

BRIDE'S GUIDE

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is wearing a white, sleeveless wedding dress with a V-neckline and a full skirt. She is posing with one hand on her hip and the other resting on her skirt. The background is a plain, light gray.

Newspaper Name Here | 2008

SNAP-TO!
NEW AGE WEDDING
ALBUMS

DO WEDDINGS NEED RULES?
A. YES B. NO C. MAYBE
D. ALL THE ABOVE

THERE GOES THE BRIDE:
SAYING YES TO
'TRASH THE DRESS'

THE FINER POINTS
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*** HOW TO COLOR**
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*** COUNTDOWN TO YOUR**
PERFECT WEDDING

SPRING 2008

Showstopppers!

BRIDES, GET READY FOR
YOUR STAR TURN

BEST WISHES

You’re in love, and soon you’ll be married. No matter where you are in the process – thinking about the ring, selecting your special day or nearly ready to walk down the aisle – you can use inspiration and informed advice. The key to a perfect wedding starts with a savvy bride and groom. That’s why we’re excited to bring you this edition of Bride’s Guide, your source for planning and enjoying one of life’s sweetest celebrations. Congratulations!



ON THE COVER:
Monique Lhuillier gown

SPRING 2008 GOWNS **Showstoppers!**

Brides, get ready for your star turn. Glamorously embellished new gowns for spring promise every woman her own Hollywood-style, red carpet moment.

WEDDING CAKES: **Too Much (Is Not Enough)**

Understated is out. Too much, even wa-a-y too much, is just what many brides crave in a wedding cake. Here’s what’s on the cutting edge.

Beyond the Wedding Album

Snap to it! Digital images and technology have opened the door to a wildly creative new world of making wedding-day memories.

Etiquette, Schmetiquette

Q. Should brides and grooms throw tradition by the wayside in creating the wedding they want?

A: Yes. No. And maybe.

A Little Dip’Il Do Ya

For some 21st-century brides, it’s all about drowning the gown.

I Do, I Hue

Somewhere between Will you marry me ... ? and Do you take ... ? lies a wedding’s third overwhelming question: What are your colors?

MY WEDDING, MY WAY

‘Our Friends Camped Out, and We Roasted Marshmallows at Our Wedding’

She didn’t want a white dress. She didn’t want bridesmaids. Ariel Meadow Stallings had issues with just about every wedding tradition in the book. Maybe that’s why, after her own offbeat nuptials, she rewrote the book.

Get a Grip: The Finer Points of Ex Etiquette

You’ve been there, done that – and now you’re doing it again. When former spouses are in the picture, the seating plan isn’t the only challenge. Here’s how to handle your past perfectly.

Books for Guys and Dolls

New reading for marrying types.



Brides,
get ready
for your
star turn.
Glamorously
embellished
new gowns
for spring
promise
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moment

The *Showstoppers*

By NOLA SARKISIAN-MILLER
CTW FEATURES

Sirens of the silver screen of yesteryear are today's muses for brides-to-be who are looking to channel their inner Rita Hayworth as they splurge on gowns redolent with glamorous accents. Whether it's cascading swirls on the backside of a gown from Reem Acra or beaded necklines and seams in Amsale's decadent creations, a bride wearing a Spring

2008 gown will be anything but invisible. This summer's poster child for the look was Eva Longoria, who wore a mermaid gown by Angel Sanchez made of silk wool with silk gazar metallic embroidery and a long train at her July 2007 wedding to basketball star Tony Parker.

The trick, designers say, is to create showstoppers without summoning up visions of Vegas showgirls.

"I'm looking at my wall of sketches and it's about Old Hollywood styles," says Victoria McMillan, a couture designer for New York-based Alvina Valenta. "It's a balancing act, however, to remain tasteful. I always ask myself if Grace Kelly would wear this gown."

"Quiet elegance" is the mantra at Los Angeles-based Monique Lhuillier.

"Monique makes it edgy, not overdone," says Lori Weil, sales director for Monique Lhuillier. "She stops before the showgirl aspect of it. The neckline is low but never garish. Embellishments are always feminine but never loud."

Indeed, when one mentions embellishments on gowns, many in the industry recoil at the thought of empty design and meaningless gilding. Designers are keeping it soft and romantic with pleated tulle sleeves and chiffon

ruffles on the neckline. Instead of heaping directionless beading on the gown, designers are strategically placing adornments to highlight the bride's features, such as Amsale's jeweled bustlines and



Designer Alvina Valenta keeps things soft and romantic by framing the neckline with spaghetti straps and brooches.

Lucite-inspired beading at the waist and Alvina Valenta's beaded spaghetti straps and brooch framing the neckline.

"Proportion is very important when using certain silhouettes," says Amsale Abera, who's also the designer for the Christos label,



Image courtesy Alfred Angelo

which is sold, at Saks Fifth Avenue, Kleinfeld in New York and Stanley Korshak in Dallas. "An empire gown emphasizes the detail on the top as well as framing the waistline."

Adds Michael Shettel, head designer for Alfred Angelo Bridal: "Embellishments can add a lot of unexpected drama to a dress, but in a very subtle way... [they're] a wonderful way to add more contour to a waistline or give a little extra lift or the look of volume to the bust."

The push for such exquisite detail dovetails with the escalating cost of gowns. Brides spend an average of \$1,500 on a wedding dress, according to theweddingreport.com, nearly double the price paid 10 years ago. Rising cost may be prompting designers to pile on the extras, perhaps in order to ensure that their patrons get their money's worth. They're even taking chances on more adventurous fabrics, beyond the world of silk and tulle. Junko Yoshioka, for example, incorporates faille, velvet chiffon, Italian shantung organza and subtle brocades in her collection.

"If brides are spending more, they want to see more elements in the gown," says Kirstie Kelly, a couture designer based in the affluent Los Angeles community of Brentwood, whose dresses have appeared on film and television.

Brides are definitely getting more for their green at Monique Lhuillier. The designer's \$12,000 lace dress with a tulle overlay embroidered with flowers and beading is "selling like popcorn," says Weil.

Floral touches are one way

Embellishments add drama to an Alfred Angelo gown, left. 'Quiet elegance' is the theme for Monique Lhuillier's gowns, right, whose embellishments 'are always feminine but never loud,' says sales director Lori Weil.



Image courtesy Monique Lhuillier

embellishments are looking springtime fresh. A Vera Wang strapless mermaid gown features a floral waist corsage; an off-the-shoulder sheath is punctuated with a flower. The motif has wended its way to Lazaro, where the designer is incorporating crystals in floral patterns on belts and embroidered chiffon flowers on

the gown. At Alfred Angelo, floral hip appliques attached where the draping intersects provide a sassy twist.

