

Pfannastic



PHOTOGRAPHY

THE ULTIMATE WEDDING PLANNING GUIDE



WRITTEN BY

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REASON FOR WRITING THIS GUIDE

I know how overwhelming the wedding planning process can be, and I firmly believe it doesn't have to be. That's why I wanted to write a guide like this. I wanted to put as much information within it's pages, without being overly expansive, and burdensome to the reader. The goal, is to help equip brides with detailed questions they may not think/know to ask. In doing so, hopefully they will feel more confident with the vendors they choose for their day.

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How to make the most of this guide. . .

So, he asked, and you said yes. That's great! What's next? Now you plan the best day of your lives. Unsure where to start? Well, that's exactly why I created this guide. This guide is going to be rich with an abundance of information. My advice... don't allow yourself to get overwhelmed. God created wedding professionals for this very purpose. When in doubt ask a professional.

The content and worksheets were designed by experienced wedding professionals and are meant to help you plan your perfect day, with ease. I recommend printing off a copy and adding it to your wedding planning binder.

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Chapter 1

~What Matters Most~

Make a list of what matters most. Doing this gives priority to each item you will have to spend money on. Clearly, those items toward the top of the list are the items you will be devoting the most attention and financing to. I suggest you both make separate lists, then come together to compare them. You might be thinking, "Why make two separate lists?". Well, a lot of times in the planning process, one or the other of you may end up not getting certain things that are important to them, because of a desire to please the other. In doing it this way first, you get to really know what matters to you both individually, and then finetune the list into one that combines all of the most vital elements. Now you have a properly prioritized list.

Here's where you can put your final top 10 list:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Chapter 2

~Figuring Out a Realistic Budget~

This is one I feel most brides struggle with. After all, how on earth do you put a price tag on the most important day of your lives? It's important to put it into proper perspective. Here's something to consider for a moment... Ask yourself this question. What would you expect to pay for a new car "I mean a for real new car, not a new to you car"? Stay with me here, I'm getting to the good part. Once you have that number in your mind, ask yourself if you're willing to invest somewhere close to that amount to the beginning of forever? According to cars.com in 2017 the estimated cost for a new car was \$31,400. As you can imagine, that figure has jumped to \$34,000 in 2019. After pouring over study after study, I found that the average cost of a wedding in 2019 is just over \$30,000. You might be thinking "That's nuts!", and maybe it is a little. But, that's the reality of the world we live in. Things cost money, and the most important things. . . You guessed it, cost even more money. Does this mean you have to drop \$30,000 on your wedding? I'm not saying that. I'm just suggesting that you do the following things before you throw out a random number and call it your budget, without having a clear understanding of how that will be limiting your options.

Things to consider when figuring out a realistic budget:

1. Take your what matters most list from the previous chapter. Let's for the heck of it just say that Photography is number 1 on your list (wonder why I chose that?). Reach out to 3-4 quality photographers in your area to get pricing information. Take the average cost of the quotes and write that beside The first item

on your list. Move on to 2, do the same, and so on. Once you've covered every foreseeable cost you can think of, take the total of these sums + \$1,000 for any extras that should arise, and that should leave you with a fairly comprehensive idea of your budget.

2. When calling to get prices, ask what, if any, discounts they offer for a particular time of the year, or day of the week. Some venues may not charge as much for a Friday, or a Sunday wedding. Also, some places/vendors may offer a discount for military. It may not be much of a difference, but every little bit helps!

3. Consider planning on having a slightly longer engagement. Some vendors may offer a discount for booking dates farther out than "the norm". Or maybe they can arrange some sort of payment plan with you. You never know until you ask.

4. Don't take on this task all by yourself. Consider enlisting the help of your fiancée, mom, soon to be mom-in-law, sis, best friend. If you do get help from others, I would recommend that you pick the vendors you are interested in getting pricing on, then pass the contact info along to your selected helpers.



Chapter 3

~Picking Your Date~

I know what you're thinking. Well duh! This one is obvious. There's more to this than just choosing a date you like the sound of. If you want any part of your wedding to include the outdoors, you clearly need to be intentional when selecting a date.

Here's a few things to consider when selecting your date:

1. I usually recommend selecting a date that's more than a year out. Why that far out? Well, if you do, that season will come and go at least once before your wedding. Which makes it easy to shop for décor items that other local brides may be selling off, at a discounted rate. Which could save you lots of moola! No matter what your budget, we all like the idea of saving some of our hard-earned money. Plus, some vendors may be able to offer payment plans if you book enough in advance, which may make more of what you dreamed of possible. With regards to Photography, it gives you plenty of time to plan and prepare for your engagement session, possibly even have split sessions, in multiple seasons. One of my couples has a 4-hour engagement session with their package. They have had a session in the Summer, one in the Fall, and we are currently on standby for a good snow to shoot their final session. Their wedding isn't for another 8 months. How awesome is that?

