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Wedding Guide

March 6, 2026



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The benefits to choosing a local wedding venue



Wedding planning requires coordinating a laundry list of details that ultimately come together to make for a memorable ceremony and reception. Couples tying the knot have their work cut out for them, and one of the biggest decisions they will have to make involves choosing where to hold the ceremony and reception. Religious couples often opt for ceremonies at their churches, synagogues and mosques. Secular weddings can occur just about anywhere, with couples sometimes utilizing ceremony spaces adjacent to their reception rooms.

As brides and grooms narrow down their venue options, they may want to give strong consideration to the benefits that sticking close to home can offer. Certainly there are advantages to be had hosting a wedding at venues many miles away or even in international locations, but there are unique perks to keeping festivities local. The Knot 2025 Real Weddings Study indicated six in 10 couples chose to get married in a place where they currently live; 23 percent opted for a hometown venue; and 18 percent decided on a destination wedding. Here's a look at some of the perks of staying local.

Convenience: One of the biggest benefits of a local venue is convenience for both the couple and their guests. Local venues tend to be easily accessible for those who live nearby, minimizing travel time and reducing any barriers brought on by a lack of familiarity with distant locales.

Familiarity: Couples who love their hometowns and close environs may want to get married in a familiar and comfortable atmosphere. Plus, they may already be familiar with venues in the area and what they offer.

Expertise: Venue staff likely live in

the area or are familiar with other services close by. They can offer valuable recommendations and insights on other vendors, including what has worked before and what to avoid.

Familiarity with clergy: Couples who get married in a local house of worship likely know the religious leaders there and any support staff. This can add a particularly personal component to the ceremony.

Easy payments: Many venues require some sort of payment plan that consists of a deposit at the time of booking and a series of payments culminating with the last installment upon learning the final head count. Choosing a local venue makes it easy to stop at the reception site in person and provide such payments with ease, while getting confirmation and receipts in real time.

Reduce delivery fees: If florists and other vendors have to drop off items, they may not charge the same delivery fees if the reception site is close by.

Ease returning home: Chances are the couple will arrive at the ceremony and reception by hired car. Once the wedding is over, they'll have to find transportation back home, especially if there is a gap in time before departing on a honeymoon. Utilizing a local venue can make it easier to get home.

Support of local businesses: Choosing a local venue keeps dollars in couples' own communities, which is a great way to support businesses in the town and the people that work for them.

There are notable advantages to getting married close to home. When planning to tie the knot, couples can give ample consideration to local venues.

3 tips on creating 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.

Creative ideas for wedding welcome bags

Who doesn't love a goodie bag? Goodie bags are staples of kids' parties, and "swag bags" have become the norm at everything from trade shows to town events. Known as "welcome bags" at weddings, these tokens of appreciation help set the tone for the wedding experience and are an extra touch that couples may want to consider.

Welcome bags may be crafted for out-of-town guests or guests who are attending destination weddings. They can be filled with necessities or just a fun mix of items. Either way, they're great ways for couples to show friends and family they are excited for those who are sharing in the celebration. Here are some ideas for filling welcome bags.

Essential items

Oftentimes welcome bags are filled with essentials that can help guests in a pinch. Pain relievers, breath mints, sewing kits, stain removers, and similar items are necessities that will come in handy.

Eats and treats

Food can appeal to a wide range of people. By filling up welcome bags with some bites from local vendors, couples can offer their guests a gift and support local small businesses.

Pampering products

Welcome bags also can include luxury toiletries, creams, bath bombs, or any other product designed to pamper.

Products for pets

If the vast majority of guests are pet lovers, then treats and trinkets for their four-legged friends may be appreciated.

Mixologist must-haves

Packaging the ingredients to make a signature drink, perhaps one that will be served at the wedding, is another clever way to fill welcome bags. Utilize miniatures/airplane bottles of liquor and pair with small amounts of mixer and garnish.

Overnight items

A welcome bag also can be outfitted with needs for travelers. Earplugs, sleep masks, cozy socks, and travel toothbrush are some essentials that many out-of-towners will appreciate when they check into their hotel later on.

Personalized bags

Sometimes the welcome bag alone can be the gift. A decorative or monogrammed canvas bag works as a tote for the beach or a reusable bag for the supermarket.

Welcome bags are an added touch that can set weddings apart.

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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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How to maximize outdoor wedding venues

When searching for the right place to tie the knot, each couple looks for their own unique spot. According to The Knot Worldwide 2024 Global Wedding Report, couples across the globe identify cost and venue style/type as the most important variables to consider. Nearly 75 percent of couples worldwide report getting married within 30 miles of their homes. And many couples prefer an outdoor wedding.

