Wedding
CHECKLIST

January 2021
A special supplement to
The Times-Gazette Record-Herald News Journal

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Wedding CHECKLIST

Making a wedding guest list is seldom an easy task. Couples often find that many people are worthy of an invitation, which can make creating a guest list tricky for those with budgets in mind.

According to data from the online wedding resource The Knot, the average wedding catering cost per guest is roughly $70. However, catering costs will vary depending on the reception venue, the number of guests, the foods chosen, and the region of the country where the wedding takes place.

When creating their guest lists, couples may wonder if they have to offer all guests the option of bringing a “plus one” to the occasion. As with other wedding day etiquette questions, the plus one concept is not set in stone.

Any guest who is married
It’s typically standard to invite a couple as a whole to the wedding, even if you’ve never met the spouse. This often comes up when inviting work friends, according to Vogue magazine. Even if you have never interacted with a coworker’s spouse, etiquette dictates that all married guests be allowed to bring their spouses along.

Any guest who is engaged or is in a serious long-term relationship
It can be challenging to know the relationship status of everyone who will be invited to the wedding, but chances are you’ll have a good idea of those people closest to you. Include a plus one for guests who are engaged or in long-term relationships.

Consider guests who may not know others
Weddings often are times when childhood friends reconnect, or people who haven’t seen each other in a while come together. If there’s a good chance someone who is single and is invited to the wedding may not know anyone else there except the couple, extend a plus one as a courtesy.

Include the wedding party
All members of the wedding party should be offered the option of bringing a date to the wedding.

Apart from these guidelines, couples can establish any other rules, such as no plus ones for guests under a certain age or those who are not in serious relationships. The Knot also says it is polite to find out who the plus one will be so that wedding reception seating cards include that person’s name instead of “and guest.”
The question was popped; the engagement ring presented. What’s the next step on the road to the wedding? Saving should definitely be on couples’ minds.

A wedding is likely the most costly party couples will ever throw. According to The Knot’s 2019 Real Weddings Study, the average cost of a wedding in 2019 was $33,900. There are many different costs associated with weddings. Some are predictable, while others are unexpected.

Investopedia says the vast majority of couples budget too little for their weddings and also end up spending more than they had planned. Various strategies can make it easier to save for a wedding and avoid a post-wedding financial hangover.

Get informed

It’s impossible to budget for a wedding and ultimately save without knowledge of what services and items cost in the region where you live. A wedding in New York City will be expensive, while a wedding in Mississippi will cost a lot less, indicates SuperMoney’s guide to wedding costs.

Conduct some research and find out what photographers, florists, transportation providers, reception halls, and wedding wardrobe vendors charge for common services. This will paint a vivid picture of what a wedding may cost in your area.

Flesh out the budget

Once you have gathered estimates, you can then figure out a financial goal. This also is when you can determine where to rein in spending and where you might want to splurge. If having a video memory of the wedding is not a top priority, you can skip videography services. If you have a special flower that you like, you may want to budget more for that bloom even if it isn’t in season.

Set up a dedicated savings account

One of the easiest ways to save for big-ticket items like a wedding, home purchase or other financial goals is to use an automatic savings account that may be available through your bank or employer. An automatic savings plan will pull a set amount from a personal checking account into a savings account through auto-draft. The bride and groom can link individual checking accounts to one savings account to contribute jointly.

Avoid overspending

An analysis of your spending habits will likely reveal areas where you can scale back so you can devote more funds to wedding savings. Do you need a takeout coffee in the morning or can you brew a pot at home? Might you be able to scale back on streaming services? Do you feel comfortable buying less expensive store brand groceries over name brands? Small cost savings can quickly add up.

Add up gifts

Factor in deduction of expenses that other people will commit to covering for wedding expenses, but only if you have concrete confirmation. A parent may host the rehearsal dinner. One’s relative may offer to pass down an antique wedding gown to wear. But rather than simply removing these gifts from your savings calculations, keep them as a safety net to put toward unforeseen expenses.

Saving for a wedding can be challenging. But various strategies can help couples plan their dream weddings without breaking the bank.
Weddings are great opportunities for people to gather and celebrate the melding of two families into one. Weddings are a melting pot, and while the ultimate goal is for all guests invited to mingle and have a good time, preexisting relationships may cause some wedding-day interactions to be strained. However, with careful planning and some best behavior on the parts of all involved, getting hitched can go off without a hitch.

It’s possible for guests who may have tumultuous pasts to keep the peace, but this also can be ensured through careful seating arrangements. This is just one factor couples need to consider when deciding where guests will sit and dine at receptions. It’s important to avoid some common mistakes.

**Mistake #1:** Not having a seating plan. Let guests sit where they want and chaos may ensue. People may think they’re entitled to certain seats, may hop into seats vacated by someone getting up to use the restroom or any number of other scenarios. Seating arrangements also ensure everyone is accounted for across the room.

**Mistake #2:** Seating families separately. Unless there are rifts between certain family members, it’s best to seat parents and children at the same tables.

