

21 Steps

to a Picture-Perfect Wedding

by *Leticia Hsu*

CONGRATULATIONS, YOU ARE GETTING MARRIED. YOU'VE TOLD YOUR PARENTS, EMAILED YOUR FRIENDS AND SCREAMED AT THE TOP OF YOUR LUNGS. NOW WE'VE GOT TO START PLANNING YOUR PICTURE-PERFECT WEDDING. HERE IS A 21-STEP GUIDE TO HELP YOU ALONG.



Step 1 *Guest list and budget*

- Discuss with your fiancé what both of you envision for the wedding. Do you want a destination wedding for 50 friends, or a grand ballroom dinner for 1,000, or both? Work out the guest list, including plus-one guests, and the size of your wedding will form.
- Decide how much you want to spend on the wedding and who is paying for what. The number of people and budget play a vital role in your planning as they shape the complexity and atmosphere of the wedding.

Step 2 *Theme and concept*

- Now for the theme and concept. Do you want a fairy tale wedding with a horse carriage, a swanky, modern wedding in a ballroom or a laid-back beach wedding?
- Go back to your roots, your history together and what you both are like. The wedding should be a representation of the both of you and what you like. If you can't stand mosquitoes and sun, then a ballroom is the way to go.
- Do your research online and check with married friends. You will see photos of weddings with similar themes. The first impression you get from that theme should shout out to you. Trust your instincts.
- If you plan to get a wedding planner, this is the time to bring in one so that she can help you conceptualize your ideas.

Step 3 *Venue*

- Now let's look at venues. Think about locations, logistics and price.
- Location: If it's a destination wedding, think about a locale that your friends and family can easily get to. See if it can accommodate the number of people comfortably. Check on its track record and recommendations.
- Logistics: You have to consider if you have disabled guests in a venue full of steps, if it's a long drive or in a remote area. Think also about the venue's facilities, such as parking, lavatories, electricity, water, linens, furniture and even mosquitoes.
- Price: Check to see if there is a time limit or other surcharge. Some venues may impose a corkage fee not only on alcohol brought in, but also on external vendors brought in.

Step 4 *Your dream team*

Your dream team is the vendors who will work with you for your big day, from the florist to the photographer. They will help make your dreams come true.

Check out websites, speak with friends and family, get recommendations and see the vendors' work. You need to gather a dream team that shares the same vision with you. This ensures that once you put your trust in them, you can relax and have a good time.

Step 5 *Gown and attire*

You need to make you beautiful. Think about the events you will have and what type of attire you will need to acquire for you, your fiancé and the bridal party.

Some brides have a design in mind; some find inspiration through fashion shows and magazines. Whichever type of bride you are, we are here to help.

Keep an ear out for wedding gown sales. Check out fashion shows and be inspired by designs on the web and in magazines. From there, make appointments to meet designers and be honest about what you like and dislike. You can ask to try on gowns to get an idea of what shapes suit you.

When you go gown shopping, go with someone who can give you an honest opinion. There's no need to bring a football team along. The final decision is yours.

Step 6 *Invitation cards*

The first impression your guests get is important. The invitations set the tone of the event and guests can gauge what to expect from the wedding festivities.

Decide whether you want couture invitation cards or run-of-the-mill types. Start on this early in your planning because there are many details related to invites that you need to decide on, for example, fonts, paper, colour, envelopes and text.

While working on the cards, you can clean up your guest list with addresses and proper names. You will then realise that you don't have the addresses of some friends.

Step 7 *Wedding cake*

Traditionally, wedding cakes were supposed to bring good luck to couples and their wedding guests, but in recent times, most wedding cakes are just there as a centrepiece and are not even served.

So, decide if you want to serve your wedding cake, let guests take it home or whether it's just there for decoration. This will determine the size and complexity of the cake. Think about designs to suit your theme and concept, then meet bakers and try their cakes.

If you are planning to serve the cake, make sure it complements the dinner menu. If your menu is heavy, you might want to think of a lighter fruity cake.





Step 8 Entertainment

- The size of your wedding dictates the elaborateness of the entertainment. For a small, cozy wedding, even an iPod will do, but for a grand ballroom, a live band is the answer.
- Find a balance between the music you like and what is generally accepted; not everyone likes heavy metal. Then visit the band when it is playing in an event or check out its demo DVD.

Step 9 Legallities

- Find out what are the procedures for the legal portion of getting married. Prepare the forms, photos and information way in advance to avoid being stressed out at the last minute.
- Some locations will help you with the applications, but in most countries, couples need to submit and apply personally.

Step 10 Details, details, details

- You're almost there. Fit in the little details that make the wedding you. If you caught the Bridezilla bug, you'll probably be way ahead of this step.
- But if you are a carefree bride, think about special touches that you want to include in your celebration: a gesture to include a grandparent who may not be able to attend or a welcome basket for guests from far.
- Not every detail is difficult to undertake nor expensive. It just requires a bit of imagination.
- You've done your research and you've booked your vendors. Now it's time for action. If you've got a wedding planner, sit down with her and run through the scheme and flow of things.

Step 11 Programme

- Work out your programme in detail. Plan the timing, from who will do speeches to who will help receive presents. After this, check to see if the programme overwhelms guests or is empty. You want to have a balance of entertainment and good company.

Step 12 To-do list

- If you don't have a wedding planner, work out a to-do list for your helpers so that everyone knows his or her duty.

Step 13 Vows, speeches, readers and announcements

- Start preparing your vows and speeches. Remind other speakers to do the same so that you will have plenty of time to run through what you want to say and not leave anything out.

Step 14 Religious details

- Confirm with your religious representatives on the documentation they may require and the logistical arrangements on the day itself.

Step 15 Honeymoon

- This is an important event. Plan a getaway for both of you to enjoy, relax and unwind. It's a holiday you'll remember for the rest of your life.

Step 16 Seating arrangements

- As RSVPs come in, start planning your seating arrangement. Group guests who have similar interests.

Step 17 Pack your emergency kit

- An emergency kit has:

For clothing

- * Sewing kit with needles, threads, buttons and safety pins;
- * Toupee tape to keep clothes in place;
- * Scissors;
- * Stick-on instant hemming tape;
- * Clear nail polish for runs; and
- * White chalk for masking stains;

From the pharmacy:

- * Breath mints;
- * Bandages;
- * Blister protection;
- * Antacid; and
- * Pain reliever.

For touch-ups

- * Blotting papers;
- * Cotton swabs;
- * Tweezers;
- * Emery board;
- * Lip balm;
- * Tissues;
- * Hand lotion;
- * Bobby pins;
- * Comb;
- * Lipstick;
- * Powder;
- * Small mirror; and
- * Nail polish in the shade you're wearing.

Step 18 Delivery, pick-ups and logistics

- Reconfirm delivery, pick-ups and arrangements. You need a driver for your wedding car and someone to carry the gifts to the car.

Step 19 Hen and bachelor parties

- Hand over the planning of your last wild night to your maid of honour or best man and enjoy the moment.

Step 20 Spa day

- Plan a day of massages and pampering for you and your fiancé. The planning may have stressed you out, but you may also have stressed out your fiancé. So enjoy a day of relaxation together.

Step 21 Relax

- You have done your best to ensure you have a picture-perfect day. To complete the perfect picture, we need a smiling and relaxed bride. Enjoy every moment of it. sw

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