Outdoor weddings peaked in popularity in 2020, when the global pandemic forced couples to be creative as they sought to tie the knot with friends and family in attendance. Statista reported that 68 percent of couples hosted their wedding ceremonies outside or partially outside in 2020. However, Hudson Valley Weddings paints a more conservative picture of outdoor weddings today, with 35 percent of weddings now being held outdoors.

Couples hold their ceremonies and receptions outside for a variety of reasons, including the chance to tie the knot in a naturally beautiful landscape. The following are some ways to maximize the benefits of outdoor venues.

Embrace the opportunity to accommodate more guests. Couples with large guest lists may opt for outdoor weddings because venues with outdoor space typically can accommodate more people. Outdoor spaces can be vast and not constrained by the walls of banquet halls or restaurants — allowing guests to spread out.

Include child-friendly elements. If it would be difficult to exclude children from the festivities, an outdoor venue can ensure kids have something to do. Kids tend to have high energy levels, and an

outdoor venue gives them space to run around without crashing into something or tipping something over. Setting up a separate kids' play area also makes it easy to gather the kids in a certain spot, helping to keep children away from adults who are dancing.

Take advantage of the aesthetic. Most outdoor spaces offer awe-inspiring features. Those who opt for spring or summer weddings can take advantage of cultivated, fragrant gardens or even fields of natural wildflowers. Fall weddings will be on fire with the natural oranges, reds and yellows of the changing landscape, which makes the perfect photo backdrop for nuptials. Try to time the occasion for around sunset to make outdoor areas even more special. A setting sun can cast a special glow on the festivities. And save money on decor by relying exclusively on natural features.

Get creative with food. Part of the appeal of being outdoors for the wedding is the freedom to offer guests less standard fare in regard to food. A pig roast for a tropical affair or even wood-fired pizzas or barbecue align well with an outdoor wedding. Caterers often suggest passed appetizers for the cocktail hour and plated meals for dinner to cut down on insects buzzing around a buffet line.

Design a contingency plan. Every couple wants the wedding to go off without a hitch (except for the actual getting hitched part), so it's important to have a tent, pergola or covered area to retreat to in the event of rain or strong sun.

Outdoor weddings are popular options that can add a special touch newlyweds will remember for years to come.

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.

- **Wedding venue**
- **Reception venue**
- **Caterer**
- **Bakery**
- **Photographer**
- **Videographer**
- **Florist**
- **Officiant**
- **Entertainment**
- **Jeweler**
- **Transportation**
- **Hotel**
- **Salon/hairdresser**
- **Makeup artist**
- **Wedding planner**
- **Bridal gown retailer**
- **Groom's attire**
- **Favors vendor**



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7 ways to include family in your wedding

The central component of a wedding is two people vowing to share their lives together. But weddings often are family affairs that feature more than the happy couple. In fact, a wedding merges two families who will then share in celebrations that come forth from the marriage union, including the arrival of children, work successes and much more. It is fitting, then, that a wedding should celebrate this future family unit. One way to do so is to incorporate various family members into the festivities in notable ways.

Processional

Couples can let more than just parents and the wedding party strut their stuff down the aisle. Allow other family members to shine, such as grandparents or someone who has been a very close and supportive person in the couple's life.

Readings/Speeches

Family members can give readings during religious ceremonies, lead prayers or make certain speeches. It's also possible to ask a family member to officiate the wedding entirely or lead certain unity rituals like candle-lighting or sand-combining ceremonies that signal the blending of lives.

Play music

Musical family members can play an instrument during the ceremony or reception, or even sing if they have the vocal chops. Another idea is to include songs during the wedding that are meaningful to a particular relative.



Family traditions

Incorporate family traditions into the reception, including cultural dances,

special foods, traditional songs, or anything that is unique to the family.

Wear special clothing

A couple wear clothing that is meaningful to a loved one, like a grandmother's wedding gown or a tie that was passed down through the generations. If a family member is a

tailor or seamstress, that person might also help tailor a wardrobe for the wedding.

Coordinate dances

The bride, groom, mother, and father typically enjoy the spotlight dances during a wedding reception, but couples can expand special dances to honor and include additional family members. A large group dance that invites several family members onto the dance floor is a great way to get everyone involved.

Photo display

A couple can set aside a table to showcase special people in their lives with a brief description of why these people are so meaningful to them. This also is a place to honor any deceased relatives who are in couples' hearts.

Including additional family members in a wedding can shine a spotlight on a few extra key players in a couple's life.