**Mistake #3:** Trying to force new friendships. Avoid trying to figure out who will get along by creating a potpourri table. A cousin in a band will not necessarily want to sit next to your coworker who plays guitar simply because they have a shared love of music. A wedding is not the time to try to create new friendships. If it’s meant to be, they’ll connect in a more organic way.

**Mistake #4:** The dreaded kids’ table. Young children can probably get away with sitting at a dedicated kids’ table, although it may mean their parents have to interrupt their experiences by checking on their kids throughout the night. A bigger faux pas is to sit teenagers or twentysomethings at the kids table even if they seem like youngsters to you. Set a strict cut-off age for a children’s table.

**Mistake #5:** Being too strict in seating. It’s one thing to direct couples or singletons to specific tables, quite another to assign specific seats. Do not dictate exactly where at the table a guest should sit. Some people arrive early, others late, and it is up to them to work out how to arrange themselves at the table.

**Mistake #6:** Failing to get family feedback. Always check with your parents and future in-laws as resources about how to seat certain guests. They’ll likely know who will make the best table-mates, especially if couples are not familiar with everyone on the guest list.

**Mistake #7:** Not being aware of disabilities or needs. Be conscious of guests’ needs. An elderly relative may not be comfortable in front of the DJ table. A person in a wheelchair may need easy access to and from the reception room. It’s important to be mindful of these special needs.

A seating plan for wedding receptions is an important consideration so that every guest can feel comfortable.
Various components combine to make weddings beautiful and memorable. Couples rely on photographers to capture the smiles and moments that helped make their events unique and to ensure the big day is remembered for years to come.

The trusted wedding resource The Knot notes that an internal study found that, among 27,000 couples who got married in 2019, an average of $2,400 was spent on a wedding photographer to document their big day.

Couples who want to find the best photographer for their wedding day can ask several questions before making their final decision.

What style do you specialize in?
Photographers may be able to shoot various styles of photos, but may specialize in a specific type. For example, some photographers specialize in photojournalism, while others may excel at portraiture. Going with a photographer who has the most expertise shooting the style you prefer will help produce the desired results.

Who will be shooting my wedding?
Certain photography studios have several photographers working under one roof. Just because you meet with one does not necessarily mean that photographer will be on site, unless it is specified in the contract.

Have you ever worked at my venue before?
Photographers may be familiar with several local wedding venues and houses of worship. A photographer who has experience working in the locations where couples will tie the knot and subsequently celebrate might produce the best results, but lack of experience with particular venues need not exclude other professionals.

Can we see a full gallery of a recent wedding?
According to Brides magazine, unlike an album or a highlight gallery, a full gallery provides a better sense of a photographer’s style and attention to detail.

Will photos be color balanced and retouched?
Skilled photographers are capable of capturing winning photos. But photos can be enhanced further in the studio with retouching software to bring out specific effects. Some photographers will polish all proofs, while others only will work on the images ultimately ordered. Confirm retouching details before signing the contract.

What’s included in the photo packages?
A detailed price list helps you compare one photographer to another and decide which elements are covered. Additional prints, having a photographer’s assistant, ordering albums for the parents, or ordering a large framed print can alter costs significantly. Explore all prices to ensure you’re getting the best value. In addition, consider how many hours of event coverage are included in the price.

What is the payment timeline?
Photographers may accept deposits for their services but expect a different timeline of payment. Some may require payment in full before the wedding, while others may offer a payment plan that includes a final payment when picking up proofs or albums.

Wedding photography is one of the essential elements of a wedding and helps tell the story of couples’ special day. Asking key questions can help couples find a photographer who will produce the desired results.

An average of $2,400 was spent on a wedding day photographer.
A couple’s wedding day is likely to be the most expensive party they ever host. The average cost of a wedding is $33,931, according to The Knot's 2019 Real Weddings Study. However that final cost can vary widely depending on where the wedding is held. In fact, in 2019, New Jersey was the most expensive state for getting hitched, at an average cost of $53,400, followed closely by Rhode Island at $49,800. The average cost of a Canadian wedding, according to the lifestyle resource Slice, is around $31,000.

Engaging in a dialogue with prospective vendors can help couples curtail the cost of their weddings. That's especially so during the pandemic, as so many businesses have faced financial uncertainty due to the global pandemic. Vendors who already have been operating under less-than-ideal circumstances may be more flexible with their pricing schedules. Then again, struggling business may have to increase prices to cover losses. Negotiation may be necessary as couples look to get married without breaking the bank.

Be open and honest
Negotiating with vendors should not be mistaken for aggressive haggling as one might do at a garage sale or auction. Rather, it’s more about having a discussion about what can be modified to work with the budget. A vendor may not be able to dramatically drop his price, but may be accommodating in another respect. For example, florists may be able to throw in an extra floral arrangement or a DJ may agree to stick around for an extra hour at no additional cost.

Be gracious
Letting a vendor know you’re a fan of their work or have received glowing recommendations from past customers may make them more inclined to work with you if the budget doesn’t quite align with the pricing.

