

Shoestring Wedding



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Introduction

A wedding is probably going to be the biggest event that you will ever plan in your lifetime. When you are making such a commitment to the person that you love and plan to spend the rest of your life with, you will want everything to go just perfectly.

Weddings are always a welcome addition to everyone's circle and they can be a great source of joy to all people involved.

Nothing can be as fulfilling and as overwhelming than planning the wedding of your dreams. Most people assume that the most difficult part of having a wedding is getting the groom to propose.

But what happens after that has been accomplished? What happens is the wedding has to be planned right down to last flower and place setting.

It really doesn't matter what type of wedding that you are planning to have or how many guests that you are planning to invite. You can plan a beautiful wedding that can suit any and every budget.

These days, most couples would prefer to spend the majority of their money on a great honeymoon, but still they want to have a memorable wedding. This will be your comprehensive guide to having the best and nicest wedding on a budget.

Just because you don't have the money to be able to afford the fanciest of everything, you can still host the wedding of your dreams. People throw weddings on a budget every day, and with this book handy, you will be able to do it too.

Why should something small like money put a stop to your dream wedding when it doesn't have to? These days, just about every wedding that you will see (unless the couple is rich) is going to be held on a budget.

Some weddings are even held on a budget as little as \$1000. Just because you can't afford to pay thousands and thousands of dollars

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for a wedding doesn't mean that you can't throw a wedding to be admired by others.

With this guide to having a nice wedding on a budget, you will learn how to:

- Get deals on flowers
- Get deals on catering
- Get cheap decorating tips
- Tips for hiring a DJ or music
- Save money on bridesmaid gifts
- Save money on photography

There are so many aspects to throwing a wedding that it can cost you an arm and a leg. Nobody wants to spend every dime that they have on their wedding, yet they still want the best wedding that they can possibly get.

With this guide on hand, that is exactly what you will get and at rock bottom prices too! This guide will be your comprehensive guide to saving money on all of the costs for your wedding. We will explore themes and extras and how you can save money on all of them.

Creating your Budget

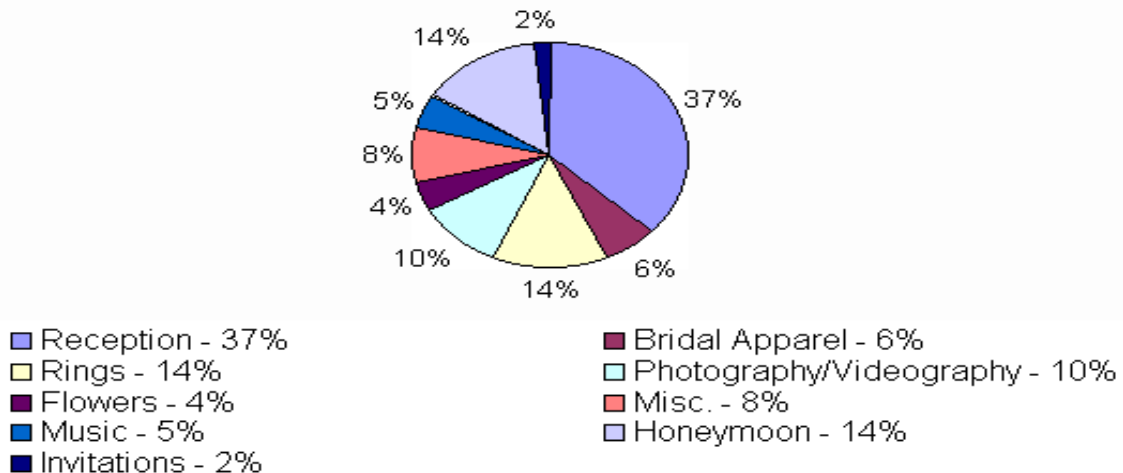
Perhaps the most important thing that must be done when you are ready to begin planning your wedding is to first create your budget. Your budget is important because it is almost impossible to know what you can afford for each aspect of the wedding if you don't give yourself a limit to the overall spending costs. For most people, creating the budget is the hardest job to do because you want to have the nicest and most memorable wedding that you can afford.

The days when the wedding is paid for by the parents of the bride are practically gone now. Parents will often contribute to the wedding cost as a gift to the couple, but it rather rare for parents to cover the whole cost of the wedding these days.

Usually it is because the parents simply can't afford it, but couples today often prefer to pay for their own weddings because it ensures that they can do it the way that they want to without interference.

A lot of the time, parents will forego paying for the wedding and pay for the honeymoon instead. Basically this makes creating your own budget very important; especially if you are paying for both the wedding and the honeymoon yourself.

These days, 4 out of 5 couples pay for their own wedding and it helps to know how your budget should be broken down. The chart below should help.



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Special Note: This chart is a general breakdown of the costs and how much of your budget should be applied to what. This chart was produced by www.BrideSave.com if you would like to see more information.

As with the above chart, when creating your actual budget, you should use the chart information as a guided starting point. From this chart, you will next have to create your actual dollar budgeted amount.

When creating your budget, you will first begin with the overall amount that you can afford to spend. The average wedding today costs approximately \$19,000. This is not a definite, but this is what the figures currently show.

Now you will need to take that starting amount and apply it to an actual separate dollar amount. If you are not good at percentages, you can always utilize the internet and check with the various websites that offer you free or cheap wedding budget calculators that will do it for you.

With these calculators, all that you have to do is give it the total budget amount and then it will calculate for you how much money in dollars that you will have to spend on each aspect of your wedding.

Once you have figured out the dollar amount that you can spend on each aspect of the wedding, you can then begin to create a chart that will itemize the list for you. I have included a quick table to help you out in this area.

Category(what must be done)	Goal (what you want for what must be done)
Reception	
Ceremony	
Photography/Videography	
Catering	
Rings	
Attire	
Music	

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Flowers	
Honeymoon	
Miscellaneous	
Decorations	

What this table is meant to show you is what needs to be done, but the blank areas are designed as a means of bringing out the dream of it all into reality. You have to make a list of all of the things that you will need to get in order to fulfill your wedding hopes.

This is necessary in order to know if what you dream of can even be afforded within your set budget. If it can't, you will have to do any or all of the following:

- Lower the guest list
- Forego some of the services
- Lessen the wedding party
- Forget the extras like limos

It is with the budget that you can set realistic goals for your wedding and whether or not if your budget is realistic to your finances. If it isn't, you will have to change or get rid of something. It's that simple.

Once you have decided what you want to include and what you can afford, it is on to the planning stage.

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The Planning Timeline

The first thing that needs to be considered when planning the ultimate wedding is how much time you will give yourself for the planning. In essence; this means what day that you will set the date of the wedding.

This may sound like a trivial matter, but it really is important because it will let you know what the time limit is for making your preparations.

Some weddings can take up to 3-4 months to prepare for and plan. This is pretty typical; depending on how big you are planning for your wedding to be and how fancy etc.

If you are not giving yourself more than a month, then planning is naturally different. Because of the differences in the time that you are giving yourself to planning the wedding, it is best to give the best planning methods and you may use them or not use them as they apply to your case.

One of the most important factors that go with planning a wedding is determining who you will be delegating specific duties to. For example, if you are terrible at choosing flowers, who will you assign to do it for you?

It is always best to try to give different duties to others so that you will not be overwhelmed by them yourself. Let's take a look at some of the various duties that you can hand out:

Catering: Who do you believe would be the best person to handle all of the arrangements for the food and drink at your wedding?