1. Figure out your ideal guest count. This one can be tricky. No one wants to offend people, but you definitely want to invite people that value you individually, and as a couple. You want people there that will add to your day. It's said that you can usually count on roughly 75% of the people you invite to end up attending your wedding. If your guest count seems to be getting out of hand, you may want to consider making it an adult only event. While this can be a somewhat taboo topic, in all reality those little people can add quite a bit of cost to your overall budget. Here's a suggestion for wording this in a way that shouldn't offend. On the RSVP card consider putting something similar to this...

"We look forward to sharing an evening of dinner, dancing, and events with you. Please kindly reply by _____
We have reserved ___ adult seats in your honor
Name(s)_____"



Chapter 4

~Selecting the Perfect Venue~

Let's talk venues, shall we? This one is much easier to figure out now that we have a guest count in mind. You need to ask yourselves if you want your ceremony & reception in one place, or two separate venues. It may be important to one or both of you that you get married in a church. Outdoor ceremony, indoor reception, both outdoors, maybe a tented reception. The options are almost endless, which gives us lots to think about.

Things to consider when searching for the perfect church:

1. Ease of travel for as many of your guests as possible
2. Tall ceilings, ornate details, color of flooring and décor that doesn't clash with your color scheme.
3. Find out what their requirements are for you, as a couple, prior to your wedding day. Some require you to finish a pre-marital course or counseling of some sort.
4. Find out what, if any, restrictions they have for your visual arts team (photographer & videographer). For example, many, if not most, Catholic churches don't allow photographers to use flash. And I'm telling you right now, from a photographer's stand point, not being able to use flash is a game changer. Is it possible to shoot a wedding without it? Sure. Would you prefer the look of your photos with flash? 100% yes! Using flash helps us to operate at a lower ISO. What does this mean in English? Well, simply put... the higher the ISO, the grainier the photos can appear. Is that something that can be corrected in Lightroom or Photoshop? To a degree it can be, however flash helps us to take crisper images, and helps us to freeze the action.

5. What are the requirements with regards to officiants? Do they require you to use theirs? If you had someone in mind to officiate your wedding, would they allow an outside officiant? If allowed, what requirements would they have for an outside officiant?
6. Do they allow you to run a rehearsal of your ceremony the day before? If so would the officiant, coordinator, and sound technician be there for the rehearsal.
7. Does the church have an experienced ceremony coordinator? Does the church coordinator come with your package, or is that an add-on?
8. Is there a dedicated location for both the Bride & the Groom to get ready in? Is said location aesthetically pleasing for photographs?
9. What's the earliest you can be permitted onsite? It might be in your best interest to plan on having an alternate location for getting ready.
10. How do they handle sound and music for ceremonies? Do they have a technician to run the sound board? What microphone options are available for officiant, couple, and musicians, e.g. lapel mics, wireless mics, mic stands, hanging mics? How do they accommodate outside musicians? Are there any restrictions with regards to types of music allowed?
11. Is your visual arts team (photographer & videographer) familiar with shooting at this church? I'm not saying to only hire a photographer or videographer that has shot at your church before. Just simply, that they need to at least visit the venue beforehand. I wouldn't dream of shooting a wedding at a location I never laid eyes on before. I don't care if it's only the night before at the rehearsal, I always make a point to see each venue ahead of time.

Things to consider when you want to have your ceremony & reception in one location:

1. Is there enough space to keep your guests from feeling cooped up? Your guests will be there for 5+ hours. You need to keep this in mind when selecting a location for an all-in-one venue. Consider having activities to keep their attention and keep them feeling like part of the event. A photobooth is an excellent option for any reception. This is actually a service we include in our top tier package, or on our "Sweet Additions" menu, as an add-on to our other packages.
2. Some venues have separate spots for ceremony & reception. Some are all in one room. If the venue you're considering is set up for ceremony & reception in one room, you need to find out what kind of time frame they will need to flip the room from ceremony to reception. If they have to flip the room, do they have an adequate space onsite for a proper cocktail hour?
3. Do they have an experienced coordinator, that is well trained in ceremony coordination? This distinction is very important. Just because they say they have a coordinator doesn't mean they know how to coordinate a ceremony, or that they provide that service. Many venue coordinators are just that, people who are dedicated to coordinating issues pertaining to the venue. They may not have the time, training, or personnel to handle the details of your ceremony. I usually recommend hiring a day-of coordinator of your own in most cases. For more on the differences between varying types of coordinators, check out chapter 6 "Planner or Day-of Coordinator"
4. When considering going with an all-in-one venue, it's important to think about what's onsite, or close by for photos. If there's not any grounds surrounding the venue with good spots for bridal portraits

and wedding party shots, you could be forced to have all of your photos indoors. You may need to consider finding locations close by to get some great shots at some point. This is something any decent photographer should be able to help you navigate.

5. Let's talk about food. It's important to know what your reception venue's policy is when it comes to caterers. If you already have a caterer that you have your heart set on using, you'll want to make sure either that the caterer is on the approved list, or that the venue has an open catering policy.

6. Do they have a good space for a DJ or band? You want to make sure your venue has enough space for either of these, especially if you're wanting a live band, as they can take up more room than a DJ.

