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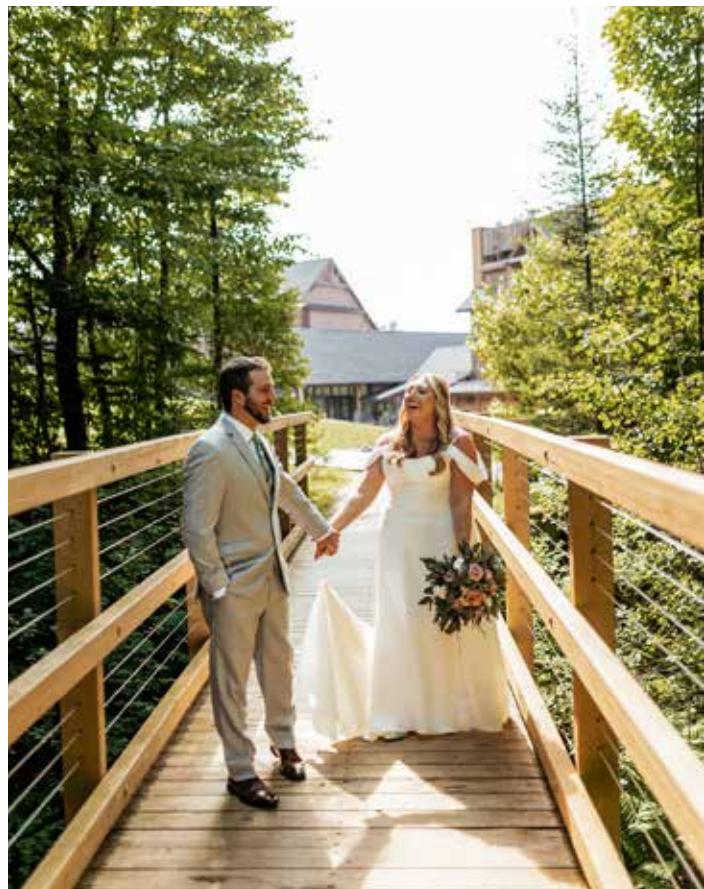
Bridal & Wedding Guide



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Shawn and Kelsey Bear stroll hand-in-hand across a Burke Mountain walkway following their July 2025 marriage ceremony. (Photo by Kelsey Gilman of K&E Photography/www.kephotographyvt.com)

Picture A Wedding Locally With K & E Photography

Pictures of area wedding scenes found in this publication are provided courtesy of K&E Photography, a business based in Lyndonville.

Owner and photographer Kelsey Gilman is a 2008 graduate of St. Johnsbury Academy. She attended an Art Institute for digital photography in Tampa, Florida, after high school. In 2014, she moved back to Vermont and got her start in professional photography by assisting an established photographer in the area.

In June 2021 she left her job as an insurance agent and committed to photography as her livelihood.

Many of the weddings she photographs are held at local venues. Her photographs published in this guide are moments she captured at three of the special places couples choose for their marriage celebrations.



Kelsey Gilman, of
K&E Photography

Kelsey already has 13 weddings scheduled for this year and is ready to book more. She said she is also scheduling out for 2027.

"I love being able to witness so many amazing love stories and meeting so many wonderful people that I would otherwise have never met," she said.

Kelsey Gilman lives in Lyndonville with her significant other, Devon Phillips, and two daughters. The name of her older daughter, 11-year-old Evelyn, is where she got the "E" in K&E Photography.

Gilman said her photography business also focuses on families, seniors and boudoir. Learn more about the photography business by going to her website: www.kephotographyvt.com; IG: @kephotographyvt



Jessica and Brody Bate celebrate their wedding in September 2025 at the Barn at Top of the World in Derby. (Photo by Kelsey Gilman/www.kephotographyvt.com)

