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“How to Have a Wonderful Wedding”

By Maureen Parnell

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About the Author

Maureen Parnell was a part-time singer and musician who specialized in weddings and other functions around her home town.

She began to suffer from arthritis and had to give up her performing.

Then, she started to teach music and singing to children and adults.

This is her first book and she has used her experiences with her customers and also people she knows to provide a wide range of tips and suggestions.

She hopes “Your Wedding, Your Way” will help new brides start right and even give people that have already been through a wedding or two some tips they wished they knew before.

The Campaign Begins

Congratulations, you're engaged!

Better start planning your wedding, because you will probably need every minute!

And, time is not all you'll need.

You'll need careful planning as well as enough tenacity to bounce back up and continue when some completely unexpected hazard gets in your way.

I tried hard with this ebook to save you money, time and frustration. It's aimed to protect you from all kinds of problems and save you money and time.

Read it now (spare time will get real scarce soon) and keep it handy as you go toward your happiest day.

It's based on my experience and those of my friends and colleagues who shared with me their experiences - sometimes on condition of strict anonymity. I've also been lucky enough to be able to include tips from people I know who provide their services or products to weddings and other functions.

You can find plenty of information about the traditional wedding arrangements here.

I've tried to show how you can, if you want to, adapt or even discard them to make a more pleasant and memorable experience for you and everyone involved.

The first rule for your wedding is that it's YOUR WEDDING.

Let's get started ...

Maureen Parnell

Reduce Stress Whenever Possible

If you haven't enough stress in your daily life, planning a wedding is likely to give you more than you need.

I don't have a 'magic cure' – there is none.

Alcohol and pills are likely to increase problems rather than help you get through them.

Here's a few quick tips that should help.

- ✓ Focus on your normal obligations with your job and your social network. If you start to push them aside because of your wedding preparations, you could build up problems for your return.
- ✓ Don't begin every conversation with something about you, your groom or the wedding. Your friends and colleagues need a break and so do you.
- ✓ Think about doing relaxation exercises and meditation. They're not the exclusive domain of particular religious groups and there are books which show how you can fit them into your regular lifestyle.
- ✓ Start or continue to exercise regularly. You need your strength and resilience to be the best it can.
- ✓ Have a complete health check-up.
- ✓ Have a massage or complete body toning session, preferably with one or more of your close female friends – better than a shower for your mental state and your diet!

A Better Wedding without Breaking Your Budget.



A wedding will probably cost the happy couple and their parents more than they expect, even if they're used to sticking to a budget.

There are so many things which have to be paid for!

I've put together some tips to help you keep control of your spending. Otherwise, you will start your life as a married couple with a financial hangover that it could take months or even years to recover from.

I can almost guarantee that your expenses will be more than you thought. It's like a "Parkinson's Law" for Weddings; instead of "work expands to fill the available time", you get "expenses grow to swallow the available budget!".

Your Budget.

1] Decide what you must have, list what you would like to have and be ruthless about trimming what you can do without.

2] Never assume that anyone will give you some money or pay for a particular item or service. Ask them, if you feel that is appropriate. Otherwise, plan to cover it yourself.

3] Keep talking to everyone. Even when someone has committed to paying for something, keep in touch. Remember that people's circumstances may change rapidly through an accident, a change in their employment, unexpected medical expenses or just a change in of their priorities. Keep in touch, and try to be as understanding as possible if they cannot fulfill their promise.

4] Some people put conditions on their "help". That might be to add

more people to your already bulging guest list or to sing at the reception. You must decide with your partner how important the financial contribution is to your budget and whether you will accommodate the “request”, and possibly disappoint other people, gently insist that the help is unconditional or decline the gift.

5] You, or your parents, may consider getting a loan to cover some major wedding expenses. This is a personal decision which I can't advise about.

I suggest that whoever is looking at this option, consider the long-term effects:

- 1) Will this extra burden put a strain on your other financial goals?
- 2) Will this debt put a strain on your relationship with each other or your parents as you start married life?.
- 3) Can you comfortably meet the repayments?
- 4) Have you compared loan options, read all the fine print and selected the best terms available?
- 5) How really important is the loan to making your wedding day a happy one?

Stick with Your Plan

It's not unusual for people, especially the bride, to start thinking of alternatives to the previously agreed food, venue and other arrangements just a few weeks before the big day.

Please stick with the original plan unless there really are pressing concerns that make some change necessary.

Otherwise, you'll have extra and probably un-necessary worry for your family and other guests as well as inflated expenses for

yourself.

The service providers won't mind because their contracts will provide for extra charges be added to your bill. They will usually be much more than you expect.

Get Family and Friends to Help

You may have the answer to reducing some major wedding expenses in your own, or a relative's, back yard.

Ask them if they will provide their:

- ✓ Garden for the wedding or home for the reception
- ✓ Catering skill
- ✓ Dressmaking.
- ✓ Printing
- ✓ Transport for the bridal party on the wedding day, or to get fly-in guests to and from the airport.

You might suggest this as their gift for your wedding.

Don't forget to thank them publicly and privately.

Keep in touch with them so you will know if, for any reason, they cannot fulfill the commitment in time for you to make other arrangements.

Your female relatives and, maybe, close friends might have a gathering to produce food or decorations for the reception. That could be a great help for your budget and theirs if you do that instead of having another shower.

Some might be able and willing to provide flowers for the reception, church or bride and bridesmaids.

Some keen gardeners may not want to cut off the flowers and some

of the foliage, especially if they are preparing for a Flower Show or just want to enjoy the flowers later themselves. Then, they might prefer to loan you the plants in pots.

Dollar Saving Decorations

If you and your friends are making some or all of your decorations, the two words to keep in mind are simple and strong. Then, if something is bent but not broken, it can probably be refurbished by willing but unskilled hands on the spot instead of having to be discarded.

Confetti is frowned on or completely banned at many venues because it becomes unsightly and can require serious effort to remove from clothing and the venues. Be sure to enquire before providing it.

Some people provide small bags of rice or seeds. The birds in the area would definitely be better off if you do not use rice. Use birdseed and the birds will happily do most of the clearing away for you.

Don't be afraid to use quality fake plants for decorations, especially when real ones are hard to get or simply too expensive.

Balloons are an easy and inexpensive decoration accessory. Buy them in bulk packs rather than the small supermarket size for big savings.

Match the colors to your theme. Get a couple of plastic pumps – blowing them up by mouth can be exhausting and is now regarded as unhygienic by Doctors.