Invitations and seating arrangements: This person will be addressing and mailing out invitations and making sure that people are seated in a fashion that will ensure everyone's mutual comfort and enjoyment

Decorations for wedding and reception includes center pieces

- Rehearsal dinners etc.

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- Music and/or DJ
- Brides maid and groomsmen gifts and favors
- Gowns, and tuxedos
- Bridal showers/bachelor parties etc.

All of these things are usual must haves when it comes to a wedding, unless of course, you opt not to have bridesmaids or groomsmen in the wedding. All of these things can be murder to try to do on your own as well.

That is why you have to get in touch with people who are capable of taking over some of the menial jobs for you. All of these things seem small at first, but they can quickly add up to quite a bit of money when they are all combined together.

After you have delegated the responsibilities, you should next set a specific time period to have all of the tasks completed. Creating a to-do list and time sheet is a great way to do this. That way, when all of the tasks are finished you can easily check them off.

You should set up specific times and days to discuss the progress of things as well, just in case things are not going so well. In doing this you will be able to help make sure that all things are running smoothly.

You might be wondering what happens when you have done all of this and are ready to get started. First of all, you have to be willing to follow the general wishes of the couple to be wed; that is unless you are the couple and are planning your own wedding.

When planning a wedding on a budget you have to lower your requirements just a bit. For example, you can't try to have to filet mignon if you are throwing the wedding on a fish stick budget. I have broken down the various aspects of the wedding planning to the last details so that you will get a better idea of what I mean.

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Ideally, you would want to have at least a year to plan the wedding, but that is not always possible or desired. For the purposes of this guide, I have set up a 12 month wedding timeline that will certainly make it a little bit easier to host your wedding.

12 months before your Wedding day

- Announce the engagement
- Set your wedding date
- Create a budget
- Hire a Wedding Coordinator (optional)
- Create your guest list
- Start brainstorming ideas and themes
- Reserve your Ceremony spot
- Book an Officiate
- Make reservations for your Reception area
- Book a Photographer and Videographer
- Book Caterer, Florist and Music (Band, DJ, etc.)
- Look for a Wedding gown and Tux, allowing time for alterations and fittings
- Register for gifts
- Select and call the bridesmaids and groomsmen.
- Agree on a date to order bridesmaids' dresses and groomsmen's tuxes

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- Choose a destination for your Honeymoon
- Apply for passports, if required

6 months before your Wedding day

- Finalize your guest list
- Decide on the timeline and details of Ceremony and Reception
- Order/make invitations, and thank you notes
- Make airline and hotel reservations for the Honeymoon
- Choose a caterer, a florist and place an order for the wedding cake.
- Book Transportation (Limo, Antique Car, Etc.) for wedding day
- Shop for any Party rentals

3-4 months before your Wedding day

- Mail out/hand deliver invitations
- Confirm wedding details and contracts with all wedding vendors
- Choose gifts for your attendants
- Set a date and time for the rehearsal dinner
- Help make travel arrangements for any out-of-town guests
- Make final alterations and fittings for the Wedding Gown and Tux

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- Set time with your Photographer for the Bridal Portrait or Engagement shoot

1 month before your Wedding day

- Apply for the marriage license
- Buy your wedding bands
- Finalize music list and no-play list with band or DJ
- Attend showers
- Make insurance arrangements

1-2 weeks before your Wedding day

- Schedule the rehearsal a day or two before your wedding day
- Make an appointment with a Beauty Salon for day of wedding
- Send a wedding announcement to the local newspapers (optional)
- Make necessary arrangements for name & address change, if any.
- Discuss final details with the reception Site and the Caterer
- Pack for honeymoon
- Write out all checks needed for wedding day
- Send reminders to the rehearsal dinner attendees about the location & time

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- Discuss final details of the ceremony and reception with family and bridal party
- Wedding day or day before
- Visit your Beauty Salon for manicure and pedicure
- Host the rehearsal and dinner.
- Make sure the ushers have the final guest list.

Special note: This timeline was adapted form a timeline that was created by www.onewed.com and is meant as a sample. Bear in mind that everything in this timeline is optional and may change the timeline as you add and remove certain aspects.



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Wedding ceremony help

When it comes to your wedding services alone, nobody wants to spend an arm and a leg on this and still have to foot the bill for the reception. Really it depends on where you want to your wedding to be and what type of service that you are hoping to have.

There is a way to satisfy all types of weddings as long as you know what your options are. Let's take a look at the different types of ceremonies that you can choose from that can save you a great deal of money.

Church Ceremony

When you want your ceremony to be in a church, you will often have to pay for the rental and the priest or minister to perform the ceremony.

Some churches will decorate for you while others will not. If this is an issue, be sure to ask first. How much money you will pay for the ceremony will vary and will depend on how the policies of the church.

Here are some tips on how you can save money on a church ceremony.

- Look for a church that offers complete services or all inclusive packages rather than separate fees
- Try to bargain deals for outdoor weddings
- Rent the church alone and hire your own minister
- Have your services on a day where there are no church services because it may be cheaper
- Decorate the church yourself
- Offer to volunteer at the church for awhile in exchange for a discount

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- You can save some money by hosting your ceremony in the church basement rather than in the worship center.
- Churches will often offer more inexpensive prices if you are a member of the church.

Outdoor Ceremony

You can save a great deal of money by hosting your ceremony outside like in a beautiful park, at the beach, on a hilltop or even in your yard.

Of course, having the ceremony in your backyard is the cheapest. Here are some of the formalities that go with having an outdoor ceremony that can save you money all around.

The best way is to have the service in your backyard

- Choose an open public forum that does not generally have a great deal of people trying to access it, and get the right permits etc. beforehand
- Opting for an ordained minister rather than a priest etc. is often cheaper. Just be sure to check that whoever you choose can legally perform wedding ceremonies in your area.
- You can forego the chairs and have the guests standing as long as you host a short ceremony. A nice white or themed linen on the ground for guests to stand on is an elegant touch
- When going with outdoor ceremony, people often opt for the portable arch because it is easy to transport and just as elegant
- Of course, you can always host your ceremony at city hall and save your money for the reception. Record the ceremony and host a viewing during the reception

Outdoor ceremonies open the door to many themes that can greatly reduce the cost of your wedding and reception. Hawaiian themes and

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beach themes can help you save money on formal wear, and decorations etc. because people having an outdoor wedding are often casually or island dressed.

It makes the ceremony more comfortable for the guests too because they are also dressed casually.

Outdoor ceremonies can immediately switch from ceremony to reception which saves some extra money on travel fees too, such as limos etc. The Hawaiian theme will be a great way to have a luau or pig roast reception.

You might want to consider a theme that lets you have a picnic for your reception party or a beach party or bonfire, but I will get into themes in more detail in a later section.

All of these tips were designed to help you find deals and discounts. You can also choose to have your ceremony at a courthouse or city hall building; record the services and play the recording during your reception instead. It is a nice way to share your vows with your friends and family without spending a fortune on the ceremony.

Wedding Chapel

When most people think of wedding chapels they think of Las Vegas style chapels, but that is not all that chapels are. If you are a religious person, it is very easy to solve the question of a wedding chapel because you can choose to get married in your usual place of worship.

This may be a church, synagogue, mosque or other religious temple. However, if you have not had a religious upbringing, are marrying someone of a different religion or culture, or simply would rather select a different venue, it is important to discover what wedding chapel options are open to you.