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2026 wedding cake trends couples are loving



Wedding cakes in 2026 are more than just dessert—they're works of art and a focal point of the big day. Couples are infusing their personalities into cakes through sculptural designs, bold colors, creative textures, and sustainable practices. Here's a look at the top cake trends for this year.

Sculptural centerpieces

Innovatively shaped cakes are making a statement. Multi-tiered designs with asymmetrical layers, cascading ruffles, and abstract forms are popular. These cakes serve as edible art, with some featuring wafer-paper sculptures, hand-painted finishes, or intricate icing patterns that turn them into true conversation starters.

Lush florals & natural accents

Floral embellishments continue to be a favorite. Fresh or sugar flowers, edible gold leaf, and seasonal fruits like figs, berries, and citrus add natural elegance. Many couples are opting for garden-inspired arrangements that feel organic, romantic, and in tune with their wedding theme.

Bold colors & metallic highlights

Gone are the days of purely white cakes. Jewel tones such as emerald, sapphire, and burgundy are trending, often accented with metallic touches in gold,

copper, or silver. These cakes make a striking visual impact and pair beautifully with sophisticated receptions.

Mini cakes & dessert duos

Smaller, individual cakes or dessert stations are gaining popularity. Couples are offering mini cakes, cupcakes, and multi-flavored dessert samplers to provide variety and create interactive dessert experiences. This approach also allows for creative customization for different tastes and dietary needs.

Sustainable sweets

Sustainability is increasingly important. Many couples are choosing locally sourced ingredients, organic products, and seasonal flavors. Some bakeries are offering reusable cake stands or multi-use desserts to reduce waste, making eco-conscious choices part of the celebration.

Interactive & experiential cakes

Some couples are incorporating interactive elements, such as DIY dessert stations, layered tasting flights, or cakes paired with signature cocktails. These experiential touches engage guests and create lasting memories beyond the traditional cake-cutting moment.

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Get the scoop on wedding and dinner rehearsals

There is quite the process involved in bringing a show to the stage on Broadway in New York or The West End in London. Lines and songs are tweaked, actors may be swapped out, and sets may be redesigned. Often these shows are tested out in regional theaters before they are finalized for the true opening night. “Practice makes perfect” is an adage that continues to be relevant today. Those involved in theater recognize the value of rehearsals, and it also should be an important component for couples planning their weddings.

Weddings involve a lot of moving parts, and that includes people. The Knot 2025 Real Weddings Study indicates the average wedding party contains eight people. Add in four parents, individuals doing ceremony readings, people participating in unity rituals, ushers, and others of recognition, and there may be a dozen or more people responsible for knowing their places and understanding their responsibilities. The wedding rehearsal helps to corral these individuals and tame nerves by showing everyone what is expected of them on the big day.

Who is in charge of the wedding rehearsal?

Various people may take the lead at the rehearsal. In some instances, it is the officiant who will guide everyone. More often it is the responsibility of the coordinator at the ceremony site or a wedding planner who handles the cues so that everyone enters and exits properly. Some couples will also ask an organized friend or family member to assume the role of rehearsal leader.

What do you rehearse?

According to Ceremony Officiants, Rev. Laura Cannon and Associates, the wedding rehearsal does not run through the entire ceremony, only the key spots. A rehearsal typically focuses on the “walking in and walking out” and ensuring participants know where to stand and what to do. A generalized outline of the wedding ceremony timeline will be reviewed, helping participants understand when they will be called upon to fulfill their responsibilities. Running through the processional, recessional and other key moments in the ceremony two to three times is usually enough practice.

Who attends the rehearsal?

Only a select number of people need to attend the rehearsal. This includes the couple, their parents, the



wedding party, anyone serving a special role in the ceremony (such as leading a prayer), and the wedding coordinator or the rehearsal leader.

How long does the rehearsal last?

Typically a rehearsal should not take longer than 30 minutes to one hour. It’s generally held the evening before the actual wedding when everyone should be in town for the festivities.

What happens after the rehearsal?

It’s traditional to attend a rehearsal dinner directly after the rehearsal itself. This intimate meal gives the key players in the wedding ceremony an opportunity to chat and mingle before the big day. It’s also a chance for the couple to offer gifts to the wedding party, parents and others in appreciation of their participation in the wedding. Sometimes speeches are given, but the rehearsal dinner tends to be a low-key, low-pressure

opportunity to spend time with special people.

What is the dress code?

The dress code for the rehearsal and the dinner is totally up to the couple. Many opt for business casual, but the restaurant chosen for the dinner may guide couples on what everyone should wear.

Additional tips

Couples may instruct people to bring along the shoes they will be wearing at the wedding to get a feel for them walking into the ceremony site.