Warning: balloons should never be given to small children who are not well supervised and no-one should put a balloon near anyone's

face – there are people injured frequently, especially when a balloon breaks and a piece lodges in their eye. If a piece gets into a child’s throat, it can be fatal.

Dress up your simple and inexpensive decorations with a monogram using the bride and groom’s names or initials.

Select the lettering and font on your word processor, choose a large size and just print an outline on thin card. Then, cut out the letters to make your stencil(s).

If you have a lot of items to decorate, put some adhesive plastic, usually used to protect school book covers, over the cardboard before you cut out your stencils so that they will last the whole job.

Also, make some extra stencils so that you have enough without having to set up the computer again.

Surviving the Engagement

From this point, you have to deal with some issues which affect each step in the journey to your actual wedding:

Finances: There is a cost attached to each part of the journey and the wedding itself. On top of everything else you have to contend with, it's very important to keep your available funds in mind.

It would be a bad mistake to splurge on your dream wedding to the extent that you are both consigned to a financial nightmare at the start of your marriage.

Another important financial consideration is to be aware that the other people involved, family and friends, may have limited finances but feel obligated to meet any requests or arrangements you make. Don't put an unreasonable burden on them.

Schedule: Almost everything will take longer than you might anticipate. I'll give you a list of important milestones to plug into your personal calendar. Because everybody's situation and obligations are different, you'll need to adjust it to fit you.

Health: It's obvious that there will be demands on your physical and emotional strength above what you're probably used to. So, it's a good idea to get a full physical check early on and make sure that you eat well and exercise to help you cope with all of it.

Plan for Your Perfect Wedding.

Preparing for your wedding is like taking on another job.

Reduce the impact on your normal life by writing out a schedule of the important things which you must keep aware of.

Keep this list handy and refer to it when needed. You may need to adjust it to fit your situation and perhaps discard or add some items. But, it's fairly comprehensive.

If the list seems overwhelming, don't panic! Almost everything here is covered in the later chapters. When you've read them, you will be well prepared and, I hope, looking forward to the adventure. I've put the list here as a memory aid. That doesn't mean you'll be able to recite the list without looking at the page – that's not required.

If you read through it a couple of times, you will impress it on your subconscious which should help eliminate the possibility that you will overlook any important steps – your subconscious will pop the right items into your conscious mind when needed.

Tell your families. If they're very traditional, then the future husband might ask his prospective father-in-law first.

You also need to work out who will pay for the event, the other associated expenses and whether you will pay or assist with the costs, like accommodation, travel etc., of members of the bridal party or any special relatives who might not have the funds to be able to attend.

Then, tell your friends and announce it through the local newspaper (not compulsory).

Set a date for the wedding.

Decide where you will be married and where you want to have the reception. Popular venues are often booked far in advance.

Contact any relatives and friends who might have to travel a considerable distance to the event as soon as possible after booking the venues.

Decide where you will have your honeymoon and start checking the travel brochures and legal requirements, if any. Find out if you need passports or other documentation and, if so, start the process.

Pack your luggage carefully, including you carry-on luggage, to minimize delays at airports or when embarking on a cruise.

Check well in advance about any import restrictions which might affect you in countries that you plan to visit.

You must sort out between you who you want to have fill the other roles in your wedding party and contact them to see if they accept and are available.

Start planning what the bridal party will wear – six months out is not too early to order your wedding dress.

Let your mothers decide between themselves what they will wear.

If you will have a bridal registry, start visiting those stores which have the items you want and your guests are likely to be able to afford.

Start sorting out your guest list. You'll probably involve your parents but you should have the final say.

Order your wedding stationery; invitations, place cards and whatever else you want.

Decide whether you will hire a wedding planner or organize and supervise all the preparations yourself. Some couples do most of

the work themselves but bring in professional help close to the event so they can concentrate on the personal aspects of the arrangements, including keeping in contact with relatives that might be flying in, attending pre-wedding events and keeping the peace between the bride’s family and the groom’s family.

If you are not using a wedding planner, get firm quotes from different suppliers and then make your decisions and bookings as soon as possible. Your MC (if you decide to have one), musicians or other entertainers, photographer, hire car provider, minister or celebrant and caterer need to be confirmed at least a month before the event and probably much earlier.

Of course, you may have friends or relatives providing some of the services. If so, it’s probably even more important that you keep in touch and can be confident that they’ll be able to fulfill their role on the big day.

Choose and order your wedding cake, table decorations and balloons etc.

When the members of your wedding party have confirmed, you can discuss and then decide on what they will wear on the day.

You can also decide what small gifts you will give the bridesmaids and groomsmen and buy them.

Mail the invitations. Yes, email is all-pervasive and very fast, but it’s not always reliable. You can suggest that people confirm by email and also follow up with those that you do not hear from.

Check for the regulatory requirements you need to meet. As well as the marriage license, you need to know whether blood tests are required, how long it will take for the license to be issued and any waiting period required between getting the license and having the

wedding.

Readers in the U.S.A. can find this information at <http://www.nolo.com/> where you will also find some inexpensive, plain language guides and free articles about other relevant legal issues.

Reserve accommodation for guests or confirm that they made their own arrangements. Make sure they understand whether you or they are responsible for payment.

Start a list of gifts you get. This is much easier to do on your computer than with paper and pen.

Print or write your thank you notes. Send them soon after the gift arrives.

Open and check that the gift has not suffered any damage in transit.

Start filling in and submitting the necessary forms to get the bride's new name on her licenses and other official documentation.

Pack your honeymoon clothing. Keep in mind the strict airport security regulations to minimize stress and delays.

Make sure that you have enough clothing and accessories for the last week leading up to the wedding without the stuff you've packed for the honeymoon.

Confirm with your caterer, the exact number of guests that you will have. They will also want to know about any special dietary requirements or other important issues as early as possible.

Sort out where the guests will sit. Discuss this with your partner and your parents.

Arrange your appointments with the beautician and hairdresser. You

might want to confirm appointments for the bridesmaids too.



Choose and buy the wedding ring(s). Store them safely and make sure they’re delivered to the wedding venue on the big day.

Confirm your suppliers are all on track about two weeks before your wedding day.

Setting up the Bridal Party

After selecting the person they want to marry, many brides next biggest problem can be assigning the formal bridal party titles and duties among her family and close friends.

You're often faced with more good choices than slots to fill or you may not have enough people to fill your list.

But, remember that asking someone to fill one of those slots is not doing them a favor; everyone will have responsibilities and all of them will need to be capable of contributing real effort to making the whole event a success.

You haven't got much choice with your parents but you need to give careful thought about who you ask to fill the other slots.

