

GETTING STARTED

Planning a wedding is a time-consuming process, but it can be a lot of fun if you know what you want. Use this questionnaire to get the ball rolling. Once you have a general idea of how you want your event to unfold, then you can start planning the details.

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Do you want to incorporate any of your interests or passions into your wedding?

What do you and your fiancé like to do for fun? What is meaningful to you both?

Do you want to tie the knot in your hometown, or would you prefer a destination wedding?

Consider travel time, transportation needs and out-of-state relatives and friends.

Would you rather have an indoor or outdoor ceremony?

What is your contingency plan concerning the weather and venue location?

Do you want to have your ceremony and reception at the same venue?

Be sure to consider travel time, transportation needs and proximity to guest lodging.

What is the overall theme or look you want to convey through your wedding ceremony and reception?

Are there any hobbies, events or passions that are especially meaningful to you? Are you drawn to a certain color, texture or style?

What colors do you want to feature?

The clothes in your closet and your home décor will give you hints.

At what time of year will your wedding take place?

Remember that summer months, as well as September and October, are popular times of year and booking vendors may be more difficult.

How many guests do you plan to invite?

Do you have an exceptionally large family? Is the venue of your dreams a tight squeeze? Are you allowing guests to bring dates? Is this a child-friendly event? Consider childcare options for the ceremony and reception.

What kind of venue will benefit your wedding?

Are you planning a mountain or city wedding? Does the venue offer guest lodging?

Will you hire a wedding planner?

Consider your budget, time and energy. Does your venue provide an on-site coordinator? Do you need help brainstorming ideas for your wedding? What aspects of the wedding do you need help planning?

QUESTIONS TO ASK VENDORS

BAKERIES AND CAKES

Do you want a traditional wedding cake, a dessert bar with miniature treats or something entirely different?

Does your heritage provide you with a special dessert inspiration? For example, a Scandinavian bride or groom could opt for a "kransekake," which is rings of cake stacked in a cone shape.

If you're going with a traditional wedding cake, what style is your favorite?

Consider buttercream versus fondant; an unusual caketopper; the number of layers; and more.

If you choose mini desserts, what kinds of treats do you want to offer your guests?

How many varieties will you offer? Consider any serving challenges a unique dessert might provide.

What flavors do you and your fiancé prefer?

Consider sweet versus savory and accents such as fruits, nuts and edible flowers.

Will you also have a groom's cake?

Does your fiancé have a particular sport, team or hobby that he loves?

BRIDAL BEAUTY

Will you be doing your makeup and hair yourself, or will you hire professionals for your beauty needs?

Don't forget about your budget and the trial hair and makeup sessions.

Will you also provide beauty services for your bridesmaids?

Consider the needs and financial situations of your bridesmaids.

What kind of look do you want to have on your wedding day?

A smoky eye, bright lip color or natural look?

How will your makeup and hair complement your dress?

Your dress's neckline often indicates the best style for your hair. For example, a strapless gown often looks best with hair that is kept down. A one-shoulder dress often looks best with hair that's styled in an up-do.

Do you want to plan a spa day for you and your bridal party?

Keep in mind cost, transportation, special bridal party packages and out-of-state bridesmaids.

CATERING

Will you be having a cocktail hour after the ceremony and prior to the reception? If so, what cocktails would you like to serve?

Will you be taking photographs between your ceremony and reception? Does your budget allow for beer and wine; a signature drink; or a completely open bar?

Does your venue have a special place for cocktail hour?

Do they provide the beverages, or can you bring in an outside vendor?

What food fits your theme?

Do you and your fiancé have a favorite dish you'd like to include? Consider seasonal food choices, vegetarian dishes and food allergies.

Do you want a formal sit-down meal, a buffet-style reception or simple hors d'oeuvres?

Do you have the appropriate tables and chairs for the style of meal you choose?

Does your venue require you to use in-house catering, or can you bring in an outside vendor?

How will this affect your budget and preferences?

DÉCOR

Will you include décor at your ceremony, reception or both?

Does your venue provide any décor elements, or do they need to be brought in separately?

What décor will best portray your theme?

Consider centerpieces, table settings, "ceiling swag," dramatic lighting and more.

Are you working extensively with a florist or keeping flowers a minimal part of the wedding?

Do you have time to make your own décor, or would you rather hire a décor company to handle the details?

Consider the time that DIY projects involve. Does your budget require DIY options? Are you occupied with a full-time job? Are your bridesmaids available to help? Are you a naturally crafty person?

ENTERTAINMENT

Would you prefer a DJ, live band or a combination of both?

Are you incorporating music into your ceremony? If you're on a tight budget, would you consider using a iPod for the reception? What music do you want played at your wedding? Consider your favorite bands and songs.

What song do you specifically want played for your first dance? What about for the father/daughter and mother/son dances?

Does your family love a certain artist or genre? Does your mother-in-law prefer a specific song?

Do you want to plan the playlist?

Many DJs and bands require an exact playlist ahead of time, while others prefer a smaller list to understand your preferences.

How strongly do you want music to be involved in the reception?

How long will the reception last? Will you play music the entire time? Do you want a certain song played for your grand entry or exit?

FLORAL

What flowers work best with your theme?

Consider everything from your flower girl and aisle décor to centerpieces and hair accessories.

What flowers are in season during your wedding?

Do you want floral arrangements for the ceremony, reception or both?

Do you want your bouquet to differ from that of your bridesmaids?

FORMALWEAR AND GOWNS

What style of dress best represents your personal taste?

Look in your closet for clues. Do you normally wear strapless dresses or halter tops? Form-fitting styles?

Do you want a traditional white dress or something trendy?

Some brides opt for Champagne or blush-colored dresses.

What colors and styles do you want for your bridesmaid dresses?

Consider how these dresses will complement your theme, bouquets and men's formalwear.

Do you want the groomsmen to wear suits or tuxedos?

Does your fiancé have a strong preference? Is he comfortable in formalwear? What are the groomsmen's financial situations? Do they own a suit or tuxedo that will complement your wedding?

PHOTOGRAPHY

Do you want to take engagement photos?

Consider your budget and wedding time frame. Do you want to incorporate your engagement photos into the wedding? For example. Including engagement photos on the save-the-date cards or in the guest book?

What are some of the moments that you want the photographer to capture?

Make a list of specific shots that you want captured, such as the first kiss, father/daughter dance and detail shots.

How do you want to utilize your photographer on the wedding day?

Does your budget allow the photographer to shoot from the moment you begin getting ready in the morning to the moment you exit the reception?

Do you want to incorporate photography into your guests' reception experience?

Consider a photo booth with props or a "red carpet" entrance into the reception

What kinds of photographic styles do you prefer?

Documentary-style; serious versus smiling shots; antique touches; and heavily saturated colors make a big difference in the final outcome.

STATIONARY

What kind of style do you want for your save-the-date cards, wedding invitation and thank you notes?

Do you have the budget for all three? Do you want a theme to be carried throughout all paper goods?

How will you word your wedding invitations?

Keep in mind delicate family situations, such as blended families. Do you prefer formal wording? Is it necessary to explain wedding attire?

Do you want to hire a calligrapher or address invitations yourself?

Consider your budget. Are your bridesmaids or family members willing to help?

TRANSPORTATION

Will you need transportation from the ceremony to the reception?

Is there available parking at the reception site? Can the guests and bridal party get there easily?

Will the guests need transportation from the reception to guest lodging?