7. Just like with searching for the perfect church, you want to keep some of the same things in mind. Numbers 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11 from the previous list all apply to this one as well.

Things to consider when searching for the perfect reception venue:

1. Proximity to your other venue. It's important to keep these locations somewhat close. I would recommend no more than a 20-minute commute between the two. Also, if there isn't anything picturesque outdoors at either of your venues, you may want to choose a location between both venues, that doesn't take you too far out of the way, to ensure you get some of those beautiful outdoor portraits we all love.

Will the space be enough to accommodate all your guests, not just seated, but moving about as well? Also keep in mind if you want extras like a photo booth, Comfy Cow Ice Cream Cart (yes, this is a

real thing, and so cool!), a candy bar, a doughnut bar, or whatever else. Make sure there is enough room without overcrowding.

2. Is the dance floor a decent size? If you have a lively bunch of friends and family, that are big dancers, is the dance floor large enough to fit a good number of people looking to show off their moves?

3. Whether you have an open bar, or a cash bar, it's important to make sure there is a dedicated bar area. Also, does your venue provide bartenders? If not, do they have an approved list of bartenders to choose from? If you already have one in mind, what does the approval process look like?

4. Do they have a good space for a DJ or band? You want to make sure your venue has enough space for either of these, especially if you're wanting a live band, as they can take up more room than a DJ.

5. Let's talk about food. It's important to know what your reception venue's policy is when it comes to caterers. If you already have your heart set on a particular caterer, you need to make sure either that the caterer is on the approved list, or that the venue has an open catering policy.

Top 6 list of venues you both love

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Chapter 5

~Capturing Your Wedding Day Memories~

Photography

This is one area you can never devote too much time or attention to selecting. The one tangible thing you walk away from your wedding with (besides your new spouse), are your photos. I can tell you from personal experience, making a poor selection is a regret that stays with you for years to come. It's vital that your desire to save a buck or two doesn't make you lose sight of just how important your wedding day memories are. I love this quote I recently came across: "The bitterness of bad photographs remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten." When starting your search, it's important to figure out what styles you like, light and airy, darker and somewhat moody, or dynamic light where the subjects really pop, and the colors are vivid. If you're unsure what styles you like, I usually recommend hitting up Pinterest to see what photos speak to you. Next step is to determine what the going rate is in your area for the varying levels and degrees of talent. This can be quite difficult because lots of people take photos and charge money for them.

The trick to choosing a photographer you can be completely confident in, isn't any one thing, it's about asking the right questions, reading reviews, meeting up with them in person, and making sure their work is consistent. Also, keep in mind, whoever you choose as your photographer becomes a permanent fixture throughout your engagement and wedding day. So, it's important to select someone you have good chemistry with, and whose company you thoroughly enjoy.

Important questions to ask any photographer you might be considering:

1. How many years have you photographed weddings professionally, and can I see at least 5 full wedding galleries? Any true professional photographer won't shy away from this request. If they seem reluctant, this could mean they aren't as seasoned as they claimed to be. Seeing complete galleries should help eliminate people who have zero wedding experience and are just hoping to use your wedding to practice. It tells you if their work is consistent, how many photos they turn over on average, and how they handle changes in lighting conditions.
2. What back up plans do you have in place in case of unforeseen circumstances? Do you have back up equipment should anything malfunction or break? Does your camera have the ability to record on multiple cards? What happens if you are sick, or injured and are unable to shoot our wedding? Knowing that your photographer has a plan to deal with such complications, can give you insight into their level of preparedness.
3. Are you insured? This one is very important because most venues require that your vendors be insured. Also, if they break something of value, they could come after you for reimbursement following your wedding. The last thing you want when trying to start your lives together, is having to face a possible lawsuit.
4. How do you prepare for each wedding you shoot? I, for instance, have a very comprehensive approach to planning and preparing for each wedding I photograph, so that any surprises that come my way, aren't due to my lack of preparedness.
5. When can I expect a preview of my images, and when can I expect to receive my complete gallery?

For example, we turn over a large preview within 24-48 hours following your wedding, and your complete gallery in 6-8 weeks.

6. How do you help us prepare for our engagement session? To give you an idea of what we do, I send out an engagement questionnaire to each of our couples. This helps me to design a session around your relationship, your likes, and your dislikes. We talk about locations, props, wardrobe, and everything in between. I always encourage each of my clients to snap pics of outfits they are considering for their session and send them to me, that way I can offer suggestions, if need be. While everyone knows what they feel good in, most haven't had professional photos taken before, and have no idea what looks good on camera. Also, when shooting a couple, it's important to coordinate looks, rather than matching. Knowing how to do that doesn't come naturally to everyone. And you know what? That's ok! That's what I'm here for!

7. How do you handle changes in lighting conditions? While natural light is beautiful, it isn't readily available for an entire wedding day. There will be plenty of times throughout the day when you can't rely on it being there, and it's highly important to know what to do when it's not. A seasoned, professional photographer will be able to tell you exactly how they handle such conditions. Our style is what I call "dynamic light photography". What this means is that we use studio lighting everywhere we go. You might think, "Surely you don't use studio lighting in full sun?" Well, we absolutely do. We don't want our subjects looking into the sun, so we backlight with the sun, and we fill light with our lights. What this allows us to do is to perfectly balance the exposure every time. It eliminates racoon eyes, and any other shadowing we don't want.