It's a design element that gives the dresses texture, say the designers.

"Creating beading on flowers gives the dress a more dimensional look; it's not so flat," says Kelly.



Image courtesy Junko Yoshida

Another defining feature of the gowns is the use of jewelry or jeweled effects in their styles. Taffeta sashes with a crystal brooch on an A-line gown at Vera Wang and Angel Sanchez's silk tulle gown over gauze with an inset of dramatic silver embroidery create a sparkling halo for brides. Those styles are inspiring brides to look for similar looks at slightly lower prices

"Our customer is very interested in what stands out," says Lynn Medoff, owner and designer of

Lena Medoyeff Bridal in Portland, Ore., where bridal gowns range in price from \$400 to \$1,200. "Customers are requesting that type of embellishment that allows their individuality to shine through."

How brides wear the embellished gown can be an even more important decision than deciding on their milestone dress. Some designers encourage their brides to have fun and go for the gusto when it comes to accessorizing their dream dress, especially if



Image courtesy Christos Bridal

No need to over do it: "When a dress has embellishments, brides need to scale everything back," says gown buyer Barbie Roberts. "The bride just needs pretty earrings or hairpins or a veil."



Image courtesy Lazaro

they're given heirlooms or jewels by their fiancé, says Alfred Angelo's Shettel.

"My personal motto has always been: 'Do whatever you feel is right for you and do not let fashion dictate what you should wear,'" says Rani Totman, designer for Dallas-based St. Pucchi, whose gowns are known for intricate embroidery.

Others worry about sensory overload or the gaudy factor. Lazaro suggests opting for a clean neckline and no necklace for a bride's red-carpet glide down the aisle.

"The bride just needs pretty earrings or hairpins or a veil," says Barbie Roberts, buyer for the bridal department at Julian Gold in San Antonio, Texas. "When a dress has embellishments, brides need to scale back everything else."

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Image courtesy Monique Lhuillier

Too Much (is Not Enough)

BY BEV BENNETT
CTW Features

Decked out in finery, topped with a glittering tiara and swathed in creamy, cascading folds, the center of so much anticipation stands quietly alone, awaiting the big moment.

This object of awe, the wedding cake, ranks second only to the bride for attention.

If you think this is hyperbole, you've never visited a cake room, where the statuesque bit of sugar and froth is enshrined for wedding guests to ogle and scrutinize.

Understated is out. Too much, even wa-a-y too much, is just what many brides crave in a wedding cake. Here's what's on the cutting edge

about a dessert and are just as happy to pick the cake and frosting style from a picture in a sample book, others see the wedding cake as a means to break new barriers of flavor, texture and color.

For some brides, says Weber, a wedding cake becomes "a personal statement. [They] don't want anyone else's cake style."

Despite regional preferences, you'll find certain trends in common among the top wedding cake bakers.

The era of elegant but simple cakes is giving way to one of more elaborate, larger-than-life confections.

"It's been replaced with over-the-top, grandeur, bigger-is-better," Weber says. "I'm doing a lot of cakes that are bigger than the wedding. People may have 200 guests but cake for 500; they're asking for cakes

the statuesque bit of sugar and froth is enshrined for wedding guests to ogle and scrutinize.

"It's No. 2, after the bride, in terms of importance," says Bronwen Weber, executive chef at Frosted Art Bakery & Studio in Dallas.

The cake, just like the bridal ensemble, presents an opportunity to express exclusivity and luxury. A bride who insists on intricate, original details for her gown often wants no less for her wedding cake. And just as the fashion dictates for a jaw-dropping, wedding-gown change each season, so do those for the cake.

Even though some couples still insist that the celebration isn't



Lace-like string work, rolled fondant swags and a sugar angel embellish this cake by Cheri Elder of Cakes by Cheri, Kansas City, Mo.

Image courtesy Hawks Photography

that are 6 feet tall for 50 of their closest friends.”

Eccentric cakes are also passé. The wacky reign of “mad hatter” cakes from “Alice in Wonderland” – multicolored spectacles with uneven layers stacked in a topsy-turvy manner – is over. Wedding-cake design has retreated into a statelier, traditional realm heavily influenced by the past. “Old-school beautiful,” is how Weber describes the new style.

“A lot of people are bringing in their grandmothers’ cake pictures,” asking not for a duplicate but for a cake inspired by the old-school model, she says.

How does all this stack up in cake layers? In a wedding era where nothing is as impressive as excess, here’s what’s in fashion, starting at the top.

CakeToppers

Crowns, tiaras, monograms and initials made from materials ranging from brushed metal to sterling silver are among the trendy toppers for wedding cakes.

A new twist in cake jewelry is a silver plate monogram encrusted with Swarovski crystal beads. “The bride can choose from 40 fonts and 80 colors of crystals,” says David Mess, owner of the Buttercream Collection, a bakery in St. Paul, Minn.

Sugar flowers, not monograms, are in peak demand in Texas, says Weber.

A rosette or sugar flower is one of the most expensive elements on a cake. Each flower can take 30 minutes to make and an impressive cake will have hundreds of cascading flowers. Expect to spend from \$1.50 to \$10 per flower, Weber says.

Say goodbye to the tradition of saving the top cake layer for the first anniversary. Since bakers of most high-end cakes shun the use of ingredients with preservatives, the year-old cake is inedible, even if dutifully frozen, according to Weber.

If you want a keepsake, Mess sells shadow boxes for displaying cake jewelry.

Cake Flavors

Wedding cakes are taking their cues from the bar, Weber claims.

Based on the hours it took her to create, baker Lori Cossou of Lori’s Creative Cakes, Oswego, Kan., estimates it would cost \$10,000 to make this five-tier dessert decorated with string work and a floral appliqué.



Image courtesy Hawks Photography



Image courtesy Hawks Photography

Handmade fondant feathers and orchid blossoms crafted from sugar gum paste bedeck this confection by Mark Seaman of Marked for Dessert, Chicago.

“In Dallas we’re doing cake flavors that are reminiscent of [cocktails], such as mint julep or mojito,” Weber says. Her mojito cake with lime curd and minted rum syrup is a favorite of grooms.

Since brides prefer chocolate and grooms more often opt for vanilla, according to Weber, wedding cakes have to include at least two different flavors to accommodate the couple. Some cakes have more.

Frosting Styles

Fondant – the flat rolled sugar paste that creates a pristine, virtually flawless surface for a wedding cake – has been the trendy choice for some time. But tastier buttercream is coming back in a big way. Buttercream is more finicky, but many people prefer the taste. Expect to pay more for it.