Find work-arounds
Even if the price seems out of reach, there are ways to negotiate with vendors to get things close and where all parties are in agreement. For example, a florist may be able to make suggestions on another type of bloom that looks similar to the desired flower but at a fraction of the cost.

Vendors may be willing to discount some costs if the couple handles some of the work themselves, such as picking up and delivering materials to the reception or ceremony sites or handling alterations.

Couples should speak freely with wedding vendors and discuss what they can spend after some careful research in regard to what standard services and products cost.
Wedding guests will remember many aspects of the ceremony and reception. For guests who have food allergies or require specialized diets, dinner can be memorable for all of the wrong reasons. But it doesn’t have to be.

Even though weddings are all about the happy couple’s wants and needs, special attention should be placed on ensuring guests’ comfort. Individuals with allergies and dietary restrictions warrant extra caution. Any food can cause an allergic reaction, but eight types in particular, often referred to as the “Big 8,” are responsible for the greatest numbers of adverse reactions. Milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soy comprise the Big 8. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Food Allergy Research and Resource Program says the Big 8 accounts for about 90 percent of all food allergies in the United States.

Couples need to recognize the likelihood that at least one person at the wedding will have a specialized food need. Most people with dietary restrictions will be very understanding that eating out is a challenge, especially at a wedding. But couples can take steps to ensure that guests with food allergies don’t go hungry.

Ask about allergies on the response card.
Some couples request that guests choose their food preferences on their RSVPs. Include a spot where guests can mention serious food allergies.

Choose a caterer very carefully.
Caterers are increasingly adapting to common food restrictions. Express specific food avoidances or what you want to be included and find a caterer who specializes in this type of cooking.

Offer allergen-free appetizers.
Martha Stewart Weddings suggests serving customized bite-sized hors d’oeuvres during cocktail hour to allow for easier customization. This gives guests with allergies the ability to pick and choose their pre-entrée bites.

Label foods and let guests with severe allergies dine first.
Buffets should be clearly labeled so those with allergies can avoid certain foods. Also, those with severe food allergies should have first shot at the buffet to limit cross-contamination from serving utensils.

Create separate meals.
A caterer may be able to make separate meals for certain guests, particularly if they have advanced notice.

Don’t forget desserts and drinks.
Allergens can be included in drinks and desserts as well. Offer gluten-free desserts and gluten-free beer as well.

Dietary restrictions are another factor that couples must consider when planning their weddings.
Music is an important component of wedding celebrations.

Few things set the mood of a wedding more effectively than music. Beautiful songs often are incorporated into wedding ceremonies, and romantic or upbeat songs intermingle to create a festive mix at receptions.

Playlists curated specifically for weddings can be found online to help couples narrow down their options. According to Wedding Forward, a wedding planning guide, wedding planning experts and modern couples agree that wedding playlists should have a 60/40 split of classics and new wedding songs.

Music is a personal choice, but couples may benefit by considering who will be in attendance at their weddings. In doing so, couples can ensure the music played at their weddings reaches as many people as possible there:

• **Wedding processional song**: The wedding processional is the moment the wedding party walks down the aisle. Music may be a traditional hymn, classical music or a favorite contemporary song.

• **Bridal processional song**: In many traditional wedding ceremonies, the bride walks down the aisle separately, with her father or both parents. She customarily will have a different song from the rest of the wedding party. While “Bridal Chorus/Wedding March” is a traditional choice, some brides may prefer a different tune.

• **Wedding recessional song**: Again, depending on the ceremony location and choices, the recessional may be a classical piece or a hymn. Some couples choose an upbeat song for their first official promenade as a married couple.

• **Wedding party entrance song**: Couples can ask their music vendor to put together the majority of the songs for their reception, but they may want to choose their own wedding party entrance. This song typically is a fast-paced, upbeat song that gets the crowd pumping and ready for a fun night. Think “Dynamite” by Taio Cruz or “Can't Stop the Feeling!” by Justin Timberlake.

• **First dance**: The first dance song is another personal choice for the couple. Slow songs traditionally are chosen, but couples who want something a little different have increasingly selected faster songs and paired them with rehearsed choreography. “Thinking Out Loud” by Ed Sheeran has become a popular first dance song.

• **Other songs**: Couples also will select songs to complement dances with their parents, cake cutting, garter toss, and any other special traditions or moments. They also can make requests to include songs of different eras to appeal to guests of all ages.

Music is an important component of wedding celebrations and deserves some extra consideration to ensure everyone has a great time while cutting a rug.
How to host a socially distant wedding

It’s likely that few people heard of “social distancing” prior to 2020. That changed as the novel coronavirus COVID-19 spread rapidly across the globe and the world found itself in the midst of a deadly pandemic.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines social distancing as keeping a safe distance of at least six feet between yourself and other people who are not from your household. Public health officials continue to champion social distancing while acknowledging the fatigue that many people have experienced as the pandemic stretched on for months. Though much of the world hit the proverbial pause button, life went on during the pandemic. Perhaps nowhere was that more evident than at the altar, where many couples still tied the knot, albeit in scaled back ceremonies that adhered to social distancing guidelines in their communities.

