



Cortland Standard

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# Weddings 2025

## Planning your Happily Ever After

Couples are turning to more individualized wedding plans. They'll skip the heels, incorporate thrifted decorations, choose interesting destinations — even black wedding dresses.



# The individualization of weddings: Quirky, personal — even black

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A new, white dress. Heels. A local church. Many wedding traditions are being left behind — lost to the era of customization and personalization, industry professionals say.

“The wedding industry has taken a major turn in the last 20 years alone, on what anybody wants to do with theirs,” said Valerie Suk, owner of Blessed Bridal & Body, 4 Main St. in Cortland. “It’s turning into a more unique experience.”

Some people have wanted chair massages at their wedding, she said. Some want an artist providing face paint to guests, or a custom-brewed beer for the evening.

“The weddings have been very intimate, but not number-intimate,” said Tanya Maggs, asso-

ciate director of campus event management, about the weddings hosted at the Lynne Parks ‘68 SUNY Cortland Alumni House. “They’re very intimate to the person. The wedding embodies the personality of the couple. They make sure that it’s *their* moment.”

### DRESSES

It’s becoming less common for someone to buy a new, traditional white dress, Suk said. Last year, many brides wanted to wear their mothers’ dresses, but revamped or restyled.

“Everyone’s wearing mom’s wedding dress now, and mom got married in the ‘90s, so it’s the idea of that old style with a modern kick to it,” Suk said.

Some styles that have been out of style for years are coming back, such as a high-low skirt, said Nancy Elster, owner

of Nancy’s Bridal, 17 Main St. in Cortland.

“The heavier dresses are also on the way out, because people just want to be comfortable,” Elster said. “They don’t want to be stuck in a dress that’s tight, and you can’t move in. They want to dance.”

Black dresses and dresses with ombr?-style pops of color have also been increasing in popularity, Suk said.

“Everybody wants that personal touch to it,” Suk said. “Everyone’s wedding has to be unique.”

### SHOES

Many brides are leaving behind the high heel, Elster said. Cowboy boots and sneakers have been on the rise.

“They want to wear boots with their dresses,” she said. “That’s why they want the high-low, so their boots will show.”

Brides will often wear colored sneakers or decorated sneakers, especially if their skirt covers their feet, she said.

### TIME & PLACE

All three of the weddings Elster is providing dresses for next month are destination weddings — a trend that’s becoming more common, she said.

“They’re all going to Mexico or wherever,” she said. “There’s a lot more of that than there ever was the past two years. I don’t know where they’re getting the money.”

Some brides think it’s bad to have a wedding at the end of the year, because you have to out-do the ones before, she said.

The most popular wedding month used to be June, but now it is October, Suk said. Many brides like the barn and fall foliage vibe.

### FAVORS

Of the recent weddings and bridal showers hosted at the Lynne Parks ‘68 SUNY Cortland Alumni House, many of them had secondhand favors or decor, she said.

“It’s very eclectic,” Maggs said. “Not everything matches, which I think is really neat. You’ll have a runner throughout the center of the table, and then instead of the vases being the exact same thing, they’ve clearly thrifted them.”

A 2024 bride at the venue spent all year thrifting teacups for her guests, which were filled with treats and used instead of name cards. Another bride had a flower bar — a long table filled with various flowers where guests could create a bouquet to take home.

“The favors have been very personable,” she said. “Not some random tchotchke.”



# Songs tailor-made for father-daughter dances

Weddings can be as novel or traditional as couples prefer. Couples who go the traditional route will undoubtedly include certain spotlight dances in the reception.

The father-daughter dance is a staple of a wedding reception. According to the experts at Fred Astaire Dance Studios, the history of father-daughter dances can be traced back decades. The dance once was one last nod to Dad before the bride's husband became the most important man in her life. Now it's more symbolic of general love and affection.

Times have certainly changed from the first father-daughter

dances and this tradition no longer carries the same meaning. In fact, despite what the name may imply, father-daughter dances needn't take place with a father at all, especially if he passed away or is not in the bride's life. She can choose any special person, whether a father figure, uncle, brother, mentor, etc. to honor during the dance.

Traditionally the father-daughter dance (and mother-son dance) takes place immediately following the newlyweds' first dance together. However, some opt to have it after the toasts or before the cake cutting. Couples can make their preferences known prior to the reception and sched-

ule these dances any time they desire, especially since they are frequently preceded by a special announcement.

While many brides prefer to dance to a slow-paced, heart-felt song, this needn't always be the case. In recent years, some daddy-daughter duos have opted to put on shows with humorous dances or even entertaining showcases of fancy footwork to songs of all types. The song should match the vibe of the wedding. That said, certain songs seem tailor-made for the times during the reception when love and gratitude are expressed during these bitter-sweet dances.