“Buttercream is more temperamental than fondant,” says Mess. It’s expensive because of the butter and because it demands that a cake be made closer to serving time. Buttercream also requires cooler storage. Fondant frostings prevent the cake from drying out, so baking can be done in advance, according to Mess.

Budget anywhere from \$4 to \$15 per serving for a buttercream cake, says Weber.

Chocolate Ganache

Who knew it was ever out?

Chocolate, though briefly banished, has been revived by the rage for ganache, an intense combination of chocolate and cream, used for frostings. “Ganache is hot, hot, hot,” Mess says.

CakeTextures

Replacing the sleek fondant shells that have been popular for several wedding seasons now, look for textures, finishes, patterns and folds that make a cake look like fabric.

Cake designers take their cues from the latest styles on fashion runways. “Go into Saks [Fifth Avenue], find Oscar de la Renta, bring in the fabric and we’ll make a transfer sheet that can be used as a panel [for the cake’s exterior],” says Mess.

Designers like Mess also will use a transfer process to recreate a

pattern or graphic design from fabric onto sheets of chocolate to decorate truffles.

Color

Yes. It’s permissible.

“Ten years ago it would have been unheard of to add color to a cake. No longer,” Weber says. Subtle isn’t essential, either.

“We did a hot fuchsia with lime green. It was stunning,” says Mess.

Presentation

A hunk on a plate isn’t enough.

Expect truffles, heart-shaped chocolates and garnishes for a complete presentation.

“The wedding cake is the last thing people eat at your wedding. It makes a statement,” Mess says.

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Images courtesy ArtZ Products

A stylish box for
500 4 x 6 proofs



The art of love: A hardbound coffee table book of wedding images, digitally printed and bound in leather, looks like a fine-art book published by a professional publisher.



The New Books of Love

Snap to it! Digital images and technology have opened the door to a wildly creative new world of making wedding-day memories

BY JESSICA ROYER OCKEN
CTW Features

MENTION THE WORDS wedding album and immediately it comes to mind: that gold-leafed, white "pleather"-covered monument to memories, filled with neatly spaced cascading 5x7s and 8x10s and bouffant hairdos.

But this is not your parents'

wedding. And, thankfully, presentation options for wedding photographs have progressed accordingly.

For starters, most professional wedding photographers are shooting digital images, rather than film, these days. "This has had a profound effect on the entire wedding industry, including how brides want to display and view

their images," says Arnie Burton of Millers Professional Imaging, which operates in Pittsburg, Kan., and Columbia, Mo. "In the old days there was one option: You ended up with a nice album. That's not necessarily even the primary option anymore."

Although many of his clients still select an album, Keith Moore, a wedding photographer based in

Little Rock, Ark., includes a DVD slideshow set to music in each of his packages. Lately he's gotten even more high-tech, recording snippets of sound from the wedding day with his iPod as he shoots.

"The DVD was the coolest thing Keith did," says Amy Tilson Buckley, whose July 2007 wedding was photographed by Moore. "He used sound bits from the ceremony, the toast my husband gave ... We had family members who couldn't make it and we've mailed

[the DVD] across the nation. People love it."

In some cases, photographers and videographers (amateur or pro) can work together to create a multimedia slideshow. Chad Weinard, a Durham, N.C.-based Web designer and artist, combined the professional pictures from his wedding with amateur video footage to create a short DVD presentation. "The DVD wove together the elements of our wedding that were most important to us," he explains. Photographs capture the Kiawah Island setting and "hidden gems" in the hours of video that otherwise would have languished in the basement. The evening's carefully planned and selected soundtrack provides a unifying element. "It was the only thing that could bring all of these together into a package of memory," he says.

Yet, there's nothing like a tangi-

ble photograph as a memento of the occasion, and although albums reinvent themselves from time to time, they'll likely never go away. "The photography business in general is very cyclical, not different than any major industry," says Dan Hammel, executive director of sales and marketing for Leather Craftsmen, Inc., a custom book-binding and now full-service album company based in Santa Ana, Calif., and Farmingdale, N.Y. "Now the hottest things since sliced bread are the collage-style books and flush-mounted albums. Photographers can build their own designs with multiple images on a single page."

"Flush-mounted" means a photograph is bonded to the album page so it lays "flush" with the edge, and, using the computer, images on a page can be combined, overlapped, faded in, or faded out. The latest album covers can be made from metal, glass or a rainbow of leathers.

But what if your sensibilities are a bit less modern? Matted-photograph albums also have entered the digital age. Museum-quality matted albums from Bozeman, Mont.-based Art Z offer an endless array of different-sized photo windows; white, black, or natural pages; and assorted leather or silk covers – not a gold edge in sight. "We stick with having a more fine-art feel," says Kristin VanDeWalle, Art Z's owner. "It just focuses in on the image. It's more like visiting a gallery in a book."

Art Z also has an option for those who like the photograph-directly-on-the-page look. Their version of the flush-mounted album features 100-percent cotton paper pages; photographs can be ink-jet printed on one or both sides.

You and your photographer are limited only by creativity, and you usually can choose to be as involved – or uninvolved – in the album-design process as you'd like.

"Today's lifestyle is such that a good percentage of brides are professionals. They're employed and they don't have time," says Burton. "They want to turn [their album] over to a professional and trust their ability and judgment." If you don't care to join the design team, your photographer may have your album ready when you return from your honeymoon.

However, for every hands-off couple who just wants a finished product, there's a pair of artistic

both [styles]," reports Hammel. "Years ago, our matted album had 8x10, 10x10, and 10x12 holes," he adds. "Now photographers are asking us to create openings that are 2x10 so they can do creative work with a strip of photographs."

Having your wedding pictures out in the open, rather than closed in an album, is another popular presentation. The composite images being created for modern album pages also are finding their

means couples can create their own personalized presentation.

Weinard and his wife, Ashley, made an old window into a coffee table and placed custom-sized prints of their honeymoon photos, along with odds and ends they collected while touring the Aeolian Islands, beneath the panes. Something similar could easily be created from wedding day photographs and keepsakes. "Photos trapped in a frame on the same wall for too long can become



'The album presentation is just the package,' says one photo expert. 'What makes people take notice is the storyline of the content.'

way to the wall, as are groups of framed single images. "The DVD will be what we cart around to show what our wedding was like, but I do plan to hang some pictures in my house," Tilson Buckley explains. "I like to do them more like artwork."