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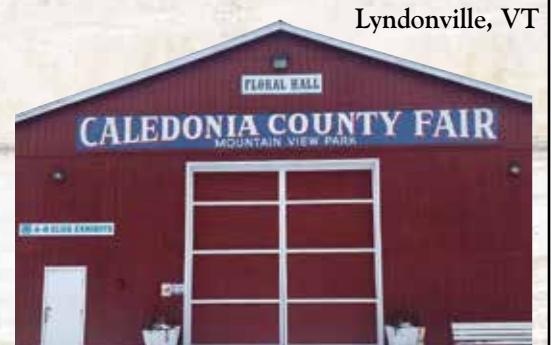
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Shawn and Kelsey Bear walk in wedded bliss on Burke Mountain following their July 2025 marriage ceremony. (Contributed Photo by Kelsey Gilman of K&E Photography/www.cephotographyvt.com)



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Lisa Patrick and David Kiyak marry at the Notch House at Lake Willoughby in August 2025. (Contributed Photo by Kelsey Gilman/www.kephotographyvt.com)



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Tips to streamline a wedding day

Marriage is a social institution that is thousands of years old. Marriage has undergone changes over the years, but plenty of people are still tying the knot and hosting amazing wedding celebrations. A total of 2,065,905 marriages were recorded in the United States in 2022. Statistics Canada indicates 98,355 registered marriages took place in 2020. Prospective brides and grooms may be inclined to host more simplified and streamlined weddings in order to save money and time. Finding ways to streamline a wedding is not necessarily that challenging.

- **Keep the ceremony short.** While this may not always be an option for couples who are having a traditional religious ceremony that is beholden to the rules of the faith, some couples can opt for a shortened ceremony that is more direct and to the point. A streamlined ceremony can stick strictly to the exchange of vows, rather than including readings, musical interludes, candle lighting ceremonies, and more. Couples who want religious ceremonies can speak with their officiants to see how they can stick to tradition, but keep the ceremony more succinct.

- **Communicate roles for the wedding party.** Having designated people to handle a variety of tasks at the wedding fosters efficiency and can

save time by moving things along. It also allows for smooth transitions during parts of the ceremony. For example, the maid of honor traditionally holds the bride's bouquet during the ceremony. But other bridesmaids can be enlisted to hold items or fix the bride's train or veil as well.

- **Select one venue.** Holding the wedding ceremony and reception in the same place cuts down on travel time and logistical issues for both the guests and those involved in the wedding. It also reduces necessary costs for transportation.

- **Choose a nearby location.** Asking guests and vendors to travel great distances can add time to the wedding festivities. Selecting a centrally located ceremony site and reception hall will streamline many of the steps people would have to take to attend. It also might remove the need to arrange overnight accommodations for the wedding.

- **Hire a wedding coordinator.** A professional planner and coordinator will keep the wedding moving along on time and ensure a smooth process. This professional can remain emotionally neutral, solve problems and ensure that everyone is in the right place.

Streamlining a wedding and making it more efficient can save time and money.

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A checklist of vendors to facilitate wedding planning

Planning a wedding is a significant undertaking. Though many tasks associated with wedding planning are enjoyable, the number of variables that must be coordinated can make the process feel a little overwhelming at times. Staying organized can make wedding planning a lot easier, and this checklist of vendors can be utilized by couples looking to stay calm as they plan their big day.

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Anna and Austin Beveridge enjoy their summer 2025 wedding day on Burke Mountain. (Contributed Photo by Kelsey Gilman/www.kephotographyvt.com)

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Jessica and Brody Bate celebrate their wedding in September 2025 at the Barn at Top of the World in Derby. (Photo by Kelsey Gilman/www.kephotographyvt.com)

3 tips to create a reasonable wedding budget

Weddings are momentous occasions in the lives of couples. Recently engaged couples likely know that weddings can be expensive. The experts at the online wedding resource Zola estimated that couples would spend around \$36,000 on their weddings in 2025. If that figure produces some sticker shock, couples can rest easy in the knowledge that such estimates reflect a host of variables, not all of which are applicable to each wedding. It also can calm couples' nerves to develop a budget as the first step in wedding planning. Once a budget is worked out, couples can then use that to guide their decisions. The need to budget for a wedding may seem obvious, but couples, particularly those tying the knot for the first time, might not know where to begin. Couples facing such a situation can consider these three budget-building tips for their wedding.