## Country

- ♪ "The Man Who Loves You the Most," Zac Brown Band
- ♪ "My Little Girl," Tim McGraw
- ♪ "Just Fishin'," Trace Adkins

## Big Band

- ♪ "Unforgettable," Nat King Cole
- ♪ "The Way You Look Tonight," Frank Sinatra
- ♪ "Swinging on a Star," Bing Crosby

## Indie/Singer-Songwriter

- ♪ "You've Got a Friend," James Taylor
- ♪ "Let it Be Me," Ray LaMontagne
- ♪ "Father and Daughter," Paul Simon
- ♪ "Wildflowers," Tom Petty
- ♪ "Constellations," Jack Johnson

## Rock

- ♪ "Sweet Child O' Mine," Guns N' Roses
- ♪ "When You Need Me," Bruce Springsteen
- ♪ "Scarlet Begonias," Grateful Dead

## R&B

- ♪ "Ain't that Love," Ray Charles
- ♪ "Daddy," Beyoncé
- ♪ "Dance with My Father," Luther Vandross
- ♪ "Love of My Life," Brian McKnight

## Tried and True

- ♪ "Butterfly Kisses," Bob Carlisle
- ♪ "Wonderful World," Louis Armstrong
- ♪ "Hero," Mariah Carey
- ♪ "You Are So Beautiful," Joe Cocker
- ♪ "Lullabye (Goodnight My Angel)," Billy Joel

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# Make memories with mother-son dances

There is nothing quite like the love a mother has for her children. When it comes time for a son to get married, Mom has already seen him through plenty of milestone moments like birthdays, proms, graduations, and other achievements that showcased his transition from boy to man.

A wedding is a momentous occasion in a family's life. During a wedding, couples opt to show their love and gratitude to their parents or guardians in many ways, including through traditional dances. The mother-son dance gives the groom an opportunity to honor the special

woman in his life who saw him through thick and thin. Much like the father-daughter dance, the mother-son dance traditionally takes place during the reception after the newlyweds take their own first turn around the dance floor. However, this spotlight dance also can occur at other times during the festivities.

Typically the groom chooses a song with the right sentiments, but the decision also can be a joint effort. There are no right or wrong answers when it comes to song selection. However, for those who need some inspiration, certain songs are tried-and-true options.

- ♪ "How Sweet It Is," James Taylor
- ♪ "You Raise Me Up," Josh Groban
- ♪ "Time After Time," Cyndi Lauper
- ♪ "Letter to My Mother," Edwin McCain
- ♪ "Mother Like Mine," The Band Perry
- ♪ "God Only Knows," The Beach Boys
- ♪ "Beautiful Boy," John Lennon
- ♪ "Wonderful Tonight," Eric Clapton
- ♪ "The First Lady in My Life," Paul Todd
- ♪ "Because You Loved Me," Celine Dion
- ♪ "You're My Best Friend," Queen
- ♪ "Thank You Mom," Good Charlotte
- ♪ "The Wind Beneath My Wings," Bette Midler
- ♪ "Forever Young," Rod Stewart
- ♪ "You'll Be in My Heart," Phil Collins



# Pointers for post-wedding brunch

A post-wedding brunch is a nice way to wrap up a wedding weekend and gives a newly married couple a chance to spend more time with close friends and family, particularly if the couple isn't immediately leaving for the honeymoon. A brunch is the perfect way to send guests on their way with a few extra hugs and full bellies.

A brunch is not a necessity by any means, but it is a nice gesture and a good way to wrap up a wedding weekend. Couples who plan on hosting brunches can consider these tips.

♥ **DELEGATE:** The happy couple already has a lot of details on their plate to ensure the wedding occurs with minimal hiccups. A parent or member of the bridal party may want to take on the task of planning the brunch to alleviate stress on the newly betrothed.

♥ **FUNDING:** There are no hard rules about who will pay for the brunch, but typically it is the person

who hosts it. Couples may want to set aside funds in their budgets for the brunch, or parents of the couple may want to contribute.

♥ **TIMING:** Seeing as it likely was a late evening prior, the brunch should occur as late as possible in the morning, with 11 a.m. or noon a good start time so everyone has a chance to sleep in and recuperate.

♥ **EASE:** The brunch planner should make it easy on himself or herself by finding a venue that is close by. Sometimes that venue may be a lodging location if the couple arranged for overnight accommodations. For example, if overnight guests stayed at a hotel near the reception site, that hotel may have a small conference or party room where brunch can be held. The brunch planner can work with the hotel staff to cater the brunch; otherwise, find a nearby restaurant that specializes in breakfast or brunch foods that is convenient to most.

♥ **INVITES:** For those with big budgets, anyone can be invited to the wedding brunch, but it may be more manageable if it is restricted to only close friends and family, or only those who opted for the overnight wedding accommodations.

♥ **GIFTS:** There is no need to offer another favor at the wedding brunch. However, if any favors from the wedding were left behind, they can be displayed at the brunch in case any guests forgot to take theirs.

♥ **DURATION:** A 2- to 2½-hour brunch is sufficient.

♥ **FOOD:** Brunch implies a mix of breakfast and lunch treats, which can include bagels, muffins, omelets, waffles, cold cuts, and quiches. While cocktails like mimosas or bellinis may be offered, they're not necessary after a night of indulgence. In fact, coffee and tea may be more coveted. A post-wedding brunch is the perfect way to wrap up a successful wedding celebration.

# Consider wedding flowers carefully

Although many decorative elements help to create ambiance for a wedding celebration, perhaps none is more awe-inspiring than beautiful floral arrangements. Flowers offer visual appeal, captivating aromas and texture that can make a space more welcoming.