Although a photographer's expertise comes in handy for cropping, toning and printing larger wall-worthy images, many photographers also offer their clients a high-resolution CD of their wedding pictures to make prints on their own. This ensures that Aunt Irma gets a copy of every image she desires, and it

invisible," Weinard says. "I think it's nice that we use the table every day."

Whatever display you choose, remember that your photographs are where the memories live. "The album presentation is just the package," Hammel says. "What makes people take notice is the storyline content." So begin your quest for the perfect final presentation by finding a photographer whose style you like and who runs a reputable business. And, just be sure you do something with those images.

"What makes us nervous," Burton says, "is when a bride gets busy with life and puts her CD in a drawer and never gets any prints."

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Etiquette Schmetiquette

Q. Should brides and grooms throw tradition by the wayside in creating the wedding they want?

A: Yes. No. And maybe.

BY SALLY FARHAT KASSAB
CTW Features

DON'T TELL THEM what to wear, when to eat or who to invite. "It's our wedding, and we'll do what we want" is the mantra of most couples planning a trip down the aisle these days.

An Associated Press reporter writes about her wedding done her way: no cake (fancy desserts instead); no bridal party, no first dance. Popular Web sites like indiebride.com are made for "independent-minded" brides. And a growing crowd of "anti" wedding guide authors have set up raucous reading rooms outside the upholstered walls of traditional bridal advice literature, where the Posts (Emily and Peggy), Martha Stewart and, more recently, Carley "The Knot" Roney stand guard. Sassy titles like "Offbeat Bride," "Anti-Bride Guide" and "Anti-Bride Etiquette Guide" offer, as "Offbeat" author Ariel Meadow Stallings explains, "taffeta-free alternatives for independent brides."

In her own 2004 nuptials, Seat-

le-based Stallings writes that she dispensed with bridesmaids, the garter toss and monogrammed napkins and served Champagne in mismatched mugs. She maintains a blog where like-minded tradition-busters share their stories: a bride in a red wedding dress, bridesmaids on roller skates, brides displaying colorful expanses of tattooed skin in wedding day portraits.

While it's fine to put an original spin on a wedding, some experts remain unconvinced that traditions and etiquette should be thrown out the window.

"Unfortunately, for the last five or 10 years, we have spent a lot of time telling brides to do whatever they want," says Julie Raimondi, editor in chief of 16 "Brides Local" magazines across the country. "That's not really fair. All of us wedding media are partially to blame for creating the egomaniac couple."

She and other wedding experts say: Remember your family. Remember your guests.

"I hear complaints all the time," says Karen Bussen, author

of "Simple Stunning Wedding Etiquette" (Stuart, Tabori and Chang, 2008). "One of the problems is that we are living in a 'me'-oriented society. On one side, it's your wedding. On the other side, do you care about your family and others?"

The top rule: Don't offend your guests. My husband and I attended a wedding last year where guests

to offer guests just beer, wine and perhaps one "signature" drink instead of a full bar. Seem obvious? Maybe. But some issues are not so easy to navigate. What happens, for example, if a bride and groom do not want children at the reception – and your families have tons of them?

"I had a recent situation where the kids issue became a giant prob-

family members couldn't believe her 1-year-old wasn't invited."

Does this mean you always have to invite children? No; it's a personal choice. However, Bussen and other experts argue that marrying couples would do well to keep a simple rule in mind: It's not all about the bride and groom. Consider your family and friends.

"Weddings are ultimately a family event," Raimondi says. "If they weren't, we'd all just go to city hall. It's your job to be a good host. Otherwise, why are you having all these people over for a party?"

One of her particular pet peeves is when brides have many out-of-town guests and don't provide transportation from the reception, ceremony site and hotel. "All people want is to have a good time and know they can get home safely," Raimondi says. "I see brides spend thousands of dollars on their dress but forget things that basic."

Another blunder? Giving useless favors. "People don't need a miniature, steel wheelbarrow," Raimondi says. She suggests either giving something edible, or something a guest will actually use.

Are only brides at fault? Of course not. Brides, you have a right to get angry when guests don't RSVP. But it is unfortunately becoming more and more common for people not to.

"Friends don't realize a reply is not optional," Bussen says. "I think it's crazy that people don't reply

"All people want is to have a good time and know they can get home safely. I see brides spend thousands of dollars on their dress, but forget things that basic."

—Julie Raimondi, bridal editor

were asked to pay for their own drinks at the bar, and that was the talk of the party. "How could they be so cheap?" one guest said. A wiser approach might have been

lem, and several parents left the reception," Bussen says. "People who have children are offended that their kids are not welcome, and they put up a stink. One of the

to wedding invitations. They don't realize it's their social obligation to reply."

Another sticky area of etiquette is the bridesmaids issue: Do you

pick what they wear, even if it's expensive? Can you have a "man of honor" if your best friend is a guy? The answers fill modern wedding books. In fact, Bussen wrote her new one partially because she felt like times are changing so quickly, and these issues need to be addressed.

Are ushers and greeters important to have, for example? Chaos can quickly ensue when wedding guests are expected to seat themselves or root around in the back room for the box of programs. Take the pressure off your guests and provide directives in the form of helpful ushers and greeters.

Then there are the small, meaningful things that are rarely seen anymore: hand-addressed invitations. The trend now is pre-printed address labels. While computers are great, the Bride's Book of Etiquette says to address all invitations by hand. But how many brides these days actually sit and read books like this?

On the flip side, sometimes brides and grooms do things they think they need to, like spending a fortune printing "save the date" cards. Most of the time, these aren't necessary. An e-mail and word of mouth is usually plenty. Save-the-dates are meant for people who are having destination weddings or for those who are getting married over a holiday weekend.

And what about thank-you notes? Anyone who has received a pre-printed thank-you card, especially for a cross-country wedding, is likely to never forget it. "In that case, it [is] better for the person to send it a year later and have it handwritten," says Raimondi.

Tradition says you have two weeks to write notes for gifts received before the wedding; for gifts at or after the wedding, you have one month after your honeymoon. Realistically, the sooner the better.

Still confused? A good rule of thumb, wedding experts say, is to consider those most important to you.

"I don't like the word 'etiquette,'" Raimondi says. "What matters most is having a gracious bride and a thoughtful reception."

Bussen, the author of several

wedding books, agrees.

"My whole message is simplicity, and to get people to understand that etiquette is not necessarily about rules. It's about being gracious."

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Photo courtesy of Clare Norton Photography

A Little Dip'll Do Ya

For some 21st-century brides, it's all about drowning the gown



Cerullo, a bride in Portland, Maine, who gave her dress the water treatment after her September 2007 wedding and has the photos to prove it. "I wasn't looking to absolutely destroy the dress. I was looking for some fun, informal pictures that I didn't get to take with [husband] Chris on the wedding day."

