

Planning a Wedding

DURING A PANDEMIC





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So you have a wedding in 2020... and you're wondering what to do now. Should you go ahead as planned? Should you postpone? When should you make the call? We feel you! We wish we could give all the 2020 couples the "right" answer, but the truth is, there really is no right answer. With so many unknowns, and so many personal situations and feelings, the right answer is going to vary for each couple. With this in mind, we have compiled our resources and recommendations below to help you come to the right decision for you.

What we know right now

Government Orders and Relevant Articles as of April 10th 2020.

Arming yourself with the facts (not just opinions) can help you make a logical and well-informed decision when it comes to your wedding day. Things are changing rapidly, so be sure to listen to government updates for the most up to date information and check out [our page](#) where we provide updates with new information that affects weddings in British Columbia.

- There is a provincial order in BC which prohibits gatherings in excess of 50 people. This order is set to expire on May 30th 2020 but is subject to revision, cancellation or extension by the Provincial Health Officer. **View the details [here](#).**
- As of March 25th 2020, Dr. Bonnie Henry has said that weddings and celebrations that need to happen must be without any physical gathering. Although the order is for groups of 50, she has indicated that even small gatherings are a risk. **Great articles [here](#) and [here](#).**
- According to BC's Vital Statistics Agency (who oversees the legal proceedings of marriage in British Columbia): While restrictions on gatherings are in place, couples wishing to proceed with a legal marriage ceremony may do so with a marriage commissioner and two witnesses only in attendance. **View the details [here](#).**
- Caterers have been ordered to stop food service for groups of people under the same Provincial Order that has closed restaurants and bars. This order is set to expire on May 30th 2020 but is subject to revision, cancellation or extension by the Provincial Health Officer. **View the details [here](#).**
- All Canada-US border crossings are restricted to essential travel March 21 to April 20, 2020 at which point it will be reviewed by both parties. "Non-essential" includes travel considered tourism or recreational in nature. **View the details [here](#).**
- Travel to Canada is currently being restricted for all foreign nationals coming from any country. Any foreign national is prohibited from entering Canada if they arrive from a foreign country other than the United States. This order is currently in effect until June 30th 2020. **View the details [here](#).**

What are the options?

If your wedding plans need to change because of the unfolding COVID-19 situation, here is a quick run down of some of the available options.

POSTPONEMENT: If you postpone your wedding, it means you are planning on having the same wedding you were always planning on, just on a different date in the future. It means you have officially decided you will not hold your wedding on it's original date. This is the most popular option amongst our couples!

PRIVATE ELOPEMENT NOW, BIG WEDDING LATER: You could decide to get legally married this year, but postpone the wedding until next year. You might be surprised how many couples are already legally married before their big wedding day! On your big wedding day, you can still have the whole ceremony just as you've already imagined and no one needs to know it wasn't legal (or you can tell everyone! The choice is yours!).

MICRO WEDDING NOW, BIG PARTY LATER: A micro wedding is more of a classic "wedding" compared to an elopement, but with a lot less guests than a classic wedding. You and a small handful of guests (maybe 10-20 people) can celebrate your wedding day with all the fixings (full ceremony, florals, dresses, dinner, cake and dancing!). This option would allow for greater control over physical distancing which might make it doable for your original wedding date, or close to, as regulations change around gathering. You can then hold a big reception or 1st year anniversary party for all your original guests at a later date!

CANCELLATION: A cancellation means you won't be having the wedding you were planning at all, ever. It means that you are cancelling contracts with all of your vendors.

When to Make the Call

IF YOUR WEDDING IS IN APRIL OR MAY: We recommend postponing (or otherwise changing your plans) now as your date falls within the official ban on gatherings.

IF YOUR WEDDING IS IN JUNE:

- **IF YOU OR IMPORTANT GUESTS HAVE TO TRAVEL FROM OUTSIDE OF CANADA:**

We recommend postponing now, the travel ban lasts until June 30th.

- **IF YOU HAVE A LONG LIST OF POPULAR VENDORS AND YOU WANT A PRIME SUMMER 2021 DATE AS YOUR BACKUP:**

You should probably look at postponing now.

- **IF YOU HAVE A MAINLY LOCAL WEDDING, WITH FLEXIBLE VENDORS:**

Make a backup plan now, but wait until 6-8 weeks away to make the call.

IF YOUR WEDDING IS IN JULY, AUGUST OR SEPTEMBER: Make a backup plan but wait until 6-8 weeks away to make the call. As your date approaches, see the above advice and make sure you're paying attention to official orders and what dates they apply to.

IF YOUR WEDDING IS IN OCTOBER ONWARDS: Keep an eye on the current news and restrictions.

Things to consider

Most of your decision will depend on what your priorities and concerns are as a couple. We suggest pouring a big glass of wine, snuggling up, and having a really good talk about the following topics. Keep a list of what applies to you and rank your priorities. This conversation might need to involve immediate family members, especially if they are helping with some of the costs and responsibilities of the celebration, however we recommend you two getting on the same page before bringing in any other opinions.

MONEY: Are extra costs a big concern to you right now? Or do you have some wiggle room?