Engaged couples who have yet to tie the knot no doubt recognize that planning a socially distant wedding will not be the same as organizing more traditional ceremonies and receptions. While planning a socially distant wedding presents some unique challenges, couples can take certain steps to ensure their big day is memorable and safe.

• Spread the socially distant word. Let guests know what they’re in for should they decide to take part in the festivities. Many people have strictly followed social distancing guidelines, while others have been reluctant to do so. Couples intent on keeping themselves and their guests safe from COVID-19 should emphasize that their weddings will be socially distant affairs so there’s no confusion come the big day.

• Stream the wedding online. Stream the wedding online for those guests who won’t be in attendance. By the end of 2020, millions of people had already “attended” weddings via platforms like Zoom, so loved ones may be experienced virtual guests by the time couples walk down the aisle in 2021. Couples who may need some help planning virtual affairs can visit the virtual wedding coordinators at Wedfuly.com, who recently partnered with Zoom to help couples bring their ceremonies online.

• Pare down the in-person guest list. Couples who planned large weddings prior to the pandemic can still invite all of their loved ones to witness the festivities online, but pare down the in-person guest list to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Limit in-person guests to immediate family and those people who are part of your social distancing bubble.

• Plan a party for down the road. Couples can still celebrate their nuptials with family and friends down the road. Plan a post-pandemic reception and let guests know you will fill them in on the details once social distancing restrictions have been lifted. Socially distant weddings may require couples to take some unusual steps as they try to tie the knot while keeping themselves and their loved ones safe.
Jewelry is a key component of weddings. The financial resource CreditDonkey notes that, in the United States, the average amount spent on an engagement ring is $5,500, while Canadians spend an average of $3,500. Jewelry costs can add up, especially when adding in the cost of wedding bands, which can cost as much as $1,000. The cost of jewelry only underscores the importance of learning how to care for it and preserve its value.

The best way to maintain jewelry depends on the makeup of the rings. The online jewelry guide Jewelry Notes says gold rings without gemstones can be cleaned effectively with only soap and water. Simply prepare a solution of lukewarm water and mild dish soap in a small bowl. Soak the rings for 20 to 30 minutes. Use a soft brush or cloth to clean the jewelry of dirt. Rinse the residue under clean water.

Rings with diamonds can be treated similarly with a mild soap-and-water solution. The Diamond Information Center also says to soak the diamond ring in equal parts cold water and ammonia for half an hour and let it air dry. Brand name jewelry cleaner also is another good option. This method only should be used with diamonds; ammonia can’t be used with other gemstones.

Maintaining jewelry also should include twice yearly visits to a jeweler who can check the prongs and make sure the setting is not loose; otherwise, the diamond can become dislodged, according to Martha Stewart Weddings.

Avoid touching diamonds and other gemstones as much as possible when putting rings on and taking them off. Precious stones often are magnets for dust, dirt and body oil, according to Taylor Lanore, diamond consultant and engagement ring designer for Lauren B. Fine Jewelry and Diamonds. Grab the ring by the band.

Use discretion when wearing rings while engaging in hands-on activities. Activities like cleaning dishes, moving furniture, gardening, or diving through waves at the beach warrant caution; otherwise, you risk damaging or making jewelry unnecessarily dirty. Store the ring in a safe location until you can safely wear it again.

One of the most important steps to safeguard wedding and engagement rings is to insure the jewelry. The description of the ring, its cut, carat weight, metal, and other information offered through a certified independent jewelry appraisal will be needed to insure the ring. Take a close-up photo of the jewelry as well. Other items like laser inscription or a home security system can qualify jewelry owners for discounts on insurance. Consumers also can add a jewelry rider to a homeowner’s or renter’s insurance policy.

These are some ways to care for wedding jewelry. Always consult with a jeweler before attempting to clean items made of various materials.

Did you know?

The phrase “tying the knot” is synonymous with getting married. Although the words can represent the symbolic joining of two lives together, in some cultures, getting married actually requires tying a knot. The custom traces its origins to an ancient Babylonian tradition in which threads from the clothes of both the bride and groom were tied in a knot to represent the couple’s union. Other cultures have embraced this tradition, and couples tie ceremonial knots during their wedding ceremonies.
Virtual vendors an option for couples planning unique weddings

In 2020, roughly 450,000 weddings were scheduled to take place between March and May.

Normal took on an entirely new connotation in 2020. As the world reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic, people across the globe had to adjust how they live their lives. The way people work, attend school and eat their meals changed seemingly overnight, as did the way couples tie the knot.

Engaged couples planning to get married in 2020 and 2021 faced and continue to face unique challenges. According to the online wedding resource WeddingWire, in 2020 roughly 450,000 weddings were scheduled to take place between March and May in the United States. Social distancing guidelines and fluctuating virus rates led many couples to get married in small ceremonies with only a handful of people on hand to witness them say “I do” in person. Virtual ceremonies shared through conferencing apps like Zoom soon became the new “normal,” but planning such events can be just as difficult as planning more traditional affairs.