A week after the wedding, their photographer, Clare Norton, snapped photos of Jaime and Chris decked out in their wedding attire next to a lighthouse, along a coastline walkway — and eventually in the Atlantic Ocean.

"I was really looking for somebody who would not worry about the dress," says Norton, who runs Clare Norton Photography in Portland. "She was a huge sport about it."

"Trash talking" is commonplace on bridal forums these days, and the chatter has been amplified by the "Trash

the Dress" blog run by Louisiana photographer Mark Eric. There, photographers from all over the globe post artfully framed images of brides captured in the act of "ruining" their gowns. And not all scenes are confined to the water. Wearing wedding



There goes the bride: Jaime Cerullo trashes her dress with a little help from groom Chris.

finery, the women are photographed sitting on grimy fire escapes, stretched out full length in the surf, twirling dreamily in abandoned buildings or perched in dead trees. One woman stands, inexplicably, on top of a round table, her back to the camera.

A widely held notion about dress trashing is that it symbolizes a woman's commitment to her new husband. Most dress trashers, though, say it's just fun. Photographers, meanwhile, have been happy to jump on the bandwagon.

"As a photographer, you want to do so much with your couples," Norton says. "If you have somebody who's fun and wants to do those things,

it lets me be creative."

Some trashed dresses survive the degradation. A number of charities accept donated gowns — fresh from the cleaners, of course. Brides Against Breast Cancer resells good-as-new gowns to support the Making

Memories organization. If children are in her future, Cerullo plans to have a seamstress convert her dress into christening gowns. For now, though, she's

keeping the gown handy for whenever she gets the itch to slip back into it for a sentimental moment.

The Maine bride says the gown-trashing ritual definitely isn't for everyone, but her fully dressed dip in the ocean couldn't have turned out better.

"It was perfect weather, and the water was a lot warmer than I thought," she says.

Now, Norton's looking into how she can keep up the fun well into winter.

"One of the couples wants to do ice skating and sledging [engagement photos]," she says. "I'm going to talk to them about trash-the-dress sledding!"

— Timothy R. Schulte

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Taffeta, tulle, chiffon and charmeuse are words often associated with wedding gowns. Waterproof? Not exactly. But that's not stopping brides from drenching the dresses of their dreams.

In a new take on "From Here to Eternity," where Burt

Lancaster and Deborah Kerr embrace passionately on the beach as the surf rolls around them, brides everywhere, with an accomplice photographer, are heading to the water to "trash the dress."

"Now that I have these pictures I wouldn't trade them for anything," says Jaime

iStock photo

I Do, I Hue

Somewhere between Will you marry me...? and Do you take...? lies a wedding's third overwhelming question: What are your colors?

BY KATE SULLIVAN
CTW Features

BLAME MARTHA STEWART, bridezillas or whoever it was who begot the idea of The Perfect Wedding. Choosing a color scheme for the big day has become a very big deal.

A bride is now invited to contemplate the question of color coordination across a wide array of merchandise, from her save-the-date cards and invitations right through to color accents on her wedding dress and parting gifts for guests.

Choosing a favorite hue or two can have big benefits: A color scheme can help bring cohesion and visual beauty to a special event.

"This increase of using color intentionally when planning a wedding comes from a couple's desire to have cohesiveness," explains Stacy McCain of Alison Events in San Francisco. "Clients

today want to create an experience for guests rather than just a wedding day."

But there's clearly more to the color strategy than first meets the eye.

Choosing a wedding's colors helps impose a bit of order on what can be a complex, difficult-to-govern event. Using color can simplify virtually any question that pops up, from the matter of aisle runners to the cocktail of the day.

What's a bride to do? Resist the temptation to seize on your favorite color and let 'er rip. The season and the venue of a wedding reception are the best clues to selecting appropriate wedding colors, experts say. If a ceremony and reception fall at night in the autumn or winter seasons, look for something elegant, like chocolate brown or navy, in lieu of black. If a wedding will take place outside in the summer, stick with

clean sages, ivories or whites.

The No. 1 piece of advice when it comes to choosing a wedding's tints and tones? Don't fight with what the venue already offers – go with the color palette the location itself suggests. This might mean adjusting your dream of turquoise if your reception site is based in muted grays and purples.

Using your choice of color strategically, your wedding package will light up the sky.

tastes. A sweater that catches your eye in a fashion magazine might just be the base of your wedding palette. Ellen Heisler, associate fashion editor of "Brides Magazine," sees designers highlighting of-the-moment fashion colors, including deep purples, burnt oranges, cherry reds, smoky charcoal and nautical navy. Grassy greens remain popular for spring and summer affairs; yellow is a new hot spot for Spring 2008.

Do Your Homework

Choosing your color scheme means selecting from a sea of options, much as you might select a crayon from the big Crayola box. McCain advises brides to seek inspiration by looking beyond the obvious bridal magazines. Browsing through décor magazines you can see colors and textures in a true light. Take a step back from the wedding perspective and select tones that truly please your

Don't Go Overboard

A little color goes a long way. So stop and think before you decree that all six groomsmen must wear plum-colored tuxes to match your purple color palette. Success with a wedding color scheme is all about the little stuff.

"Keep it clean and simple," McCain warns. Heisler agrees: "Incorporate colors throughout as accents." The goal is to please the eye. Don't overwhelm your guests

2008's Hot Colors

INSTEAD OF...	TRY THESE
Black	Chocolate, navy, plum or charcoal gray for color sophistication
Pink	Cherry red or burnt orange to pack a punch
Powder blue	Sage green or yellow for a daytime or an outdoor venue

with a color statement; let them discover it on their own.

Here are ways to add splashes of color with style:

- **Drink it:** Add instant color infusion with a specialty cocktail. Is purple your choice of pigment? Think Pomegranate Champagne Sparkles. Give a nod to your green tones with Apple Martinis.

- **Taste it:** Incorporate your colors in the wedding cake. McCain's clients love to keep the look clean and white, serving all-white confections at the close of the reception.

- **Wear it:** One of McCain's brides wore a traditional white wedding dress but rocked raspberry red lace-up high heels to give a kick to her color choice.

- **Accessorize with it:** Embellish your wedding hair with a flower or clip from your color family: an orange Canadian Lily or a vintage antique navy hairpin.

- **Sash it:** A colored sash on the bride's dress is a look that's become common. Go for color cohesion by outfitting flower girls in traditional dresses tied with a colorful cloth.

- **Groom's choice:** Pass on the head-to-toe color for grooms-men; just a splash of color – in the groomsmen's ties, for example – can look classy.