Engaged couples typically go to great lengths when planning their weddings, but flowers may not be as micromanaged as other elements. Some are content to let florists design their arrangements, but the average cost of wedding flowers in 2023 was \$2,800, according to The Knot Real Weddings Study. That price tag merits some input on the part of couples. Floral experts say couples should budget for floral arrangements coming in at 10 percent of the overall wedding budget, which is the industry standard. Therefore, for a \$60,000 wedding a couple should assume their florals will cost \$6,000. It's important to note that the cost of wedding flowers has been steadily increasing over the last few years due to inflation and climate change, says The Knot. So couples may need to be even more involved in floral decisions to maximize their dollars spent.

Here are some variables to consider when selecting wedding flowers.

♥ **GREENERY:** Adding greenery to fill in spaces in floral arrangements can save some money. Centerpieces and bouquets that are floral-heavy will certainly cost more.

♥ **SYMBOLISM:** Consider the meaning behind flowers to make choices even more personal. You also may want to select flowers that will complement the theme of the wedding. For example, traditional spring

blooms like tulips and daffodils will coordinate with spring weddings.

♥ **FLOWER VARIETIES:** Hardier varieties of flowers, such as daisies, mums, carnations, and protea, are less likely to wilt quickly in bouquets or centerpieces than some other blooms, even when they are cut. Such blooms can hold up in any weather and last the entire day so that arrangements will be picture-perfect no matter the hour.

♥ **VENUE:** Couples may find that some venues already have faux flowers or other decor. That may mean couples do not need to have as many flowers or any elaborate arrangements.

♥ **SIZE:** A particularly large floral centerpiece can overwhelm a table, and a bouquet that is overly cumbersome may detract from the bride or her bridesmaids. Choose the correct scale for comfort in bouquets. For table arrangements, select a size that will not discourage conversation or block guests' view, nor take up too much real estate on the table.

♥ **ALLERGIES:** Although they are cut, flowers in arrangements can trigger allergic responses in some people. Others may be bothered by overly aromatic flowers. Work with the florist to find blooms that will be best.

♥ **COLOR SCHEME:** Although white flowers always coordinate, many couples like some color in their arrangements. Be sure the flowers pick up the hues used in bridesmaid dresses or even the season of the year.

Couples should take an active role in deciding what to include in floral pieces for their weddings.

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# Questions to ask when shopping for a wedding reception venue



Engaged couples make plenty of decisions when planning their weddings, and some may be more significant than others. Choosing a wedding reception venue is among the most important decisions couples will make.

The reception venue is where couples and guests will spend the majority of the day, and no two venues are the same. As couples begin shopping for a place to host their reception, they can ask

themselves and venue representatives a multitude of questions to narrow down their options and ultimately make the best decision for them.

#### What are we looking for in a venue?

Some couples may know precisely what they want their receptions to be like, while others may not have the slightest idea. Of course, some couples may be somewhere in the middle. Prior to beginning the process of choosing a venue, couples can identify what they're looking for. Is a venue with outdoor entertaining space a priority? Do you want to hold the ceremony and reception at the same venue? How many guests will the venue need to accommodate? Answering these questions and others can help couples narrow down their search.

#### How much can we afford?

Budget is a significant variable when shopping for a wedding venue. Some venues offer multiple spaces that can accommodate couples with a wide range of budgets, while others are singular spaces suited to receptions within a specified size. Itemizing a budget and determining how much can be allotted to a reception venue can serve as a guideline when couples begin searching for sites.

#### Is our date available?

Once couples know what they want and what they can afford, they can prepare a number of questions that are worth asking at every venue they visit. Perhaps the most important, at least for those couples who have al-

ready chosen a wedding date, is the availability of the site on that date. If couples have not yet chosen a date, they can ask for a list of available dates at each venue they visit and perhaps use that knowledge to pick a day, particularly if they prefer a given venue.

#### Who will cater the meal?

Some venues do their own catering, while others may have working relationships with outside caterers. And some venues rent only the spaces and require couples to hire their own caterers and arrange all the details on their own. If a venue caters the meal, ask if they accommodate people with various restrictions, such as food allergies and gluten intolerances.

#### How many hours are included in the rental agreement?

It's important that couples know what they're getting, including how much time they get in each space they consider. The online wedding resource The Knot notes a standard wedding reception is five hours, the first of which is generally designated as cocktail hour.

#### What is the payment structure?

Identifying the payment structure, include down payment due date and when the final payment must be made, is important as well. This knowledge can allow couples to map out their expenses, the most significant of which is typically the reception venue.

These are just some of the questions couples can ask as they plan their wedding receptions.

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## How to manage the menu at your wedding reception

Wedding receptions are the culmination of a lot of planning. Though there may not be any insignificant decisions when planning the post-ceremony party, some choices will loom larger than others, including which foods will be served. When planning a wedding reception, couples can choose a venue that provides the food, such as a traditional reception center; otherwise, the reception may take place at an outdoor location or a venue that is not equipped to prepare and serve food. In the latter instances, couples will contract with an outside caterer. In both situations certain factors can help determine who to use for reception food services.