While it is traditionally the groom’s parents’ obligation to reserve and pay for the rehearsal dinner, couples who do not want to place all of that responsibility on them can discuss contributing.

A wedding rehearsal and rehearsal dinner brings together the key participants in the wedding ceremony prior to the main event.

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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.

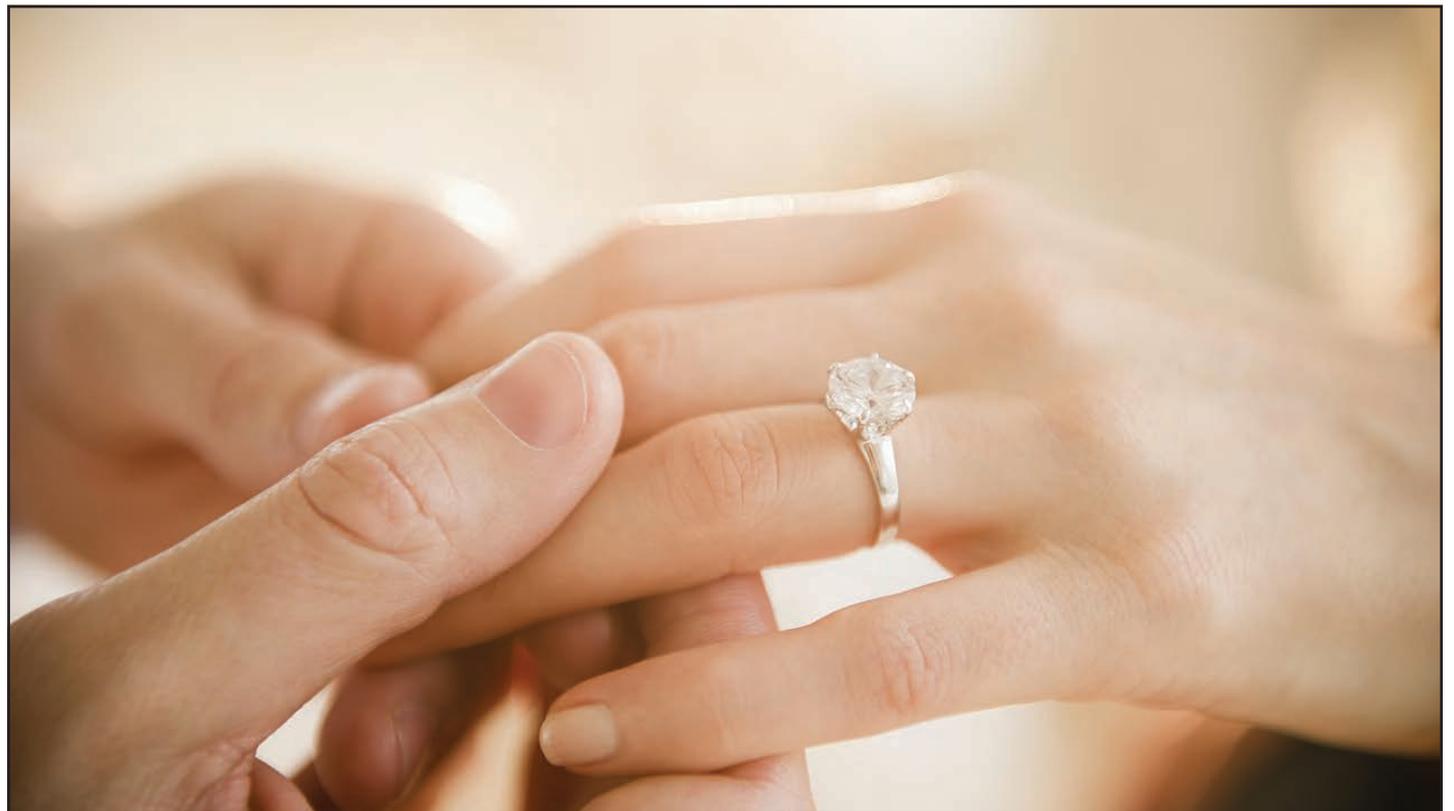
Shopping for an engagement ring is a unique experience. A ring requires a significant financial investment and serves as a lifelong symbol of commitment to another person. To navigate this sparkling world of diamonds and settings, shoppers can focus on key areas, notably budget, gem classification and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

chase wears away, the lasting memories of the engagement and wedding to come will make everything well worth it.

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Questions to ask when vetting wedding officiants

Many things come to mind when couples are planning their wedding. Brides-to-be may envision walking down an aisle decked with beautiful flowers in a space populated with their closest loved ones, while grooms may anticipate the moment they first see their beloved in a beautiful gown. One person who will be there to witness it all may not garner too much of a couple's planning energy, but officiants are nonetheless notable components of a couple's big day.