If you would still like a ceremony in the style of a particular religion, most chapels have a host of different officiates who can provide the appropriate wedding ceremony to suit your own specific needs.

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The majority of wedding chapels are designed in the style of churches. Most couples seek this traditional type of scene, even if they do want a non-denominational ceremony.

Chapels advertise features, such as stained glass windows, oak flooring, historical buildings, chandeliers and more. If you would prefer a modern building, it is possible to find chapels that are less traditional, such as those that are located in art galleries but you will need to research them well if you want to get a good deal.

Wedding chapels come in various sizes, and you must calculate how many guests will require seating at your wedding before committing to a particular chapel.

The majority of chapels seat between a hundred and a hundred and fifty guests, but there is one to suit every size of wedding. In Las Vegas, for example, there are chapels just large enough for the Bride, Groom, officiate and witness.

The location of your wedding chapel is key. There are numerous choices in cities and towns, but you may opt for a more natural or dramatic position. There are wedding chapels located anywhere from the Smoky Mountains to Hawaiian beaches, from Lake Tahoe to Disneyland!

If you have connections to the military, you could consider holding your wedding in a military chapel on a military base. There are long waiting lists for these facilities, but they are usually free (except a charitable donation).

Some facilities offer a choice of chapel depending on your religion, and it is possible to find Protestant, Catholic and Jewish chapels. However, there may be restrictions on decoration or numbers of guests.

There is also a vast array of novelty, or themed, wedding chapels springing up everywhere these days. The first themed chapels originated in Las Vegas, but it is now possible to find outlandish chapel designs anywhere.

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Aside from the ubiquitous Elvis chapels, there are options such as a neon wedding at the luminous chapel in New Orleans, or a Cowboy chapel in Nevada. Try to incorporate the theme into other aspects of your wedding, such as your attire, the music and food. Some chapels even supply costumes for the guests, which can really make your day a great deal of fun.



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Planning the Reception

Great deals can be found when you know how much money you are working with. It really doesn't matter how small your budget is for the reception because all budgets can be accommodated.

Your reception budget should consist of approximately 30% of your wedding budget or more. Most wedding receptions are so expensive due to the fact of providing meals, decorations, hall rentals etc.

For the purposes of this guide, I will give two different examples of common receptions and an idea for cutting costs on the food and drinks as well as give you the best tips for throwing your reception on a budget.

Renting a Hall

If you prefer to rent a hall or space for your reception, you must consider many things before making this decision. You will have to think of the prices for the hall rental, the cost of using their servers (most halls include servers in price and they are not negotiable), decorations, flowers, meals, drinks etc.

When you wish to rent a hall for your reception there are some things that the hall will include in your rental that you can't avoid paying for such as: servers, decorations, and wine. However, some halls will give you the option to pick and choose the extras that you want.

Depending on the type of hall that you choose to rent, the costs can vary greatly. For example, if you rent a large hall, you could pay more than if you rented a legion hall.

You might also want to consider that if you are starting with a small budget, that renting a hall might not be worth the effort and money, or it may leave you with less options.

There are a few tips when renting a hall that could keep a great deal of your costs down. Let's take a look at them.

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- 1.** You should only consider renting a hall if you have invited 50 or more people to your reception.
- 2.** When renting a hall, you have to decide if you are opting for a cash bar or an open bar. A good compromise is to purchase a few cases of beer on your own and host a cash bar for those who want mixed drinks if you are trying to keep costs down.
- 3.** Rent a hall that you can decorate yourself
- 4.** If you must have servers, rent a hall that includes servers in the price of the rental or go with a hall that lets you bring your own.
- 5.** Choose a hall that will cater to whatever your needs or budget is.
- 6.** When it comes to the food, you should go with a hall that will allow you to bring your own food if you would prefer to not pay extra for catering.
- 7.** Serving vegetable and fruit trays, as well as finger foods like finger sandwiches will be of great value in accommodating vegetarians
- 8.** Opting for a casual reception will allow you to serve your food buffet style which will be predominantly cheaper.
- 9.** Opting to tell people to forego giving you a wedding gift and serve a completely cash bar is a great way to accommodate guests and recover some of the money for the hall.
- 10.** Opt for non-weekend dates because these are not peak hours for the hall and the prices may be cheaper
- 11.** You should choose to host your event during the winter for the best rates
- 12.** Negotiate a special discount by paying cash instead of credit card. Most reception halls will do this
- 13.** Choose to go with a non-dinner reception offering instead snack foods and munchables

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Hosting a wedding reception at a hall does not have to cost through the nose if you know how to get around the basics, which I have just mentioned.

Most people would like to host their reception at a reception hall because they feel that it is more elegant than hosting it outdoors, however, this is not always the case. Sometimes, hosting your event outdoors is more fun and it is also much cheaper.

Saving Money Using Reception Themes

Just like weddings, receptions are often theme based as well. Reception themes are often more relaxed than wedding themes because they are meant to be provided in a party atmosphere. There are many affordable themes that can be used and I will mention some of them here as well as some great ideas for them.

Choosing a themed reception can save you a great deal of money on it, depending on the theme that is chosen.

Reception themes allow people to get creative with their celebration and express themselves. People often choose to base their themes on hobbies, personal interests, and dreams. It can be very costly to host a reception. That is why the majority of your wedding budget is spent on it. Themes help to cut the costs because you can choose to use a casual theme that doesn't require a great deal of extras.

Choosing themes like beach themes, Mexican fiestas, or toga party is simple and the food is cheap and easy. Take a look at some more themes to lessen the cost of your reception.

Star Trek

This fun theme can be extremely affordable. You can decorate the room or hall with stars. You can use black garbage bags like wallpaper and string white lights around to simulate the stars. You can have guests dress up like aliens or star trek characters.

You can serve appetizers rather than entrees and give them special names that remind them of Star Trek. It is a really fun theme that is great if you are a star trek fan. You can also go with other-worldly music that is downloaded from a computer rather than go with a DJ too. You can also choose to play episodes of the show during the reception as entertainment.

NASCAR

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This theme has a world of possibilities. You can decorate with checkered flags and checkered flag streamers, toy cars, painted numbers of the different cars and drivers.

If you would like, you can decorate with a particular driver motif. The best part about this theme is that it is very casual and you can serve regular foods like pizza, large submarine sandwiches, hamburgers and even chips and nachos; pretty much any food that you want.

In general this relaxed type of theme applies to all sports related theme. This theme is great for receptions. You can also opt to watch a race.

Movies

Popular movie themes like the Matrix and Lord of the Rings etc. can be a lot of fun for receptions when the bride and groom are movie buffs.

Decorations will be based on what the general movie symbolizes such as; if you chose the Matrix, you would use computer data charts and sheets, computers, dress in all black etc. You could serve appetizers rather than entrees for this type of theme as well. Playing the movie during your reception is a cool idea for background scenery.

Roman theme

The choices with the Roman theme vary. Togas are always a part of the festivities. Serving fresh fruits like grapes, apples etc. are always good. Serving fresh rotisseries meats or cold cuts are great with this theme too.

You can generally serve beer and wine for this theme and you can decorate with wreathes, garland, candles and anything else in the Roman fashion.

Reception themes are a great way to personalize your reception. People often choose their themes based on their personalities and

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individual character. Some themes are based on hobbies and others are based on hopes and dreams.