#### Planning

A traditional reception center/catering hall is likely a wise choice for couples who prefer simplicity in wedding day meal planning. These facilities are experts at addressing all of the components that go into a reception. Such venues offer access to a cocktail area and banquet room, and the facility likely has a staff of chefs at the ready to dish up meals. While many reception centers offer restaurant-quality offerings, scouting venues and sampling dishes will provide an idea of how foods taste and help couples narrow down their choices.

#### Preferences

Some receptions are multi-course events starting from the moment guests arrive and snack on hors d'oeuvres to the dessert display served as a final course. Others are low-key and may not

have full sit-down service. If you prefer a cocktail atmosphere only, certain venues may make more sense than others. Identifying how much food to have and the type of service desired can help pinpoint caterers to interview.

#### Chef access

Having a specific chef or cuisine in mind may require separating the food from a venue. Reception centers likely will not allow couples to bring in their own food. Therefore, you will have to find a venue where outside food is possible. Then you can work with a favorite chef for catering services.

#### Location

Some couples prefer to combine their ceremony and reception at one spot. This may be at a beachside location or in a converted country barn. If this seems like a scenario you are considering, then the venue will take priority and you'll have to find an outside caterer to service the wedding.

#### Allergies

Food allergies and intolerances are on the minds of many nowadays. It is important to be mindful of food restrictions when speaking with caterers. Take careful inventory of work-arounds so that every guest at the wedding can enjoy a safe, delicious meal.

The wedding reception menu is an important variable for engaged couples to consider. A host of factors may come into consideration as couples try to determine how to feed their guests come their wedding day.



# How to create a backup plan for an outdoor wedding

A wedding day is a magical and memorable day for a couple and their family members. Months or even years of planning may go into making a wedding day special.

For some, an outdoor wedding and celebration amid the beauty of nature is the ultimate setting in which to tie the knot. When Mother Nature is your decorator, the setting can be hard to match. Perhaps that's why 62 percent of couples opted for outdoor nuptials in 2023, according to The Knot 2023 Real Weddings Survey. However, there may be some extra work involved when exchanging vows outdoors, hosting a reception outside or both. That work includes having a contingency plan in place if the weather does not cooperate. Here's what couples should know about having a backup plan for their outdoor weddings.

♥ Identify a second location. Couples who book outdoor receptions at catering halls can inquire how they handle inclement weather. Many will have a clause built into the agreement to move the party indoors in the event of bad weather. Others may enable the wedding to move to a different space for an added fee. Smaller, less formal

weddings taking place at other locations may require a bit of ingenuity when looking for a backup space. Perhaps a friend has a large house where everyone can gather, or an employer may have a warehouse, loft or even a barn that can be transformed into unique venues at the last minute?

♥ Choose outdoor spaces with covered areas. The wish might be to have blue skies overhead, but it's impossible to control the weather. So it's safe to select outdoor spaces that offer a measure of weather protection, such as a pavillion in a park or a covered deck at a beachside locale. Such sites offer a little security without detracting from the ambiance.

♥ Look into a tent rental. A tent is a great investment because it keeps everyone out of the elements rain or shine. Even on a lovely summer day, the blazing sun can make being outdoors uncomfortable. A tent is the solution. Couples should coordinate with a wedding planner or the venue itself to be sure that a tent is allowed on the grounds.

♥ Think about event insurance. Special event insurance may protect against financial loss in

the event that severe weather throws a wrench into outdoor wedding plans. Poor weather may make moving around the venue treacherous and might force a postponement. Liability and cancellation protection in an insurance policy helps couples avoid financial hardship.

♥ Hire a wedding planner. The Knot suggests hiring a wedding planner or coordinator who can pivot to plan B in the event of bad weather. This helps take some of the stress off of the couple so they can enjoy the day.

♥ Plan wardrobe and hair/makeup accordingly. Brides and bridesmaids can choose fabrics for dresses that will be comfortable and not become blown around or see-through due to rain and wind. The wedding party can ask hair stylists to create a wedding hairstyle that is somewhat weatherproof. Experienced makeup artists likely know some tricks to keep makeup looking flawless even when the weather isn't.

Outdoor weddings can be beautiful events, but it is important to have a backup plan in place in case weather doesn't cooperate.

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## Variables to consider before picking a wedding date

After announcing their engagement, couples may need to get used to being asked if they have chosen a date to tie the knot. Friends and family members who are thrilled for the happy couple may want to know when the partnership will become official, but choosing a date is not always so simple.

A host of variables must be considered before couples pick a wedding date. Though the choice of date is ultimately a couple's decision to make, consideration of the following variables can help engaged individuals make the most informed choice.

♥ Season: Time of year is an important consideration when picking a wedding date. Summer was once the season-of-choice when tying the knot, but data from the online wedding resource The Knot indicates that has changed a little in recent years. The most popular day to get married in 2024 was Saturday, September 21, which the experts at The Knot note reflects a notable shift in couples' preferences that began in 2015. Since then, fall has been the most popular season to tie the knot. Moderate temperatures and less rainfall likely contribute to that popularity. Before picking a date, couples can consider which time of year they prefer to get married.