1. Identify where funds are coming from. Parents of the bride were once the traditional sources of wedding funds, but that's less common than it used to be. According to The Knot Real Weddings Study, the average age of marriage in 2024 was 32 years. That

means many couples are now on relatively firm financial footing by the time they get married, prompting some to pay for the entire affair themselves. Couples looking to establish a wedding budget can first identify who's helping to fund it. If couples are going it alone, then this is a simple step in the process. If parents and other relatives offer to pitch in, couples can count such offers toward the total amount of money they have to fund the big day.

2. Consider working with a financial planner. Another strategy to building a budget is to work with a professional to

determine how much you can afford. Many couples now live together prior to getting engaged, and Zola notes that more than half (53 percent) even shop for rings together. Advanced wedding planning can be a wise move, particularly for couples footing the bill on their own or with minimal assistance from family members. A financial planner can help couples determine what they can afford and offer tips to grow their existing wealth with an eye on paying for their wedding.

3. Identify your priorities. The Knot reports that venue and rentals accounted for slightly more than one-quarter (27 percent) of couples' wedding budgets in 2025. While venues and rentals are typically the biggest expense when planning a wedding, couples building a budget should identify their biggest priority. Some might want a stunning venue, while others might feel a backyard ceremony is perfect for them. Identifying your biggest priorities and then devoting enough funds to those areas can guide the budget-building process. Weddings can be expensive. Budgeting can help couples get the wedding they want without breaking the bank.

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Did You **KNOW?**

Weddings are made up of various components, and coordinating those elements can be a significant undertaking. In addition to accommodating their own needs, couples must consider a host of variables unique to their situation, including budget. When establishing a wedding budget, couples may want to allocate a significant percentage of their funds to the reception.

According to The Knot 2025 Weddings Study, much of the cost of a wedding, which cost an average of \$33,000 in 2025, can be traced to reception-related expenses such as food and drinks, entertainment and venue. The Knot study found that couples spent roughly 27 percent of their wedding budget on venue and rentals, 24 percent on catering (including drinks and cake) and 11 percent on music and guest entertainment.



Katarina and Evan Leonard marry on Burke Mountain in September 2025. (Photo by Kelsey Gilman of K&E Photography/www.kephotographyvt.com)

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A beginner's guide to engagement ring shopping

Couples far and wide will tie the knot this year. Weddings join two lives together and often culminate with a lavish party that sees extended family and friends gather around tables enhanced by floral arrangements and delicious food. But long before guests can choose chicken or beef or newlyweds mail the final thank you note, couples must first take the initial step on the road to the wedding. That means getting engaged. Traditionally, engagements involve a sparkling gem that symbolizes love, fidelity and a whirlwind series of months poring over every possible wedding detail.

Shopping for an engagement ring is a unique experience. A ring requires a significant financial investment and serves as a lifelong symbol of commitment to another person. To navigate this sparkling world of diamonds and settings, shoppers can focus on key areas, notably budget, gem classification and finding a reputable jeweler.

Establish an engagement ring budget

Those ready to pop the question need not adhere to the outdated "three months' salary" rule when selecting an engagement ring. Instead, the ring should be chosen based on financial realism

and means. The Knot's 2024 Jewelry & Engagement Study indicates the average cost of an engagement ring in the United States comes in at approximately \$5,200. However, many couples spend less, showing that a marriage need not start on shaky financial footing due to the cost of a ring. If cost is a factor, lab-grown diamonds often cost 50 percent or more less than natural diamonds, yet they are chemically and physically identical to mined diamonds. One also can consider another gemstone, particularly if diamonds are beyond a budget or seem too traditional.

Know the four Cs

Diamond shopping involves mastering the Four Cs, which refers to Cut, Color, Clarity, and Carat Weight. A person should prioritize the cut above all else, and try to find a diamond in budget that has a cut that brings out the gem's brilliance and fire. It can be challenging to distinguish a diamond's color with the naked eye. Very often a near-colorless G-J diamond can look identical to a colorless one (Grade D). Color grades increase up to Z, with the diamond being more yellow/brown as the grading goes on. Clarity refers to tiny flaws (inclusions) in the diamond. A diamond that is Very Slightly Included will have inclusions not



visible without magnification, making them a safe bet for saving money over those without any inclusions at all. Carat weight refers to the diamond's weight and not its size. Diamonds just shy of the full- or half-carat mark tend to be less expensive but still look impressive.