8. Are you familiar with our venue? I want to reiterate, I'm not discouraging you from hiring a photographer that's never shot at one or both of your venues before. I am, however, saying that if they haven't, a good follow-up question would be, "if we were to hire you, would you make a special trip out to our venue to familiarize yourself with it?" I wouldn't dream of photographing at a venue before seeing it (even if it's just the night before at the rehearsal).
9. How many edited images do you usually turn over from an engagement, and from a wedding? This can vary depending on the photographer. It's standard to include a set number, say 50 from engagement, and 300 from the wedding. If you want the rest of your images, you may be charged an exorbitant amount to purchase them. You need to know up front, what's included in the package you choose. For example, we turn over an average of 350 edited engagement photos and an average of 1,700 edited wedding photos.



Videography

Seeing as they are both visual arts in nature, many of the same questions apply to both Photography & Videography. If the idea of having a video of your wedding is something that's important to you, I recommend going as high quality as your budget will allow. Some of the best videos I've seen are the ones that move you in the first minute or less.

When starting your search, you can never view enough of their videos. Don't let yourself stop watching at the halfway point. That's cheating, and you won't get a complete feel for the videographer's artistic vision. You need to know how they handle different lighting conditions throughout the day, you want to see how seamlessly they transition from one moment to the next. Song selection is another big one. Are there moments where the music fades into the background a bit, and voices are brought in? Is it done well? Thoughtful, artistic production is everything when it comes to creating a cinematic masterpiece out of your wedding day memories. Just like with photographers, videographers are a big part of your wedding day. Make sure you enjoy their personality, that way you can be sure you will have a great time working with them on your wedding day.

Important questions to ask any videographer you might be considering:

1. How many years have you been filming weddings professionally, and where can I find examples of your work? Any true professional videographer will be excited to share their videos with you. If they seem reluctant, this could mean they aren't as seasoned as they claimed to be. The goal here is to eliminate people who have zero wedding experience and are just hoping to use your wedding to

practice. It tells you if their work is consistent, how their transitions look from frame to frame, how they handle changes in lighting conditions, if they are good at choosing the perfect music to fit the feel of each part of the video, and if they can blend the music perfectly.

2. When can I expect my teaser video, and when can I expect my complete video? It's important to allow the videographer to set the expectation of turnover time, to avoid unrealistic expectations on your part.

3. How do you handle changes in lighting conditions? It's important to know that they are professionals, and as such, they have a plan for every possible situation.

Just like with searching for the perfect photographer, you want to keep some of the same things in mind. Numbers 2, 3, 4, and 8 from the previous list all apply to this one as well.



Chapter 6

~Planner or Day-of Coordinator~

We've touched on the topic of coordinators a number of times throughout the first few chapters. There's lots to keep in mind when choosing between hiring a planner or a day-of coordinator. A wedding planner does it all! They listen to your dreams, your fears, and somehow keep your fears at bay while making your dreams come true. They are your therapist, your miracle worker, your friend, and so much more. So, what's the difference between a wedding planner and a day-of coordinator, you might ask? Wedding planners lay out a vivid picture of your dream day. Usually, they'll have a network of trusted vendors they regularly work with that can jump start your planning. They set appointments with your potential vendors, even at times attending the meetings with you. She helps to design a timeline for your wedding day. They coordinate with all of your vendors to make sure everything is all set weeks before your day. They are there at your rehearsal to make sure everyone knows what to do and when. She's there throughout your wedding day, to ensure everything goes as planned. Day-of coordinators handle all of the same day-of stuff that a planner does. Think of them as your personal assistant for your wedding day.

Things to consider when choosing a planner vs day-of coordinator:

1. How much time do you have to plan the type of wedding you're envisioning? Planning a wedding is no small feat. It takes lots of time, major organizational skills, knowledge of the industry, the ability to take someone's vision and make it a reality, all while sticking as close to the budget as possible.

If you read through that and thought something along the lines of, "What have I gotten myself into?!", you may want to consider hiring a planner over a coordinator.

2. Planners usually offer different types of packages, depending on the level of help you're needing. So, do your research, figure out how much help you need, then choose your package.

3. Have all kinds of time on your hands, have planned your dream wedding with the help of Pinterest, and already have a selection of vendors in mind? Well, maybe your best bet is to go with a day-of coordinator.

4. Whatever direction you decide to go, read reviews, ask some of your newly married friends who they used, and why they loved working with them. Meet with anyone you're considering, to make sure their personality is one you can get along with. Planners and coordinators are a big part of your wedding day, choose someone you know will add to your enjoyment of it.