♥ Convenience: The convenience of a particular date won't be the same for everyone, but couples may want to consider a date or season that is amenable to as many bridal party members and guests as possible. Couples planning to invite children to the wedding may learn from parents that fall, winter and spring are tough times of year due to youngsters' hectic school and activities schedules. Summer may be more convenient, but it's also likely that some guests with preexisting

vacation plans may not make it if the date chosen coincides with their trips. There's no way to accommodate everyone, and couples should make their own preferences their top priority. But those with no such preference may want to look for a time of year when traveling to and from the wedding is convenient for as many guests as possible.

♥ Holidays: Holidays are another variable to consider. Travel and accommodations tend to be more expensive on holiday weekends, and roadways also can be crowded during three-day weekends. In addition, many people look forward to their own traditions during the holiday season and other notable events, such as July Fourth and Labor Day. Before choosing a wedding date that coincides with a holiday, it might be a good idea to get some feedback from bridal party members and other trusted confidantes.

♥ Local event schedule: It's common for couples to inquire about other events a wedding venue may be hosting when shopping for ceremony and reception sites. But it can be equally important to consider events in the area where you plan to get married on and around the days you're considering. For example, tying the knot on the same weekend as the Super Bowl in the city where the event is taking place may not be wise, as hotel availability will likely be limited and room rates may be much higher than normal. Even more localized events like harvest festivals may affect the availability of accommodations, so this important variable merits consideration.

These are just a handful of variables couples should consider before choosing a date to tie the knot.

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# What to know before a wedding gown shopping trip



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Weddings mark a turning point from one stage in life to another. The significance of that transition is perhaps one reason why couples and their guests dress so nicely for a wedding ceremony and reception. Formal garb is a wedding tradition, and guests anxiously await seeing which type of gown a bride will wear. In western cultures, white wedding gowns have been the standard since the nineteenth century and are believed to symbolize purity and grace. In eastern cultures, wedding gowns often have been elaborate, colorful creations that have their own symbolic mean-

ings unique to various areas of the world.

Shopping for a wedding gown can spark mixed emotions. While it is exciting to try on some remarkable garments, there also is the pressure of knowing all eyes will be on you while wearing this couture creation. Narrowing down wedding gown prospects can take vision, time and patience. The following pointers can help when it comes time to visit bridal shops.

### Make an appointment

Many bridal shops operate by appointment only. That's because the staff wants to devote complete attention to a client, and having people simply walk in from the street can draw their attention away and/or lead to long wait times. Identify the stores you want to visit, and then call to secure your time slot.

### Narrow down styles

Think about what your personal style might be and how you want to look on your wedding day. If you're not sure about the vocabulary surrounding dress silhouettes, visit Pinterest or Instagram and save images of dresses that you love. Then you can show the sales staff what you are thinking instead of going in empty-handed.

### Keep an open mind

Try on a few different styles even if you have a particular dress in mind. You never know if something might be a better fit for

your body type or the scope and style of your wedding unless you give it a go.

### Start the process early

Unlike off-the-rack clothing, most wedding shops will have to order your dress and have it shipped. Then comes a few weeks for alterations. KWH Bridal notes eight to 12 months before a wedding is a good time to choose and order a dress. Brides magazine says most made-to-order wedding gowns take about six to nine months to create. There also are three separate fittings to ensure the gown will fit like a glove.

### Invite a handful of confidantes

It's best not to arrive at the shopping appointment with an entire entourage. Pick, at the most, four people whose opinions you trust; otherwise, it could be a case of too many cooks in the kitchen. As a bride-to-be you'll already be anxious, and you'll want soothing, supportive people with you.

### Plan your budget

Know well in advance what you can afford to spend. According to data from The Knot, wedding attire accounts for 7 percent of the average couple's budget. Most wedding gowns are in the range of \$2,000. Don't forget about additional costs, such as veil, shoes, alterations, undergarments, and any add-ons.

In addition to these tips, arrive to an appointment well-rested, fed and comfortable.

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## Top trends in tuxes

Theories on the origins of the tuxedo vary significantly. Some believe that this formal garment was created by wealthy aristocrats attending an autumn ball in Tuxedo Park, New York. However, the Wall Street Journal has reported that the tuxedo might be a British invention, spearheaded by the fashion-conscious King of Wales Edward VII in 1865. No matter where the tuxedo originated, it has become standard attire for formal occasions, including weddings.

It may seem as though every tuxedo is the same, but that's not the case. Tuxes come in different styles, so those tying the knot or attending other formal functions can choose an option that fits their personality and physique. Here's a look at what sets tuxedos apart and some noteworthy tux trends.

### Suits versus tuxedos

Some may wonder what sets a tuxedo apart from a suit. One of the more notable differences is that tuxedo lapels are designed with silk, satin or textured gros-grain to provide that signature V-look, says Brides magazine. Suit lapels are made from the same fabric as the suit jacket. Tuxedos traditionally are held up

with suspenders, while suit pants have belt loops for use with a belt. Suits are styled with a dress shirt while tuxedos are worn with a particular tuxedo shirt that likely has a spread collar, bib, decorative studs, and French cuffs fastened with cufflinks.

### Change up lapel styles

Men who want to set themselves apart can opt for what The Knot calls the most popular styles of tuxedo lapels. Notch lapels are the most common and feature two lateral points. Shawl collars feature a smooth, sleek looped lapel without notches or peaks. Peak lapels have the lower point of the lapel peak above the upper. Trying on the different jackets can give individuals an idea of which lapel look is best.

