

Wedding

Insider

SECRETS

That Save Time, Money &
Stress

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10 Wedding Insider Secrets That Save Time, Money and Stress

Planning a wedding takes a lot of time and can easily be stressful for everyone involved. Sure, there are plenty of blogs, magazines, and guides available that can be helpful, but lots of them are unrealistic and here are a few tips that I wish someone had shared with me while I was planning our wedding.

I started working in the wedding industry because I love getting to help couples create lasting memories on one of the biggest days in their lives. However, since so many of them have never planned anything like a wedding before, I kept seeing friction about the same issues over and over. These are by no means hard and fast rules; just a few suggestions to help reduce stress and avoid awkward moments and hurt feelings.

Remember, your wedding day should be full of love, happiness and good cheer. You're getting married!

1. Your wedding should be a reflection of your personalities. Your wedding day is an opportunity to share your values and passion with your family and friends.

These days anything goes, and the most memorable, special weddings are the ones that echo your partnership and individuality. What are your favorite things to do? Is there a way to incorporate your passions into your wedding day?

If you are a couple that can't turn down a party, then plan an evening ceremony and throw a dance bash that lasts long into the night. If you love the outdoors, find a venue that showcases the natural beauty of your wedding season. Or if you are a couple that is passionate about local food, find a local farm or B&B to host your event.

If you love it, it will be less stressful to plan, plus you're guaranteed to have an amazing time and that will inspire your guests to relax and better enjoy themselves.

2. Check local calendars for conventions, parades and other events that may interfere with traffic and hotel arrangements before setting an official date for your wedding.

There is nothing worse than planning your wedding and then finding out that your guests cannot get hotel rooms because everything is booked up due to a local event or college graduation.

Check with your local hotels to see if availability around your big day is limited due to an event or conference. If so, consider choosing another weekend for your festivities or let your guests know well in advance.

You should also call your local tourism office or visit their online calendars for charity walks, marathons, parades, or other big events that could affect traffic and hotel room availability. This way you will not be caught unaware.

3. Turn saving money for the wedding into a game!

Almost all couples are responsible for at least some financial aspect of their weddings, so you know how important it is to save money. The best way to do this, besides setting a budget and sticking to it, is to make a game out of saving.

Here's one creative idea:

Set up a jar and label it, "Wedding Fund." Make a list of your favorite bands/artists and narrow it down to the three or four that you hear the most. Set monetary amount for each of them.

Now every time you hear a Lady Gaga song, you must put \$2 into the jar. If Nickleback is played, then \$5 goes into the jar.

If you're not a music lover, you can play the same game with television commercials instead.

Give yourselves a time period for the game to run. Six months is a reasonable length of time. See how much money you can save this way before time is up. You might be surprised!

If you want to take it a step further, set up two jars and compete against each other to see who can save the most.

4. Remember to keep the small decisions small.

If you and your fiancé don't feel strongly about a particular aspect or detail, make the quickest, easiest decision and don't second guess yourselves. One of the simplest ways to do this is to make a list of the most important pieces of your wedding day. Is it music, food, or atmosphere? Or other aspects entirely?

My clients Beth and Jonathan decided they really wanted to celebrate their wedding by finding a location where they could host all the various activities AND that allowed both families to stay on the premises the entire weekend. They ended up finding an amazing local B&B with a working goat farm on the same property. Other details, like the wedding favors, weren't things they felt strongly about so they made a quick decision and moved on. Not only was the setting everything they'd imaged, but the friendly farm animals ended up providing endless distractions for all their guests.

5. Choose an imperfect, mismatched Alice in Wonderland-esque theme for your wedding.

Too often couples focus on trying to make everything at the wedding "perfect." Instead, you can deliberately include eclectic choices, resulting in a wedding that is unique, memorable and less stressful.

Here's how it works:

Take the story of Alice and Wonderland and loosely adapt it to your wedding reception. Have everything be a little funky and different; perfection is not the goal here.

Your reception hall can be decked out with mismatched tables, china, flowers and silverware. Scatter several mini desserts on the table around a traditional wedding cake.

Automatically, a huge weight lifted off your shoulders. You no longer have to worry about throwing the “perfect” wedding. When the guests arrive, they are greeted by an atmosphere of whimsy and comfort.

If Alice in Wonderland isn't your thing, there are any number of similar themes you might choose. Host a shabby chic wedding or a down home country wedding (throw in a few wooden farm tables for this one) or a relaxed theme.

The theme you choose doesn't really matter. What does matter is the fact that you won't have to stress over choosing the perfect china to eat off of.

6. Keep track of your guests by numbering your guest list and coordinating your RSVP response cards with those numbers.

When it comes to invitations and reply cards, you can keep better track of them by numbering the reply cards to correspond with your guest list. For example, if Great Aunt Elsie and Uncle Gene are the fifth people on your list, write a small number five discreetly on the back of their reply card or in the corner by the stamp.