You need to be sure that each friend or family member can be relied on to produce and also has the time and financial resources, so that the costs involved will not be a burden to them.

The Maid or Matron of Honor

The Maid or Matron of Honor is the most prestigious position, after the parents of the bride and groom. It's also a lot of work, including helping with the invitations and checking out possible suppliers. But, I know of a few families where someone was very hurt that they were not asked by their sibling to fill that coveted position.

The solution, many times, is simply to have two of them, provided that both people have the qualities needed to do the duties and give real support to you through the whole adventure. That can be sold, if necessary, by mentioning the fact that there's plenty of things for the two of them to do and so, it might be too much to ask of one, however loyal a friend.

If there is no-one you want who is available for a particular slot, think about offering to someone of the opposite gender.

Your Dress and the Rest

Be realistic about your size and your shape.

Choose a color and shade which complements your natural look.



Avoid anything which will reduce your enjoyment of your big day. Tight but stylish shoes may be okay just for a photo shoot but switch them for something which will caress and support your feet while you are dancing with your new husband or trying to avoid his uncle's clomping feet during the next dance.

Your dress should catch the eye but not constrict you from moving around or being able to eat some of those special snacks which you've been looking forward to since you ordered them from the caterer.

Keep your make-up to a tasteful minimum.

If someone offers you a miracle wrinkle reducer cream be very careful. One treatment which has been used for years by make-up artists was developed to reduce hemorrhoids! It is claimed to have some effect over time but there's a big downside. Some doctors say that the cream may reduce the natural elasticity of the skin. That might give you a papery complexion like a real smooth sheet of paper.

The Bridesmaids

There's a lot more that your girlfriends who accept your invitation to be your bridesmaids contribute to the wedding day and your whole experience than just their company, laughter and gifts.

It's not just the money and time they give to help make your day a

raging success, they may help with checking possible suppliers and hosting as well as attending your showers and other pre-nuptial events and helping you to perk up when the load gets a bit heavy.

So, you owe them!

Remember that when you are about to choose a dress in a very expensive fabric that some of them might not be able to buy enough to make an apron, let alone a complete outfit.

Tone down your spending to what is likely to suit their pockets too.

You can put the money you didn't spend into your reserve cushion or perhaps use it to help with some of their travel or accommodation costs, if you're not already picking up the tab.

Here's a few other suggestions to help them help you and keep the costs in check:

Dress Sense: Choose a style which will suit them or, if they vary markedly in size and shape, settle on a color and ask them to get a dress in that shade but to choose a style which suits them.

Make sure that you choose a color which is hard to duplicate in any reasonably-priced type of fabric.

Don't just discuss your needs and the progress with your wedding when they are around.

Ask them about their careers and conquests and the other interests you all shared B.T.E. (Before The Engagement).

If you've got a few spare dollars, get some simple but classy jewelry for your bridesmaids to wear and keep as a memento.

The Receiving Line

A traditional way of ensuring that every guest gets at least a few

seconds to personally wish the happy couple well and speak a few hurried words to the happy couple’s parents.

But, it also tends to drag for the guests who are waiting to get to the bridal party. They have only the people on either side of them in the line and that’s often two people that they have already been sharing a table with for some time.

Maybe it’s time for the line to be erased.

Bring in the Professionals.

You might not need all the services which I'll cover here but what you save in dollars or pounds may not compensate for the extra effort, time and stress, accurately termed “sweat equity” that you will have to expend as a substitute.

You can keep some of your expenses in check by using your “personal network” to find people that can make your wedding cake, table decorations or even provide classy vehicles to transport the bridal party on the wedding day.

But, don't expect to get everything for free. Offer to cover any out of pocket expenses (such as gas). Don't forget to seek them out during the reception and chat. Then, make sure that you give them a quality token of your appreciation along with your sincere thanks.

Wedding Planner

If you've got just a minute budget then you and, perhaps, family and friends will have to do all the planning (with my help, of course).

If you have the funds, then you might find the professional planner will not just save you more than she charges, but will also act as a buffer where there is disagreement between you and one or more of your parents about some part of the arrangements.

You can hire a planner to take charge from the earliest stage or just come in a few days before the event to make sure everything comes to a memorable and joyous conclusion. Even if you go for the second, less expensive option, you will still need to book them much earlier, of course.

When the planner is in charge of most of the arrangements, she can

get professional discounts from suppliers which means that your costs are lower. You might get discounts from some suppliers by yourself but they give planners who provide them with steady business much better ones.

She also only deals with suppliers that she knows are reliable and high quality.

Remember that any good planner will provide you with choices but always be focused on helping you to achieve the type of wedding that you want. She will explain what can be provided within your budget, suggest alternatives in design, location and other aspects but always leave the final decisions to you.

Wedding Planners build their businesses through referrals. So, their focus is over-delivering on your usually very high expectations.

Don't want a Professional Planner?

You can call on friends, colleagues and, especially, family to help you with advice and also the leg-work involved in checking on venues and suppliers.

Many people will also have contacts that may be able and willing to supply some services for your wedding. At the very least, their feedback about suppliers they have used could save you a lot of leg work and time.

Photographer

There are many commercial photographers to choose from when looking for someone to take photos or a video of your wedding and reception. It's a very competitive market but price is just one important factor you have to consider.

You need to look past the specially chosen pictures that the

photographer puts on his brochure or website. The best idea is to ask to see a full set of proofs from one of the weddings which he photographed.

Ask for references and check through your own friends about their recommendations. Be prepared for some horror stories and some glowing testimonials.

Make sure that the photographer whose pictures you’ve seen is actually the one who will be at your wedding. But, if it’s a one person business, ensure that they have someone with similar abilities who is able to step in if they are not available at short notice.

As with each of the other suppliers, you must expect to pay for any additional services or features.

Make sure you have the cost for the whole package, including albums, in writing before signing the contract. At that point, you are legally committed and any additions or changes could be very expensive.

Most photographers will proudly display their membership certificates for the appropriate professional associations. But, a photographer may still produce work of a very high standard and not be a member of any association. And, membership or even having won awards, is no guarantee of a good result – check their recent work.

Don’t expect “Hollywood” standard results. Those pictures are produced by experts with a supporting team of qualified professionals and in highly controlled environments. One picture might take an hour to set up and then undergo significant retouching later on.

Time is another important consideration. If you want the best possible pictures, set enough time into your wedding day schedule for the photographer to arrange and shoot the pictures at the various locations.