Chapter 7

~Selecting the Members of Your Bridal Party~

Choosing Maid of Honor, Best Man, Bridesmaids, and Groomsmen is one that may not seem like a big deal, but it's important to make these selections carefully, and not to choose based out of fear of hurting someone's feelings. The people you select to stand up there beside each of you need to be like strong pillars for you to lean on, not anchors to weigh you down. These should be your forever friends. You don't want to look back on your wedding photos and think, "I wonder what happened to so and so?"

Things to keep in mind when selecting members of your bridal party:

1. How large do you envision your bridal party to be? Does the number in your head overwhelm you, or make you smile? Then you have your number.
2. Does your number of bridesmaids match his number of groomsmen? If not, it's not the end of the world. Unless it matters to you that they be even numbers. If you have an extra girl, one of his guys will just end up looking like a stud escorting two girls, and I'm pretty sure he won't mind that. 😊
3. Make sure the group you select are low drama and can get along with each other. If you know for sure Jake doesn't like Melissa, and Melissa regularly voices how annoying Jake is, maybe one or the other of them shouldn't make the cut.
4. Always keep in mind that this is your day. And the people you invite along for the ride with you, should be the people you want to follow you into the next chapter in your lives.

Chapter 8

~Looking Your Best~

This chapter is going to be chocked full. We all know looking your best is always a must at one's wedding! In this chapter we will be covering attire, hair, and makeup.

Let's kick this off with attire.

When choosing your attire, it's common that the hunt for the perfect dress usually comes first.

Choosing the dress of your dreams comes down to a few factors:

1. Making sure it fits your body type. If you're unsure what styles should be most flattering, any good bridal shop should be able to help guide you to the best fit for you.
2. Keep your theme in mind (if you have a specific theme that is). Say you're wanting a romantic fairytale feel to your day. Well, a dress can add to that feeling, or take away from it. What about a beach themed wedding? There's a dress for that! Know your style and stay true to it.
3. Think about the time of year. Keeping the possibility of extreme weather conditions in mind, could save you from ending up a sweaty mess, or freezing your butt off.
4. We can't forget the accessories! The options really are endless. There's a fine line between too many and too few accessories. Keep it tasteful, without looking like you must have left something at home.

5. Make sure you have plenty of details for your photographer to capture. Think veil, jewelry, shoes, wedding day fragrance, your grandmother's handkerchief, and look into a custom bride hanger. You paid all that money for that stunning dress. Don't forget to get a hanger to help your photographer to get great shots of it.
6. And lastly budget. Getting the dress you feel amazing in is super important! But, don't blow your budget all in one place. No matter what dress you end up selecting, as long as you love the person in it, you will be the most beautiful girl at your wedding.



Let's talk about the groom. Depending on what bridal shop you go with for your dress, most should have options for your guy. The options for guys may not be as infinite as for us ladies, however, there are many more choices now than there were 10 years ago.

Here's some things to consider when shopping for the groom's attire:

1. Suit or Tux? How formal do you want your wedding to feel? If you're listing your wedding as a black-tie event, you may want to go with a formal tux to ensure you're not likely to be out dressed. However, I think a nicely fitted suit is pretty tough to beat.
2. If you're leaning towards a suit, then you've got to ask yourself if it's worth buying, so that you have a nice suit, or do you want to rent it? Oftentimes, if you get your groomsmen's suits at the same place, they usually give the groom a nice discount.

3. Whatever direction you end up going in, make sure to try to add in unique elements to your look. Whether it be with fun socks, fancy shoes, a wooden or leather bowtie (yes, that's a real thing, and I really want one of my grooms to get one so I can capture it!), or whatever else. Make sure your style makes a statement. I like when the groom makes sure his ensemble stands apart from the look his groomsmen are wearing. I mean, the bride clearly stands out from her girls, don't you think everyone should be able to distinguish you from your guys?

4. Don't forget to make sure you give your photographer enough awesome details to capture. Tie or bowtie, watch, cologne, cuff-links, suspenders, belt, flask, shoes and socks. And consider having a nice hanger to hang your suit or tux on.



Moving on to the bridal party. Obviously, the time of year and theme of your wedding will be a major factor when figuring out your bridal parties' attire. I recommend hitting up Pinterest to get ideas of color schemes you like.

Here are some things to think about when searching for your bridal parties' attire:

1. Make sure the length & style of the bridesmaid's dresses flatter the majority. I always recommend sticking with the same length for all your girls and think about picking a dress with multiple style options in the same color, so that every girl feels as comfortable as possible.

2. Match the groomsmen's looks to the bridesmaid's dresses as much as possible.

3. Think about the accessories... I usually recommend giving your girls their jewelry, shoes, and maybe a hanger for their dress, as your gift to them.



Let's talk about hair.

Your hairstyle is a pivotal part of your look on your wedding day. You need to have a very clear picture of what you like, and what you don't like. This is another place where Pinterest can be a great resource for you to determine what looks you love. However, as told to me by a hairstylist friend of mine, it's important to have a realistic understanding of what styles are possible with the hair God gave you. So, if you have a hairstylist in mind, you may want to pull a photo or two, send it to them, and see if they think your expectations are realistic. But if you don't already have someone in mind...