No matter what type of theme that you choose for your reception, you can always find the right way to represent it. Some special themes for your reception include but are not limited to:

Fairy Wonderland: Decorating in fairy's wings, sheer fabrics draped around you, baby's breath, moss, and serving fine breads and appetizers as well as all things beautiful. This theme really lets the bride bring her childhood dreams to life. Music like Enya would be nice to listen to for this theme

Ethnic traditions: This theme require that you choose specialty foods and decorations from the ethnicity of your choice. For example, should you choose a Scottish theme, you would listen to bag pipes, dress in the Scottish fashion and do all things Scottish.

Mexican fiesta: This fun theme can have you hitting a piñata, serving popular Mexican dishes, mixing a bit of Santa Fe decorative blankets for the walls and many other things. You can play mariachi music or Spanish guitars for this theme.

Holiday themes: i.e. Valentines day

Arabian Nights: Filling your reception hall with beautiful linens; letting your bridal party have costumes should they wish to. You can also serve Arabic foods or appetizers and pita breads etc. this theme is very versatile and fun.

Greek Mythology: This theme can be geared toward a particular Greek saga or more popularly, guests can each come dressed as a particular Grecian of their choice. Greek foods like fresh fruits, wine, and other edibles of ancient Greece can be offered.

Hawaiian: You can use your imagination to create any Hawaiian fantasy that you wish. You can give out fresh leis or artificial ones as wedding favors. You can serve fresh tropical island fruits such as pineapples and serve those cute tropical drinks with decorative umbrellas etc. Wherever your mind takes you.

Disney

The Wild West: This theme can be as fun as you want. You can set up your reception area to look like an old saloon. You can have dancers give a burlesque show etc. You can do all kinds of fun things with this theme. You can also serve easy to create entrees like meatloaf or more expensive steaks etc. As long as you stick with your theme (leave out the shrimp cocktail) you can have a great time.

When it comes to themes, the possibilities are endless. Coming up with them can be much of the fun. After you have chosen your theme, you can brainstorm ideas to expand upon it for the decorations and foods.

The themes that have been touched up on here were designed to be as easy as possible, but they can be as intricate as you want.



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Outdoor Reception

Hosting your reception outdoors can be a great deal cheaper and a lot more fun for you and your guests. When you host your reception outdoors you have a lot of options as to how you want things to be.

The only downside to doing this is whether or not the weather conditions will permit it. Because of this your reception and its success is often at the hands of Mother Nature. Other than that, it can be the best decision that you could make.

Outdoor receptions give you an endless supply of ideas and freedom in how your reception will be handled. The best thing is that you can host an outdoor reception at a hall or beautiful grounds, or you can do so in your own back yard.

If your own yard permits it, it would be best to do it here because it is a relaxed atmosphere and you need not worry about many of the small details that come in when using public grounds (i.e. music).

There are many ways that you can make an outdoor reception easy to plan, cheaper to pay for, and a great deal of fun. Of course, there are small formalities that go with it as well.

I have developed a to-do list for you as well to help you to make the most out of your outdoor reception.

Reception to do List

You have to start with a thorough to do list when planning an outdoor reception because this will keep your affairs in order. When creating your list, you have to consider having a contingency plan. The reason for this is to accommodate bad weather conditions that may prohibit your reception from taking place at all. Or having your reception ruined due to a thunderstorm or severe winds.

Here is a sample to do list for you to look at so that you will know all of the things that need to be considered. The list will include what needs to be done, and why it should be handled.

To do list should include:

- Renting tent or gazebo and decorating it. Make sure that you confirm your rental date at least two weeks ahead of time or sooner if you can.
- Renting tables and chairs. It is cheaper when you set them up yourself
- Getting regular updates on the weather. Of course, you should have a contingency plan just in case the weather does not permit an outdoor party.
- Getting any miscellaneous items such as extension cords etc.
- Hiring a DJ or band and confirming
- Deciding on food items and drink and who will prepare what
- Getting permits that may be required in serving alcohol
- Getting permission from neighbors. You don't want them complaining about the noise and the parking situation (invite them too). Of course this rule applies when you are hosting your outdoor reception in your backyard.

These are some quick tips for your to do list. Of course, you will also want to know how you can possibly save as much money as possible on this event and the tips and ideas are literally endless.

Perhaps the best reason to host an outdoor party is because it will take care of the smoking problem on its own. When you host an outdoor reception, there are so many choices that you can make on what to do and serve your guests. Because of this, I have divided the outdoor reception items separately.

Food for Outdoor Reception

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There are many ways that you can choose to serve your reception food when the reception is held outdoors. Here are some of the most popular and money saving ways to serve foods.

- Have a casual reception and serve barbecue items such as hamburgers, chicken, ribs etc. Have everyone forego a gift in exchange for bringing their own special dish to the barbecue instead. Just have everyone confirm beforehand so that you do not have everyone bringing the same thing.
- Serve your food buffet style having each guest bring a food item instead of a gift.
- Serve vegetable, cheese, fruit, and meat trays with dips and other snackables rather than hosting a huge meal. This is a great alternative anyway, for vegetarians as well.
- Host your reception with a theme so that you can be more casual with your food, for example, perhaps you can host your reception with an Italian theme and make spaghetti or order pizza etc.
- Choose an outdoor theme that is simple and easy and one that you can afford.

Outdoor Reception

Hosting your reception outdoors can be a great deal cheaper and a lot more fun for you and your guests. When you host your reception outdoors you have a lot of options as to how you want things to be.

The only downside to doing this is whether or not the weather conditions will permit it. Because of this your reception and its success is often at the hands of Mother Nature. Other than that, it can be the best decision that you could make.

Outdoor receptions give you an endless supply of ideas and freedom in how your reception will be handled. The best thing is that you can host an outdoor reception at a hall or beautiful grounds, or you can do so in your own back yard.

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If your own yard permits it, it would be best to do it here because it is a relaxed atmosphere and you need not worry about many of the small details that come in when using public grounds (i.e. music).

There are many ways that you can make an outdoor reception easy to plan, cheaper to pay for, and a great deal of fun. Of course, there are small formalities that go with it as well.

I have developed a to-do list for you as well to help you to make the most out of your outdoor reception.

Drinks

Serving drinks at the reception can be the most expensive part of the whole event at times. Of course, it doesn't have to be.

Here are some great tips on serving drinks at your reception that will satisfy everyone; particularly the person/persons who are paying for it.

- Serve your beer and punch for free and get all to pay a minimal amount like a dollar per mixed drink etc.
- Offer an open bar for a small amount of money per guest such as 2 or 3 dollars to help you recover some of your money.
- Request that the champagne toast is free and that everyone bring their own drinks to the outdoor reception. For this option you can also let everyone not be obligated to give a gift.
- Look to get your spirits in bulk from a wholesaler
- Begin to prepare for your reception months ahead of time so that you may purchase all of the drinks over a time period rather than all at once.
- Do not forget to include special punches or sodas for non-alcoholic beverages.

Photography

When hosting an outdoor reception, you can save yourself a great deal of money by placing disposable cameras around and letting the guests take their own snapshots for you. This can save you a great deal of money on the wedding photos.

You can also choose to limit the photos that you get with a professional photographer to lower the costs, or you can make a deal with a photographer to give you the negatives at a special discount and you can have them developed yourself at a later date.

Otherwise, your best bet is to simply go with the cheapest option that you can find.

A really fun extra way to capture parts of your wedding is to make a video recording instead of paying for professional pictures. You can simply use your own camcorder or borrow a friend's and ask someone to record the ceremony and the reception festivities for you.