Don't let the photographer tie up your guests for long periods – they want to enjoy the function, to eat the food and mingle. Also, people that are not used to being posed and directed get irritable fairly quickly unless very carefully handled.

Tell him what you want but be guided by his suggestions where they concern technical details.

You want a photographer that you like enough to be comfortable around through the big day and one that will get along well with your guests. You can't always avoid inviting your less pleasant relatives to your wedding but you've got more control over choosing the photographer.

Tell the photographer about any particular shots that you want, especially groups containing special family members and/or friends, and encourage them to take lots of pictures.

They will probably have a good knowledge of the venue you chose. If they say that there are no good backgrounds for some shots, work with them so that you get the best possible results.

All the above will apply when you hire someone to produce a video of your big day.

Give them a list of the particular moments that you want covered.

Don't want a Professional Photographer?

Even when you hire a professional, encourage your guests to take their own pictures (without interfering with the photographer when

he is setting up or shooting).

Think carefully before you decide not to use a professional.

Then, try to find someone you know who has photographed weddings before and got good results. It's too important an occasion to risk ending up with no good pictures.

Make one person your designated photographer and give them a list of the shots which you want.

Give them time to set up their equipment and the groups to be photographed. But, don't let any photographer run your whole schedule or harass your guests.

Set the locations for the special group shots.

Give the people that you want in them at least a few minutes notice so that nobody pops out for a cigarette or is hurrying off to the toilet when they're needed.

Everybody knows that the best pictures have everyone looking at the camera but it is worth reminding your guests just before they are photographed, so that you aren't left with an album full of apparently sleepy or distracted people.

Some amateur videographers like to add a lot of flashy effects to their movies. Ask that they first give you an unedited version for you to keep.

Videographer

Weddings can be a profitable area for Videographers but it takes experience and attention to detail to get good results.

Unfortunately, some people see wedding videography as a quick way to earn some money from their new video camera, maybe so they can buy a better one.

So, you're likely to have to sort through a lot of wannabes to find someone with some good references which you can check and then you need to discuss the fee.

Arrange to talk with the videographer that you are considering and ask them for references and also to let you see a full video from someone else's wedding.

If they cannot or will not supply a full wedding for your review and to return or even just watch in their premises, but want you to just look at selected short clips, my advice is to keep looking.

Ask how many people and cameras will be used. A good craftsman or woman can produce an enjoyable result with just one camera and operator but two cameras give many more possibilities (and cost more too, of course).

If the film will be edited, check whether you can also get a copy of the raw footage for your own viewing. A professional probably won't agree to just supplying the raw footage because they would not want it distributed – it might reflect on their professional reputation.

But, supplying an unedited copy might be agreed to provided you confirm that it won't be shown outside of your own home.

It's a good idea to get a volunteer to stay near the videographer while they are at the venue to smooth their way with the other guests so they can concentrate on giving you the best possible video memories.

Give them a list of the main people at your wedding and reception along with a clearly marked map and all the relevant people's mobile phone numbers.

Don't want a Professional Videographer?

The potential for disappointment with an amateur video of your wedding is like that with amateur photography but multiplied a few times.

That's because the technology is still fairly new but the price of a reasonable camera has dropped to where almost anyone can get one, just in time for your wedding.

Where a professional will try to make a story from your wedding and reception, many amateurs will be prone to trying every feature which they can find on their camera.

They may not have conquered those common beginner problems of shake and external unwanted noise like wind or irrelevant conversation.

That can be significantly reduced by using an external directional microphone with a wind cover.

It's a good idea to use quality lapel microphones to record the speeches onto the video.

Careful editing will improve most amateur videos but it is like anything else; start with the best original that you can to get the best results.

The bottom line is that you get just one chance to get it right.

Master of Ceremonies

A professional MC can make an event memorable and the worst speaker look good.

But, it's an extra expense and many couples are choosing to get a DJ and rely on a male relative to introduce the special guests, speakers and anything else that is required.

They'll discuss with you before the event any particular people you want them to mention and subjects that might unwittingly cause discomfort to any of the guests.

Give them the times that your reception will start and finish as well as when you want them to begin their presentation, plus any relevant information about the minister or celebrant, special guests and the people who will do the actual speeches and any musicians or other entertainers who will perform at your reception.

Then, just leave them to it.

Don't want a Professional Master of Ceremonies?

You should try to find someone with some speaking experience or, at least, someone that you know will prepare for the occasion.

There is no such thing as a great impromptu speech. A friend who is a professional speaker said that the most valuable advice he ever got was to practice everything, including his ad-libs (impromptu remarks).

If the professionals don't risk making a real off-the-cuff joke, then the risk of someone with much less experience seeing his joke fall flat or, even worse, seriously offending a guest or group, you can see that preparation is essential.

The other point to be aware of with an amateur MC is for them to avoid making a speech themselves. They're needed to provide a smooth connection between the bride's father, the groom and best man (or whatever speakers you have) and help the audience to get maximum enjoyment possible from each one.

All speakers need to rehearse their speeches. But, remind them that they're going to be among friends and you just want a few sincere

words from their heart, not a stunning piece of oratory.

Your Caterer

You should do some investigating of your catering options before settling on the caterer or venue. Some venues have in-house catering which may give you a better price than if you hire a venue and arrange an outside caterer who has to bring in their equipment, staff and supplies, then pack up everything afterwards.

Of course, deciding to use a specialist caterer will give you a wider range of food options and some may cost less than the in-house catering.

Focus on the sort of food which you both like and also your families, but be aware of the likely preferences of your guests, especially any from different cultures and the elderly.

This is an area where you are unlikely to get more than you pay for. Catering is fiercely competitive and costs are steadily increasing.

The best recommendation is word of mouth from friends, colleagues and people in other businesses you deal with. You could ask the people that organize your office’s Christmas party or the people at any other reasonable-sized business you deal with who caters for their functions and what they like or don’t like about them.

You need to be sure that you won’t be let down on the day, so inquire what provision the caterer has if there is a problem with the number of their regular staff available for your event.

Don’t just go for the caterer with the most eye-catching or largest advertisement in your phone book. You might find out that eating the Yellow Pages would have been better!

Don't want a Professional Caterer?

If members of your family **really** want to prepare the food for you, tell them up front that they will have a lot to do and you won't be able to help much because of the rest of your commitments.

But, if they're determined to go ahead, then give them what support you can and be mindful of this major contribution to your wedding when you're thinking about asking them to help with other preparations.

There can be problems too if someone, like your mother or favorite aunt, offers to make your wedding cake for you.

Preparing a wedding cake really is a major project, requiring a lot of effort and time.