Things to consider when searching for the perfect hair stylist:

1. Make sure you check out their website, Facebook page, Instagram, etc. to ensure that their work is consistent.
2. It's so important to read reviews and ask for references. This will tell you if they conduct themselves in a professional manner, if they are quick and efficient, are consistently on time, or regularly late. What happens during the getting ready portion of your day, can dictate how the timeline for the rest of the day will play out.
3. Are they comfortable doing the type of style you have chosen, and do they have plenty of examples that are similar to that style?

4. Do they offer a trial run? Everyone's hair is different, from texture, to thickness. Not having a trial run before your wedding could cause major setbacks on the day-of. In short, schedule a trial run, you'll be glad you did.
5. Do they travel to you, or do they require you to come to them? Having them come to you can lower the stress factor significantly when it comes to your timeline.
6. Make sure the stylist can do everyone in your bridal party herself or has a team of stylists that can. If they need 40 minutes per head and you have 6 girls, do you want 4 hours of your day spent on hair? Make sure you have enough stylists to get the job done efficiently.
7. Make sure they can create the style you want in a timely fashion. The trial run will be a good indicator of this.
8. Ask them if they have any photos of how they normally dress for weddings. I know this may seem like an odd question, but think about how many photos your makeup artist will end up being in, trust me, you will want to make sure they look professional.



Time to talk about Makeup.

Makeup is just as important as hair when it comes to your wedding day look. It's important to look like yourself, while also having that special little something that completes your bridal look. Consider the overall feel that you're wanting to accomplish with your entire look, and make sure your makeup is the perfect accompaniment. Search Pinterest to see what looks speak to you.

Things to consider when searching for your makeup artist:

1. Does the makeup artist you're considering have a very distinct style? If so, are they willing/able to stray from it enough to customize a look to your wants/needs?
2. Do they travel to you, or do they require you to come to them? Having them come to you can lower the stress factor significantly when it comes to your timeline.
3. Figure out what extra fees you can expect. For travel, lashes, and whatever else.
4. Is their makeup smudge proof as well as waterproof, especially with regards to lipstick? Let's try to keep the lipstick where it belongs, on the Bride and off the Groom.
5. Will you look like yourself in person? Some makeup looks are designed to look good on camera but can look fake in person. You want an artist that has a good understanding of how to make you look great in person, and on camera.
6. Number 8 from hair also applies here. Make sure they dress professionally.



Chapter 9

~Eat, Drink, and be Married~

Let's face it, one of the things people look forward to most at weddings is the food. The food, cake (or cupcakes, doughnuts, or dessert bar) and drinks at your wedding are a major part of your and your guests' experience at your reception. You want it to be a memorable experience that everyone raves about.

Here are some things to consider when searching for your caterer:

1. Are they licensed and insured? Making sure they are insured is important because they will be responsible for the food all of your guests will be ingesting. This is not optional. Plus, venues usually require this.
2. Do they have a reputation that precedes them? Read reviews, ask friends who have recently been married who they loved and why. Think back to weddings you remember loving the food at. Ask those friends who they used, and if there is anything you should know about working with them.
3. Schedule multiple tastings. What's a better way to determine if they are the caterer for you than tasting their yummy food? Try a few before making a final call.

Here's some things to consider when selecting a bakery:

1. Figure out if they are licensed and insured. Just like with food, we're talking about something that the majority of your guests will be eating.
2. Do your research, read reviews, ask for references. Look at examples of their work.
3. Schedule several tastings. Taste and compare several options.
4. Be sure to show them examples of what you envisioned your cake to look like. Ask if they have any examples of similar cakes they have made.
5. Do they provide delivery and set up services?



Things to consider when it comes to beverage choices:

1. Try to accommodate everyone's taste as best as possible. Obviously, offer water, lemonade, tea, and maybe a soda option or two.
2. When it comes to wine, I notice at many weddings they offer a dry white (usually Chardonnay), and a dry red (like a Merlot or Cab). I always hear people at weddings asking if there's a softer option available. So maybe offer either a Riesling, a Moscato, or some other soft wine option. Obviously, keep your own tastes in mind as well. You want to love what's being served.
3. Beer, I don't care for it myself, but some people can't seem to live without it. Choose one or two popular domestic options, and an IPA or two.

Chapter 10

~The Details That Make Your Day~

This one is going to have to be a somewhat mixed category. I'll be going over flowers, invitations, and rentals in this category.

Let's start with flowers.

Flowers can add so much to your day. They bring life, beauty, and fragrance. They are the perfect accompaniment to a well-tailored suit lapel, help to give a bride's look that final wow effect, they can take a beautiful space to the next level, and give your guests something to admire at each table.