With all of the digital cameras and recorders available now, it is easier than ever to make professional looking videos.

Digital photography can be extremely easy to create and just as easy to reproduce later as weddings mementos for the wedding party.

These days, the average home has so much photo-technology attached to PC computers that there isn't really much needed to hire professional photographers because you can give the professional quality to yourself.

Weather protection

When you are looking to rent a gazebo or weather tent for your outdoor reception the choices can vary greatly. Some places have some really good rental deals, but others do not.

Some places rent by the day, some rent by the hour and some only rent by the week. The prices can also go up or down based on the

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tent's size, and whether or not you need it to be installed by them or if you are doing it yourself.

You should know that some companies will insist upon putting the tents and gazebos up themselves and taking them down. If the price is too high for you, just go with another company.

You can also choose to use a do-it-yourself tent that can be created using tarps. Tarps come in many different colors and you can find it in any size at any home improvement store.

When you do it yourself, you will pay for it once, but you can use it for years during barbecues, cook-outs etc. That is another way to get cheaper weather protection for your back yard.

Finally, you can opt to buy any number of those tents that do not use mosquito mesh or have removable mosquito mesh. These usually stand on their own and are easy to set up. The best part about buying them is that you will have one handy whenever you need them. Some of them are all weather and can stay up all year round.

It is a good investment if you entertain in the yard often, or if you just like to sit outside during the nicer weather.

If you choose to rent tables and chairs, you can often get good deals when you go through a church or charity for the rental. They will always be willing to give you a hand.

If you find that renting chairs and tables is too expensive you can just set up a table to hold the food outside and ask everyone to bring a folding chair with them if they can so as to make it easier.

This is a great way to save a lot of money on your reception. Hosting it outdoors is always nice to the guests as well as to the happy couple. When you do it in your own backyard, you know that you are in a comfortable place.

If it is a choice between an outside reception and an indoor reception, the outdoor option is always welcome.

Planning the Menu

When you are planning a budgeted menu, you must first know what your exact budget is when it comes to the food and drink specifically. Some people keep the food and drinks separate, but on average, the food and drink are a part of the same bill.

If you can afford the more expensive catering services, then by all means enjoy. However, if you are like most of us, you will likely need a little bit of help in creating a menu that is fitting to your budget. If you are hosting an indoor reception in a hall and plan to have a dinner option, you have to make sure that you accommodate the needs of all of your guests which include vegetarians. You should request that the guests RSVP beforehand so that you can get the right amount of vegetarian plates.

The way that you choose to serve the dinners can vary. Here are some tips on how you can choose to serve the guests to make it a bit cheaper for you.

- You can serve the meals buffet style, with this option you have people forego wedding gifts in favor of bringing a dish
- You can offer vegetable, fruit and meat platters with dips and crackers instead of foods
- You can ask each guest to contribute a small amount of money to the reception or to make donations toward the reception rather than buying a gift.
- You can offer a soup and salad menu rather than a full blown entrée
- Offer a limited bar which means that you offer an open bar only at certain times such as after dinner and during toasting etc. that way your guests aren't paying and you won't go broke, the rest of the time offer a cash bar
- Offer around the world appetizers instead of a meal. This will give you the opportunity to offer fill ups such as crab, shrimp.

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Etc. as well as casual appetizers like cheese sticks, chicken wings, and mushroom caps etc. the around the world motif will also provide your party with a variety of different tastes.

- Request that each immediate family member create a dish instead of a present
- Do not pay for extras like servers, bartenders etc. asking a friend or family member to do it instead as a wedding gift to you

Outdoor receptions give you much freedom when choosing your menu because you can serve anything that you want including barbecue, long group submarine sandwiches or pizza.

As long as you offer foods that will accommodate both carnivores and vegetarians, you will be fine. You can always find items to suit all of your needs and every budget as long as your budget is reasonable for the amount of people that you are planning to serve. If it doesn't fit, you may have to trim the invite list.



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Planning your Decoration Budget

When it comes to your decorating budget it really depends on where the ceremony and reception will be on what decorations need to be present as well as what if any; themes that you are choosing.

For example, if you are planning an indoor dinner, you have to include centerpieces etc. The most common decorating choice for weddings and reception are flowers, and streamers.

While the streamers and various other decorations are generally inexpensive, the flowers can kill you. It is best when choosing your flowers for a wedding service and reception to use false flowers or paper machete flowers as they are cheap and reusable.

For those who would much prefer to use real flowers, it can be much cheaper to go with wild flowers and/or hand picked flowers. It is also a good idea to use them sparingly.

For example, rather than going all out and decorating everything with flowers just use a simple arrangement for the center of the table and place them in small vases or hand made crafts.

Of course you can also opt to keep the flowers strictly in the ceremony. Paper machete flowers re getting more and more popular as well as hand made roses that were created from tissue paper. When they are placed on green pipe cleaners or wires that are covered in green tissue paper they are quite attractive. It is a nice way to save money and spend some time with your friends and family in creating them.

When it comes to the decoration budget, this is a time when you will want the church, chapel or hall for the ceremony to cover them for you.

If that is not possible, the ceremonial decorations can be limited to those involved in the ceremony, such as their clothes. If you must, you can pin balloons to the areas where the guests will be seated or create some flowers out of tissue paper.

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Streamers are always used, but there are other ways to decorate that are just as appealing. Here are some good tips for decorating at your wedding on a budget.

- A really unique idea is to use glass containers and putting baby fish in them. It is very unique and attractive, and it is also cheap because the glass containers can be purchased at Wal-Mart and even a dollar store. The fish can be as cheap as you want them to be
- Good old candle holders and candles are always a romantic addition to any wedding decor
- If your reception is at night it is nice to add fireflies to a glass container with holes for air or even butterflies during the day
- False flower arrangements in a bamboo pot are a very nice addition and keepsake for guests
- Using white Christmas lights streamed through greenery is a beautiful decoration and is one that you likely already have available
- Chocolate and candy flower bouquets are sweet accents to the décor and they can be souvenirs for the guests later.
- Balloons, balloons, and more balloons are always fun

These are not the only decorations that are available but you are getting the idea. The best thing that you can do before choosing your decorations is to choose a theme first. Themes for weddings are just like choosing themes for anniversaries and birthdays. Once you can decide on a theme, you can decorate around that theme.

For example, if you are choosing to have your theme be tropical romance, you can use glass containers with sand etc. as centerpieces to your reception. Some extra and easy to afford themes include those that will be listed in the table below as well as some of the things that usually accompany them.

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These are common wedding ceremonial themes that are used as opposed to the reception themes mentioned above; of course they can be used as reception themes too.

Wedding Ceremony Themes	Specialty items used for theme
Medieval	Wreathes, wild flowers, garland, candles
Tropical/beach	Sea Shells, polished stones, fish tanks
Victorian	Lace, bows, flowers, candelabras
Big band	Balloon bouquets, stringed lights, empty wine bottles draped in fake pearls (centerpieces)
Roaring 20's	Balloons, streamers, candles, USO items
Spring	Daisies, butterflies, birds
Autumn	Colored leaves, terracotta pottery
Winter	Crystal, icicles, babies breath, glitter

These are some of the most common themes that you can choose and the most affordable as well. The fact of the matter is that once you have chosen your theme it is easy to work around. Many of the items that were mentioned in the above themes can be found in discount stores and dollar stores.

The point here is that before you can decide on a wedding budget, you must choose your theme first and make sure that it suits your finances.

