



Wedding Guide

CONGRATULATIONS...YOU'RE ENGAGED!

Planning the most important day of your life can be overwhelming, so take advantage of the [loveactuallyweddings](#) Wedding Guide and help make it an enjoyable experience.

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The ceremony

Legalities

- You and your fiancé must be at least 16 years of age (in Wales and England, if either of you are under 18 you must get permission from your parents or guardian)
- You must not be closely related
- You must both be eligible to marry (ie you can't already be married)
- The marriage ceremony must take place in legal premises such as a register office, religious or licensed venue and be in the presence of a registrar or authorised person
- The marriage must take place between 8am and 6pm
- Two witnesses must be present

Religious ceremonies

Church of Wales

- As long as you live in the parish, or are on the electoral register, you can marry in the parish church subject to their approval – even if one or both of you are members of another religion
- If neither of you live near the church, you'll need to apply for a special licence (which costs £125) and prove that you have lived in the parish for at least 15 days
- The marriage can be authorised by banns, the notice of your intent to marry, on three consecutive Sundays three months before the wedding date, or by obtaining a common licence
- As your wedding day approaches you may need to visit the church for a rehearsal
- Church fees can vary between a donation or up to £500

Roman Catholic

- You will need to arrange to meet the priest at least six months before your wedding date and take along your baptism and confirmation certificates
- If either of you have not been baptised your priest will need to give permission for you to be married
- It may be expected that both of you attend Mass at the church for at least six weeks before your wedding date
- You will also need to visit your local superintendent registrar to give notice of your intent to marry and obtain your licence
- Church fees can vary – just check with your priest

Jewish Weddings

- You will need two applications – one for your local register office and one for the religious authority under which the ceremony will take place
- Ceremonies will normally take place in a synagogue, but can also be held at other venues
- Weddings can take place on any day of the week

Civil ceremonies

Register Office

- In Wales and England, you both need to have been resident in these countries for seven days before you visit the registrar
- You must both give notice, in person, to your local superintendent registrar, who will ask for proof of your name, age, marital status and nationality. You will then receive a certificate of common notice
- You will then need to make a provisional booking with them as soon as possible for your wedding date
- Your wedding date can be booked between no less than 17 days and no more than 12 months in advance
- The minimum fee is £94 (that is £30 each to give notice plus £34 for the registrars fees)

Licensed Venues

- You can marry in any building licensed for civil ceremonies
- The local registrar will conduct the ceremony and you will need to give notice in the same way as for a register office ceremony
- The costs will depend on the venue chosen plus the registrars fees

Marrying abroad

- Unless you know people in the country you wish to marry or have a good idea of the procedures, it would be best to book through a reputable tour operator or a specialised wedding organiser
- Check with the embassy or consulate of your chosen destination to ensure that your wedding plans are in line with local laws and that they are recognised in Britain
- You may have to prove your age, proof of residence and proof of divorce (if appropriate)

Second time around

- Neither the Church of Wales and Roman Catholic Church recognise divorce; therefore second marriages are normally limited to civil ceremonies.
- Some ministers are prepared to offer a Service of Blessing after the civil ceremony has taken place
- However, exceptions may be made for some denominations

Budget planning

How much do you think your wedding will cost? Well, this will depend on what you want for your special day.

However, you will need to remember that you do not want to worry about how you are going to find the money to pay for it. Be realistic when setting your budget and do this as early in your planning as possible.

These are the main areas that your budget will need to cover...

- Rings
- Dress
- Bridesmaids' and attendants' outfits
- Groom's suit
- Stationery
- Flowers
- Fees for the ceremony
- Venue, food and drink
- Cake
- Photographs/Video/DVD
- Transport
- Thank-you gifts
- Going away outfits
- Honeymoon

Surveys have shown that over 80% of couples contribute the major part of the budget, but parents still also like to help.

Traditionally though this is who pays for what:

Bride's parents:

- Announcements in the newspapers
- Stationery
- Bride's and bridesmaids dresses
- Transport for the bridal party
- Flowers for the ceremony and reception
- Venue, food and drink
- Cake

Groom:

- All ceremony fees
- Bouquets for the bride and bridesmaids, sprays of flowers for bride's mother, his own mother, himself, bestman and ushers
- Engagement and wedding rings
- Transport for himself and bestman
- Honeymoon

Timetable

ASAP

- Tell relatives and friends of your plans
- Book date with minister/registrar
- Choose bridesmaids and bestman
- Make a guest list
- Set your budget
- Start looking for dresses
- Book venue, photographer and transport
- Send 'Save the date' cards

6 to 12 months before

- Choose florist and discuss ideas
- Choose cake maker and discuss ideas
- Book photographer and DVD company
- Order your stationery

3 months before

- Choose your rings
- Discuss your service with minister/registrar
- Plan your order of service
- Organise dress fittings
- Finalise your flowers
- Finalise your cake
- Finalise photographs and DVD
- Finalise honeymoon plans
- Send 'Save the date' cards
- Plan and book your honeymoon
- Book band/DJ

2 months before

- Book first night hotel
- Reconfirm all bookings
- Discuss menus with your venue
- Post wedding invitations
- Buy accessories
- Choose thank-you gifts
- Buy a guest book
- Send thank-you cards as gifts arrive

1 month before

- Book your hairdresser and make-up artist
- Check dress fitting
- Break in your shoes
- Enjoy your hen party!

