

A LOCAL GUIDE TO PLANNING YOUR PERFECT DAY

To Have & To Hold

- ideas
- photos
- advice
- fashion
- receptions

...and more

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WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE

wedding gown shopping

Weddings mark a turning point from one stage in life to another. The significance of that transition is perhaps one reason why couples and their guests dress so nicely for a wedding ceremony and reception.

Formal garb is a wedding tradition, and guests anxiously await seeing which type of gown a bride will wear. In western cultures, white wedding gowns have been the standard since the nineteenth century and are believed to symbolize purity and grace.

In eastern cultures, wedding gowns often have been elaborate, colorful creations that have their own symbolic meanings unique to various areas of the world.

Shopping for a wedding gown can spark mixed emotions. While it is exciting to try on some remarkable garments, there also is the pressure of knowing all eyes will be on you while wearing this couture creation. Narrowing down wedding gown prospects can take vision, time, and patience.

The following pointers can help when it comes time to visit bridal shops.

• MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

Many bridal shops operate by appointment only. That's because the staff wants to devote complete attention to a client, and having people simply walk in from the street can draw their attention away and/or lead to long wait times.

Identify the stores you want to visit, and then call to secure your time slot.

• NARROW DOWN STYLES

Think about what your personal style might be and how you want to look on your wedding day.

If you're not sure about the vocabulary surrounding dress silhouettes, visit Pinterest or Instagram and save images of dresses that you love. Then you can show the sales staff what you are thinking instead of going in empty-handed.

• KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Try on a few different styles even if you



In western cultures, white wedding gowns have been the standard since the nineteenth century and are believed to symbolize purity and grace. In eastern cultures, wedding gowns often have been elaborate, colorful creations that have their own symbolic meanings unique to various areas of the world.

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have a particular dress in mind. You never know if something might be a better fit for your body type or the scope and style of your wedding unless you give it a go.

• START THE PROCESS EARLY

Unlike off-the-rack clothing, most wedding shops will have to order your dress and have it shipped. Then comes a few weeks for alterations.

KWH Bridal notes eight to twelve months before a wedding is a good time to choose and order a dress. Brides magazine says most made-to-order wedding gowns take about six to nine months to create.

There also are three separate fittings to ensure the gown will fit like a glove.

• INVITE ONLY A HANDFUL OF 'HELPERS'

It's best not to arrive at the shopping

appointment with an entire entourage. Pick at most four people whose opinions you trust; otherwise, it could be a case of too many cooks in the kitchen.

As a bride-to-be, you'll already be anxious, and you'll want soothing, supportive people with you.

• PLAN YOUR BUDGET

Know well in advance what you can afford to spend. According to data from The Knot, wedding attire accounts for 7% of the average couple's budget.

Most wedding gowns are in the range of \$2,000. Don't forget about additional costs, such as veil, shoes, alterations, undergarments, and any add-ons.

In addition to these tips, arrive to an appointment well-rested, fed, and comfortable.

(METRO CREATIVE)

TO HAVE *and to hold*

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Top trends in tuxes

Theories on the origins of the tuxedo vary significantly. Some believe that this formal garment was created by wealthy aristocrats attending an autumn ball in Tuxedo Park, New York. However, the Wall Street Journal has reported that the tuxedo might be a British invention, spearheaded by the fashion-conscious King of Wales Edward VII in 1865.

No matter where the tuxedo originated, it has become standard attire for formal occasions, including weddings.

It may seem as though every tuxedo is the same, but that's not the case. Tuxes come in different styles, so those tying the knot or attending other formal functions can choose an option that fits their personality and physique.

Here's a look at what sets tuxedos apart and some noteworthy tux trends.

• SUITS VERSUS TUXEDOS

Some may wonder what sets a tuxedo apart from a suit. One of the more notable differences is that tuxedo lapels are designed with silk, satin, or textured grosgrain to provide that signature V-look,

says Brides magazine.

Suit lapels are made from the same fabric as the suit jacket. Tuxedos traditionally are held up with suspenders, while suit pants have belt loops for use with a belt.

Suits are styled with a dress shirt, while tuxedos are worn with a particular tuxedo shirt that likely has a spread collar, bib, decorative studs, and French cuffs fastened with cufflinks.

