went ahead and created a complete lineup of your duties, from hosting roof-raising parties to straightening the guys' bouts seconds before they hit the aisle. Wondering what the guys will be doing? Flip to page **TK** and compare. >>

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**the engagement party**

**DUTY #1** Send out a mass email to get all the bridesmaids and the groomsmen on the same page. Then be prepared to spend just about all weekend preparing a slideshow of the happy couple to present at the surprise party in their honor. Resist the urge to put up photos that fall under the categories “spring break,” “21st birthday” or “Vegas New Year.” Some moments are better kept in the past.

**DUTY #2** Happily go back and forth with the other bridesmaids about doing something extra-special for the couple at the party. Receive a total of zero replies from the groomsmen, who, you’re pretty sure, have already blocked your email address. Just for effort’s sake, send a follow-up message to the guys explaining that engagement parties are, like, “off the hook, dude,” and they better get their acts together.

**DUTY #3** If the couple’s parents are throwing the party, offer to get the addresses of the bride and groom’s friends so they don’t have to spend hours on the phone (when, let’s be honest, it’ll take you about 10 minutes on Facebook).

**DUTY #4** Make nice with the groomsmen. This will probably be your first official meeting, and for the sake of the couple, you want it to go well (blood smears on tux lapels is such a bad look). Putting on your best thanks-for-not-helping-with-the-gift smile is key here, so treat them like you all sat around for hours picking out the lavender champagne flutes and perfect bottle of bubbly. Because, really, is it the absolute end of the world that they didn’t contribute? They’re practically colorblind anyway.

**DUTY #5** Give up on being nice two hours into the party and shoot dirty looks to the tipsy groomsman who keeps staring at your boobs and saying, for some reason, “Dibs!” It might be a party foul to stick him with your plastic cake fork, but a severe stare will give him the clue that you couldn’t be less interested, even if he were dipped in dark chocolate and came with a lifetime supply of Chanel. >>

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**the shower**

**DUTY #1** Help ensure that the bride and groom have a full registry (kitchen, bedroom *and* bath swag in various price ranges). If they have a but-the-economy-sucks guilt complex, remind them that registering isn’t about greed—it’s about not winding up with 12 blenders or a Jell-O mold in the shape of a poodle.

**DUTY #2** Book the location. On a budget? Start cleaning your apartment. Got some cash flow? Spring for the bride’s fave restaurant. If you’re planning on a girls-only shower, then your “pay up” pool is limited to the bridal party. But if you’re going co-ed, get back on that email train and tell the groomsmen A) what the hell a shower is, and B) how much they owe.



**DUTY #3** Spend no less than five hours of your Saturday baking, frosting and boxing up a mountain of red velvet cupcakes for partygoers to take home. Not exactly Betty Crocker? Swap cupcakes for candy and boxes for bags (just be sure to hide them from the groomsmen).

**DUTY #4** Scroll through the bride and groom’s registry. Select something super-original (sense the sarcasm?), like cookware or, wait for it, bed linens. Sure, it’s not the sexy. But it’s safe.

**DUTY #5** As soon as the bride opens a gift, hand her another—or be ready to stay ‘til midnight. It’s also your job to keep track of (read: write down) which gifts came from whom. >>

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**the bachelorette party**

**DUTY #1** Go back and forth for months with the other bridesmaids deciding on the locale for the bride-to-be’s last single bash. Settle on a five-day Caribbean cruise. Crunch the numbers again and realize you’ve already spent most of what was left of your meager savings on the previous two parties. Start thinking local.

**DUTY #2** Order all bachelorette items. We’re talking pink T-shirts with “(insert bride’s name)’s bachelorette party” spelled out in rhinestones, or something equally gaudy and commemorative (except for any penis-themed items—nobody’s saying to wear plastic testicles around your necks). Part of your “maidly” duty is to cheese out a little bit—so drop the too-cool-for-school routine (cough, wearing all black, cough), tap into your inner girlie-girl and buy something sparkly and matchy-matchy.

**DUTY #3** Choose an affordable location/activity, keeping in mind what the bride (not you) loves to do. If she avoids the sun, forget about those group surfing lessons. She’s not one for a wild night out? Opt for a relaxing spa day, where you can all loosen up together while talking trash about the groomsmen (although one of them looked cute at the shower—even if he had cocktail sauce on his pants). Oh, and if she says, “No strippers, please,” that’s not code for “Hire a man in a G-string to gyrate in my face.”