2 weeks before

- Draw up the seating plan
- Organise place cards
- Arrange honeymoon money
- Write your speech if appropriate

1 week before

- Hold a rehearsal of the ceremony
- Confirm all reception details
- Confirm flowers, cars etc once again
- Arrange for cake to be delivered
- Start packing for your honeymoon

INVITATIONS

Which invitations to choose?

You should choose invitations which match the theme of your wedding. As they will generally be the first thing that your guests receive (unless you have issued 'Save the date cards') they should set the tone of your wedding.

Who sends out the invitations and when?

Traditionally the invitations are sent by the bride's parents but it is now becoming more common for the couple themselves or others to act as the hosts. Send your invitations out at least six weeks before your wedding date, and if you are sending 'Save the date cards', send these at least six months in advance.

What to include

Apart from the usual details of names, dates, times, locations etc you may want to include additional inserts to help your day run as smoothly as possible:

- **Gift list** – provide information of where your list is held and any reference numbers, together with telephone numbers and website addresses if appropriate
- **Directions** – to avoid stress for your guests who are not familiar with the locations, detailed instructions will be very useful as you don't want Aunty Joan arriving twenty minutes late!
- **Children** – If they are not invited leave their names off the invitations and if they are you may want to think of activities or goody bags/gifts to keep them occupied during the ceremony and reception
- **Special dietary requirements** – ask guests to contact you as soon as possible with any special requirements
- **Dress code** – let guests know if you wish them to follow a particular dress code – black-tie, informal etc
- **Accommodation** – if your venue has rooms, include details of how to book and also include details of other hotels, B&Bs in the area

As mentioned, it's not only the bride's parents who now act as hosts and so you may need alternative wording for your invitations.

photography & DVDs

Your wedding day is likely to pass all too quickly and the best way to remember each detail over the months and years that follow is through your photographs and DVD. There will be lots of family and friends who will take photos and maybe even video those special moments, but many brides and grooms book a professional to ensure the moments are captured in the best possible way.

The photographs & DVD

- Your choice of photographer should be based on the type of work they have previously done
- Take recommendations from family and friends who are pleased with their own wedding photographs
- See how the photographer has chosen the shots and ask if they have any examples of weddings at your chosen venue
- Ask if they can provide different styles of photographs as you may want a selection of both traditional, contemporary, colour and black and white
- If your photographer is not familiar with your ceremony or reception venue ask if they will visit the locations beforehand so they can choose the best shots
- Make sure you get a written quotation which specifies how many photographs will be taken, if there is an album included and how much additional copies cost
- If you want photographs taken in a church you may need to check with the minister/priest to ensure this is allowed
- Some photographers also offer a pre-wedding portrait for the bride and groom – this is a good opportunity to familiarise yourself with the way they work and vice versa



TRANSPORT

There are many things to consider when choosing how to arrive on your special day....but always think of the practicalities of your dream transport!

- If it's a long journey ensure you leave sufficient time to arrive...a horse and carriage will take much longer than a chauffeur driven Mercedes
- Is there plenty of room for your dress to ensure it does not get creased
- Consider a change in weather conditions

You will need to think not only about the bride and her father but possibly the bride's mother and bridesmaids. If the ceremony is not too far away ask if the company will make two journeys.

Whether you want a horse and carriage, stretch limo or classic vintage car visit a number of companies in your area and ask to see the cars...don't just rely on photographs

Some companies will include other services such as flowers in the car, ribbons and bows to match your colour scheme and champagne for the bride and groom on the way to the reception.



Traditionally the groom will travel with the bestman, but that's no reason why he should not be spoiled too! Why not surprise him....many companies now offer chauffeur driven sports cars and these can be quite quirky to include in your wedding photographs and DVD.

The cake

Ideally your cake should be ordered at least three months before your wedding date although you may want to book the date with the cake maker in advance of this.

Though the tradition is for a multi-tiered fruit cake, there are now many more possibilities for fillings, styles and designs.

