

JUST A TIP

You've already spent big on your wedding, so how much more should you give your vendors for great service?

BY ERIC D. JOHNSON

THE FIRST RULE OF TIPPING IS don't talk about tipping. The great tip conundrum makes almost everyone uncomfortable and causes a vast range of emotions: Should I tip at all? Am I tipping enough? If I don't tip, who will silently judge me?

When it comes to tipping wedding vendors, many brides and grooms are completely in the dark. "Nearly every couple we work with asks our team for advice on tipping vendors," says Rachele Mazumdar, director of weddings and events at Style-Architects. "They are concerned with who they should tip and how much."

With it being such a common concern, Mazumdar and the team at Style-Architects try to make it simple by giving rule-of-thumb numbers for a given service. They break it down into which tips are discretionary and which are expected.

For example, they classify your DJ, transportation provider, and hair and makeup team as vendors who generally expect a 15 to 20 percent tip, unless it is otherwise stated in your contract. However, they view tips for musicians

(\$20–\$40), the photographer and videographer (\$50–\$200), the caterer (\$20–\$40 per staff member), and the wedding planner (10 percent of the total fee) as discretionary, with the listed amount a mere suggestion, should you decide to add gratuity.

Amy Zaroff, lead event designer and producer at Amy Zaroff Events + Design, agrees with Mazumdar's assessment, but adds: "There are many other vendors and creative partners involved in the day, and it is up to the bride and groom who gets a tip."

One often-forgotten service provider is your officiant. If your wedding is affiliated with a church, it is customary to make a donation to the church. If your wedding is not church-affiliated, Mazumdar recommends a \$50 to \$100 tip.

Personal gifts are another option for vendors you know on a more personal basis. Zaroff says brides and grooms often give their photographer and videographer gifts instead of a tip because they are more intimately involved with the wedding. Though thoughtful, use caution: This is a business relationship,

and most vendors believe cash is king—so unless you're purchasing something you're confident they will enjoy, stick to what you know will be appreciated.

To make this process as easy as possible, most planners advise their couples to work through their vendor list ahead of time, so it's not a worry on the wedding day. Create envelopes to be handed out to each vendor at the end of the night and delegate the distribution task to your planner or a parent or close friend. If a specific service is not up to par, you can revisit the amount, but this way you're not shouldered with the responsibility of tracking down a checkbook and your vendors while you're bidding adieu to your guests.

No matter what you decide, make sure your vendors know how much you appreciate the hard work they put in. "Whether you decide to tip a vendor or not, a written thank you is always appreciated," Mazumdar says, "especially when it speaks to the vendor's service in a way that can be used as a testimonial."