Affordable Centerpieces

When it comes to decorating your reception tables, the centerpieces for each table play a major role in setting the tone and style of your wedding. They will be one of the major focal point for your guests while they are eating their meal, and spectacular or unique centerpieces can add an element of sophistication or surprise to your event.

The most established kind of centerpiece is flowers and it is the most expected. There are literally hundreds of floral centerpiece designs, from tall lilies to tightly packed roses.

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You should really shop around and check out different wedding supply shops and online specialists to see the different possibilities, and look at the varying prices. You must also remember that you will need a centerpiece for every table, so it could get expensive if you are planning to invite a large guest list.

For a cheaper option, buy the flowers yourself from a wholesaler, and produce simple displays such as six tulips in a glass vase. You could also use the bridesmaids' bouquets as centerpieces to really get the best value out of them.

Believe it or not, this happens all the time. Instead of fresh cut flowers, consider using potted plants as centerpieces. You can decorate terracotta pots and pick plants that flower in co-coordinating colors to your scheme.

These centerpieces will last long after the day has finished, and provide a lovely gift for those you would like to give them to.

Popular alternatives to floral centerpieces include candles and fruit. Candles are a wonderful way of creating an air of romance and enchantment for your wedding, and look particularly effective if your venue is dimly lit.

However, if you plan to hold your reception in the afternoon, with plenty of natural daylight, candles may not produce the appropriate dramatic effect.

You could purchase candelabras for each table for an elegant look, or consider the less formal appearance of floating candles in a large glass bowl.

You must ensure that any holders or bowls you use are heat-resistant, and also check with your venue for any restrictions they may have on the use of naked flames.

Fruit is a nice and decorative choice, and can also be eaten later in the evening! Other edible choices include candy, chocolate lollipops or Hershey's Kisses. Use your imagination to display whatever treats you choose in an exciting way, using glitter, streamers or balloons.

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You can be as original as you like when it comes to your centerpieces, and you could choose something really personal such as hand-written poems or family photographs in ornate picture frames.

If you are having a themed wedding, create a unique centerpiece that reflects the wedding motif. A wonderful centerpiece for an oriental themed wedding is a bonsai tree, or large origami creations. Anything that matches your theme is best.

Invitations

It really doesn't matter if you are planning to have a large or a small wedding; you still have to send out invitations. For larger wedding parties, you should buy your invitations at bulk party stores, or wedding warehouses in order to get the best buy for your money. Of course, you can always choose to make your own invitations which is also nice and unique.

Common homemade invitations are often made up of tissue paper over white regular paper, and decorated colored paper. When it comes to wedding invitations, some people even use calligraphy to hand craft their invitations and it adds a nice elegant touch to your invitations.

When you make your invitations by hand, you can address each one individually so that you can add unique invitations to your guests that are addressed specifically to them.

When you hand make your invitations, there are no limits to what you can do to them or what add-ons that you can use. The most popular additions to hand made invitations are:

- Photos of the happy couple
- Artful calligraphy accents
- Paper flowers
- Poems, verse and prose
- Rhinestones and/or sequins
- Gold or silver model car paint for accents

Not everyone has the know how to create hand made specialty invitations, and if you would prefer to buy yours, you can easily find good bargains on them if you go to a wedding warehouse or a party warehouse.

Most places offer discounts when you buy items in bulk and this is great if you are planning to have a larger wedding of 50 or more guests. Invitations do not have to break your bank account, but they do have to be there.

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You can also save money on invitations if you personally deliver as many of them as possible rather than sending them through the mail.

You can also hand certain invitations to friends and family members to pass along for you to those who they see more often than you do.

You can also post your wedding date and guest list on your family website if you have one or in the newspaper and only send invitations to those who do not have access to the Internet.



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Getting Deals on the Wedding Clothing

If you are planning to have a full wedding that includes bridesmaids, and groomsmen etc. it could run you a great deal of money to cover your gown as well as the other women and men's clothing as well.

Bridesmaid's dresses get more and more costly with every extra woman in the wedding party. When you are deciding how much money you can afford to spend on the wedding clothes, you have to consider the fittings and the flowers or accessories as well.

If you can, you might do better to allow for casual wear for the bridesmaids so that they can wear less expensive dresses or skirts. This is particularly good if you are planning an outdoor or beach wedding.

The less formal the ceremony, the less money that you are required to spend. Perhaps that is why outdoor ceremonies are getting more and more popular these days.

You can also save money on the ladies dresses by purchasing them off season from a bridal store. You can always shop for out of season or discontinued dresses as a means of getting great discounts on gorgeous dresses. If you really want to, you can ask that your bridesmaids forget about the wedding shower gifts in favor of buying their dresses. That is a common compromise that is made these days.

If the cost of the dresses is really going to be a matter of stress for you, just reduce the bridesmaids to just having a maid/matron of honor and a best man only for the groom.

Many couples opt to forego the extras all together and simply do not have anyone standing up with them at all. After all, there is no law that states that you have to have a maid of honor or best man present during the ceremony.

When it comes to the tuxedos for the male participants and the groom, you can often find good deals when renting if you just shop around. It helps is you limit the number of participants if you must in

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order to reduce costs or if the men involved have their own tuxedos already.

Either way, research and comparison shopping really is the best chance.

You can also choose to rent the ladies gowns as well as the tuxedos. Not everyone wants to spend hundreds of dollars on a dress that they will wear once. Or spend that much money on many dresses that you will never be worn more than once.

Many bridal shops will let you rent a dress rather than buy one. The only difference with rented dresses is that you have to take it as is. They are not custom fitted to you. Other than that, you can save hundreds of dollars doing this.

Wearing your mother or grandmother's wedding dress is also an option; especially if your are choosing a period theme where the dress was used. For example, if you are wearing your grandmother's dress and the dress was worn in the 40's, you can make the 40's your wedding theme.

If the dress is your mother's from the 60's or 70's, you can do the same thing. It will save you money and provides you with a fun theme.

You can also opt to make your own dress from scratch. Many women are choosing to go with home made pieces because they can get truly original in the make of the dress and the style.

It can be made in any fashion that you like and of any material also. Making your own dress is a good way to save money and it is also guaranteed to make sure that no one else has the same style as you.

When you make it yourself, you are guaranteed a custom fit without paying a custom price.

Finally, you can save bundles on your whole wedding party clothing, including the wedding dress by dressing according to your theme.

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For example, if you choose a Hawaiian theme, you can wear island clothes. As part of your theme, you can dress in costumes to make the festivities more fun and as an added bonus; you can make the guests and wedding party dress in costume too.

You can also get a good deal by buying your wedding items at vintage or used stores. Many people bring back their wedding clothing after they have used so that they can recoup some of their money later.

This is a great way to save money for you and the rest of your wedding party. Used clothing items can also be found in bridal shops or tuxedo warehouses because the average person doesn't wear these items more than once and because of this they will return it to the store that they got it from later.

When you are not afraid of vintage clothing, you can find some truly beautiful designer clothing for great prices. Some of the stores that offer used items will not force you to buy them, but they may request that you pay a bit of an extra fee for dry cleaning etc.

Either way, you will still be saving yourself a great deal of money that you would spend if you bought your items outright.

Getting Deals on Catering

When it comes to your catering services for your wedding, there are options to make it more affordable. Generally for larger receptions, catering companies will offer discounts on their own.

Saving money on your food and drink can be very easy, but it really depends on how large your reception party will be and what you are planning to serve. I will explain how you can save some money on the catering for your party.