• CHANGE UP LAPEL STYLES

Men who want to set themselves apart can opt for what The Knot calls the most popular styles of tuxedo lapels. Notch lapels are the most common and feature two lateral points. Shawl collars feature a smooth, sleek, looped lapel without notches or peaks. Peak lapels have the lower point of the lapel peak above the upper.

Trying on the different jackets can give individuals an idea of which lapel look is best.

• NEW COLOR SPECTRUM

A traditional tuxedo will be black, although navy tuxedos have gained a following. But individuals can find a tuxedo in any color.

Those who want to add some extra flair to their weddings may opt for a tuxedo in a color that coordinates to the season or

aligns with what the rest of the bridal party is wearing.

• ALTERNATIVE FABRICS

The majority of tuxedos are made from wool and will have the silk or satin detailing as described.

Newer trends include incorporating fabrics like linen or flannel, although these are rare and may be harder to come by.

• NECKTIES GRABBING HOLD

People can set themselves apart with everything from lapels to tuxedo shirts to different colors, but only bowties or neckties can be worn with tuxedos.

While bowties once were the gold standard, those personalizing their wedding looks and taking liberties with style are increasingly opting for neckties.

Gents can choose a necktie in a complementary texture that will coordinate with the elegance of the tuxedo.

• SLIM FIT

Modern tuxedo choices feature a slim fit in both jacket and pant. It's a good idea to try on a few different options to see what feels comfortable before choosing a fit.

Tuxedos have been around since the nineteenth century and are the attire of choice for formal functions.

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Considerations when choosing wedding flowers

Although many decorative elements help to create ambiance for a wedding celebration, perhaps none is more awe-inspiring than beautiful floral arrangements.

Flowers offer visual appeal, captivating aromas, and texture that can make a space more welcoming.

Engaged couples typically go to great lengths when planning their weddings, but flowers may not be as micromanaged as other elements. Some are content to let florists design their arrangements, but the average cost of wedding flowers in 2023 was \$2,800, according to The Knot Real Weddings Study. That price tag merits some input on the part of couples.

Floral experts say couples should budget for floral arrangements coming in at 10% of the overall wedding budget, which is the industry standard. Therefore, for a \$60,000 wedding, a couple should assume their florals will cost \$6,000.

It's important to note that the cost of wedding flowers has been steadily increasing over the last few years due to inflation and climate change, says The Knot. So couples may need to be even more involved in floral decisions to maximize their dollars spent.

Here are some variables to consider when selecting wedding flowers.

• GREENERY

Adding greenery to fill in spaces in floral arrangements can save some money. Centerpieces and bouquets that are floral-heavy will certainly cost more.

• SYMBOLISM

Consider the meaning behind flowers to make choices even more personal. You also may want to select flowers that will complement the theme of the wedding. For example, traditional spring blooms like tulips and daffodils will coordinate with spring weddings.

• FLOWER VARIETIES

Hardier varieties of flowers, such as daisies, mums, carnations, and protea, are less likely to wilt quickly in bouquets or centerpieces than some other blooms, even when they are cut.

Such blooms can hold up in any weather and last the entire day so that arrangements will be picture-perfect no matter the hour.

• VENUE

Couples may find that some venues already have faux flowers or other decor. That may mean couples do not need to have as many flowers or any elaborate arrangements.



Couples should take an active role in deciding what to include in floral pieces for their weddings, from costs and choosing a florist to types of table arrangements as well as bouquets.

Variables to consider before choosing a date

After announcing their engagement, couples may need to get used to being asked if they have chosen a date to tie the knot. Friends and family members who are thrilled for the happy couple may want to know when the partnership will become official, but choosing a date is not always so simple.

A host of variables must be considered before couples pick a wedding date. Though the choice of date is ultimately a couple's decision to make, consideration of the following variables can help engaged individuals make the most informed choice.

• SEASON

Time of year is an important consideration when picking a wedding date. Summer was once the season-of-choice when tying the knot, but data from the online wedding resource The Knot indicates that has changed a little in recent years.

The most popular day to get married in 2024 was Saturday, Sept. 21, which the experts at The Knot note reflects a notable shift in couples' preferences that began several years ago. Since then, fall has been the most popular season to tie the knot. Moderate temperatures and less rainfall likely contribute to that popularity.