Thankfully, couples can work with an assortment of virtual vendors as they confront the challenges of planning weddings during the pandemic.

The online resource SimplyEloped was initially created to provide couples with an alternative to traditional weddings and all the stress and difficulty that comes with planning such affairs. The service offers advice on everything to planning small ceremonies featuring 20 guests or less to coordinating photography, videography and floral arrangements. Similarly, the online resource Wedfuly assists couples with the planning of virtual weddings, helping to coordinate guests on as many as 1,000 devices.

Couples tying the knot during the pandemic may need to confront some unique challenges en route to saying “I do.” Relying on the services of virtual vendors can help such couples overcome these challenges and create memories that will last a lifetime.

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Weddings are very special occasions for two people who are in love. That’s why many couples want close family and friends nearby when they tie the knot. But even the happiest couples may express some nervousness about one particular part of traditional wedding ceremonies.

Wedding vows are a way for couples to profess their love for each other. However, many couples who want to write their own vows are hesitant to say them aloud in front of an audience. If couples are intimidated by a heartfelt recital of their vows in front of a crowd, then exchanging vows in private may be for them.

Wedding planners and industry experts say that private vows have become very popular. While the vows do not replace the public exchange that seals the marriage from a legal standpoint, they can be words shared in a private moment before the actual ceremony itself. A quiet moment alone allows couples to shed private tears and share a special moment before they make haste for the altar.

The Knot, a premier wedding planning resource, notes that there are many reasons to share private vows.

• You do not like being in the spotlight or become shy in front of crowds.
• There are words you would like to share with your future spouse that are deeply private, and you don’t want to express those feelings to every person at the wedding.
• You do not want to censor your thoughts or words.
• You desire an intimately private and personal moment together before all of the fanfare and rush of the wedding.
• You’d like to recite loving words in a native language that some guests may not understand.
• You desire the potential for some very great candid photos if you invite the photographer to be there at a distance.
• You want to create a lasting memory that is only yours as a couple to share.

The popularity of private vows exchanged before a wedding ceremony is growing. This growing trend provides yet another way for couples to personalize their weddings.
Weddings join the lives of two loving individuals so they can share their future with one another. Various elements help make weddings both momentous and magical.

Some weddings adhere to themes that are designed to make an impression and showcase couples’ personalities. Floral arrangements are key components of wedding themes, as they help to establish ambiance at both the ceremony and reception.

Flowers can easily help couples achieve a desired vibe, whether that’s rustic, romantic, modern, or even whimsical. Skilled florists may use a variety of flowers and foliage, as well as dramatic displays to help create the couple’s wedding day vision. According to an internal study from the wedding advice and planning resource The Knot, which surveyed more than 27,000 couples who got married in 2019, the average cost of wedding flowers was $2,000 in 2019. However, the cost of floral arrangements can vary depending on the scope of the arrangements and choice of flowers, including whether they’re in season or not.

It is essential for couples to spend time vetting potential florists to find one who will produce their desired vision at a price that fits their budget. These guidelines can make the process go more smoothly.

- **Establish your theme early on.** Floral arrangements will complement and enhance other elements of the wedding, including color scheme and the wedding theme. If your wedding theme ties into a specific season, you will work with the florist to find blooms and other pieces that coordinate. For example, winter weddings with white, ice blue and silver color schemes may coordinate with white ranunculus flowers, dahlias, dusty miller foliage, and viburnum berries.

- **Bring swatches and photographs to consultations.** It is easier to explain color palettes to a florist with examples in hand. Show the florist the types of arrangements you prefer and have actual fabric swatches from bridesmaid gowns or groomsmen vests so that colors can be complemented.

- **Create a list of desired items.** Florists may sell items a la carte or have packages of common floral pieces for wedding celebrations. Types of floral arrangements include bridal bouquet, bridesmaids’ bouquets, maid of honor bouquet, corsages for mothers/grandmothers, boutonnieres for groomsmen and fathers/grandfathers, flower girl headpiece, petals to sprinkle, table centerpieces, altar arrangements, pew or chair decorations, and cake decorations.

- **Go easy on aroma.** Tread lightly when selecting blooms that have strong aromas. They may be beautiful, but many people are sensitive to smells. Allergies also may be exacerbated by flowers with strong aromas. Discuss options with the florist before proceeding.

- **Explain your budget.** Research the average cost of floral arrangements and let the florist know what you can afford. This can help the florist narrow down options or make substitutions that fit your theme and your budget.

