

10 Tips & Tricks to Know Before Planning Your Wedding



1. YOU'LL OFEND AT LEAST 1 PERSON DURING THIS PROCESS AND THAT'S OK!

This tried and trued bit of wisdom, is important to remember for all occastions, but especially for weddings. This is YOUR day, always keep that in mind. Everyone has their own opinions, but really in the end, it is about celebrating in front of your family and friends, the love you have for each other. Of course you want everyone to be happy and have fun, but for this one day it is ALL about the two of you...and now is the time to enjoy it, because befor long life comes along and throws adventures your way.

2. PLANNING YOUR WEDDING ALL BY YOURSELF WON'T NECCESSARYILY SAVE YOU MONEY.

I love saving money, and I love crafty projects of all kinds, but time is precious and we are all very busy. As much as I love to create things of my own, I know that there is no way for me both plan and design the wedding. If you are like many brides, you have no idea where to start, and the ever growing to do list is paralizing you, this is where hiring a wedding planner is worth EVERY PENNY. Not only do they relieve the stress of choosing all the vendors and scheduling all the tastings and so on and so forth, but they often can save you money. Personally I work with a couple wedding planners that I offer discounts to for bringing business my way. The same goes for a mirade of other high quality vendors. One last note...time is money, and your time is worth a lot, remember that. This is not to say you can't pick a couple projects to personalize and pick as a DIY.



3. SPLURGE ON THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS, KNOW THE BUDGET BREAKDOWN

There are many things that can be splurged on while planning a wedding such as flowers, food, decorations, etc...However, the Knot has come up with a good rule of thumb to go by no matter what your budget, however some adjustments have been made for the Bay Area costs. The average wedding is around \$30,000. Below is a sample budget:

- Reception: 46-50% = \$13,800-15,000
- Ceremony: 2-3% = \$600-900
- Attire: 8-10% = \$2,400-3,000
- Flowers: 8-10% = \$2,400-3,000
- Entertainment/Music: 4-8% = \$1,200-2,400
- Photography & Videography: 16-20% = \$4,500-6,000
- Stationary: 2-3% = \$600-900
- Wedding Rings: 2-3% = \$600-900
- Parking/Transportation: 2-3% = \$600-900
- Gifts/Favors: 2% = \$600
- Miscellaneous: 4% = \$1,200
- Just in Case: 3% = \$900

Just a note, that in the San Francisco Bay Area, the standard/mid-range photographer charges \$3,000 for 8 hours of photography and a videographer starts their fees around \$2,000. This is a great place to start though. I recommend creating an excel spreadsheet, then putting them in order of importance, from there tweek, the numbers. If flowers aren't your thing, but you know you want the best to capture your day, I'd suggest moving 2-3% of your flower budget to your photographer and videographer. If entertainment is your thing, then move more money into that category. It is ALL about what's important to YOU.



4. VET YOUR WEDDING VENDORS

Even if your wedding planner or best friend swears by a DJ, photographer or florist, make sure their style melds with yours. Look at their work, meet with them in person. Look into their reputation. I know that not all brides will like my style of photographer or mannerisms. I may not be for everyone and that's ok. I don't take offense. Don't be afraid to ask for what you want, the worst they can say, is no, and there are hundreds of other vendors in the area to choose from....in fact if you fall in love with a photographer or videographer in your area, but have a destination wedding, talk to them, they may be willing to travel. I myself love to travel, and if I get chance to travel Hawaii, Australia, Crete, etc.....I can say I would personally provide a discount just for the experience....you never know,†so ask.

5. MAKE A CHECKLIST

Checklists are my lifeline, in all aspects of my life, and when it comes to planning a wedding it is of the utmost importance. I use Trello, it is free and is so very easy to use. To start, make lists and name them using the budget breakdown from #3, then start adding all the little items that come to mind, or that you create with your wedding planner. I find it to be most rewarding to check each and every item off my lists. These lists also come in handy for the next item.

6. DELGATE TASKS TO PEOPLE YOU TRUST

Using your lists from above, delegate the items via Trello, you may need to pay a small fee for this, but is well worth it. It is a great way to manage and follow up with those you've delgated to. This will help take the stress off.



7. FIRST LOOKS ARE SOMETHING TO REALLY CONSIDER

So many people, especially the grooms, are very traditional when it comes to seeing the bride for the first time as they walk down the aisle. However, first looks are extremely personal and intimate, they consist of just you, your fiancé and the photographer or videographer. No one need be there. This is a time for the groom to cry if he so feels, without feeling awkward, if he happens to be concerned about that. In addition to the intimacy, it also allows for a majority of the images to be taken before the ceremony. You can also ask family to arrive early so that the only images needed during the cocktail hour, are a few of the two of you as a newly wed couple or a few of the images that you didn't get to prior to the ceremony.

8. MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR VENDOR MEALS IN YOUR BUDGET

Vendor meals are often a required part of the contracts signed. I know I include it in my contracts. 95% of my brides feed me the same food as the guests, but if that is too expensive, feel free to ask the caterer to put together a delicious meal specifically for your vendors that are there throughout the day. (i.e.) Photographer, Videographer, DJ/Musician, and of course your Planner. Make sure and get a head count that includes all assistants that may be accompanying your vendors. Some great meal options are gourmet mac and cheese, lasagna, salad, chicken, etc...Feel free to ask your caterer for different affordable options.



9. BOOK YOUR VENUE, PLANNER AND PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER FIRST

When you are making your lists and getting organized, the first 3 items on your list should be your venue, planner and photographer. All 3 items are usually booked 6 months to a year in advance. If you are at a loss for venues or photographers, then start with a planner. As mentioned, a planner will often save you enough money to cover their fee. However, if you absolutely don't feel you can afford a planner, I still suggest making sure that you have a day of coordinator, also booked well in advance.

10. PLAN FOR THE WORST

First thing to remember is that no wedding day goes perfect. Something will inevitably go wrong, but that's ok, no worries, I have never seen a wedding go so off that it ruins your day. Below are a few items to plan for ahead of time.

- **Weather:** Even in the summer it can rain, make sure your venue is prepared for an indoor ceremony or reception, or have a large party tent on stand by. For extreme heat have home made or store bought misters to help ease the guests. Having large umbrella's or a canopy doesn't hurt either.
- **Traffic:** Tell all the guests to arrive at a said time, but make a plan to start 15 minutes later. If the parents arrive late...I have seen them show up 45 minutes late, relax, play music and remember you can always make up the time later.
- **Allergies or Medical Emergencies:** Most venues have a first aid kit, but by law they cannot hand out medication, so bring allergy pills or maybe even an eppy pen. I have never seen the flowers, cake or food not arrive, but it is possible, the most important thing is to remain calm, because all these items can have adequate substitutes brought in from nearby stores. Just breath.



BONUS TIPS

11. VENUES OFFER DISCOUNTS ON WEEK DAYS

If you would like to save a little money on your venue, especially if it is already expensive, try asking what the pricing is on a Thursday or Friday. You would be surprised how many people are absolutely fine with weekday weddings, and if it does bring your guest count down, well then that's just another way to save money.

12. THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Just because your sister, friend, mother, or co-worker, did their wedding a certain way, doesn't mean you have. Take a page from Megan Markel and walk yourself down the aisle, don't toss the bouquet, find other international traditions to add to your day....the gist is, to do what is important to you and not just for other people. If you don't want to have a traditional wedding, don't, it will be ok, and it will be unique.

Thank you so much for allowing me to give you this free gift and I hope it will be most helpful in your wedding planning. I look forward to possibly connecting with you soon.

Sincerely

Crystal Summer Bear

Summer Bear Photography