But, if your budget is very limited, thank them and keep an eye on their progress so that you don't become cake-deprived at the last minute.

The easier option all-round might be to use a professional caterer and ask the generous relative to maybe take part in the reception or give a reading during the wedding itself.

The Right Cake for the Occasion

Whatever your choice of cake maker, I strongly recommend that you stick with one proven tradition, have your wedding cake made with fruit cake and not some other type.

Fruit cake may not be your favorite but a well-prepared one will probably remain edible for longer than most other kinds. Even after being frozen and revived, it will still taste okay!

You can't expect a fruit cake to stand up to being dropped even a few inches but you could send a piece around the world without its

flavor or appearance being seriously affected.

But, please don't send any fruit cake or any other food to someone in another country or even another state without first carefully checking if you might be breaking their quarantine regulations.

If you do get a home-made cake, be very careful about who you ask to deliver it to the reception. They are very delicate and need to be well-wrapped, then transported on the floor of the car.

Don't put the cake on a seat or shelf, even if it is in a well-padded box. If it falls or even just tips over, major irreparable damage will probably result.

Leave the final assembly of the upper tiers and decorations until it's safely on the table at your reception venue.

Live Music or Disc Jockey

The choice of entertainment will depend in part, like everything else, on the budget. Then, it starts and finishes, in my opinion, with the desires of the bride and groom.

You need to talk with the people you are thinking of hiring and, preferably, see them work for the same sort of people as yourselves and your friends.

Try really hard to get references of people they've worked for recently. Don't pay too much attention to critics' column in the local press or their agent when he or she is trying to get you to book them.

When you've settled on a group or a DJ that's within your budget and won't completely freak out your beloved elderly relatives, you need to let them know of any special requirements you have.

For instance, your Uncle Jack may want to sing a ballad. If that's

okay with you, make sure that the DJ or musicians can accompany him or give them the name and other details of the song so that they can get the music.

Some musicians can pick up a tune just by hearing it. Even if someone in the group can do that under normal conditions, it might not work when Uncle Jack is the singer.

The band will have their own needs, like a room to change into their stage gear, check their equipment and relax with a drink (that you pay for) between sessions.

When you decide how long you want them to work, they will say how many breaks they need.

It's also wise to allow about, say, half an hour between the finish of the meal and the first music session. That's because your musicians or DJ will need time to set the equipment in place and check it thoroughly.

There's also a 99% likelihood that the meal will take about that much longer than the caterer suggested.

You should also arrange for someone to keep the band happy. That requires someone that is sober and reliable.

That person needs to be supplied with the fee in the agreed form to pay the band when they have finished and, preferably, to keep an eye on their equipment when they take a break and leave the stand.

He must not let any of the guests, not even Uncle Jack, fiddle with their equipment.

Amateur Comedians

Amateur comedians are one of the hazards of these events.

The professional comic spends years perfecting a personal style that looks effortless.

But that makes the untalented, or drunk joker think it must be easy enough that even he can do it.

If you want to make a great impression with your jokes, try to follow these tips from a very funny friend of mine:

1. Rehearse everything you are going to say, including any apparently impromptu jokes (ad-libs).
2. Be careful that you offend no-one.
3. If you must make someone the butt of a joke, use it against yourself. It worked pretty good for Bob Hope.
4. Don't just leave them laughing. Stop before your run out of your best material and leave them wanting more!
5. Many people think that a little alcohol before they give a speech or tell a joke will “loosen them up” and help them fight their stage-fright. Instead, alcohol relaxes your inhibitions and reduces your coordination – a recipe for disaster!.

Feeding the Horde

I’ve included some suggestions for using a professional catering service or co-opting friends and family to reduce strain on your budget.

There’s a few other important points that you need to keep in mind.

Frugal Food

If your family is providing the food for the reception:



Choose dishes which are simple to prepare such as lasagna, cold meats, salads.

Limit the number of dishes to simplify preparation and transport.

As a rough guide, figure a pound of dry pasta enough for maybe eight guests and a pound of mince for meatballs might be enough for twelve guests.

Not all guests will eat each dish and some will eat more than anyone could expect.

Have plenty of bread (plain and wholemeal, or garlic if appropriate). It’s fairly cheap and will probably reduce the consumption of the main dishes a little.



While there are many kinds of cake which might be used for the Wedding cake, stick with plain fruit cake; it is cheap, keeps well and almost everyone can eat it.

Make sure to check for special food requirements

of your guests and advise your caterer or family food preparers as early as possible.

When deciding the menu, take into account the preferences of the bride and groom and their parents. Stop there or you'll never make a final decision.

Be doubly careful about hygiene, storage, transport and serving of food. When wedding guests become ill, it can sour a relationship, not just a meal.

It's your event, so the people that it's most important to cater for are you, your partner and your families.

Be mindful of other religious and cultural sensibilities as far as you believe reasonable but the bottom line is your preferences and your budget.

Check with all the guests about any dietary requirements and give the full information to the caterer, if you are using one, well ahead of time.

Things to Avoid

Peanuts: These little nuts are tasty but even small traces can cause serious problems for some people. Your caterer or your team of amateur food preparers must avoid using any item which contains traces of peanuts. In many countries, this is required to be shown on all labels of packaged food.

Fish or Shellfish: They also can cause problems either because of religious restrictions, allergies or random outbreaks of contamination

Pork: Banned by some religions.

Things to Avoid or Provide Alternatives for

Spicy foods: Many people love a dash or more of hot spice with their food but it's likely to cause discomfort to some other guests. So, have some less aggressive options for those who would prefer them.

Maybe, you could have these available in small dishes for the more adventurous eaters.

Alcohol: You've probably seen the effects on an event and the other guests where someone has had too much to drink. It is also a significant contributor to the road toll and other problems.

Make sure you offer non-alcoholic alternatives, fruit juices and sodas for those who are driving and anyone else that prefers them or wants to space out their alcoholic drinks.

Financing Your Big Day

Even if the bride’s parents are strict traditionalists and insist on paying for the wedding, you will face significant expenses and need to start setting up a realistic budget right at the start.

You need to decide together:

- ? how much money you currently have which can be used for starting your wedding fund
- ? how much you can manage to put aside without living on beans and hamburger (you need to keep up your strength and complexion), and
- ? what contributions you are certain to get from loving and better-off relatives.

That’s all you can really count on and, of course, some urgent expense or the non-arrival of a promised cash gift may require a quick and significant change between now and the big day.

But, without the budget as a first step, you would know what you could afford and that’s likely to bring disaster.