Here are some things to consider when shopping for your florist:

1. I guess I skipped the part about fake or real flowers. I'll use this first point to touch on that topic. When I was starting out as a photographer and working with a lot of brides on tighter budgets, I saw my share of bad silk flowers at weddings. What I learned was, if you want them to look real, you may end up spending more money on fake flowers than you would on real ones. Are there other options than silk? Absolutely, and some truly are beautiful! I've seen a bouquet of flowers made from pieces of sheet music for a musician, foam bouquets, brooch bouquets, or flowers crafted from pieces of burlap that were stamped with polka dots; wood bouquets are even an option. If any of these ideas are more to your liking, you may want to check Pinterest, and Etsy. You will more than likely still want real flowers for at least some part of your day.

2. It's important to know reality vs expectation. Say you have your sights set on the perfect bouquet, boutonnieres, and centerpieces for your wedding. But maybe what you want isn't in season. Keep an open mind with your florist as they show you what they can create that might be similar to what you're wanting.

3. Make sure they won't have any trouble delivering your flowers by a specific time. I recommend asking the photographer when they need the flowers onsite for shots of the accessories. I was photographing a wedding, and the florist was a solid 2.5 hours late delivering the flowers. That is not ok, not in the slightest! Ask your florist to use flowers that have a history of being more resilient than others. No one wants wilting flowers halfway through their day. Do your best to keep the bouquets in water whenever they are not being used for photos.





Moving on to Invitations.

Whether you're going for basic, cutesy, or something more ornate, the style and feel of your invitations tell your guests a lot about the kind of event they are being invited to. I personally appreciate the invitations that go the extra mile with detail on the envelopes. See this example. . .



This photo wouldn't have the same feel or impact, without the added detail of the "To" & "please deliver to" nicely printed on the envelopes.

Here are a few things to consider when shopping for your invitations:

1. What do you want your invitations to tell your guests about your event?
2. Select a style and feel that matches the style of your wedding.
3. Keep it clean. Make sure all the most important information is easily found, and that it's not too wordy.
4. Always keep a copy for yourselves, maybe one for each of your parents, and have an extra copy for your photographer.



Let's talk wedding rentals.

When it comes to weddings, the rental options are almost endless. From chairs, tables, linens, tents, chandeliers, centerpieces, and so much more. Many of these items are the final elements that pull everything together. Shoot, if one of your rentals are a tent or bathroom trailers, they are much more than just a mere element. They can be a pivotal part of your wedding experience.

Things to consider when renting:

1. What are the security deposit requirements?
2. Is the company you are renting from established? Read reviews. Ask for references.
3. Whoever you're considering renting from, make sure to visit their warehouse/storeroom, so you can see for yourself the quality of the items they are renting.
4. If you are looking to rent a wide variety of items, working with a company that has more to offer may end up saving you money if you can work out getting all of your items from one source.
5. Ask if they have a delivery option, or if you need to figure out the logistics of pick up and return.

Chapter II

~Officiant~

An Officiant sets the tone for your wedding ceremony. You want someone that can lay out the story of your relationship, in a fun and unique way, to keep everyone engaged in what they are hearing. Some are blessed enough to have the perfect someone in mind for this important task. Someone that has known one or the other of them for quite some time or knows them as a couple. Others well, let's just say, aren't as fortunate. And those people, they must shop around.

Things to consider when searching for an Officiant:

1. Make sure your beliefs line up. You want an officiant that is capable of carrying out your vision of your wedding ceremony, faith/beliefs play a big role in that vision.
2. Figure out if they are willing to take time to get to know you. Some of the best wedding ceremonies I've been to, are the ones where the officiant had a few cute little anecdotes about the couple to share and knew just when to add them.
3. Personality is key! Find someone that is personable, well versed, well spoken, and has a good sense of humor.
4. Have a final meeting, to have them go over what they are going to say and hear how it will be presented. This ensures there will be no surprises.

Chapter 12

~Entertainment~

The entertainment you choose dictates the entire flow, as well as the enjoyment of everyone at the reception. Whether you choose a live band, or a DJ, they need to be able to create a good flow, while making sure the songs on your requested list get played, and the ones on your never list don't. You need to find someone that's enjoyable to be around for hours on end, keep in mind, this person will have a mic and be hooked up to a sound system.

Things to consider and questions to ask when looking for a live band:

1. Can they cover the encyclopedia, and can they crush it? They don't have to sound exactly like the original, but they need to be able to do it justice. Make sure their music knowledge is extensive, and their talent is undeniable.
2. Make sure they plan out the timeline of events for the reception for you, in the same way a DJ usually does.
3. Do they have an enjoyable personality? You want them to be interactive and fun, not in your face and annoying.
4. Do they have better than adequate equipment, and back up equipment should anything happen to their primary equipment?
5. Do they have/offer up-lighting? I recommend asking them to refrain from pointing colored lights towards the dance floor. Ask them to use white lights on the dance floor, and the colored lights for up-lighting around the room.
6. If something were to happen to anyone in the band preventing them from playing at your wedding and or reception, do they have a network of musicians they have previously worked with, that they could contact to get a replacement?