### New color spectrum

A traditional tuxedo will be black, although navy tuxedos have gained a following. But individuals can find a tuxedo in any color. Those who want to add some extra flair to their weddings may opt for a tuxedo in a color that coordinates to the season or aligns with what the rest of the bridal party is wearing.

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# How to allocate funds when planning a wedding



Whether it's a lavish, black-tie affair or a laid back gathering in the backyard, a couple's wedding day is a momentous, and often costly, occasion. According to the online wedding planning resource Zola, the average cost of a wedding in 2023 was \$33,000. That's a significant sum for couples to spend, and it's understandable if couples aren't sure how to allocate funds for their big day.

It's important that couples recognize what's most important to them when planning their weddings. Recognition of those priorities can help couples determine how to allocate their funds. Equally helpful can be how past couples have spent on their weddings. Utilizing data from its The Knot 2023 Real Weddings Study, the wedding experts at The Knot (theknot.com) have calculated general percentages of a wedding budget couples can devote to various components.

- ♥ Venue: 37 percent
- ♥ Catering: 28 percent
- ♥ Band: 12 percent
- ♥ Wedding rings: 9 percent
- ♥ Photography: 8 percent
- ♥ Flowers: 8 percent
- ♥ Alcohol: 8 percent
- ♥ Rehearsal dinner: 8 percent
- ♥ Videography: 7 percent
- ♥ Couples' attire: 7 percent
- ♥ Rentals: 6 percent
- ♥ DJ: 5 percent
- ♥ Wedding party attire: 4 percent
- ♥ Guest entertainment: 3 percent
- ♥ Transportation: 3 percent
- ♥ Ceremony music: 3 percent
- ♥ Cake and desserts: 2 percent
- ♥ Stationery: 2 percent
- ♥ Officiant: 1 percent
- ♥ Favors and gifts: 1 percent
- ♥ Additional jewelry: 1 percent

Couples with a keen eye might notice these percentages add up to significantly more than 100 percent. That's because the budgetary breakdown reflects personal preferences, individual couples' budgets and what couples can expect to spend on certain components. For example, The Knot data indicates a couple that prefers a band for their reception instead of a DJ may need to allocate roughly twice as much of their budget to accommodate that preference. In addition, couples who do not intend to pay for wedding party members' attire can find other ways to allocate those funds, which The Knot data indicates typically accounts for roughly 4 percent of a wedding budget.

Another variable to consider is family. According to The Knot data, couples allocated an average of 8 percent of their budgets to their rehearsal dinner. However, couples' parents may offer to pay for that meal, which can leave more room in the budget for other expenses. In addition, The Knot reported that the percentage of couples asking a friend or family member to serve as their wedding officiant rose from 37 percent in 2015 to 51 percent in 2020. Wedding officiants do not often eat up a significant portion of a couple's wedding budget (1 percent), but this is another expense that modern couples may not need to account for.

Weddings can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Couples who determine how best to allocate their wedding budgets may find it far simpler to plan their big day.



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## Did you know?

Weddings are well-known as costly affairs, even for couples who opt for more laid back ceremonies and receptions as opposed to lavish gatherings. Each year, The Knot Real Weddings Study uncovers the latest wedding trends, including those related to fashion, food and, of course, finances. The most recent study found that the average cost of a wedding in 2023 was \$35,000. That marks a considerable increase over just a year earlier, when couples spent an average of \$30,000 on their weddings. That significant spike in just a 12-month period undoubtedly reflects the effects of inflation, which has led to a

notable increase in the costs of many products and services since 2022. If wedding costs are indeed surprising couples as they start to plan their big day, they can consider an approach that many before them have increasingly turned to: wedding planners. According to The Knot, 37 percent of couples hired a wedding planner in 2023, an increase of 7 percent over 2019, when the pandemic had yet to be declared and inflation had not led to such significant price increases. Wedding planners can help couples navigate some costly waters so they can avoid starting their life together with substantial wedding-related debt.

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# Wedding hair for every style

Weddings are one of the most-photographed and documented days in couples' lives. From the moment the question is popped to the final goodbye before setting out for the honeymoon, all eyes (and cameras) will be carefully trained on those vowing to share their lives together.

French Touch Photography says wedding photographers take an average 50 to 100 pictures per hour. That means couples ultimately may appear in 600 photos before the night is through. Is it any wonder that brides, grooms and everyone in between want to ensure they are presenting the best versions of themselves come

the big day? The hairstyle chosen for a wedding can affect how couples view these photographs in the years to come. It can take some trial and error to find a wedding day hairstyle that is perfect, but these popular styles are good starting points.

- ♥ Bouncy blowout: Many brides choose to leave their hair down for the wedding, and this style looks bouncy, smooth and approachable. The blowout can be straight, or stylists can add curled edges for a luxurious look.
- ♥ Messy bun: A messy bun is another hairstyle that appears effortless. An imperfect bun with

some tendrils escaping and a decorative hair pin is both elegant and fun.