Make sure that you stick within your budget unless there is some unexpected development. Maybe you can think of ways to increase the available amount?

Emphasize the Essentials

It’s time for another list. This one is very important because it will save you time and help you to keep within your budget.

You need to list every relevant item that each of you can think of which you need or want to buy between now and your wedding.

Then, draw all the essential expenses into a new list. Things like

supplier’s accounts, stationery, minister’s fee, hire of venues, registrations, passports, insurance, accommodation (for guests and the honeymoon) etc.

Now you should review the remaining items together and remove any that are very low priority, then save the remainder on a list called something like “if possible”.

Your budget needs to have an untouchable cushion as well as the amount set aside for each item in the two new lists.

If you manage to reduce the cost of something you listed, move the amount actually saved to the cushion or use it to promote something from the “if possible” to the must have list”.

If you are unsure, then put it in the cushion for a while.

Who Pays for What

Like many things that were laid down as L-A-W for all weddings in past days, the decisions about who pays for what are observed to varying degrees by people today who are more realistic and decide who pays according to ability and whether the couple actually need or want help in that area.

The bride’s parents traditionally paid all the expenses of the wedding but that was really a relic of the old view which had a girl worth less than her brothers. The bride’s parents either paid the expenses or a dowry (cash or cattle) to the groom for taking her off their hands!

Things have changed.

Many times, both sets of parents share the costs or the bride and groom pay the bulk or all of the expenses themselves.

It depends on the ability and willingness of each to contribute.

If someone can't or won't, that doesn't mean they don't love you as much as the other parents. Accept their position and set your plans in line with what you have.

If you decide to get some debt to ensure you have the sort of wedding you really want, make sure that it's a joint decision because you will both have to live within the reduced income until that debt is cleared.

One advantage that comes from paying for your own wedding is that you don't have the burden of any obligations that sometimes come with large sums of cash.

If you feel that a parent or other relative has put emotional strings on their cash, talk to them before accepting the gift. Thank them for the money and ask them to understand that you will have full control of how the money is used.

Otherwise, you're probably better to get them to pay for a specific item, like the catering or keep the check so you avoid any ongoing obligation.

This can be more complicated with second and subsequent marriages, which seem to be increasing.

There can be no reason to believe that any parents have any obligation to contribute substantially to these. Some will without being asked.

And it's probably more responsible and caring not to ask those who don't.

Cutting Costs Without Pain

The first thing to do is to talk to all the people involved.

If someone promises you a contribution, either you or your partner

must follow up and sort things out.

That’s a task for whoever is more closely related to the person or couple that made the promise.

But, understand if their circumstances, or their priorities, change. You will have a, hopefully, long-term or even lifetime relationship with them, and starting off with a heated discussion about money is not a good omen.

On the other hand, don’t accept an obligation to pay some expenses or for a gift for someone where you don’t think it’s reasonable.

Outfitting the Wedding Party

The mothers of the bride and groom will choose their own dresses and pay for them themselves.

If the outfits for the groom and groomsmen are hired, the bridal couple will probably pay those charges if they’re not picked up by the groom’s parents.

The bridesmaids’ outfits are most often either paid for by the bridal couple or their parents but many people now ask the bridesmaids to buy their own outfit.

If they are to pay for their own, then the bride needs to be as flexible as possible, either settling on a design which all are comfortable with and letting each bridesmaid choose their own color or setting on a color which complements her outfit and letting the bridesmaids choose a design which each feel suits them.

You may still have to help one or more of your friends with some money or lose their services.

You might be able to get a better deal from the bridal salon if you all buy the same style at the same time. But, you can also check out

other dress shops and even factory outlets in your area.

I don't recommend buying dresses from online auctions because of possible delays, bad descriptions and the ever-present possibility of fraud.

Their shoes and the bride's should be the same color, or dyed to match. Be particularly careful to choose shoes which are supportive and they must be comfortable.

Many venues have floors which suck the strength from your legs over a few hours. Waking up the next morning with aching legs is not a good way to start your marriage.

Maybe you could wear more stylish, but less comfortable shoes for the ceremony and change them for a pair which look after your feet better when you get to the reception venue.

Insurance

Make sure that you include any necessary insurance cover when you first plan your budget.

You can get insurance for most parts of the wedding and the reception, including a sum to cover another photo-shoot, damage to the bride's dress and a couple of million dollars in public liability cover to give you some protection if someone drops the punch bowl on a bridesmaid's foot.

Any hired gear, clothing or equipment, is usually covered by insurance but be sure to check with the hire company before you sign the contract.

Check that your home insurance will cover the gifts and dress while they are at your home. If they're not covered, you may be able to get a low or no-cost cover note for a few weeks if you are a good customer of the insurance company.

Don't forget to get medical insurance that covers you for the honeymoon if you are traveling outside your own country. The first place to check is with your current supplier of domestic medical insurance.

You also need insurance for your luggage, clothing and any expensive cameras or other items which you carry with you.

This is also something that you should remind any guests who are coming from overseas to your wedding.

Yes, some companies offer insurance for the biggest disaster, cancellation of the wedding. But, you really need to examine the fine print on any policy which you are considering and get any clarification in writing before you write a check, or you might be

doubly disappointed if you make a claim.

Children at Your Wedding

Your Children

If either of you have children, you'll want them to attend the wedding and the reception.

You will also need to involve them in a meaningful way with the preparation and put their name(s) on the invitation.

If your children are still getting to know his children, there may be some unsettled tensions.

You could include them in the ceremony but only after discussing it with them and gauging their real attitude, not just accepting their verbal agreement.

If the children are truly willing, arrange for them to be part of the ceremony but never push.

It's obviously important to be even-handed and a small but valuable memento of the occasion for each child could help to smooth over any remaining tensions in the following weeks.

Other People's Children

You may not want guests to bring their children to the wedding or reception even though you will have yours there, of course. That should be okay with any reasonable person and, especially your friends and relatives.

But, don't be surprised if you get some mule-headed pair either staying away and giving that as their reason or bringing their own children anyway.

If they do bring children along, welcome them but tell the parents that you hope they will still enjoy the function while keeping an eye

on their little Attila. It is not your responsibility.

If you decide to let guests bring their children, you'll need to provide them with some appropriate food, distractions like puzzles or games, and entertainment or a couple of wranglers I mean child sitters.

Children love to be entertained and most good entertainers charge fair fees but they probably will only attend for a set period. If that fits your budget and program, it's worth considering.