Things to consider when looking for a DJ:

1. How extensive is the library they have access to? If there is a request for something you don't have, what other means do they have to get access to more music when WiFi is not available?
2. Do they lay out a timeline of events for the reception?
3. How's their personality? Fun loving and energetic, or cheesy and off putting? I don't have to tell you which one you want to hire.
4. Do they have professional grade equipment, and back ups should anything happen to their primary gear? Do they have a compact system for the ceremony for quick & easy transportation?
5. Do they have a partner to help set up the equipment, tear it down after the wedding, help move it to the reception, then set it back up quickly enough to not delay the reception? This one may sound super specific, probably because of what I witnessed while photographing my friend's wedding this past year. The ceremony ended, we spent 40 min taking family portraits. The ceremony and reception were at the same country club, wedding outside, ceremony inside. The DJ had what should have been plenty of time to move his equipment 100 yards, but because he wasn't prepared with an extra set up or an extra set of hands, I had to assist him in setting up. He was still over 30 minutes late.
6. Do they have/offer up-lighting? It's important to ask them to use any colored lighting as up-lighting alone, and only white lights aimed towards the dance floor. Less is more here and makes for better photos. The colored lights (aka party lights) pointed at the dance floor effect skin tone. You can end up looking like a smurf, or Shreck. Have them explain their lighting to you, and their understanding of how their lighting effects the photos being taken.
7. Make sure the DJ provides you with a contract.

Chapter 13

~Event Insurance~

You might be thinking "is that even a thing?" It is, and it exists for a good reason. It's a policy that covers you in case you must unexpectedly cancel your event, if you or one of your family or friends are found responsible for property damage, or maybe a vendor at your wedding causes damage, and doesn't have proper insurance, or in the event that there is an injury at your event.

Things to consider when looking for event insurance:

1. Figure out what type of coverage you want. There is liability insurance, and cancellation insurance. Liability is the most common type of event insurance. However, you may want to see if it would be worth it to you to get a combination of the two.
2. According to reviews.com the top-rated insurance companies are the following... For best overall coverage "Markel", best destination wedding insurance is "Travelers", most customizable policies are through "Wedsure", best liability coverage is "WedSafe".
3. As always, do your research, read reviews, ask people you know. Ultimately, you must decide what's best for you and your needs.

Chapter 14

~Planning a Wedding Moon~

Sometimes the planning process can seem like a burden that's putting a strain on your lives, and your relationship. And that can't just be ignored. Wedding Moons were created for this very reason. The big wedding with everyone you know isn't for everyone. You may desire something more intimate, with a small group of your favorite people. If every time you picture your wedding day you imagine yourself barefoot and on the beach, then a wedding at a resort may be just what you need. This type of wedding has been gaining in popularity over the past 5 years and is a great option for some.

Things to consider when planning a Wedding Moon:

1. Is this a feasible option for everyone you want present for your nuptials? Think about finances, health conditions, and any other factors that could prevent those closest to you from attending.
2. Many resorts have all inclusive wedding packages. While it's a nice thought, that you could pay one lump sum, and your wedding is planned, this can create a different set of problems. For example, I had a couple that booked their Wedding Moon package and didn't read the fine print, which stated they couldn't bring their own photographer. Thankfully, they found out before flying me out to the Bahamas (still a little sad I missed out on that one), but that wasn't the worst part. They didn't know the photographer, he didn't know them. He didn't know how to pose them, which made the photos quite awkward looking. Even though the photographer was included in their Wedding Moon package, the couple had to pay the photographer quite a bit more money to purchase the rights to photos they didn't even like.

Chapter 15

~The Honeymoon~

I know what you're all thinking, "finally the fun part!" Your honeymoon should meet all the criteria you both envision for your perfect get-away. Think luxury, think relaxation, think paradise. As Coldplay's "Paradise" starts playing in each of our heads. . . Let's move on, shall we? As someone who's honeymoon was only 5 nights long, I do recommend planning at least a week-long trip, if possible. I didn't even unpack my bag, because it was "a waste of precious time".

Things to consider when planning your honeymoon:

1. Start by making a list of places you've always wanted to go. Think bucket list destinations. Make the start of your lives together an epic beginning.
2. I highly recommend an all-inclusive resort! This was one thing I absolutely loved about our honeymoon! Even better, they have adult only resorts. You're welcome!
3. I kind of already mentioned this point, but what's the harm in adding it to the list? Take at least a full week, better even, 10-14 days. Trust me, you will be glad you did.
4. Not sure you can afford a nice long honeymoon? Look into HoneyFund. It's a registry for your honeymoon. And it's kind of amazing! You can even add activities to your registry that your guests can purchase for you to enjoy, such as, a couples massage, dolphin excursion, scuba diving, guided tours, and much more.
5. Keep climate in mind when making your selection. While weather can't be controlled, it can be predicted, at least to a degree. See what I did there?

6. Don't stay in the room the whole time. I mean some of the time for sure, just not all of it. Plan some things to do, so you actually get to experience this great place you've spent all that money on. Otherwise, you could have just stayed at a local Bed & Breakfast. Not knocking it, just saying it's not really the thing honeymoon dreams are made of.

7. Strongly consider trip insurance. Why? Well, what if the weather takes a turn for the worse, or one of you gets sick and can't enjoy the trip. Hello trip insurance!