- **Hold it:** Bundle your bouquets with your bold color accent.

- **Display it:** Colorful napkins aren't the only element of the table that can tell the color story. Adorn each napkin holder with a lavender sprig.

- **Print it:** The easiest way to keep color cohesion is through print. Use your main color choice on the save-the-date, invitation, welcome cards for out of town guests, place setting and menu cards.

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Just the One

Monochromatic use of one color throughout a wedding is a no-no – with one exception. McCain gives the green light to going over-the-top with a single color at the after party, where a dramatic shot of color can add to the post-reception revelry.

“When creating a space completely different from the wedding, like a lounge for your late night, bring in crazy lighting and textured draping in one color of your choice.” Color instantly changes the vibe and mood, transporting you and your guests from reception mode to retro mode in seconds.

MY WEDDING, MY WAY

I Planned a Day I Hope Will Make My Grandkids Laugh

She didn't want a white dress.

She didn't want bridesmaids.

Ariel Meadow Stallings had issues with just about every wedding tradition in the book. Maybe that's why, after her own offbeat nuptials, she rewrote the book

BY CHRISTINA OWENS
CTW Features

THE COUPLE: Ariel Meadow Stallings and Andreas Tillman Fetz

THE DAY: Saturday, Aug. 4, 2004 6 p.m.

THE PLACE: Bainbridge Island, Wash.

The wedding was at a bed and breakfast, Holly Lane Gardens, and the reception was just down the dirt road on my mom's property, Sacred Grove.

IN ATTENDANCE: About 40 guests. I wrote my book "Offbeat Bride" (Seal Press, 2006) as one giant

thank-you to all my friends and family.

PLANNING: It took us about six months. It was very much a collaborative process. We picked the things that were important to us.

A CHANGE OF HEART: I foresaw gold monogrammed napkins and a princess dress and knew it just

wasn't in the cards. Marriage seemed weird to us with our gay families and both of our sets of parents divorced. But one Christmas the three lesbians in the room (my mother, aunt and aunt's partner) all commented on the irony that Andreas and I - a straight couple who could get married - would choose not to enjoy the rights for which so many committed gay and lesbian couples fight. By the time our third wedding anniversary rolled around, my

thoughts on getting married had shifted.

THE COMMUNITY: What we needed more than more stuff was friends and family to help us make the wedding fabulous. If our wedding had a theme, that was the theme. Most of the gifts we received were gifts of time and skill. The guests were really a part of the wedding. It was a kind of community endeavor. There were parts of our wedding

that were beautiful in ways that I never could have thought of. There were really amazing gifts from people that were way better than a set of towels.

OPENING THE PRESENTS EARLY: Our caterer and bartender were gifts from friends in Los Angeles. She cooked. He poured drinks. Two friends served as kind of wedding coordinators. One handled the reception and one handled the wedding and dinner venue. That





The bride, above with the newly formed clan, admits the idea of marriage seemed 'weird' to her at first, but she warmed up it. Guests at wedding hula-ed the night away, right.



was their gift to us. Two friends helped with location management, handling crews of people putting up decorations. One friend acted as bridal bodyguard. There were people out in the woods collecting ferns and cedar boughs to make table displays. One family stuffed tomatoes. I'm a big proponent of creative wedding parties.

THE ACCOMMODATIONS: Our guests started showing up Friday night and showed up with tents. People camped out on my mom's property.

THE DRESS: I had a bustier-style pur-

ple corset top with a matching ribbon headpiece worn around two large buns in my hair, and layered, green-and-white skirts. Later, my mother wore my corset at her wedding.

THE REHEARSAL DINNER: A campfire with marshmallows.

THE CEREMONY: Our ceremony was very short, only about 15 minutes from start to finish. The traditional wedding just doesn't really offer me much.

THE 'OOPS': I forgot my vows half way through. I stumbled on one line that I just couldn't quite

remember. But our minister, my godmother, had given me a tip beforehand that it was perfectly fine to pause. So I just stopped for a second and took a breath and paused to see if I could remember what came next. I couldn't, so I just went on to the next sentence.

THE SAVE: The truth is that I forgot my vows, but many of the guests thought I had paused because I was choked up. It was seen as a really touching emotional moment. This apparently was the point at which all the guests started crying. For me it wasn't touching at all, it was really more panic-inducing.



Ariel and her friends spent a few months making the "muglies" that the couple gave guests as favors, left. Below, the happy en route to saying 'I do.'



THE CAKE: Our wedding cake was a gift from my best friend in high school who's a baker. I thought, as long as it's carrot cake and it's my friend making it, who cares? The cake was made in the shape of two rings intersected almost like an infinity symbol. One of the rings was vegan for Andreas and one of the rings was not vegan, and we fed each other cake.

STEMLESS GLASSLESS GLASSWARE: Our wedding favors were these things we called "muglies." My friends and I spent a couple months before the wedding buying old mugs from second-hand stores. We put stickers on each of the mugs and wrote an explanation. And that was their drink container for the night. It was sort of this

SOMETHING BORROWED: We actually really liked the Jewish tradition of Yichud, where immediately after the ceremony the bride and the groom have private time together. More than anything else it was just us having a quiet moment, just the two of us. So we imported a tradition.

THE MENU: A vegan buffet. Andreas decreed that we would have an all-vegan dinner at our wedding. I put up a tiny argument ("But I'm not vegan!") but ultimately I sympathize with the fact that he is very rarely in an environment where everything is vegan. If there's any event that should cater to his diet, it should be ... our wedding.

way of saying these aren't just ugly mismatched mugs that cost 25 cents, this is a symbol of the beautiful diversity and eclecticism of our family and friends.

THEY DANCED UNTIL: 3 a.m. to music provided by three different DJs.

THE YEAR OF THE WEDDING: We wanted it to feel like 2004. This is a slice of exactly where Andreas and I were when we got married. For some people, the motivation for planning a wedding is, 'I don't want my grandchildren to laugh at my pictures.' I want my grandkids to laugh.

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GET A GRIP!

The Finer Points of Ex Etiquette

BY MARGARET LITTMAN
CTW Features

In the old days, movies were black-and-white and, to a certain extent, so were relationships.

But just as today there are live-action, anime, direct-to-DVD, Web-only and many other kinds

of (or third) time and may have an ex who is the father of their children, and those kids, clearly, have a vested interest in any new marriage.

Even without kids, the ex situation can be complicated. Not every break-up is acrimonious. It is possible to remain friends with an ex. Thus, the role an ex-spouse or former significant other plays

folks don't choose to break those ties when the romantic relationship ends. While amicable divorces are not the norm, an increasing number of couples have ongoing contact with their exes, experts say.