This tip is helpful in case you receive an RSVP that lacks a name, meal choice or number of guests attending. (Believe me, this will happen to you.) It's also quite useful for those guests with illegible handwriting.

This way you won't need to call every one of your guests to retrieve the missing information. You can save time and aggravation by going straight to the number on your list.

As a bonus, you can reward the guests who responded the fastest. One couple, who both happened to be accountants, gave the centerpiece at each table to the person who was the first to RSVP.

It was the perfect way to reward their prompt guests and showcase the couple's slightly obsessive compulsive personalities. In fact, if you set up this contest when you send out your invitations, you will receive your responses much faster.

7. Assign someone the important task of wrangling out of town guests on your wedding weekend.

It's your wedding day. You have better things to worry about besides figuring out how to get your lost Uncle Bernie to the ceremony on time. Yet if you don't plan ahead, everyone will be calling you with their numerous questions and problems.

Solve this by designating a contact person. Make sure this person isn't a member of the wedding party because they have enough to do on your wedding day. Besides, the last thing you need is for your pictures to be delayed because your Best Man is too busy giving directions to your second cousin twice removed!

Instead, designate one person, a parent or responsible family member, as the contact person who will help guests on your wedding day. Put that person's cell phone number on your wedding invitations.

Ideally, this person should know your local area backwards and forwards, or just be really good with their smart phone GPS and map apps. He or she can be your point man for all questions, giving you one less thing to worry about.

8. Make a list of all of the contact information for each member of your wedding team and distribute several copies to friends and family in case you need to get a hold of one of them on your wedding day.

Murphy's Law states that whatever can go wrong will, and unfortunately, sometimes this applies to the day that you get married. Your cake might be late, the church doors might be locked or the limos might not arrive on time. Any number of emergencies can occur, and you need to be prepared.

Record the names, phone numbers, street addresses and email address for every vendor that you hire. On the day of your wedding, keep your emergency contact list in your purse and give a copy to your Maid of Honor. The list may come in handy in case your limo driver gets lost, or if you decide you'd like your photographer to take some unplanned shots.

9. Allow extra time for everything on your wedding day and “fake out” your guests with an early start time.

While you may put an exact start time on your invitations, don't expect everyone to take it seriously. Someone is always late.

You need to plan for this by making the time on your invitations at least 15 minutes prior to the time when you actually plan to begin. This is the only way to ensure that you begin on time.

Do the same thing with the other events on your wedding day timeline. Pad the amount of time you think it will take to get your hair done, put on your dress and complete your make up, especially when doing all of this with your bridesmaids. Tell everyone involved when to arrive dressed and ready for photos or when to arrive at the salon with all of the necessary accoutrements. Add some extra time to allow for someone who is running late, which will inevitably happen.

If you are starting photos at 5:00pm, tell them to arrive at the church at 4:40. And whatever you do, don't let anyone know that this is not the "real" start time. If you don't think that 20 minutes is enough leeway, add on another ten and tell them to arrive a half-hour before. Otherwise you may end up wasting time and money because you have to adjust your ceremony and reception to someone else's schedule.

10. Instead of spending time at each table thanking guests at your reception, prioritize your “thank you's” to allow more time to relax and enjoy your wedding.

The old tradition of visiting tables at the reception to thank each guest is just that: an old tradition. Wedding etiquette handbooks and family members may insist that you do this properly and successfully.

While in theory, this seems like a good idea and it's certainly a nice thing to do, actually doing it can single handedly ruin your reception.

Look at it this way: let's say you invite 250 people to your wedding and your venue sets up 25 tables each with 10 chairs to comfortably accommodate

everyone. If you walk around to each table, allowing only two minutes per table to greet everyone (which breaks down to an implausible 12 seconds per person) it will take 50 minutes to welcome your guests. When you allow for the reality of much longer conversations, that time can easily double.

That's almost two hours of your precious reception time spent on obligation instead of enjoying yourself. And if you are planning to cut the cake, do a first dance or bouquet toss, and your reception is over in a flash and you haven't even hit the dance floor.

The truth is that you don't have to visit tables at all. But if you do choose to greet your guests individually, here are some tips that will keep this task from dominating your special day.

Use assigned seating and keep track of the tables where your older guests and family members will be seated. These are the people who are most likely to throw a fit if you don't spend individual time with them.

Since the day will be a whirlwind of activity, write down where your relatives and older guests will be seated beforehand.

Make sure you eat dinner as soon as it is served, and then immediately head straight for those tables to make those essential greetings.

As far as your friends are concerned, you can greet them on the dance floor, at the bar or at the after party. Otherwise, you will be visiting tables until the very end of the reception and miss out on all of the fun that comes with it.

Planning a wedding isn't easy; it takes time, effort, and a whole lot of patience. With these insider secrets under your belt, your planning will be off to a great start.

Congratulations and good luck with your wedding plans! Please contact me with any questions and to find out if I'm a good match for your wedding day.

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