Wedding officiants come from a variety of backgrounds. Many are representatives from a couple's house of worship, such as a parish priest or the rabbi from their synagogue. Others are friends of the couple who get certified to officiate weddings just for the occasion. Many more are officiants couples meet for the first time in advance of their wedding. For those going that latter route, knowing what to ask when vetting an officiant can increase the chances of finding the right fit. No two couples are the same,

so some of the following questions may not apply to every couple, but many can come in handy and help couples identify the right officiant to preside over their nuptials.

- How long have you been officiating?
- Are you a legally recognized officiant?
- What inspired you to become a wedding officiant?
- What is your fee?
- What is included in your fee?
- Do you ever book more than one wedding in a day?
- Can we write our own vows?
- Can you share remarks you've prepared at previous weddings you officiated?
- Can you share references from past couples whose weddings you officiated?
- What is the biggest challenge to arise during a ceremony you officiated and how did you handle it?
- Is it possible to customize our ceremony?
- Are you available on our wedding day?

- When do you typically arrive at a ceremony venue?
 - What is your availability during the season we want to tie the knot?
 - How far will you travel to officiate a wedding?
 - How often do you meet with couples in advance of a wedding?
 - How long is the average ceremony you officiate?
 - Are you familiar with unity ceremonies?
 - Are you available for the rehearsal?
 - Do you perform religious ceremonies?
 - Do you perform inter-faith ceremonies?
 - What do you typically wear during a ceremony?
 - Do you plan to stay for the reception?
 - Do you have a backup officiant on call in case you cannot make it at the last minute?
 - Do you have any specific requests of the couple?
- Choice of officiant is a significant decision, and these are just some of the questions couples can ask when vetting prospective wedding officiants.

Responsibilities typically delegated to notable bridal party members

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 jovial part of the festivities that couples and guests look forward to, 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. 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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Questions to ask when interviewing caterers

A wedding reception is a joyous occasion that affords newlyweds and their guests an opportunity to celebrate into the evening. Various components combine to ensure a memorable reception, but food is a major highlight of the festivities for guests. That places a significant responsibility on couples to find a reception center or third-party caterer who can dish up food that will have guests saying “I do” to a great meal.

These considerations and questions can help couples find the right caterer for their weddings.

Does my venue mandate use of a particular catering service?

The wedding planning website Zola advises that many wedding venues require couples to use a specific catering service. They may have an arrangement with a particular caterer who they trust, or the venue has in-house chefs and servers. In the earliest planning stages after the wedding date has been set, a couple should be sure to pick a venue that will serve the best food possible. Couples who have a specific caterer in mind may need to shop around for a venue that will allow outside vendors.

Identify your preferred meal

First and foremost, a couple should know how they want to have their food served and inquire with potential caterers about their standard options. Service types often include a formal sit-down dinner reception, a buffet dinner service, a family-style dinner, or a more minimal cocktail offering without a full dinner. The couple can cross out prospects that don't offer the type of service they desire most.

Ask what's included

A couple should determine if a catering service offers food prepared by professionals, the amount of flexibility related to menus, if table settings are included, and if cleanup is part of the fee. Full-service catering typically includes all of this, while more limited service may be food brought in that requires the venue's own staff to serve and clean.

Compile the right questions

It's important to ask caterers some key questions to narrow down prospects. Some of these include:

- Are you a participant in any local business associations?
- What events with a similar concept have you catered?
- How many weddings do you book each year?
- Will my wedding be the only event you cater on that day?



- How many guests can you accommodate?
- Do you handle special food requests, such as gluten-free or kosher meals?
- How many chefs and cooks prepare the meal, or are meals exclusively prepared by the business owner?
- Do you allow substitutions or customization to a set menu?
- Do you have references for other events you have catered?
- Do you have any preferred vendors?
- What do we need to know and do regarding delivery?

Keep location in mind

The distance a caterer has to travel to cater the wedding will affect the price. It's helpful to find a caterer who knows the venue or has had experience with a similar place.

What are the contingency plans?

When interviewing caterers, Cvent, an event management software company, suggests asking about any last-minute changes they've dealt with to gauge

how the caterer handles problem-solving. Inquire about how they adapt if a certain menu item is no longer readily available or what they do if a piece of equipment breaks down the day of an event? Answers to these types of questions can separate

seasoned professionals from those caterers who may not be as experienced.

Food is a vital component of a wedding reception, which underscores the significance of finding a talented and experienced caterer.

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