- ♥ Boho braids: Whether a hairstyle is mostly down and free-flowing or pinned back into a loose bun, adding bohemian style braids can impart whimsy to any look. This hairstyle may be best for informal weddings and to match gowns that are flowing and ethereal.
- ♥ Top knot: This style is a practical choice for warm weather weddings, when heat and humidity can attack a polished style. The look is made by winding the hair into a bun at the crown of the head. It can be

enhanced with a crown or headband.

- ♥ Half-up, half-down: Brides who want their locks down with voluminous waves but without hair in their faces often opt for a half-up, half-down style. This pulls the front portion of hair back and away from the face, which can be braided, twisted or even just loosely pinned, depending on preference.
- ♥ Side-swept: This look pulls tresses over to one side, where they cascade in waves over the shoulder. It is elegant and classic.
- ♥ Chignon: From the French chignon de cou, which means "nape of the neck," a chignon is a wrapped bun hairstyle pinned low on the head where it meets the neck.

While it's the bride's hairstyle that often draws the most attention, the groom also may want to experiment with hairstyles.

- ♥ Pompadour: This style is characterized by a voluminous top that is swept back from the face.
- ♥ Quiff: Like a pompadour, this hairstyle also features volume but with natural curls offering a full, defined look.
- ♥ Classic side part: This look is classic and polished. A clean parting that is either slightly off from the middle or even deeper on the side completes this look.
- ♥ Undercut: This hairstyle features hair buzzed on the sides and back with a longer top.

Everyone can be wedding-ready with classic or trendy hairstyles that complete a finished look.



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Wedding planning requires a lot of hard work, as couples try to ensure all of the components and moving parts add up to a memorable day when the time comes to say, "I do." One notion that can help couples navigate wedding planning is to keep the focus on fun, as the goal of any couple is to make their wedding day a festive affair for them and their loved ones.

A couple's choice of entertainment can go a long way toward ensuring the wedding reception is fun and festive. Couples can keep these tips in mind as they look for entertainers to establish the right vibe for their wedding reception.

- ♥ Identify your options. Couples typically choose a DJ or live band to entertain guests during the reception. Some couples may even choose both. In general, the more densely populated an area is, the more entertainment options couples will have to choose from. Couples who have no preference regarding DJ or band can explore each option, speaking with representatives for each to get a grasp of their cost and offerings.
- ♥ Seek recommendations. Word-of-mouth helps many wedding vendors attract new clients, and entertainers are no different. Couples can seek recommendations from friends who have tied the knot. In addition, speak with people who have coordinated other gatherings in the past, such as family reunions, office parties and community events. Entertainment is often part of such events, so those who plan them might be able to

offer some valuable insight into the local entertainment scene.

- ♥ Attend a performance. In addition to seeking recommendations, couples can see entertainers in action and form their own opinions. Many DJs and bands that perform at weddings also ply their trade elsewhere, including at bars, clubs, community events, etc. If couples are intrigued by a band or DJ as a wedding reception entertainment option, they can arrange to see them perform. Pay attention to their catalog, performance style and how they interact with the crowd during their show.
- ♥ Consider the crowd. The guest list and number of invitees also merit consideration when choosing entertainment for the reception. Conventional wisdom suggests bands tend to suit smaller affairs better than DJs, who may be accustomed to playing loud dance music for bigger crowds. In such cases, a booming dance playlist with a sparsely populated dance floor may not establish the vibe couples are going for. Live bands may provide a greater sense of intimacy, which can work better with a smaller crowd. It's also beneficial to consider musical style before choosing entertainment. A band or DJ that can incorporate a wide range of musical eras and genres is ideal for a wedding reception, where guests will include the very young and the elderly.

Finding the right entertainment for a wedding reception is a fun component of wedding planning. The right choice of entertainment can make for a particularly festive wedding night.





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# Can't-miss photos for your wedding

Couples who hire a professional photographer to capture their weddings may end up with anywhere from 400 to 600 images, with some photographers promising even more. Although it is likely that a wide array of shots will be taken, couples who do not want to leave things up to chance should sit down with their photo professionals and discuss the key shots they want to capture.

Once the big day has passed, there will be no opportunity to go back and arrange missed shots. This list of must-have photos can ensure that the wedding album has all the shots couples desire.

## Before the ceremony

- ♥ Wedding day outfits hanging in the wardrobe or placed over a chair
- ♥ Wedding invitation surrounded by bouquets
- ♥ Wedding rings side by side
- ♥ Outfit accessories, such as shoes, jewelry, a veil, and cuff links
- ♥ Bride and bridesmaids getting hair and makeup done
- ♥ Groom and groomsmen laughing and having fun
- ♥ Bride getting zipped up into her dress

## At the ceremony

- ♥ Guests entering the ceremony site
- ♥ Ushers escorting guests to their seats
- ♥ Close-ups of the couple separately waiting to see their soon-to-be spouse
- ♥ Cute kids participating in the ceremony coming down the aisle
- ♥ Parents of the couple coming down the aisle or seated prominently awaiting the start of the ceremony

- ♥ Shots of all members of the wedding party
- ♥ Guests of honor, such as grandparents
- ♥ Partner coming down the aisle and the partner's reaction
- ♥ Exchange of rings
- ♥ First kiss
- ♥ A wide shot of the guests at the ceremony
- ♥ Signing the marriage certificate
- ♥ The processional with the newly hitched couple beaming
- ♥ Couple in the limo backseat