You might be able to hire or persuade a couple of reliable teenagers to look after the children for the duration. See if you can get an extra, smaller room at the venue for a small additional cost. It could be well worth it to reduce stress and interruptions to your “main event”.

Check with the parents about any allergies or other conditions which you and the minders need to be aware of.

Animals

I love animals but, with weddings and receptions, I believe the old Hollywood maxim is spot on, "Don't work with children or animals", especially the latter.

Animals, except hearing and seeing-eye dogs which are trained to standards that the average pet owner could never attain, are likely to be a problem.

Your first line of defense is the fact that most areas ban all animals except those special dogs from all venues where food is served.

Support the law!

Your Wedding Venue

If this is your first wedding and you are both of the same faith, you should not have much difficulty in arranging a wedding in your local church or other place of worship.

Most weddings are probably still held in places of worship but that's not everybody's choice.

Many people are married in a civil ceremony conducted by a licensed marriage celebrant.

They may have trouble deciding which place to be married in or just feel that they are not religious and might feel hypocritical if they went back to church just for this special occasion.

Up a Tree or Below the Sea!

There is a growing trend among people who do not regularly attend them to have the ceremony in a place they are familiar with and which has some sort of special appeal to them.



I've heard of people being married in a plane and then sky-diving back to the ground to start their married life together (they both landed safely!)

I read about another couple who took their vows under water. That was a few years ago and probably dozens, or even hundreds of couples have donned wet-suits and copied the idea since then.

I haven't heard of anyone being married in the African tree houses where tourists watch lions but I am sure there have been some great celebrations there.

I'm not that adventurous, but I can understand the appeal for those

who are more adventurous. I can imagine a couple wanting to be married near a favorite waterfall or on top of a mountain. I wonder if the celebrant would also climb it or whether they'd have to hire a helicopter.

The laws and regulations which must be observed vary from country to country and between states.

Check with your local authorities. Again, Nolo.com might have some relevant books or even free advice.

When You have Different Religious Backgrounds

There may be difficulties where you are of different faiths but most, though not all, obstacles can be reduced or removed over time.

There could be friction within one or both families and there may be legal requirements if you decide to have two services (one following the tradition of each faith) or a non-denominational ceremony.

You may need to have a licensed marriage registrant at one ceremony to comply with the laws in your area.

I suggest that you approach members of your families who are closer to their church for information unless doing so might increase tension between you.

You will, however, probably find that your local religious leaders are quite helpful when they understand the sincerity of your commitment to each other.

The traditional choice is for one person to convert to the religion of the other. That is a very serious decision which should be considered carefully and which the two of you should discuss without pressure.

Priming and Pruning the Guest List

The guest list is likely to be one of the most sensitive areas when you are arranging your wedding and the reception.

There used to be a tradition where the total number of guests was decided by the overall budget, with a slight reduction to allow for unexpected contingencies.

Then, the bride’s parents would invite about one third of that number, the groom’s parents a like number and the other third would come from the bride’s and groom’s own personal friends.

There are usually more people on each of their lists than can be invited.

Then, there could be pressure from the parents who are paying for or subsidizing the major costs to let them invite more people.

There can be emotional pressure to invite distant or elderly relatives who none of you can remember meeting, business colleagues of your parents and other loosely connected people.

With most couples, the discussion doesn’t take long because the budget runs down pretty quickly when you consider that each guest that’s in any form of formal relationship will expect their partner to be invited.

Add your fathers’ bosses and their bank managers – that should be it.

Be prepared for requests and even anger from people that didn’t make the list. You’ll also get more requests from parents to bring their children if you didn’t include them on the invitation and some parents will bring their children along without asking.

The best answer is plain honesty, “The budget would not stretch

very far and I knew you would understand. Let's arrange to meet for dinner after the honeymoon?"

Keep in touch with your guests and, especially, the bridal party.

There's always the possibility that someone will have to pull out.

Then, you can either add someone else to the list (don't be surprised or disappointed if they decline the second-hand invitation) or keep to one less so that your budget has a bit more cash in it.

It's All OFF!

Those are the words which every bride, groom and, especially, their parents dread!

They probably won't be heard except in your nightmares or a moment of complete exhaustion after trying to squeeze just two more into the guest list.

Sometimes, there has to be a postponement because of serious illness, natural disaster or a business commitment overseas.

But, unfortunately, weddings do also get cancelled – one or the other partner lets their cold feet take them out of their cozy relationship in search of something better.

I hope that you, like me, never get even close to this situation but I'm including a few suggestions which will give you a guide to keep you focused while you sort everything out.

Notify Suppliers: You should phone your suppliers and the venues you booked to minimize the amount you will still owe them. Don't try to work that out over the phone.



Don't expect to get much back. It may depend whether the venue or supplier can fill your booking with another booking.

You may be able to get the store or dressmaker to sell your wedding dress and give you something back from the sale price.

Otherwise, you can sell it privately.

Be sure to contact airlines or cruises and your accommodation if you had booked an overseas honeymoon.

Notify Your Guests: If the wedding date is just a couple of weeks away, email or phone people that don't live close by.

Then, follow up with a short, printed note because some people don't read their emails regularly and emails sometimes just get lost.

If a sympathetic and reliable family member offers to make some or all of the calls and send the emails for you, it will do much to reduce the load on your shoulders for at least a little while.

Repeat Newspaper advertisements: You should put a small advertisement in any newspaper where you put an advertisement to announce your engagement.

Presents: You must return them all. That will be a hassle and expense but it is the right thing to do.

Whether you return the engagement ring depends on you.

I would never throw in into a crusher but I know many of my friends say that they would in those circumstances.

I'd rather sell it and use the proceeds to treat myself to a massage or something else that would help to relieve the emotional pressure.

Relations

Your Mother

Don't be surprised if you notice a change in your mother's attitude to you and life in general after your wedding.

It's my theory that she feels some sort of loss even if you will both be able and willing to stay in close contact.

There's also the view which some believe that she sees your transition from daughter to wife like her. (Relax, I don't mean like her in every way) as a signal of her advancing age.

But, I think she is focused on you and your happiness. Her only concern could be the probably irrational one that she might not have done all she could to help you make a success of your marriage.

This won't last because your mother will be drawn back to concentrating on her other personal interests fairly quickly.

But, you can help by making sure that when an opportunity to be with your mother for a bit of shopping or just a quiet chat at her place or yours arises, you grab it and talk about what she wants to talk about as much as you want to fill every minute with details of your new life.

Demonstrate that you are still very interested in her as a person and tell her she has been a wonderful mother for you.

After all, I know many people who passed up those opportunities until it was too late and their mother was not around to hear their words anymore.