Couples can take certain steps as they choose floral arrangements for their weddings. Cost should not be the only factor in the decision, even though it is an important one.
Many couples who are planning to get married have lived together during the engagement period or even longer. A Pew Research Center study found that about two-thirds of married adults who lived with their spouses before they were married say they saw cohabitation as a step toward marriage. According to Brandon Gaille Small Business & Marketing Advice, 65 percent of couples who get married live together at some point before their weddings. Individuals who live together must outfit their homes with furniture and other essentials, including kitchen supplies. That means that couples may already own traditional wedding registry gifts like kitchen and bath items and accessories. Brides- and grooms-to-be can think creatively when registering for gifts if they already have many of the items found on traditional registries. Target has partnered with HoneyFund, a free honeymoon registry and cash wedding gift registry, to allow couples to register for honeymoon travel and other experiences. Honeymoon registries can be great ways for couples who already own household items to simplify the process of gift-giving for their wedding guests.
Rain on a wedding day is something that many couples encounter, but the silver lining is that various cultures view rainy wedding days as a symbol of a lucky and successful match. Rain on a wedding day is considered good luck in India and in areas of Great Britain and Ireland as well. In ancient pastoral societies, rain symbolized fertility — a mark of good luck for the newly betrothed.

While couples may rely on these lucky day customs to cope with a shower on their nuptials, rain on a honeymoon may not be so welcome. Mother Nature is unpredictable, so couples may have to contend with soggy honeymoons. Here’s how to handle the situation with grace.

**Invest in a hotel upgrade**
Honeymooners may not expect to spend much time in their hotel rooms, especially if beautiful weather is the norm at their destination. But if it rains, you’ll be spending more time indoors. If budget allows, upgrade to a suite or a more opulent hotel with added indoor amenities. A hotel with an indoor pool or a spa can save the day when a beach day is canceled due to rain.

**Walk (or kiss) in the rain**
The patter of rain on an umbrella can be soothing and romantic. Don’t let a light shower get you down. Instead, take a stroll with your newly betrothed and soak up some fresh air and negative ions that a fresh rain can bring.

**Sleep in**
While you already may be spending more time together in bed, use rainy days on your honeymoon to extend time spent under the covers. Put the “do not disturb” sign on the door and lounge around while raindrops cascade outside. Order breakfast or lunch as room service and catch up on extra cuddles.

**Take the plunge anyway**
If there is no thunder or lightning in the forecast, who says you can’t still dive into the pool or jump through some waves? After all, you’ll be wet either way. Put on those swimsuits and take a dip. Snuggle up in the hot tub, especially if it’s under a sheltered pergola or gazebo.

**Take a drive**
Rent a car or arrange for a taxi service to take you on a tour. Rain generally cools down hot climates and can reduce airborne pollen, so it might make sightseeing more comfortable. While you’re out, visit museums or other indoor venues. The soft light created when it’s overcast also can make photographs pop. Capture many memories along the way by snapping photos as you go.

A rainy honeymoon may not be ideal, but couples can adapt and find ways to make their getaways memorable and romantic.

Did you know?

December may not mark the peak of wedding season, but many couples tie the knot at the culmination of the holiday season. According to The Knot, a leading wedding industry resource and information site, New Year’s Eve weddings are popular. A poll from The Knot found that 7,230 weddings were scheduled for December 31, 2017. Flowing champagne, extra vacation days during the holidays and long weekends, as well as the merry atmosphere of the holiday season can make New Year’s Eve a great time to get hitched.

Make the most of a rainy honeymoon
Throw a safe bachelor or bachelorette party

The consensus from public health professionals around the world is to maintain continued social distancing to help prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus. Various events have been modified due to the pandemic, and weddings and bachelor/bachelorette parties have proven no exception.

Couples may need to make certain changes to traditional gatherings like bachelor and bachelorette parties to stay safe. Wedding parties average four to five close friends or family members on each side, according to Martha Stewart weddings. Gatherings of five will likely comply with the limitations set for gatherings for indoor and outdoor venues. However, it’s essential to check local regulations before planning festivities. Even if gathering with your wedding party is doable, you may have to think outside the box when it comes to how to enjoy these last hoorahs before the wedding.

Host it outdoors
The likelihood of spreading respiratory viruses like COVID-19 is greatly reduced in outdoor settings where respiratory droplets are more likely to be dispersed rather than concentrated. Restaurants and bars still offer outdoor seating options in many areas, and an intimate gathering for food and drinks outside can be a low-key way to spend an evening.

Try an “extreme” activity
Weekend travel has become a standard option for many bachelor and bachelorette parties. But travel restrictions or personal health preferences may mean it’s not prudent to take a trip to Las Vegas or Cancún. Booking activities that are a little edgy can add some adventure to the festivities if travel is a nonstarter. Some amusement parks are still open, so an evening of riding zero-gravity coasters or free-fall bungee jumps could satisfy everyone’s adventurous side. Race tracks offer tourist options where novices can take high-speed spins around the course. When traveling in small groups, these activities can be possible.

Virtual karaoke
In-person karaoke nights may be unavailable, but there’s a bevy of online sing-a-long apps that enable participants to sing with backing tracks either for solo performances or with others — even people around the world. Each member of the bachelorette or bachelor party can download the same app and then sing together. Laugh along to renditions of classic tunes or modern favorites.

Celebrate at home
It may not seem as glamorous as a night out, but home cocktail parties can be customized. Hire a mixologist to whip up special drinks for the occasion. Caterers may be available to cook personalized meals in your home, providing lessons along the way.