## Portraits

- ♥ Couple with bridesmaids and groomsmen
- ♥ Bride and maid/matron of honor
- ♥ Groom and best man
- ♥ Couple with each set of parents and siblings
- ♥ Couple with close family members

## At the reception

- ♥ Couple's first entrance
- ♥ Special signage, decorations or photos of the scenery
- ♥ Wedding cake details
- ♥ Toasts and speeches from key people
- ♥ First dance as a couple
- ♥ Father/daughter, mother/son dances, if applicable
- ♥ Couple mingling with guests
- ♥ Guests dancing and having fun
- ♥ Shots of the musicians or any special entertainers
- ♥ The cake cutting
- ♥ The couple's grand exit and wave goodbye

These are some of the customary images that couples will want to request. Photographers likely will cover most of them without prompting, but couples should be sure to point out any special photographs they'd like captured throughout the day.

# The roles played by bridesmaids and the maid of honor in a wedding

During a wedding, the couple tying the knot certainly gets to shine, but so, too, do other ceremony participants. From the parents of the bride or groom to the officiant to the ring bearer, there are many roles beyond bride and groom.

A bridal party typically includes a soon-to-be-bride's close friends and family. The bridesmaid tradition may trace its origins to ancient times, when

bridesmaids would be selected to dress like the bride and confuse vengeful spirits or warring rival clans who might want to harm the bride. A special individual gets to enjoy a higher-level job within the bridal party, serving as maid of honor, if she is unmarried, or matron of honor if she has already walked down the aisle.

Bridesmaids lend support and provide help as needed, but it is

**Continued on page 10**

# TOP TRENDS IN TUXES

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## Alternative fabrics

The majority of tuxedos are made from wool and will have the silk or satin detailing as described. Newer trends include incorporating fabrics like linen or flannel, although these are rare and may be harder to come by.

## Neckties grabbing hold

People can set themselves apart with everything from lapels to tuxedo shirts to different colors, but only bowties or neckties can be worn with tuxedos. While bowties once were the

gold standard, those personalizing their wedding looks and taking liberties with style are increasingly opting for neckties. Gents can choose a necktie in a complementary texture that will coordinate with the elegance of the tuxedo.

## Slim fit

Modern tuxedo choices feature a slim fit in both jacket and pant. It's a good idea to try on a few different options to see what feels comfortable before choosing a fit.

Tuxedos have been around since the nineteenth century and are the attire of choice for formal functions.

# Did you know?

Brides-to-be make many important decisions when planning their weddings, and one of the more notable ones is the choice of wedding gown. According to The Knot Real Weddings Study, the average wedding dress cost \$2,000 in 2023. Despite that hefty price tag, gowns remain a pivotal component of a wedding, as 98 percent of women who responded to The Knot survey indicated they wore a dress for their nuptials. If the sizable price tag is a cause for concern to some aspiring brides, The Knot notes that customization can drive up the final price tag by a significant amount, which undoubtedly affects the median price of gowns. Brides who opt for no or minimal customization can likely find a dress that costs significantly less than the \$2,000 average price.



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## THE ROLES PLAYED BY BRIDESMAIDS AND THE MAID OF HONOR IN A WEDDING

• from Page 9

the maid of honor who will serve as the right-hand woman to the bride. Here is a deep look at the unique rolls these women play both before and during a wedding.

### Bridesmaids

A significant amount of planning goes into a wedding and bridesmaids may be called upon to help brides make various decisions. Bridesmaids also offer support to the bride, who may be feeling a tad overwhelmed. It is important for bridesmaids to calm the bride and care for her while she tackles the tasks necessary to host such a momentous occasion.

Bridesmaids can lend support and opinions when visiting with vendors like florists or musicians. A bride-to-be also may ask certain bridesmaids to come to dress appointments.

Collectively, bridesmaids will plan and help pay for the bridal shower and bachelorette party. They also can assist the mother-of-the-bride with whatever extra help she may need.

### Maid of honor

The maid of honor (MOH) does all of the above and more. She will attend wedding dress shopping appointments and serve as a trusted source of honest feedback. The MOH also may be called in to mediate any conflicts within the bridal party, as these

ladies may not all know each other prior to the nuptials. She will check in with the bridesmaids to be sure they are on task and fulfilling any responsibilities in a timely manner.

The MOH will be the main point of contact for the bridal shower and bachelorette party. She will keep track of gifts so that the couple can follow up with thank you notes. She also may help assemble and mail out wedding invitations. The MOH will help the bride get dressed on the wedding day and attend to any needs she may have, including providing snacks and water. In the event the bride's gown is cumbersome, the MOH may need to assist the bride by adjusting the dress while seated or when visiting the restroom.

During the ceremony, the MOH will hold the bride's bouquet and she will give a toast at the reception. She also may make music requests to keep the party upbeat and fun.

There is no minimum or maximum number of people who can be part of a bridal party, but it is important to choose people who can be relied upon and who will enhance the experience. The bride-to-be can discuss her expectations from bridesmaids and the maid of honor at the start of the wedding adventure to ensure that everyone can help ensure the day is a momentous occasion.

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