- Postponing into 2021 might mean paying a slightly higher rate for your vendors.
- On the other hand, postponing might give you longer to save up and push some payments into the future, giving you some financial breathing room now.

MAKING IT OFFICIAL: Is it important to be legally married right now for family reasons? (immigration, wanting to start a family, etc.)

- If this is really important, you might consider looking into an elopement or a micro wedding as those may become feasible sooner than a full wedding.
- If this isn't too important, postponing is likely the right plan for you!

CELEBRATING WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY: Can you imagine your wedding day without all of your guests? If the government changed restrictions by your date but you could only have 50 guests, would you want to go ahead? What about 100 guests? 150 guests?

- It's helpful to know where you draw the line when it comes to deciding to go ahead (if possible) but with less guests, or postponing so everyone can join.
- If your guest list is less than 50 people, or you can get it there without too much compromise, you might fall into the micro wedding category which we are hopeful will be a possibility at some point this summer!

ANXIETY RUINING THE FEELING: Is the lack of control and uncertainty causing you to feel overly anxious, helpless, or grief stricken? Or does giving up on your wedding date make you feel worse than the waiting?

- If the uncertainty is driving you crazy, you should look at postponing! This will allow you to put a pin in everything and pick up planning again when things have calmed down.
- If the idea of not having your wedding this year is causing you stress, then you will likely want to hold out until the last possible second! That's cool too!

INTERNATIONAL GUESTS: Do you have important people coming from another country? Can you have a wedding without them? Are you yourself travelling to BC for your wedding day?

- Travel restrictions will likely be around longer than the gathering restrictions. So even though big weddings might be possible in BC, your own wedding might not be. If you have an international component to your wedding, there is a much greater chance that you will need to change your wedding plans, especially if your date is earlier in the wedding season.

LOTS OF VENDORS OR DIY: Do you have a long list of vendors and suppliers who you have brought on board for your wedding day? Or is it mainly DIY?

- Weddings with larger vendor lists are harder to move and require more planning. It's important to get a back up plan in place ASAP.
- If you don't have many vendors, you may be able to wait longer before making a call.

PRIORITY VENDORS: Have you already put a large amount of money down on something that would be hard to walk away from? Is there a photographer or makeup artist you can't imagine your day without?

- When it comes to changing plans, there might come a time when you need to choose a new date that a vendor cannot attend. It's a good idea to know where your priorities are.

EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING: This is a challenging time for all. From couples to venues to vendors; everyone's emotions are stretched thin and everyone has likely lost something in this upheaval. For the most part, vendors are doing their utmost to be flexible and empathetic towards their clients while suffering from a great deal of loss themselves. Reaching out with empathy and grace is something we encourage from all parties while we work through this together.

UP NEXT, OUR GUIDE ON STEPS TO TAKE TO POSTPONE YOUR WEDDING AS IT IS BY FAR THE MOST POPULAR OPTION THAT COUPLES ARE LOOKING TO PURSUE.

Step 1: Making a backup plan

If your wedding date is any time in April – September 2020, it's time to make a back-up plan.

1. REACH OUT TO YOUR VENUE AND LET THEM KNOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO SET UP A BACKUP PLAN. ASK THEM FOR AVAILABLE DATES FOR POSTPONEMENTS.

- Every venue is different, but we are finding that most venues are choosing to allow 2020 couples to tentatively hold a backup date without any additional financial commitment.
- Keep in mind, your venue will be prioritizing closer weddings first. So if you are in August or September, please be patient and know that they are working their way to you!

2. SELECT A DATE.

- If you have a wedding planner/coordinator you've been working with, check with them first for availability. Depending on your service package with them, there's a great chance they've already done some of the legwork on items found below!
- Check with any must-have vendors (as discussed in the things to consider)
- Check-in quickly with key family members and friends to make sure they could still attend.
- If saving money was a top priority for you, or you have a large dream team of vendors and you're worried about them already being booked, we recommend selecting a backup date in October – May or considering a Friday, Sunday or weekday wedding in the high season (June – September).
- Keep in mind that people start planning weddings well in advance, so for many vendors high season dates for 2021 may already be booked.

3. CONFIRM THE BACKUP DATE WITH YOUR VENUE AND ASK THEM TO PLACE A HOLD ON IT.

4. SEND YOUR VENDORS THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE:

“Thank you so much for your guidance and support at this time. While we are hopeful that we will be able to celebrate on INSERT ORIGINAL DATE HERE, we have secured a backup date with our venue. That backup date is INSERT BACKUP DATE HERE. Are you able to pencil us in for that date and let us know if someone else inquires for that date before committing to a new client? (Essentially giving us the right of first refusal). It would mean so much to us to know that we will still be able to work with you. We plan to re-evaluate the need to postpone 6-8 weeks out from our original date.”

- Every vendor is different. Some will be able to pencil you in easily, others might not. You should be prepared for both. This is when it's helpful to consider who your priority vendors are.
- If you haven't already, you can also take this time to politely inquire as to what that vendor's policy is in regards to postponements.