Bachelor and bachelorette parties may have to change as the world continues to confront the pandemic. With a few tweaks, these events can still be enjoyable and memorable.

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You’ve planned the date, met with the officiant, decided on what to wear, and booked the venue. But how are you going to arrive in style?

Arranging wedding transportation can be tricky, even if it seems like it’s a relatively minor detail. However, getting not only the bride and groom, as well as the rest of the bridal party and guests, from point A to point B and even point C is often a taller task than it seems.

The wedding planning resource The Knot says couples should begin focusing on transportation between four and six months before their weddings. If the wedding will be held during prom or graduation season, couples may want to reserve vehicles even earlier due to high demand.

While rented transportation is not necessary, it’s a luxury many couples prefer, as it allows them to leave the driving to someone else. Generally speaking, hired cars will pick up the bride and groom separately before the ceremony; otherwise, they will arrive to the ceremony by other means and then utilize a limo or other vehicle afterward. The transportation will then take the married couple and typically members of the bridal party and immediate family to the reception venue.

Depending on the head count and how many other people will be getting a lift, two or more vehicles may be necessary. And since the limos will leave after the reception drop off, some other form of transportation will be necessary to take the couple and whomever else rode to the reception back home (or to the airport). This may require dropping off one or more personal cars at the reception venue in advance.

Budget also will dictate if transportation is provided for other guests. The majority or guests will drive their own cars to the wedding. However, if the ceremony and reception site are far apart or if the journey is arduous and out of the way, some well-meaning couples will arrange for transport. Many times couples will have to opt for function over form when tasked with transporting a large number of people. Pricing out different options can yield the most cost-effective route, which very well may be a school or charter bus instead of several limousines.

Couples can start the process by asking their reception venue for transportation recommendations. Or if there are hotel accommodations after the party, the hotel may have connections or offer shuttle services.
Factors to consider before booking a holiday wedding

Holidays are conducive to festive atmospheres. Whether it’s seasonal celebrations for Christmas or Chanukah or summertime soirees on Fourth of July or Labor Day weekends, there’s no denying festive vibes tend to prevail when holidays turn up on the calendar.

Weddings also are marked by festive atmospheres, and many couples are tempted to make their nuptials even more jovial by saying “I do” during holiday weekends. Before making that decision, couples may want to consider a host of factors as they try to determine if a holiday weekend wedding is for them.

Availability

Guest availability is a big consideration for couples as they try to decide if holiday weekend weddings are a good fit. Many families have holiday traditions that they might be reluctant to give up. For example, families who build their annual vacations around the Fourth of July may already have booked their trips by the time the wedding date is announced. Couples who anticipate inviting a sizable number of guests may want to avoid holiday weekend weddings to ensure all of their friends and family members will be in attendance.

Travel

Travel is another potential red flag for holiday weekend weddings. Asking guests to travel during weekends that are notoriously busy in regard to travel may be asking too much or it might make things more convenient for some guests. A 2019 report from the Transportation Security Administration indicated that nearly 27 million passengers were expected to pass through airport screening checkpoints during that year’s Thanksgiving travel period. Some guests may be reluctant to travel on busy holiday weekends, while others who are already traveling to the wedding destination may see holiday weddings as a great way to see their families and attend a wedding without having to pay for separate flights. In addition, some guests may be more likely to travel during a holiday weekend knowing they can return home at their leisure since they don’t have to work on Monday. Couples can gauge their guests’ temperatures on holiday weekend travel before making their decision.

Cost

Cost is always a consideration when planning a wedding, and it merits consideration for couples toying with the idea of getting married on or around a holiday as well. Venues tend to be less expensive on Fridays and Sundays, so couples who tie the knot on holiday weekends when no one has to work on Monday might save a considerable sum of money by tying the knot on Sunday. But venues and vendors may charge couples more if they get married on the Saturday of a holiday weekend. Competition for venues and vendors also may be greater during holiday weekends as people celebrate the holiday. That means couples may have to spend more to book their desired venues and vendors if they hope to get married during holiday weekends.

Couples must consider a host of factors as they try to determine if holiday weekend weddings are right for them.
Weddings give couples an opportunity to share the joy of joining their lives together with a host of friends and family members. Guests liven up the party and help make the celebration that much more memorable.

According to The Knot 2019 Real Weddings Study, the average wedding in the United States hosts 131 people. Data indicates this number has been slowly decreasing over the years, after the average wedding size reached an all-time high of 153 in 2007. No matter how big or how small the guest list, keeping guests informed of what’s happening regarding the upcoming nuptials is a courtesy couples can provide. Couples can explore various avenues for keeping guests informed and ensuring they’ll be able to take part in the festivities.

**Save-the-date announcements**

Save-the-date announcements have become an increasingly popular component of wedding planning. Instead of waiting on the wedding invitation, which traditionally arrives one or two months prior to the wedding itself, save-the-date cards provide guests with an advanced advertisement of the celebration to come. According to the photo and invitation specialists at Shutterfly, it’s customary to send save-the-date notes around six months before the wedding. For a destination wedding, which will require extra travel plans, an eight- to 12-month advance can be helpful.