Before picking a date, couples can consider which time of year they prefer to get married.

• CONVENIENCE

The convenience of a particular date won't be the same for everyone, but couples may want to consider a date or season that is amenable to as many bridal party members and guests as possible.

Couples planning to invite children to the wedding may learn from parents that fall, winter, and spring are tough times of year due to youngsters' hectic school and activities schedules. Summer may be more convenient, but it's also likely that some guests with preexisting vacation plans may not make it if the date chosen coincides with their trips.

There's no way to accommodate everyone, and couples should make their own preferences their top priority. But those with no such preference may want to look for a time of year when traveling to and from the wedding is convenient for as many guests as possible.

• HOLIDAYS

Another variable to consider are holidays. Travel and accommodations tend to be more expensive on holiday weekends, and roadways also can be crowded during three-day weekends. In



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addition, many people look forward to their own traditions during the holiday season and other notable events, such as July Fourth and Labor Day.

Before choosing a wedding date that coincides with a holiday, it might be a good idea to get some feedback from bridal party members and other trusted confidantes.

• LOCAL EVENTS

It's common for couples to inquire about other events a wedding venue may be hosting when shopping for ceremony and reception sites. But it can be equally important to consider events in the area

where you plan to get married on and around the days you're considering.

For example, tying the knot on the same weekend as the Super Bowl in the city where the event is taking place may not be wise, as hotel availability will likely be limited and room rates may be much higher than normal.

Even more localized events like harvest festivals may affect the availability of accommodations, so this important variable also merits consideration.

These are just a handful of variables couples should consider before choosing a date to tie the knot.

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During a wedding, the couple tying the knot certainly gets to shine, but so, too, do other ceremony participants. Bridesmaids lend support and provide help as needed, and the maid of honor serves as the right-hand woman to the bride.

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Roles of bridesmaids and the maid of honor

During a wedding, the couple tying the knot certainly gets to shine, but so, too, do other ceremony participants. From the parents of the bride or groom to the officiant to the ring bearer, there are many roles beyond bride and groom.

A bridal party typically includes a soon-to-be-bride's close friends and family. The bridesmaid tradition may trace its origins to ancient times, when bridesmaids would be selected to dress like the bride and confuse vengeful spirits or warring rival clans who might want to harm the bride.

A special individual gets to enjoy a higher-level job within the bridal party, serving as maid of honor, if she is unmarried, or matron of honor if she has already walked down the aisle.

Bridesmaids lend support and provide help as needed, but it is the maid of honor who will serve as the right-hand woman to the bride. Here is a deep look at the unique rolls these women play both before and during a wedding.

• BRIDESMAIDS

A significant amount of planning goes into a wedding, and bridesmaids may be called upon to help brides make various decisions. Bridesmaids also offer support to the bride, who may be feeling a tad overwhelmed. It is important for bridesmaids to calm the bride and care for her while she tackles the tasks necessary to host such a momentous occasion.

Bridesmaids can lend support and opinions when visiting with vendors like florists or musicians. A bride-to-be also may ask certain bridesmaids to come to

dress appointments.

Collectively, bridesmaids will plan and help pay for the bridal shower and bachelorette party. They also can assist the mother-of-the-bride with whatever extra help she may need.

• MAID OF HONOR

The maid of honor does all of the above and more. She will attend wedding dress shopping appointments and serve as a trusted source of honest feedback. The maid of honor also may be called in to mediate any conflicts within the bridal party, as these ladies may not all know each other prior to the nuptials. She will check in with the bridesmaids to be sure they are on task and fulfilling any responsibilities in a timely manner.

The maid of honor will be the main point of contact for the bridal shower and bachelorette party. She will keep track of gifts so that the couple can follow up with thank you notes. She also may help

assemble and mail out wedding invitations. The maid of honor will help the bride get dressed on the wedding day and attend to any needs she may have, including providing snacks and water. In the event the bride's gown is cumbersome, she may need to assist the bride by adjusting the dress while seated or when visiting the restroom.

During the ceremony, the maid of honor will hold the bride's bouquet, and she will give a toast at the reception. She also may make music requests to keep the party upbeat and fun.