Your Mother-in-law

You may have been a couple for some time and developed a good, friendly relationship with your partner’s mother and father.

But that might also change when you get married – that’s for real and, probably, permanent.

It may be obvious or so dilute that it’s hard to be sure it exists but I believe every woman feels a little bit distressed when her son puts another woman in the number one position in his life.

If it isn’t so obvious as to be a real problem, just focus on her good qualities which you discovered and enjoyed before.

In time, you might have your own son who ups and marries someone you hardly know.

I wonder if you’ll feel much different to how your mother-in-law feels in those first few weeks.

Of course, unless you are a trained and experienced psychologist you may completely misread your new mother-in-law’s feelings.

That coldness which you think she is showing to you may just be insecurity on her part about how she should try to develop a stronger relationship with you and her strong desire to make the right steps from the start.

Find some time to spend with her, listen to her stories of the wonderful son, ask for his favorite recipes so that you can cook them for him too.

Most of all, show her that you appreciate the effort she made with your husband and that she is now making to build a great relationship with you.

Your Father

If your father seems unusually docile and withdrawn as your wedding approaches, don't worry about it.

On top of his usual family concerns and business matters, he's got a lot of new things to think about and he is also probably feeling some emotions he has not felt very often before.

If your parents have taken on the traditional bride's parents' financial role of paying for the bulk of the wedding, you can understand that might cause him some concern.

He's also probably wondering if he's done everything he could to be the father that you needed.

And, of course, many men in our society feel that they must not show their emotions.

Spend some time with him, talk about things that are not part of the wedding plans – things he's always been interested in, and reassure him of your respect and gratitude for all that he's tried to do for you.

Relationships

Your Ex

Unless your ex-partner was violent or otherwise unstable, you should tell them that you are getting married.

That is especially important if you had children together and they have been providing any financial or other support.

If there were no children and you haven't kept in touch, there's no real need to go out of your way to let them know.

If you have maintained contact since you separated you might think about inviting them to your wedding.

This might be appreciated by your older children but could create some confusion and perhaps worse in the minds of very young children from that relationship.

They've already started to get used to their new circumstances as part of an expanded family and may be busy sorting out any tensions with your groom's children and then their real father is back, however temporarily.

It's something that only you can decide but, before doing anything, discuss it with your new spouse and, possibly, get the views of the older children.

Party! Party!

Everyone loves a party or maybe even two but if you and some of your friends have limited finances or a mortgage, then too many parties can be bad for your relationships as well as your finances.

You might be have almost too many things to prepare and check before the big day, but you could find it hard to refuse when somebody offers to hold some sort of celebration leading up to the wedding.

But, each party, shower or dinner puts a financial cost and time commitment on everyone who is asked to attend.

I suggest that you limit them to, say, three, and insist that anyone who wants to bring a gift should please just bring one to one event.

Emphasize that their presence and support is the best gift anyway.

My top three would be the Announcement party, if your parents want to host and pay for it, the helpers (mainly the Bridesmaids) lunch to thank them for their contribution and patience, and the rehearsal party.

Maybe you might think three could be too much of a strain for some of your friends or family. That shows you’re thinking right – about them and not just yourself. How you handle it is up to you.

But, I’m sure that you need some occasion for everyone of the major players to get together in a party atmosphere before the wedding.

The Rehearsal Party

That rehearsal party is usually fairly casual and serves as a stress diffuser after the walk-through check of the wedding.

You'll usually have the two families and other members of the bridal party with their partners, any guests that have arrived from some distance away and the celebrant. This is their chance to meet in a fairly relaxed atmosphere so that they get to know a little bit about each other before the wedding day.

You can also use the occasion to get some of the people that will give speeches at the reception a chance for a rehearsal of their own (with different material) in a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

Pre-Nuptial Agreements

You may not be a Hollywood star or have their level of financial assets but that doesn't mean that you might not benefit from having a prenuptial agreement drawn up to protect your rights if you are bringing significant assets which were your sole property with you into the marriage.

Of course, these agreements are not accepted everywhere in the United States or other countries but the benefits to asset-rich people when they are entering a new marriage is helping to drive them onto the law books in most Western countries.

You will need the full cooperation of your partner to draft and complete the agreement.

Set a time aside when you won't be disturbed so that you can freely discuss your current circumstances and your goals.

Full disclosure by both of you is essential.

Then, you should write out your agreement in plain English the agreement you have worked up together.

You should each consult a lawyer to review the agreement and advise you whether it meets all current legal requirements in your jurisdiction.

The lawyer should be able to guide you about whether the draft agreement fulfills your aims by protecting your current rights and providing for the division of your joint assets if you split up in a way that conforms to your wishes.

Then, when both of you are satisfied with the agreement, you need to have it processed according to local regulations and any relevant Federal law.

The “Easy Way” Out – Elope!

Some couples elope to get around impenetrable blocks imposed for any number of reasons by their parents to their being married to each other where they live.

Other couples just decide to forgo a lot of the preparation, expense and hassle of organizing their wedding with all the usual trappings and have a quiet ceremony elsewhere.

Most then come back and throw a celebration, inviting both families and their friends.

That might take some of the steam out of the current situation but they will probably find that their close relatives and many of their friends will feel deeply hurt.

It could take some time and a lot of effort to restore the warmth and trust that was previously between them.

The best antidote, I’m told, to restore those former deep feelings of affection and trust is a new grandchild.

If You Have to Speak

Order of Speeches

Bride's Father

Groom

Best Man

Order of Toasts

Best Man

Groom

Bride

Parents

Other Guests

Keep everything light-hearted and brief.

Keep any revelations about the bride or the groom private, to be published in your memoirs, fifty years after your death.

Don't drink alcohol before you speak.

Don't laugh at your own jokes.

Don't try to use that great joke you heard on television last night. Your audience probably heard it too and may know the punch-line better than you!

Each speaker should check with those who speak ahead of him or her to ensure that they don't use material which the earlier speakers might have already used.

Don't bite the microphone, especially if other people will have to use

it after you.

Don't blow into it to check whether it's working properly – the mark of somebody that doesn't know anything about microphones. Also, you may get a bill for replacement of the microphone!

Mini-note from Maureen

I hope you find this guide helpful and, as far as possible, stress relieving as you prepare for and approach your wedding.

It's based on the combined experience of many people.



I've just got one more short but powerful suggestion for you:

Keep your expectations high, your focus on the way ahead and never run so fast that you cannot share a moment with your friends or even a friendly stranger – it might be me.

Maureen P.

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