- Many companies now offer single cakes arranged on a stand, profiteroles, organic and even carrot cake
- Instead of a multi-tiered cake, you can opt for something more quirky such as your favourite place eg Eiffel Tower in Paris
- Take ideas and colour swatches with you when you meet with the cake maker and ask for their advice regarding fillings to compliment the time of year which your wedding is taking place
- The size of your cake can depend on whether you want your cake to double as a dessert for your reception or for guests to take a slice home at the end of the evening
- You will need the cake to be delivered on the morning of your wedding but check with your venue well in advance if they have a cake stand and knife available for you to use



Flowers

Flowers play a big part in the ambience of your whole wedding day...they bring beauty, elegance and atmosphere.

- Speak to your chosen florist at length about the style and tone of your wedding as they will be able to advise you on the best use of the flowers for you, your attendants, ceremony and reception
- Your dress co-ordinates the whole wedding so this is the best place to start when thinking about what style and types of flowers you require
- It's not just the flowers which can create an impact, also think about foliage and gems etc for different effects
- Show your florist colour swatches, dress and hair designs to help them create ideas
- They can also create buttonholes, corsages and thank-you bouquets to co-ordinate
- If they are familiar with your chosen venue they can recommend where specific displays will work best to compliment existing décor etc – country style, classic elegant or contemporary
- Some florists also hire rose bushes/topiary trees which can be used at the entrance to your venue or next to a registrars table
- If you are having a registrars table and require a table display, ask if this can then be used as a top-table arrangement after the ceremony
- The cost of your flowers will depend on the season – spring and summer are when the biggest choice of blooms are available

You may want to think about what you want to do with your flowers at the end of your big day...will you throw your bouquet or give it to a member of your family to enjoy whilst you are on honeymoon? You may also want to give table centres to some of your guests as an extra special gift.

SEATING plans

- If you are having a sit down reception meal, it is traditional to have a top table for family members of the wedding party
- If you don't want a formal table though, why not sit at a round table or just a table for two in the centre of the room
- If your parents are divorced, they should be seated close to their new partners
- Bridesmaids (if not on the top table), ushers and other close family members should be seated close to the top table
- Couples should be on the same table but don't have to be seated next to each other
- Small children should be seated with their parents or on a special children's table
- Think about using a table plan at the entrance to the meal and table numbers/names so guests can easily find their seats

Here are three options to help co-ordinate a top table:

Traditional

Chief bridesmaid Groom's father Bride's mother **Groom** **Bride** Bride's father Groom's mother Bestman

Bride's parents are divorced and have both remarried

Bride's stepfather Chief bridesmaid Groom's father Bride's mother **Groom** **Bride** Bride's father Groom's mother Bestman Bride's stepmother

Groom's parents are divorced and have both remarried

Bestman Groom's stepmother Groom's father Bride's mother **Groom** **Bride** Bride's father Groom's mother Groom's stepfather Chief bridesmaid

ETIQUETTE

There are traditional roles and responsibilities for each member of the wedding party as follows:

Chief bridesmaid

- Organising the hen night
- Looking after the money for payments to be made on the day eg florist fees
- Helping the bride to dress
- Looking after the younger bridesmaids or flower girls
- Arranging the veil and train when leaving the house and before the ceremony
- Holding the bouquet during the ceremony
- Keeping the bride stress-free!

Bestman

- Arranging the stag night
- Looking after the money for payments to be made on the day eg church fees
- Escorting the groom to the ceremony
- Guiding the ushers in their duties
- Collecting buttonholes and order of service
- Looking after the wedding rings
- Making announcements at the reception if there is no official toastmaster
- Making a speech and reading cards, e-mails and telegrams
- Returning any hired suits after the wedding

Usher

- Handing out order of service and guiding guests to their seats
- Making sure one of them pays particular attention to both the bride's and groom's parents
- Helping the bestman organise transport

Mother of the bride

- Helping the bride organise the wedding
- Sending out invitations and co-ordinating RSVPs
- Helping the bride to dress and supporting her throughout her big day!

Speeches

There are usually three speeches at a wedding – bride's father, groom and bestman – however it is now more usual for other guests and even the bride to make a speech.

The purpose of the traditional speeches are:

Bride's father

- Welcome guests and thank those who have travelled a long distance to be there
- Toast the groom's parents
- Say wonderful things about his daughter
- Welcome his new son-in-law
- Offer advice to the married couple
- Toast the bride and groom

Groom

- Thank all who have helped organise the wedding day paying particular attention to the bride and her mother
- Thank both sets of parents
- Say wonderful things about his new bride
- Apologise for the bestman in advance of his speech!
- Toast the bridesmaids

Bestman

- Normally the most anticipated speech
- Thank the bridesmaids on behalf of the bride and groom
- Read cards, e-mails, telegrams from guests who are unable to attend
- Tell a few old stories and jokes about the groom
- Compliment the bride and her mother
- Toast the bride and groom

For many brides they will also want the opportunity to thank their parents and bridesmaids for helping with the wedding preparations and say something wonderful about their new husband!