There is no minimum or maximum number of people who can be part of a bridal party, but it is important to choose people who can be relied upon and who will enhance the experience. The bride-to-be can discuss her expectations from bridesmaids and the maid of honor at the start of the wedding adventure to ensure that everyone can help ensure the day is a momentous occasion.

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FLOWERS • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

• SIZE

For table arrangements, select a size that will not discourage conversation or block guests' view nor take up too much real estate on the table.

• ALLERGIES

Although they are cut, flowers in arrangements can trigger allergic responses in some people. Others may be

bothered by overly aromatic flowers. Work with the florist to find the best options.

• COLOR SCHEME

Although white flowers coordinate, include colors. Be sure they pick up hues used in bridesmaid dresses or the season.

Couples should take an active role in deciding what to include in floral pieces.

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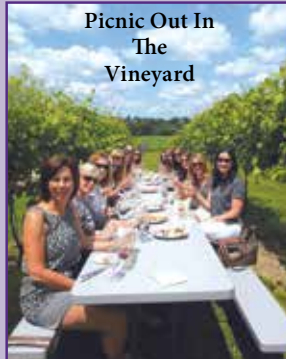
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How to manage the wedding reception menu

Wedding receptions are the culmination of a lot of planning. Though there may not be any insignificant decisions when planning the post-ceremony party, some choices will loom larger than others, including which foods will be served.

When planning a wedding reception, couples can choose a venue that provides the food, such as a traditional reception center; otherwise, the reception may take place at an outdoor location or a venue that is not equipped to prepare and serve food.

In the latter instances, couples will contract with an outside caterer. In both situations certain factors can help determine who to use for reception food services.

● PLANNING

A traditional reception center/catering hall is likely a wise choice for couples who prefer simplicity in wedding day meal planning.

These facilities are experts at addressing all of the components that go into a reception. Such venues offer access to a cocktail area and banquet room, and the facility likely has a staff of chefs at the ready to dish up meals.

While many reception centers offer restaurant-quality offerings, scouting venues and sampling dishes will provide an idea of how foods taste and help couples narrow down their choices.

● CHEF ACCESS

Having a specific chef or cuisine in mind may require separating the food from a venue. Reception centers likely will not allow couples to bring in their own food. Therefore, you will have to find a venue where outside food is possible. Then you can work with a favorite chef for catering services.

● LOCATION

Some couples prefer to combine their ceremony and reception at one spot. This may be at a beachside location or in a



converted country barn.

If this seems like a scenario you are considering, then the venue will take priority and you'll have to find an outside caterer to service the wedding.

● PREFERENCES

Some receptions are multi-course events starting from the moment guests arrive and snack on hors d'oeuvres to the dessert display served as a final course. Others are

low-key and may not have full sit-down service.

If you prefer a cocktail atmosphere only, certain venues may make more sense than others. Identifying how much food to have and the type of service desired can help pinpoint caterers to interview.

● ALLERGIES

Food allergies and intolerances are on the minds of many nowadays. It is important to be mindful of food restrictions when speaking with caterers. Take careful inventory of work-arounds so that every guest at the wedding can be sure to enjoy a safe, delicious meal.

The wedding reception menu is an important variable for engaged couples to consider. A host of factors may come into consideration as couples try to determine how to feed their guests come their wedding day.

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Though there may not be any insignificant decisions when planning the post-ceremony party, some choices will loom larger than others, including which foods will be served.

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A mock wedding day timeline



Married couples often advise loved ones who are engaged that they should make time to enjoy their wedding days in the moment, noting that the day has a tendency to fly by.

The pace of a couple's wedding day can seem so fast because the hours leading up to the ceremony and reception are typically filled with activities to ensure couples and bridal parties look their best.

Wedding ceremonies begin at different times depending on variables such as couples' preference, ceremony site, and even the time of year the wedding is taking place.

The following timeline, which is based on a summer wedding with a 5 p.m. ceremony, can serve as a guideline for couples as they map out their own big day.

• **10 a.m.-2 p.m.:** Begin getting ready. Grooms and groomsmen typically do not require the same level of attention and amount of prep time as brides and their bridesmaids, so they likely won't need to start at 10 a.m. But brides and their bridesmaids will need ample time to do their hair and makeup, and it may be necessary to begin by 10 a.m. Depending on the size of the bridal party, the hair and makeup session may last to 2 p.m. Grooms and groomsmen can decide when to start getting ready within this four-hour window.