Save-the-date cards generally have basic information, including the wedding date and the venue. Many will feature a photo of the couple as well. If you’re planning on sending save-the-date announcements, coordinate with your photographer to have a photo taken exclusively for these cards.

**Wedding website**

Couples are increasingly embracing technology as they plan their weddings. Brides magazine states that, during the typical 15-month engagement period, 48 percent of couples will launch a wedding website. A wedding website is a versatile tool that can help answer questions that guests may have. The website can spell out specifics, including dress code, whether children are invited, the names of wedding party participants, overnight accommodations, transportation providers, and even restaurants near the hotel for a quick bite between ceremony and reception.

Wedding websites also can be used as fun ways to keep guests engaged. “Throwback Thursday” photos or funny memories and anecdotes can be included.

**Video conferencing apps**

As the world continues to adapt in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, video conferencing applications like Facetime, Zoom and Microsoft Teams enable people involved in the planning process to routinely “gather” and go over details about the wedding, helping to limit in-person meetings as much as possible. These apps also can prove invaluable when conferring with wedding vendors, such as florists or musicians.

You also can schedule smaller meetings with specific guests who may be playing key roles in the wedding, such as those giving speeches, doing readings, escorting guests, or serving in other capacities.

Certain resources can help couples keep guests informed about what’s to come in regard to their weddings.
Get the most out of bridal shows and wedding events

Recently engaged couples may be excited to get a jump on wedding planning. Bridal shows can be a great way for couples to meet and familiarize themselves with local wedding professionals, all the while introducing themselves to the terminology of wedding planning.

Though they’re a great source of information, contacts and samples, bridal shows also can be a bit overwhelming. Learning how to maximize time spent at shows can help couples plan their weddings as efficiently as possible.

- **Start small.** If the idea of large crowds is unappealing, attend the more intimate, boutique shows that are often held at local reception halls and restaurants instead of the larger installations at convention centers and hotels.

- **Scout out vendors.** Check the bridal show’s website for lists of exhibitors and see if your desired vendors are on the list. But even if they’re not, keep an open mind and use the show as a chance to compare offerings. If an event map is available, marking off must-visit booths can help save time.

- **Pre-register.** Pre-registering for bridal events saves time at check-in, and doing so may make you eligible for discounted tickets.

- **Come prepared.** Chances are each vendor is going to ask couples for information so that they can follow up with a phone call or email with more detailed offerings and estimates. Couples attending the show can expedite the process by coming equipped with labels that feature their names, contact information and wedding date. They can then stick the labels on sign-in sheets or use them like business cards.

- **Dress comfortably.** Bridal expos involve a lot of walking and roaming around. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes. Consider a backpack or hands-free bag so you are not weighed down when collecting the swag and other handouts throughout the day.

- **Ask questions.** When face-to-face with vendors, rely on their expertise but don’t hesitate to ask questions concerning themes, colors, recommendations for honeymoon locations, invitation paper suggestions, and much more.

- **Stay for the fashion show.** Many shows will offer a runway experience to present the latest gown and tuxedo offerings. This can be an entertaining way for couples to formulate their wedding styles.

Wedding shows introduce couples to vendors and set them on the path to making decisions regarding the planning of their weddings.

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Happy couples experience various changes after tying the knot. One of those changes concerns couples’ finances.

According to an analysis of data from the National Survey of Families and Households, arguments about money are a frequent concern with married couples. Furthermore, there is a higher correlation between the risk of divorce and the prevalence of financial disagreements. While fights about money do not necessarily cause divorce, they can create rifts in relationships.

Even couples who have plenty of money may have disagreements about their finances. Arguments may stem from couples not understanding how their partner views money or the disparities in spending habits among partners. Couples who make early efforts to get on the same page concerning finances may have smoother waters ahead than those who delay such discussions.

- Establish goals together. Couples should define their financial goals together. Is it a goal to save for early retirement? Is a house in the immediate future? Is frequent travel a desire? Are we planning to contribute much to future children’s educations? These questions and more need to be addressed early on. By creating a financial plan together, couples can more clearly map out their financial futures.

- Combining accounts may be easier. Some couples want to maintain their full financial independence. But combining accounts can help couples avoid arguments about secrecy and concerns about partner spending. Combining accounts also affords couples a clearer picture of their spending and saving habits.

- Assess debts as a team. One person may be bringing more debt to the marriage than another. It’s important for all cards to be on the table and to work together to eradicate debt. If a person will be coming to the marriage with poor credit, it may be worth it to keep things separate until a spouse works on remediying his or her finances, according to Credit.com.

- Decide how to split expenses. One partner may make more money than the other, and one may spend more time handling household needs or future childcare responsibilities. Couples need to agree whether one person pays for certain bills exclusively, whether they spend from one salary and save the other, or combine finances completely and spend equally, offers NerdWallet.

Engaged couples who develop a post-wedding financial plan may find their transition to being married much easier than those who delay such discussions.
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