Choose a reputable seller

It's best to choose a gem that has been graded by an independent laboratory like the Gemological Institute of America. Customers also should select a jeweler they trust, which may require some research and word-of-mouth recommendations. A knowledgeable jeweler also can make suggestions on setting and gem shape. Upon purchasing the engagement ring, one also might consider having it independently appraised for further purchase protection.

An engagement ring purchase requires careful consideration and a significant investment. But once the stress of purchase wears away, the lasting memories of the engagement and wedding to come will make everything well worth it.

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Why it pays to trust a pro with wedding photography



User-friendly technology and greatly enhanced connectivity has changed the way people approach various tasks. The do-it-yourself home improvement trend is a testament to that shift, as homeowners now have access to professional grade tools and can easily take to social media for inspiration and instructions for renovations that were once the domain of experienced contractors.

Though it can be fun and budget-friendly to embrace a DIY approach in many settings, that strategy is not ideal

for every situation, including the day couples tie the knot. A couple's wedding day is one to cherish forever, which is why it pays to rely on skilled professionals. That's particularly so with wedding photography, which will serve as the official record of a day filled with love and laughs. Modern technology may compel some couples to think they can go without the services of a professional photographer on their wedding day, but there are many reasons to trust this important job to an experienced pro.

• **Photographers can get great shots no matter the conditions.** There's a difference between snapping great shots of an idyllic setting on a smartphone and taking wedding day photographs couples will look back on for years to come. Experienced photographers have cameras capable of far more than those on a smartphone, and these skilled professionals also possess the knowledge of how to get great shots in settings that might not be so conducive to photography. A dimly lit reception hall dance floor may prove challenging for untrained amateurs, but professional photographers know what to do to get great shots in such settings. Professionals also know how to utilize natural light to their advantage when taking shots outdoors.

• **Photographers handle the details.** Couples have enough on their plate when planning weddings. Taking on photography duties requires identifying the right photo locations, knowing when to take photos to maximize surroundings, ensuring bridal party members are all ready to go so photos can be taken within tight deadlines, and post-wedding detailing. That's a lot to take on, and it's work best left to professionals.

• **Photographers free up time.** Many newlyweds note their wedding day seemed to fly by and was over before they knew it. Such sentiments may be even stronger when couples take on too much responsibility come the wedding day. A professional photographer will coordinate shots and timelines with couples prior to the big day and take over getting bridal party members where they need to be when they need to be there. That frees up time for couples to spend more time with each other and their guests come the day of the wedding, which in turn can make it feel as though the day didn't fly by.

• **You get a professionally finished product.** Amateur photographers simply won't produce as stunning a finished product as professionals who take and touch up photos for a living. A wedding day photo album is a keepsake couples will look back on for years, so it's best to ensure its contents include photos taken and touched up by a skilled professional. Couples can find ways to cut costs with their wedding budgets. But it's best to avoid cutting corners regarding photography, as there's no way to turn back the clock and get better shots if the efforts of amateurs fall short of expectations.



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Responsibilities typically delegated to notable bridal party members



Katarina Leonard and her bridesmaids assemble on Burke Mountain in September 2025, following Katarina's marriage to Evan. (Kelsey Gilman)

so asking a best man to give such a speech is customary. Best man responsibilities also may include organizing a bachelor party or a similar type of get-together with fellow groomsmen and other guests prior to the wedding. A best man also may coordinate a gift for the groom if the groomsmen want to give the groom an item that requires pooling resources.

• **Maid/matron of honor:** A maid/matron of honor typically delivers a toast at the reception prior to the best man's speech.

Engaged couples tend to ask their closest family members and friends to be in their bridal parties. Such requests are an honor and bridal party members tend to be excited to play such a significant role on a couple's wedding day. But bridal party members also do much to help engaged couples before the big day.