While these relationships can be more confusing than they were back in the days when couples never spoke to one another

ing big day and figuring out how to include him or her – or not – in the festivities.

Keep your ex in the know when it comes to tying the knot. The impulse for many people is to keep news about nuptials under wraps around an ex, particularly if they're not sure how the ex will respond to definitive verification that they have moved on. But Jann Blackstone-Ford, author of "Ex-Etiquette for Weddings: The Blended Families' Guide to Tying the Knot" (Chica-

plans with your ex the day of your wedding.

No surprises, part two. Your new sweetie probably isn't too fond of surprises, either, especially those that involve the former love of your life. If you are close enough friends with your ex to consider inviting him or her to your wedding, your betrothed should already know that. Take steps to introduce the two to one another and make sure your soon-to-be spouse is comfortable with your ex, if not friends, before you issue

You've been there, done that – and now you're doing it again. When former spouses are in the picture, the seating plan isn't the only challenge. Here's how to handle your past, perfectly

of movies, so, too, are there plenty of different kinds relationships. As people wait until later in life to marry, they are more likely to have former relationships that can't be ignored. Some brides-to-be are getting married for the sec-

when a new beau comes on the scene can be confusing. When a couple spent years in a serious relationship but never married, the ex still may have formed close bonds with family members who were the unofficial in-laws. Some

after they split up, wedding experts say complicated and civil aren't mutually exclusive. If your ex is still in the picture – be it black-and-white or color – try these time-tested tips for both telling your ex about your upcom-

go Review Press, 2007), says "the worse thing you can do is surprise an ex. No one likes surprises."

If you've followed the no-surprises rule throughout your relationship, then your ex already knew that your new courtship was serious. He won't caught off guard that you've decided to marry again.

Blackstone-Ford came by her ex expertise honestly. She co-wrote the "Ex-Etiquette" book series with Sharyl Jupe, the ex-wife of Blackstone-Ford's husband, so she knows how intertwined relationships with exes can be. "Your ex does not need to be invited if you do not get along. But, if you are co-parenting, he or she still needs to know the basics." At the very least, she adds, telling your ex about the wedding ensures that your kids don't have to break the big news – and that they won't have other

an invite. If your partner has objections to your friendship with your ex, or you to your partner's, this is something you should discuss before you take your vows.

Don't feel forced.

Helene Taylor, president and founder of the Modern Woman's Divorce Guide, says that if you and your spouse-to-be feel uncomfortable around your ex, don't invite him or her, even if you feel like you should because your kids will be there. You can make the kids feel part of the process without having both parents in attendance.

Invite a guest. If you do decide to invite your ex, make sure he or she has the option of bringing a date, says Harriette Rose Katz, president of New York-based Harriette Rose Katz Events

and author of “Where to Seat Aunt Edna and 500 Other Great Wedding Tips,” (Hundreds of Heads Books, 2006). This is not the place to trim the guest list. “You want to make sure that you seat them at a table where they have fun, make sure they have a good time.”

Seat smart. Even if you had the most amicable divorce in history, there’s no reason to flaunt that at your wedding. Seat your ex (and his or her guest) away from the head table. Even if your ex and your extended family have remained close, there’s no reason to force everyone together over dinner. Plus, you do not want to make your new spouse’s family uncomfortable. Create a seating plan that assures your ex will be seated with people he or she knows and likes. Let him or her mingle with your family later.

Forget about it. Finally, Taylor says there are some instances where the ex question is a non-issue. “If the ex is not friends with either party, there is no need to tell him or her about the wedding or issue an invitation. The relationship is over and it’s time to move forward.” After all, you’re getting married. You have enough to worry about without creating more drama.

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BOOKS FOR GUYS AND DOLLS

New reading for marrying types

Easy Wedding Planning Plus, 6th Edition by Elizabeth Lluch (Wedding Solutions, 2007) \$19.95

How to be Absolutely Irresistible: Make Friends, Attract Romance and Show the World Your True Charm by Lisa Helmanis (Ulysses Press, 2007) \$15.95

The DIY Bride: 40 Fun Projects for Your Ultimate One-of-a-Kind Wedding by Khris Cochran (Taunton, 2007) \$19.95

Martha Stewart's Wedding Cakes by Martha Stewart (Clarkson Potter, 2007) \$60

The Hard Questions: 100 Questions to Ask Before You Say 'I Do' by Susan Piver (Tarcher, 2007) \$10

The Knot Book of Wedding Lists by Carley Roney (Clarkson Potter, 2007) \$12.95

Beautiful Weddings by Carole Hamilton (Ryland Peters & Small, 2008) \$29.95

Let's Dance: The Complete Book and DVD of Ballroom Dance Instruction for Weddings, Parties, Fitness, and Fun (Let's Dance) by Cal Pozo (Hatherleigh Press, 2007) \$19.95

The Bride's Diplomacy Guide: Answers to 150 of the Most Crucial and Annoying Questions That Face a Bride to Be by Sharon Naylor (Adams Media Corp., 2007) \$12.95

The Groom's Instruction Manual: How to Survive and Possibly Even Enjoy the Most Bewildering Ceremony Known to Man by Shandon Fowler (Quirk Books, 2007) \$15.95

The Sweet Potato Queens' Wedding Planner/Divorce Guide by Jill Conner Browne (Three Rivers Press, 2007) \$13.95

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ADDITIONAL COVERS TO USE WITH YOUR LAYOUT.





Countdown to Your *Perfect Wedding*

Congratulations! You're in love, you've set a wedding date, and soon you will be married. Between the romance and the ritual, however, there's some work to be done.

A wedding celebration can be as simple or as elaborate as you and your groom choose to make it. Newly engaged couples who resist plunging pell-mell into the planning process may be the most successful planners of all.

First, take a moment to dream. Summon up a clear image of the wedding you and your groom want – the image, feel and atmosphere – before you take a single step.

A step-by-step guide to help keep the stars in your eyes, your feet on the ground and your wedding plans on track.

Before rushing out to book a hall, order hors d'oeuvres and ice down the champagne, seek clarity. Who are you and your fiancé? Who, and what, is important to you? Take the time to define your idea of an ideal wedding. This will pay off later, helping with the decision-making for your ceremony and reception.

When you've decided on the overall tone for your special day, it's time to get down to business. Couples who tackle wedding planning pragmatically, as if it were a work-related project, tend to survive the process with greater ease.

