

Wedding Planning Tips For Brides on a Budget....

and Frequently Asked Questions

We want a nice wedding but don't want to go into debt over it. How do we avoid overspending?

Down load and fill out our [Wedding Planning Worksheet](#)

What was the average cost of a 2007 wedding in the United States?

\$26,750.00

What percent of your total wedding budget can you anticipate to spend on your reception?

35% - 50%.

What time of day should I have my reception if my budget is extremely limited?

Mid-afternoon. Your guests have already eaten lunch and will not require an extensive menu. Therefore, light hors d'oeuvres (finger foods) or a dessert reception will be more than adequate.

How can I conquer that costly liquor, beer and wine tab?

Serve an alcoholic & non-alcoholic punch in lieu of a bar.

If I'm hiring a professional caterer and trying to cut costs, should I have a cocktail-type or sit-down meal reception?

No bones about it, the cocktail reception is the way to go - for two reasons. First, in most circumstances, the caterer makes more profit on a cocktail reception -- they're happy. Secondly, in most cases, it's cheaper "per person" to have a cocktail reception -- you're happy. Everybody's happy!

Is there a formula to calculate how many guests will actually attend the reception?

Yes, take the total number of people you have invited and multiply that number by .66 and multiply that number by 1.15. Example: 300 invited x .66 = 198 x 1.15 = 228 people expected.

How am I going to control the children at my reception?

For the few children who inevitably show up at your reception, place coloring books and small games on a table in a corner of the reception hall. You will be amazed at how this will preoccupy their time!

How can I keep gift cards with their gifts when people don't tape them together?

Assign someone with tape in hand to monitor the gift table. As the gifts arrive, this attendant

will physically tape the loose cards to the proper gift.

What is the average deposit amount required by the caterer?

You can anticipate putting down 50% of the total package upon the signing of the contract.

Do I include small children in my guest count?

Yes, and ask your caterer for a 50% discount on the children that are 8-years old and younger. Most caterers will be happy to do this for you. You just need to ask!

When do the bride and groom eat?

You probably won't. You will be too busy greeting and visiting your guests. TIP: Make advance arrangements with your caterer to pack you a picnic basket for your departure. You supply the basket. Tell the caterer not to forget the drinks and two slices of the wedding cake.

Should we have a receiving line?

Your guests will probably thank you in advance for NOT having one. It takes forever standing in line when they're ready to eat. They'll have plenty of time during the reception to approach you and offer their congratulations.

How many napkins should I order and what size?

There is absolutely no need to order LARGE napkins for a cocktail reception. Beverage napkins will be more than adequate. Calculate number of guests times 2.5 for your napkin needs. You'll need them at the beverage tables, cake tables, and food tables.

Am I expected to provide chairs for everyone at the reception?

Absolutely not. You want your guest to mingle and afford them the opportunity to meet one another. If you arrange for 75% of your guests to have a place to sit, that will be more than adequate. If everyone were sitting, they would feel strange sitting around and staring at one another.

Is there anything wrong with NOT having alcohol at the reception?

Certainly not. Some etiquette protocols may dispute this but it's the opinion of this author that your guests have come to share their best wishes, not their best highball. You would feel horrible if someone were involved in a serious car accident after leaving your reception.

How long are we expected to hang out at the reception?

Two hours tops. You are going to be eager to proceed with your honeymoon plans, the parents will need to get home and relieve their babysitters and the wedding party will be ready to get out of their uncomfortable ceremony clothes.

How much do we pay the minister?

Consider this: Your minister is likely spending his time with your premarital counseling, the rehearsal and the ceremony. From my experiences with this particular issue, \$150.00 is an adequate sum. Of course, you may want to exceed this amount but consider the \$150.00 a minimum.

What is something that is commonly overlooked just prior to the bride walking down the aisle?

It is imperative to have a drinking straw and bottle of water handy. Chances are your mouth will become extremely dry at the last minute and you'll need something to drink. Using a straw will prevent you from ruining that perfect lipstick application.

How much ice should we purchase for the reception?

With a bar: 1 lb. per person. Without a bar: 1/2 lb. per person.

How do I politely ask an out-of-control, intoxicated guest to leave?

You don't. Kindly ask this person's sober spouse or best friend to take them home.

What is an awesome dipping sauce for fresh fruit?

For 100 guests: 4 cups sour cream, 1 lb. light brown sugar, 4 Tablespoons cinnamon, 1 oz. Kahlua. Mix all ingredients well - pour in small bowl(s) and place in the middle or alongside the fresh fruit tray(s).

What is a fair price to pay for a wedding cake?

Depending on the experience of the baker and degree of difficulty, you can anticipate paying a minimum of \$3.00 per slice.

All the reception halls I've visited require we use their caterer. What are other alternative reception sites to consider that don't cost an arm and a leg?

Depending on the size of the guest list, a church's fellowship hall, a clubhouse in an upscale apartment or condominium complex, a park or recreation facility, a friend's house, a friend's lake house, a friend's farm, a local community center, VFW or other organizational halls.

We are having pictures taken immediately after the ceremony which will probably take about 30 minutes. Should our guests be expected to wait on us to arrive at the reception site before enjoying the refreshments if we're having a cocktail-type reception?

Absolutely not. Simply put, it's rude. Have the host/hostess to announce to your guests upon arrival that you are having last-minute photos taken and that you have requested that they go ahead and enjoy their refreshments and that you will be along momentarily.

When should we have our picture made cutting the cake?

At a cocktail-type reception, immediately after entering the reception hall. Getting this task accomplished "first thing" allows your service staff to cut and distribute the cake in a timely

fashion. At a full-service sit-down reception, naturally after the meal is completed.

Should I hire our photographer by-the-hour or by-the-package?

Nine times out of ten, the package route is the way to go. There's nothing worse than having to rush through your wedding due to time restraints with the photographer. Note: This is one vendor that you DO NOT want to skimp on. Pay the money. At the end of the day, the food and decorations will be gone; however, your pictures are going to last a lifetime.

Should we have our guest book placed at the ceremony site or the reception site?

Both. Initially, have it in place at the ceremony. Then, have someone assigned to take it to the reception for those who didn't have an opportunity to sign earlier.

We're planning on stocking our own bar. How much alcohol should we buy?

Here's a basic guideline for 100 guests:

Beer - Total 9 Cases

Domestic 3 cases

Imported 3 cases

Lite 3 cases

Wine - Total 5 Cases

Chardonnay 3 Cases

White Zinfandel 1 Case

Cabernet Sauvignon 1 Case

Champagne

1-2 Cases

Hard liquor

Vodka 5 liters

Gin 3 liters

Rum 2 liters

Scotch 2 liters

Bourbon 2 liters

Vermouth 750ml

Kahlua 2 liters

Others to Consider: (1 liter of each)

Bailey's Irish Cream

Grand Marnier

Amaretto

Sambuca

Brandy

Frangelico

Chambord