If a groom and his groomsmen plan to get a hot shave at a local barbershop or hairstylist, schedule the shave so there's enough time to return to the hotel to get

dressed, as it's not advisable to get a shave when already dressed in a tuxedo.

• **2 p.m.:** Once everyone's hair and makeup is done, a bride can begin to get in her dress. Be sure the photographer is aware of this timeline, as many prefer to document the bride revealing how she looks in her dress.

• **3 p.m.:** Couples who want to do what's called a "First Look" can do so at 3 p.m. for a 5 p.m. ceremony. Couples choose to do a first look for a number of reasons, but it involves the happy couple seeing each other in their wedding garb.

One reason to do a first look is to take photographs with bridal party members prior to the start of the wedding. Doing so ensures the newlyweds will get to spend more time with their guests, particularly during cocktail hour.

A pre-wedding photoshoot can also ensure couples have ample natural lighting for their photos should they choose to take some outdoors.

• **3:15 p.m.-4:30 p.m.:** A first look won't take very long, which leaves ample time for photos of the happy couple and their bridal party. Sixty to seventy-five minutes should be plenty of time for a photographer to get all the shots couples requested.

It helps to submit a list of desired photos (i.e., couple with full bridal party, couple with parents, etc.) prior to the wedding day, and some photographers even insist on doing so to ensure they don't miss anything.

• **4:30 p.m.:** Rest and some last-minute

preparation and sprucing up can take up the final 30 minutes before the ceremony begins.

• **5 p.m.:** Ceremony begins.

• **5:30-6:30 p.m.:** The hour right after the ceremony can be designated as cocktail hour. Couples also can use this time to take additional photos with family and others that might not have been taken during the initial photoshoot.

This window also serves as a good time to sign the official documents confirming the couple's nuptials, particularly if a hired officiant will be taking that paperwork and filing it with the appropriate government office.

• **6:30-10 p.m.:** The reception, featuring bridal party member and couple introductions, can commence at 6:30 p.m. The choice of when to perform special dances is up to the couple and their parents, but such traditions are generally reserved for early in the reception, so every guest is still around to witness these special moments.

(METRO CREATIVE)

The pace of a couple's wedding day can seem so fast because the hours leading up to the ceremony and reception are typically filled with activities to ensure couples and bridal parties look their best. Looking over a mock timeline can serve as a guideline for couples as they map out their own big day.

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Did you know?

AVERAGE WEDDING DRESS COSTS \$2,000, STUDY SHOWS

Brides-to-be make many important decisions when planning their weddings, and one of the more notable ones is the choice of wedding gown. According to The Knot Real Weddings Study, the average wedding dress cost \$2,000 in 2023.

Despite that hefty price tag, gowns remain a pivotal component of a wedding, as 98% of women who responded to The Knot survey indicated they wore a dress for their nuptials.

If the sizable price tag is a cause for concern to some aspiring brides, The Knot notes that customization can drive up the final price tag by a significant amount, which undoubtedly affects the median price of gowns.

Brides who opt for no or minimal customization can likely find a dress that costs significantly less than the \$2,000 average price.

(METRO CREATIVE)

The average wedding dress cost \$2,000 in 2023, according to The Knot Real Weddings Study. However, that was in part due to customization so brides-to-be can spend less by trying to find a dress that will work as is.

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Questions to ask when shopping for a reception venue

Engaged couples make plenty of decisions when planning their weddings, and some may be more significant than others. Choosing a wedding reception venue is among the most important decisions couples will make.

The reception venue is where couples and guests will spend the majority of the day, and no two venues are the same.

As couples begin shopping for a place to host their reception, they can ask themselves and venue representatives a multitude of questions to narrow down their options and ultimately make the best decision for them.

• WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR IN A VENUE?

Some couples may know precisely what they want their receptions to be like, while others may not have the slightest idea. Of course, some couples may be somewhere in the middle.

Prior to beginning the process of choosing a venue, couples can identify what they're looking for. Is a venue with outdoor entertaining space a priority? Do you want to hold the ceremony and reception at the same venue? How many guests will the venue need to accommodate?