- 1.** You can serve basic entrees where the meals are all inclusive and forego the extras like salads, soups and breads and bring these items yourself.
- 2.** You can choose to go with appetizers instead of full entrees. Many catering companies will offer a variety of appetizers at a special cost.
- 3.** Skip out on the extra services that many catering companies offer such as place settings or servers.
- 4.** Avoid going to a professional caterer and opt instead to use a small restaurants catering services instead.
- 5.** Picking up the food for your reception instead of letting the catering company deliver it can save you a great deal of money.
- 6.** You can always make the food yourself and experiment with many different tastes or prepare all of your best dishes.
- 7.** Tips are generally included in catering packages so you do not have to provide extra tips during the reception unless someone goes out of their way and/or far over the duties
- 8.** Plan your wedding yourself instead of using a wedding planner
- 9.** Limit your transportation costs by booking the services on off seasons or shopping around for the cheapest costs
- 10.** The very last thing that you can do is elope!

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These tips can save you a lot of money on catering because when you skip the extras and forego the delivery charges and set up etc. catering companies will give you good prices.

Of course, you can also opt out of full entrees and serve something altogether different. It can be very easy to get good prices on catering services. Perhaps the best way to do this is to simply limit the guests at your reception that you have to serve.

By turning your full reception into a private and intimate celebration, you can limit the amount of guests without offending anyone. Unless you can afford to invite all of your co-workers that you get along with, don't invite any. It is just good etiquette.

Saving Money on Photography

Weddings are momentous occasions to all people involved; especially the families of the bride and groom. One very important aspect of a wedding is to commemorate the event with beautiful pictures so that the day never really disappears.

Hiring professional photographers is usually the preferred way for couples to capture the moments of their wedding forever. Professional photographers can charge an obscene amount of money for their services at times, but there are a few ways that you can save money on photography at your wedding.

Here are some of things that you can do to save some of your money for the honeymoon instead. Let's take a look at what you can do.

- 1.** Place disposable cameras on tables at your reception and let your guests capture special moments for you.
- 2.** Ask a friend or family member to take special photos of the ceremony for you or videotape it
- 3.** Check at colleges and universities who are studying photography and hire a student to do it. You can get professional looking photos for a fraction of the price.
- 4.** Have your photographs taken before the wedding by having your wedding party to gather together at a professional photographer's shop
- 5.** Have your photos taken before the ceremony and keep the negatives yourself so that you can develop them later and make prints

During one of the most important days in your life, pictures and videos can make the day last forever. The above mentioned tips can also make sure that you will not go broke in the process.

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When it comes to the disposable cameras, you can often find cameras that are decorated with wedding themes. If you can't, you can have the bridal party decorate them instead.

Using digital cameras can limit the amount of pictures that you have to take while making them easy to reproduce. Digital camera technology can make even an amateur take professional looking pictures. You can even use the prints to create thank you cards later that are personalized that show the guests and/or the bridal party.

Saving on Wedding Music

When it comes to wedding music, there are some choices that stand apart from others. During the ceremony, it is getting more popular to avoid the traditional bridal music and use a chosen song of love instead.

People still are using the traditional bridal song too, but it is just not necessary anymore for those who want to be original or walk down the aisle to a song that best expresses how they feel about their nuptials.

When it comes to the music for your wedding ceremony and the reception, it is important that you consider your budget above all things. Naturally, you will want to have all of the music that you love available including the music that you want for your first dance.

Hiring a DJ can be the best way to go, but it is not the only way to go. If you must hire a DJ, there are a few ways that you can save money on it.

Saving on a DJ

For starters, you can look to hire an amateur DJ who is just starting out. They are eager for the work and will often cut you a good deal. You can find good amateur DJ's at local school dances and sometimes just by asking local area high school and college kids about DJ's that they might know.

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Young DJ's who are just starting out are also using modern technology like portable computers with downloaded music and this means that they can almost always get just about any song that you might want.

Young DJ's are also more willing to follow your precise instructions for what you want to hear and will allow you to have full control of what they do. Many amateur DJs will also make you custom CDs if you ask them and you can give them to the bridal party as gifts.

To get the best prices from the amateurs, you can let them audition to make sure that they can play your wedding song and then you can let them bid their prices. You simply choose the best of them who has the best price.

Saving on a band

Many couples would prefer to use a live band at their wedding and reception. Live bands offer a special tone to the ceremony and it adds some elegance.

When you want to save money on a band, you can often find great deals when you look to local high school and college bands to get much cheaper prices. You can use the school bands to play music at the ceremony and hire a DJ for the reception.

You can also look to any friends or family members who play musical instruments to help you out. Just make sure that the band that you do hire knows how to play the song or music that you are hoping to have at your wedding.

Instruments like guitar, Spanish guitar, saxophone, and piano are always great for weddings and you can often find local musical students who will be willing to play a wedding for small fees.

Extra Money Saving Tips

When it comes to the music that you want to hear at your wedding, there are some extra tips that you can use to help and make it just a little bit more affordable. Some of these tips are as follows:

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Hold auditions with young people who are trying to get some experience and let them come to you.

Place an ad in the paper or penny saver that you are looking for wedding bands or DJ's and let them bid for the jobs. This will have the different players competing for your wedding which will have them all trying to outbid each other for the chance for exposure. Let them audition and tell them that you are taking quotes on fees so that they all know what is going to happen.

Use pre-recorded live music tapings at your wedding so that you will get the live music sound but without paying the extra money.

Use a stereo at your reception that hosts various different mixed CD's and plays them all automatically. Many stereos these days will play through dozens of Cd's in a row so that the music lasts for hours. This can cost you no more than the price of the CD's. You can also use CDs that you burned yourself from the computer so that you can get all of your favorite music

A nice decoration for a reception is to make a collage of pictures of the bride and groom and their families.



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Cheap Wedding party gifts

Thanking your wedding party with special gifts is a favored tradition. Depending on the size of your wedding party it can be an expensive one as well. With so much money spent on the wedding ceremony and the reception, this can often be an aspect of the ceremony that you can have a hard time in deciding upon because it can be difficult to find inexpensive, original and thoughtful items that will be good enough to express your appreciation to your wedding party.

Here are some great and unique gift ideas that are not expensive:

- Personalized shot glasses
- Personalized candles
- Personally engraved items such as ornaments, plaques etc.
- Personalized musical CD recordings commemorating the ceremony and reception music such as bride and groom's songs etc.
- Specially labeled wine bottles commemorating your special day
- A personalized picture frame of the wedding of the wedding party
- Make your own wine and give a bottle to each guest
- Make beaded bracelets with you and your couples initials on them and the date of your wedding

These are just some ideas, but you get the general thoughts on this matter. Of course, there are literally millions of gift ideas that you could choose from or create with your own hands.

Affordable Pre-Wedding celebrations

Perhaps one of the most popular and best loved wedding traditions is the pre-wedding celebrations like the wedding shower and bachelor parties. Usually these parties are supplied by the mother of the bride or the best man etc. Some couples find that they would rather host their own either out of necessity or desire.

Really, it does not matter who throws the party because in the end, it should still be affordable. There are ways to make this happen.

- 1.** Throw a Jack and Jill party which combines the bachelor and bachelor party together. If it is hosted at a home, your guests can bring their own alcoholic beverages.
- 2.** Have your bridal shower at your own home providing home cooked food.
- 3.** At your bridal shower purchase decorations that can also be used as parting gifts such as personalized candles etc.
- 4.** Celebrate your wedding at a local pub or tavern. This will give you the benefits of having all of your friends with you and none of the financial responsibility. Basically this night is no different than spending an evening with friends to celebrate a promotion, only the focus is on your wedding instead. Many couples will do this together instead of a bachelor/bachelorette party.