5. YOU CAN THEN REST EASY KNOWING YOU ARE COVERED FOR BOTH DATES.

6. IF A VENDOR CONTACTS YOU TO LET YOU KNOW SOMEONE INQUIRED, AT THAT POINT YOU CAN LOOK AT WHETHER YOU FEEL THE NEED TO POSTPONE.

Step 2: Communicating with your guests

While your wedding day centers around the two of you, you likely have many friends and family who are invested in the date as well. To help guests at this time, we recommend extending your original RSVP Deadline to 5 weeks out. This will give you a week to track down any outstanding RSVPS before the usual 4 week deadline of giving final numbers to caterers and venues (this timeline might vary, check with your vendors!).

If you haven't sent out your invites yet, or perhaps you're getting lots of questions and want to put your guests' minds at ease. Consider sending out a note like this:

"While the world is uncertain we continue to remain hopeful that our wedding will take place on INSERT ORIGINAL DATE HERE. The comfort and happiness of our guests is our main priority. If we need to postpone, we will be making that call 6 to 8 weeks out from our wedding date. In light of this, we have set our RSVP deadline to INSERT DATE THAT IS 5 WEEKS AWAY FROM YOUR WEDDING. We encourage anyone looking to book travel to make sure that they have the proper cancellation coverage in place should we need to postpone. For guests local to Victoria and Vancouver, we encourage you to RSVP as normal and save the date!

Sending love to you and your families during this time. We can't wait to see you and celebrate love on INSERT ORIGINAL DATE HERE!"

Step 3: Making the decision to postpone

WHAT POSTPONING MEANS:

If you postpone your wedding, it means you are planning on having the exact same wedding you were always planning on, just on a different date in the future. It means you have officially decided you will not hold your wedding on it's original date.

WHEN TO MAKE THE CALL:

See page 4.

WHEN TO POSTPONE TO:

This is a really tough call. Some reports are calling for a break in August of 2020, some are saying by the end of summer, some are saying this is the new normal for the next 12 – 18 months. While we can't give you the “right” answer, we can give you some things to keep in mind:

- If you postpone to a prime Summer 2021 date (ie: a Saturday in June – Mid September), some vendors will be charging their new 2021 rates. Some vendors will not postpone to a Saturday in Summer 2021. Some vendors will already be booked and you will almost certainly lose your deposit if you plan to go ahead without them on your vendor team.
- If you have an indoor venue there's no reason to feel scared about an off season wedding! Your vendors – from planners to photographers to florists – are pros when it comes to pulling off a beautiful indoor wedding!

Step 4: The postponement process

If you choose to (or have to) make the call to postpone your wedding, here is the list of things you need to do,

- Contact your venue and let them know
- Contact all of your vendors and let them know
- Re-sign contracts as necessary
- Let your guests know

- Consider making “change the date” stationery to match your invitation suite, or check out the free printables from stationery artists (We love [this one](#) from our friend, Emma Allen!)
- If you have purchased your marriage license already – you’ll need to request a refund on your marriage license from Vital Statistics if you have already purchased it (for more info: 250-952-2681 or toll-free within B.C. 1 888 876-1633)
- Re-book travel, if applicable
- Make arrangements for your honeymoon travel plans
- Re-start your RSVP Process for the new date
- Update your wedding website
- Update your wedding insurance
- If you need to make it legal sooner rather than later, reach out to your officiant and talk about options for a physical distancing ceremony with just the two of you plus your officiant and two witnesses.

Step 5: Take a step back and enjoy a break from wedding planning

Now that you’ve taken care of everything, it’s time to step back and put all that stress behind you. Take some time to step away from planning and start to get used to your new date. We promise, you’re going to be just as excited as you would have been on your original date! Speaking of, we recommend celebrating your original date regardless!

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR YOU TO CELEBRATE THE DATE TOGETHER:

- Get dressed up for the ultimate date night!
- Order a fancy meal from your wedding caterer, or head out for dinner if your favourite spot is able to serve a meal by then!
- Order a cake or favourite dessert from your wedding cake vendor
- Order a table centrepiece from your florist
- Order some cocktails from your bar team
- Dance to your first dance song in your kitchen

Things to be aware of if you're thinking of cancelling...

While most couples are choosing to postpone rather than cancel, we understand that some extenuating circumstances might lead you to consider cancelling your wedding altogether.

The majority of vendors list deposits or retainers as non-transferable (meaning you can't give your investment with them to someone else) and non-refundable (as to cover the work they have done in addition to income opportunities turned away from other inquiries while prioritizing your booking and holding your date). It's important to remember that the inquiries they turned down may have been from clients who would not have cancelled but instead postponed, which would allow the vendor to fulfil the full contract with that client.

You may want to consider a micro wedding with the same vendor list, but on a smaller scale, to avoid losing deposits. Most vendors will work with you to cut down costs for your wedding as an alternative to cancelling (maybe you opt for a shorter photography package or local florals for your bouquet).

If a cancellation is truly in your future, you could always ask your vendors if they would be willing to transfer your retainer to another type of service such as a family gathering (when it's safe to do so) or a small celebration with your significant other.



Have you read through this and are still feeling overwhelmed?

Please don't hesitate to reach out to our team!

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the
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CREATIVE PLANNING + PRODUCTION