**DUTY #4** Book the venue. This part’s not brain surgery—just reserve the hotel rooms/spa appointments/table at the club (and we don’t mean country club). Drop the fact that you’ll have 12 celebratory ladies in tow, and you’ll up your chances of scoring a nice, juicy discount without even trying. Trust us: It works.

**DUTY #5** If you do go for the whole wild night (or weekend) thing, be sure to have the bride’s back *no matter what*. This means, no getting her crazy-sloppy drunk, no letting her wander off unattended and no letting her pose suggestively with an icky phallic cake. Matter of fact, power down all the camera phones. >>

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**the wedding**

**DUTY #1** Try on the dress you had fitted (twice) for the eleventh time. Yup, it still doesn’t look like anything you’d “wear again” (the bride’s words, not yours), but you’re stuck in it for the day. C’mon, taffeta is totally cool, right?



**DUTY #2** Head to the salon (or the hotel suite) for hair and makeup. Doing your own? The bride has the right to request guidelines (as in, no glitter). What to do if you step out of the salon looking like a 1960s girl group? Simple—whatever it takes to keep up morale, even if that means singing “Stop! In the Name of Love.”

**DUTY #3** Check the groomsmen’s boutonnières. After spotting duct tape, help them out by using sturdy pins to secure bouts to their lapels so the blooms lay at a slight angle. With the pin head under the lapel, weave the pin in and out of the backside of the stem wrap so it’s hidden.

**DUTY #4** Carry your blooms. The maid of honor will hold the bridal bouquet, too, during the ring exchange, but that’s the only exception.

**DUTY #5** Give a good toast. This requires two things: humor and brevity. Otherwise, you might as well slip Ambien into the champagne. Skim over the best man’s speech just in case censorship is necessary, and you’re golden!

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## bridesmaids sound off

### Here's what *not* to give us

Anything **BARBIE'S DREAM WEDDING**: Sure, lots of girls want a hot-pink satin purse with their name embroidered on it in glittery thread. Lots of 6-year-old girls.

Two words: **FAKE PEARLS**.

Anything with **YOUR WEDDING DATE ENGRAVED ON IT**. Listen, we couldn't be any more psyched about your wedding. But that doesn't mean your anniversary is some kind of a national holiday that we'll honor every year for the rest of our lives.

Any item you want us to wear in the wedding that **WE'D NEVER WEAR IN REAL LIFE**. Listen, helping offset the cost of any portion of the bridesmaid outfit is super-cool, and we really do appreciate the gesture. But a chip-in is not a real present. Sorry!

**HOMEMADE COUPONS** for things like "girl time." There's only one person on the entire planet who actually appreciates stuff like this, and that's your Nana.



## groomsmen decoder

### What they say vs. what they mean

**WHAT THEY SAY** No problem.

**WHAT THEY MEAN** No problem for *me*. See, I plan on forgetting this conversation three seconds from now. For you however, it may well be a big, fat problem.

**WHAT THEY SAY** All set with my tux!

**WHAT THEY MEAN** I picked up my tux from the rental place less than 20 minutes ago. It's in the trunk of my car. Have I tried it on yet? No. Have I realized that I can't wear it with Nikes yet? Double no.

**WHAT THEY SAY** I like your dress/necklace/hair/shoes/flowers/contact lenses.

**WHAT THEY MEAN** I like your boobs.

**WHAT THEY SAY** See you at 4 p.m. for the final run through.

**WHAT THEY MEAN** See you at 4:59 for the 5 o'clock ceremony.

**WHAT THEY SAY** I met your sister, and she seems really nice.

**WHAT THEY MEAN** Your sister is hot. Won't ya hook a brother up?

**WHAT THEY SAY** I met your mom, and she seems really nice.

**WHAT THEY MEAN** Your mom is hot. Won't ya hook a brother up?

**WHAT THEY SAY** Okay, Maidzilla!

**WHAT THEY MEAN** I'm not completely sure what that word means—I just heard it on TV. But I'm thinkin' it's wedding-speak for "Lady, you've lost your damn mind."