If you or a family member have memberships at a local legion, you can often convince them to let you use their halls for your bridal shower.

Affordable Wedding Jewelry

Finding the right wedding jewelry is an extremely important aspect of the ceremony because the wedding bands in particular will be worn by the bride and groom forever.

Wedding bands have gotten to be a great deal more ornate than they used to be. Diamond wedding bands have reached a peak in recent thanks to the celebrities who proudly display theirs.

Wedding bands have even surpassed the usual gold and are now moving into platinum and titanium bands. It used to be that 10k gold rings were the “in” thing to buy and these days they are looked down upon by most couples who would prefer to buy their gold in 14k or higher.

Simple diamonds are still a popular buy, but colored diamonds are gaining momentum thanks to J-Lo’s pink princess cut diamond ring with Ben Affleck. Other popular diamond colors are yellow, blue and aquamarine.

With the ever growing popularity of platinum rings, many couples are looking to shining silver and white gold as a cheaper substitute. White gold has a similar look of platinum, but is a fraction of the price. It is a great alternative.

In the past, the men’s ring was often of little concern to either as long as the woman’s ring was attractive, but these days, men want a nice ring or diamond studded ring almost as much as the women do.

Beautiful ring sets can be found from nearly any source. If you can afford it, you can locate good deals on sets at jewelry stores.

For the most part, the entire wedding ceremony is completely symbolic and that symbolism reaches its peak the moment the rings are exchanged.

Knowing this, can it really be a wonder that the chosen rings are just as important as the chosen couple?

Shoestring Wedding

You can virtually choose to go with any type of ring from any source. These days even department stores are offering great knock offs to the popular celebrity rings at extreme discounts.

The popular ring worn by J-Lo; which was a platinum pink diamond ring with a princess cut and accented with two white diamonds on either side can now be purchased at Wal-Mart in a white gold setting with zirconia's and pink topaz stones.

Wedding bands still look better in a plain band style, but some people might prefer to accent the bands with diamonds. Whatever your taste is, you can pretty much find the right bands for you and your spouse to be anywhere.

All you really need to do is decide what look you want; what style that you want; and how much money you can afford to pay and then go on your search.

In order to get the best overall deals, you should comparison shop online. If you do it soon enough, you can have the bands ready way before the ceremony.

Wedding Cakes

A special part of any reception or wedding is the wedding cake. Wedding cakes come in many sizes and shapes and can be designed to accommodate any taste or budget.

Wedding cakes are a necessary part of the festivities and require much thought and consideration to your theme. Traditionally, people often think of the tiered cakes when they think of weddings, but there are many ways that you can accommodate your own creativity into making your cake stand out on its own.

Here are some tips to keeping your cake costs down:

- Make your own wedding cake creations
- Serve cupcakes and a smaller cake for the cake toppers
- Ask a guest with a baking passion to make the cake for you instead of giving you a gift. Just remember to buy the ingredients and toppers yourself.
- Have a baker make the cake but you can put it together yourself
- Buy your own cake toppers and other decorative additions
- Pick up the cake rather than have it delivered.
- Use your own decorations like flowers, autumn leaves as accents rather than theirs etc.
- Use extra candies and Hershey's kisses as accents

Extra cake accents and dividers that can be made at home for your wedding cake can be done by you and your wedding party.

Nice homemade dividers are:

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Oversized Brandy Glasses: you can accent these with ribbons tied around the bottom flute of the glass and flip the glasses upside down in order to allow room for the cake sections.

The glass bottoms will also make a nice sturdy separator for the cake layers to sit on. The best part about this decoration is that you can also place candles or other nice things inside of the flipped upside down glass as an added accent. Aside from the ribbons, you can also use rhinestones or anything else that you might think would make your cake stand out. It's beautiful, it elegant, and the decoration can be re-used later.

When ordering your cake from a professional, you should be sure to do the following to make sure that you have the smoothest transition possible. Here are the best tips to get you the right cake at the right time, without any hassles:

- Order your cake at least 6-8 weeks ahead of time
- Be prepared to leave a deposit when you place your order
- If you don't know much about the cake that you want be ready to make an appointment for a taste test of different samples. If this is required, you might need to give yourself a larger amount of time for the cake like 6 months or more
- Know that you will be paying for the decorator's time as well as the baker's and the reserved time for your cake
- Think seasonal when it comes to your cake, for example, you can't get a mousse cake in the summer months because it will go bad
- Remember that the simpler your cake design is the cheaper it will be
- If you are planning an outdoor wedding, remember that the heat will melt the icing, flies loves sweet stuff etc. think of this before choosing your cake

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- Have a big enough cake to serve all of your guests
- Try to be mindful of allergies and tastes of your guests when choosing your cake
- Choose ornaments that are not misplaced on your cake or too heavy etc.
- Don't forget to confirm later
- If you have to cancel the cake, do it sooner rather than later or you might get stuck with the bill anyway



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A Final Word

With all of the things that were mentioned in this guide, you might be thinking that I left out some small, but relatively important things such as the wedding album and guestbook etc. I didn't leave these things out, but as they are small things and miscellaneous items, I figured that I could leave them till last.

You can always find nice deals on guest books and the other little extras such as: wedding albums, guest books, tiaras, veils, jewelry accessories, and shoes just by shopping around. Many of the little items can be found cheap just by shopping at your local discount department store like Wal-Mart.

You can create your own accents and decorations just by using your imagination and some arts and crafts supplies. One of the most convenient things about throwing a wedding on a budget is that you can really be unique in doing it.

In fact, the more creative that you get at times, the cheaper the whole thing can be. Doing a lot of the grunt work on your own can be a life saver.

Hobby shops and craft stores can be a great place to find cheap decorations and accessories. You can even find good bargains on quality decorations at dollar stores in your area.

Dollar stores can give you items like glassware, fake flowers, balloons, streamers etc. You can find candles cheaper at them too. Why should you spend more for items that will only be used once and will likely be thrown away afterward?

Buying your bulk items wholesale is a great way to go too, and it can be really cheap for the more expensive items. It is a surprise to find that discount stores and wholesalers can and will make special deals for weddings and receptions as many of them will require the purchase of many bulk items; depending on the size of the ceremony.

By now, you have learned many tips on how you can make your wedding unique, elegant, fun and affordable. You have learned the

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secrets to making to your special day as great as it can possibly be and still having money left over for the honeymoon trip of a lifetime.

Anything else that there might be out there to lessen the cost of your dream wedding is likely left to simply not having one. In this guide you have learned to:

- Lower the cost of your reception
- Choose cheaper and unique themes for your wedding
- How to create your budget
- How to decorate on a budget
- How to cut costs for the ceremony and hall rentals
- How choosing themes can save you money
- How to decorate according to specific themes
- To lessen the cost of catering and great meal ideas
- Cake decorating tips and ordering help

Basically, you have learned everything that there is to know about throwing weddings and receptions for reasonable prices. This guide has hopefully given you all of the information that you could need to make your special day a little bit lighter on the wallet as well.

By now, you should be ready to plan your wedding. Enjoy this special day, because it will be the first day of the rest of your life together as a couple!

Liz Tomey

<http://www.ScrapbookingHome.com>