Couples can choose to delegate as many tasks as they desire to bridal party members. Before delegating, couples can look to tradition to guide them in regard to asking their bridal parties to lend a hand.

• **Best man:** The best man toast at a wedding reception tends to be a joyful part of the festivities that couples and guests look forward to,

A maid/matron of honor also may coordinate a bachelorette party and bridal shower in the weeks or months before the wedding. A maid/matron of honor tends to play a significant role on the wedding day as well. A maid/matron of honor may handle any problems that arise in the hours before the ceremony so the bride can relax. For example, a maid/matron of honor may work to ensure the bride is shielded from issues affecting hair and makeup, the venue, last-minute gown concerns, and other unforeseen problems that can arise. A maid/matron of honor may need to do some delegating of her own prior to the ceremony, asking fellow bridesmaids to help coordinate party plans.

• **Bridesmaids:** Bridesmaids can help a bride when she's choosing her gown as well as the dresses bridesmaids themselves will wear. Bridesmaids also help the maid/matron of honor coordinate the bachelorette party and pitch in to help address any issues that arise on the day of the ceremony.

• **Groomsmen:** Groomsmen can be tasked with helping the best man coordinate a bachelor party. Groomsmen also can be asked to schedule their tuxedo fittings to afford enough time for alterations and orders to be completed in time for the big day.

• **Parents:** Parents' roles have changed considerably in recent years. While the parents of the bride traditionally paid for the wedding and grooms' parents were tasked with bankrolling the rehearsal dinner, many modern couples now foot some, if not all, of those bills themselves. Parents can still be asked to lend some financial assistance. In addition, couples can seek input from parents regarding reception traditions like father/daughter and mother/son dances.

Many bridal party members are willing to do whatever it takes to make a couple's wedding day as special as possible. Couples are still urged to discuss responsibilities with bridal party members prior to delegating tasks.

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Simple touches that add an elegant feel to a wedding

The term "the perfect wedding" can be somewhat misleading. Couples have their own ideas regarding the perfect wedding, and no single vision is more worthy of that characterization than another.

Tradition plays a big role at many weddings, as couples have long embraced customs like the first dance, cutting the cake together and even tossing the bridal bouquet at the reception. Traditional weddings often are associated with elegance, and there are many ways to create an elegant aesthetic at a wedding.

- **Consider candlelight.** Candlelight can make any space feel cozy and warm. Lit candles also create a calming and elegant vibe at a wedding. A handful of thoughtfully placed candles around a ceremony space can add a sense of elegance to a wedding. That vibe can be maintained into the reception when candles are placed on dining tables.

- **Include some vintage items.** Vintage items can add elegance because they call to mind traditional weddings of past eras. Unique vintage vases on seating tables or even as reception table centerpieces are simple to arrange and effective at adding an elegant touch.

- **Choose a signature cocktail.** The drinks guests enjoy at the reception also can add some elegance to the festivities. Ask the reception hall bartender to collaborate on a classic cocktail, ideally one that might have been popular years ago or even a modernized version of a drink that calls

to mind ceremonies of yesteryear.

- **Go traditional with wedding attire.** More and more brides are choosing wedding gowns that go beyond the classic white dress. But brides who want something elegant may want to stick to traditional attire. The same goes for grooms, who can choose a traditional black tuxedo to add some simple elegance to the big day.

- **Set your sights on seating.** There's no area of a wedding that can't be augmented with a little elegance, and that even goes for seating. Chair sashes complement an elegant theme, and such simple decor is easy to pull off. It also provides instant appeal and a touch of class as guests enter the venue and take a seat.

An elegant wedding aesthetic makes for great photographs and adds a memorable vibe to a ceremony and reception.



Kelsey and Shawn Bear kiss at their wedding reception at Burke Mountain Resort in July 2025. (Photo by Kelsey Gilman of K&E photography)



Lisa Patrick and David Kiyak marry at the Notch House at Lake Willoughby in August 2025. (Photos by Kelsey Gilman/www.kephotographyvt.com)



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