Think of yourself as project managers. Establish an overall framework for completing the work, set specific intermediate deadlines, schedules and goals and divide the tasks. Taken one small job at a time, the detail-laden job becomes less overwhelming.

Here is our suggested timetable for the steps you should take in the months, weeks and days leading up to your wedding. Start here to envision and plan the wedding of your dreams.

9-12 months before your wedding

- Choose your wedding date. If you plan to be married in a church, temple or mosque or in a religious service at home, clear the date and time with your clergy.
- Announce your engagement in local newspapers.
- Set your budget. Take time for a heart-to-heart talk with your fiancé about the budget and style of your wedding, reception and wedding-related parties, and who pays for what.
- Enlist help. Consider hiring a bridal consultant. If your budget won't stretch that far, ask relatives and close friends to assist you in specific tasks – selecting a dress, interviewing caterers, locating a reception site – especially in areas where you feel you need support.
- Compose your guest list. Let out-of-town guests know your wedding is in the works so they can make travel plans.
- Reserve your reception site.
- Choose your wedding attendants.
- Select your wedding gown, shoes and accessories.
- Decide on bridesmaids' dresses.
- Determine the theme or mood you'd like to establish with the food, table settings, flowers and entertainment at your reception.
- Interview caterers, musicians, florists, photographers, videogra-

phers and bakers. Get written estimates of their costs. Keep track of your discussions and their bids in a notebook or with wedding-planning software.

6 months before your wedding

- Choose your caterer. Remember to get a written contract.
- Choose your musician(s).
- Book your photographer and/or videographer.
- Select your baker and order the cake.
- Choose your florist.
- Decide on your color scheme.
- Shop for wedding rings with your fiancé.
- Decide on your honeymoon destination. Work with a travel agent to book your travel and accommodations.
- Select your wedding invitations. Don't forget to purchase personal stationery for the thank-you notes you'll need to write.

4 months before your wedding

- Register for gifts at one or more bridal-gift registries.
- Help both mothers to coordinate and shop for their wedding-day attire.
- Select music for your ceremony and reception.
- Choose readings for your wedding and write your wedding vows.
- Plan a rehearsal dinner for members of your wedding party, your family and out-of-town guests. Reserve the location.
- Arrange hotel accommodations for members of the wedding party who live out of town. Reserve a block of rooms for other out-of-town guests, and let them know the rooms are available. Remember to ask for any group discounts or special packages.

- Reserve your wedding-day transportation and any other wedding-day rental needs.
- Make appointments for gown fittings.
- Check the requirements for a marriage license.
- Make sure contracts and arrangements are complete with all of your service providers.

3 months before your wedding

- Carefully prepare directions, including simply drawn maps, if necessary, to help guide guests to the wedding and reception, and to hotels. For guests who will travel a long distance to your wedding, consider assembling an information package on fun things to do and see in your area.
- Begin addressing invitations and announcements. Select a special stamp at the post office. Invitations should go in the mail six to eight weeks before your big day.
- Give the caterer or other food suppliers a close idea of the number of guests you expect.
- Make sure all reservations are in place for honeymoon travel.
- Check with bridesmaids to make sure they have their gowns and are getting them adjusted.
- Shop for gifts for your bridesmaids. Offer to help your fiancé select gifts for his attendants.
- Select your "going away" outfit and special items for your trousseau.
- Make a date with your photographer for any formal portraits you desire.
- Make an appointment to have your hair done just before your portrait session and again the day or so before your wedding. Consider including your bridesmaids in a "day of beauty" before your wedding, with

manicures, hair styling, massages and makeup sessions.

2 months before your wedding

- Mail out your wedding invitations and announcements.
- Have wedding portraits taken.
- Send bridal portrait and wedding announcement to newspapers for publication.
- Finalize the music that will be played during your wedding ceremony.
- Meet with musicians who will provide entertainment during your reception and orchestrate precisely what you want and when you want it played.
- Don't be shy to voice your preferences, down to the volume, favorite songs you'd like to hear or even songs you don't want played.
- Plan your rehearsal dinner and a brunch or fun activity for out-of-town guests to enjoy on the day following your wedding.
- Purchase special accessories for your wedding-day attire.
- Plan a luncheon for your bridesmaids.
- Make appointments for a hairdresser, makeup artist and manicurist.
- Finalize honeymoon plans. If you're traveling overseas, check again that your passports are current and that you have any necessary visas.
- Gather necessary birth or baptismal certificates you may need for your wedding license.

1 month before your wedding

- Get your wedding license.
- Have a final fitting of your gown and make sure your attendants have theirs.
- Check that your menu selections and service plans are locked in place with the caterer.

- Purchase a special book to keep track of wedding gifts as they arrive.
- Keep writing those thank-you notes on a daily basis!
- If you plan a formal dinner for your reception, it's time to draw up a seating plan and make up place cards.
- Check with your florist to confirm dates and times of flower deliveries.
- Review your wedding-day transportation plans and make sure drivers are clear about addresses, times and number of passengers.
- Make name or address changes official on documents, including driver's license, Social Security forms and financial accounts. Fill out change-of-address forms at the post office.
- Meet with your photographer to specify the formal shots you want taken of the bridal party, as well as specific, candid shots you'd like taken during the reception.
- Review the video plans with your videographer.

2 weeks before your wedding

- Keep writing those thank-you notes for wedding gifts!
- Pick up your wedding rings. Make sure any special engraving appears precisely as you wished.
- Begin packing for honeymoon.

1 week before your wedding

- Make final checks with all your vendors: officiant, musicians, florist, photographer, videographer, limousine or other transportation provider, caterers and baker.
- Ask a friend or family member to arrange for wedding gifts that may be brought to your reception to be delivered to

your home or another safe spot.

- Wrap gifts for bridal attendants and have them ready for the rehearsal dinner.
- Purchase travelers' checks and reconfirm honeymoon travel and hotel plans.
- See that checks are written and ready to be handed out to vendors at the agreed-upon time.
- Inform your caterer of the final number of guests. Confirm that out-of-town guests are set with hotel accommodations, transportation and wedding-day directions.

The day before your wedding

- Take time to relax and enjoy a massage, manicure and pedicure.
- Traditionally, this is the day for your rehearsal ceremony and rehearsal dinner. Have fun!
- Turn in early for a good night's sleep.

Your Wedding Day

- Allow plenty of time for dressing, makeup and hair styling.
- If you plan on photography before the ceremony, allow ample time so you're not rushed.
- Relax, and remember: This is your special day, the result of all your careful planning. Now it's time to enjoy. Take a deep breath. Refuse to let any glitch get to you. Savor every moment of this sacred day. Let your joy and happiness shine through. Best wishes!

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