Answering these questions and others can help couples narrow down their search.

• HOW MUCH CAN WE AFFORD?

Budget is a significant variable when shopping for a wedding venue. Some venues offer multiple spaces that can accommodate couples with a wide range of budgets, while others are singular spaces suited to receptions within a specified size.

Itemizing a budget and determining how much can be allotted to a reception venue can serve as a guideline when couples begin searching for sites.

• IS OUR DATE AVAILABLE?

Once couples know what they want and what they can afford, they can prepare a number of questions that are worth asking at every venue they visit.

Perhaps the most important, at least for those couples who have already chosen a wedding date, is the availability of the site on that date. If couples have not yet chosen a date, they can ask for a list of available dates at each venue they visit and perhaps use that knowledge to pick a day, particularly if they prefer a given venue.

• WHO WILL CATER THE MEAL?

Some venues do their own catering, while others may have working relationships with

outside caterers. And some venues rent only the spaces and require couples to hire their own caterers and arrange all the details on their own.

If a venue caters the meal, ask if they accommodate people with various restrictions, such as food allergies and gluten intolerances.

• HOW MANY HOURS ARE INCLUDED IN THE RENTAL AGREEMENT?

It's important that couples know what they're getting, including how much time they get in each space they consider.

The online wedding resource The Knot notes a standard wedding reception is five hours, the first of which is generally designated as cocktail hour.

• WHAT IS THE PAYMENT STRUCTURE?

Identifying the payment structure, include down payment due date and when the final payment must be made, is important as well. This knowledge can allow couples to map out their expenses, the most significant of which is typically the reception venue.

These are just some of the questions couples can ask as they plan their wedding receptions.

(METRO CREATIVE)

As couples begin shopping for a place to host their reception, they can ask themselves and venue representatives a multitude of questions to narrow down their options.

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How to allocate funds when planning a wedding



Whether it's a lavish, black-tie affair or a laid-back gathering in the backyard, a couple's wedding day is a momentous, and often costly, occasion.

According to the online wedding planning resource Zola, the average cost of a wedding in 2023 was \$33,000. That's a significant sum for couples to spend, and it's understandable if couples aren't sure how to allocate funds for their big day.

It's important that couples recognize what's most important to them when planning their weddings. Recognition of those priorities can help couples determine how to allocate their funds. Equally helpful can be how past couples have spent on their weddings.

Utilizing data from its most recent Real Weddings Study, the wedding experts at The Knot have calculated general percentages of a wedding budget couples can devote to various components. The estimated breakdown is as follows:

- Venue: 37%
- Catering: 28%
- Band: 12%
- Wedding rings: 9%
- Photography: 8%
- Flowers: 8%
- Alcohol: 8%
- Rehearsal dinner: 8%
- Videography: 7%



- Couples' attire: 7%
- Rentals: 6%
- DJ: 5%
- Wedding party attire: 4%
- Guest entertainment: 3%
- Transportation: 3%
- Ceremony music: 3%
- Cake and desserts: 2%
- Stationery: 2%
- Officiant: 1%
- Favors and gifts: 1%
- Additional jewelry: 1%

Couples with a keen eye might notice these percentages add up to significantly more than 100%. That's because the budgetary breakdown reflects personal preferences, individual couples' budgets, and what couples can expect to spend on certain components.

For example, The Knot data indicates a couple that prefers a band for their reception instead of a DJ may need to allocate roughly twice as much of their budget to accommodate that preference.

In addition, couples who do not intend to pay for wedding party members' attire can find other ways to allocate those funds, which The Knot data indicates typically accounts for roughly 4% of a wedding budget.

Another variable to consider is family. According to The Knot data, couples allocated an average of 8% of their budgets to their rehearsal dinner. However, couples' parents may offer to pay for that meal, which can leave more room in the budget for other expenses.

Additionally, The Knot reported that the percentage of couples asking a friend or family member to serve as their wedding officiant rose from 37% to 51% in a recent 5-year period. Wedding officiants do not often eat up a significant portion of a couple's wedding budget (1%), but this is another expense that modern couples may not need to account for.

Weddings can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Couples who determine how best to allocate their wedding budgets may find it far simpler to plan their big day.

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