

The Most Important Money Saving Tips

- ✚ You will save yourself an enormous amount of money if you get married during the off-season months of January, February, March and November.
- ✚ Getting married on any other day of the week other than Saturday.
- ✚ There is no official name for this disease but many brides get it.
 - 1st Symptom - around 3 months before your wedding, you'll begin to second-guess your decisions.
 - 2nd Symptom - You'll get scared and think about what you can do to make your wedding better or more unique.
 - 3rd Symptom - Then you'll ask friends, family, co-workers and anyone that will listen to you, about what they think of your new ideas.
 - 4th Symptom - and most dangerous...you make a few phone calls and start up-grading a few of your packages.
 - The Cure - stick to your original budget. As the wedding draws near, your emotions take over...ignore them.
- ✚ Vendors are well aware of the disease. That's why every contract allows for you to upgrade a package at any time but there are rarely loopholes for downgrading.

The Wedding Attire Search

- ✚ If finances don't allow you to purchase a designer wedding dress, consider renting. Look at it this way, if you're the type who wouldn't even consider wearing your mother's dress, why do you need one collecting dust in the closet.
- ✚ Never mind buying an expensive silk gown. Stick to polyester blends. They're cheaper, don't wrinkle as much and are easier to clean.
- ✚ The more beading and detail on the gown, the more expensive.
- ✚ Most of the big bridal shops have huge sales once a year, usually held at hotels or other big venues.
- ✚ To take care of the something old-new-borrowed-blue, look to family and friends for items you can use.
- ✚ Go shopping for bridesmaids' dresses during prom season and after New Years. There's nothing written in stone that says you have to buy your bridesmaids dresses at a wedding shop, and generally your prices will be a bit cheaper elsewhere.
- ✚ Shop for those pretty little wedding shoes in the summer, when white shoes are on the shelves of every shoe and department store, or you'll have to buy them in a bridal shop and pay their prices. Shop in the afternoon, your feet swell during the day and they'll also be swollen on your wedding day.
- ✚ Men's Tuxedo rentals are pretty much all the same price no matter where you go. The thing to check on is the condition of the suits and accessories.

Flower Power

- ✚ Unless you plan on keeping your bouquet on display in your home, don't bother with a duplicate to toss.

- ✚ Instead of tossing your whole bouquet, just pick one flower to throw. We all know what condition the bride's bouquet is in after 30 women (or more) starts clawing at it.
- ✚ Silk flowers save you a lot of money and they're already preserved. The Bride can have fresh flowers, but there really isn't any need for everyone else to go fresh.
- ✚ If you're using flowers in your centerpieces, decorations or large altar arrangements, go with silk. Would be nice if your guests could actually use the centerpieces that they just won again. You could re-use the decorations and larger arrangements at home, party accents or resell them.

I Have No Idea How To Decorate!

- ✚ To decorate the head table and save money- buy vases, line them up and place the bouquets in them on the table and place votives in between.
- ✚ Before shopping for candles and candleholders anywhere else, be sure to check out a couple of dollar stores.
- ✚ Dollar stores and chains like Wal-Mart and Zeller's also carry many items that can be used to decorate your ceremony or reception locations.
- ✚ When decorating the church or reception venue use silk flowers.
- ✚ Checks with your florist or garden centre to see if you can rent plants, some places do.
- ✚ Kill 2 birds with one stone and use your guest favors as your centerpieces. Buy a raised cake plate and display the favors on each table. Your DJ can make an announcement explaining.

How Can I Cut Corners on the Invitations?

- ✚ To make your invitations more personal and less expensive, do them yourself. There are a number of paper stores and websites available where you can find original ideas and ways to make your own invitations.
- ✚ Order your invitations over the Internet instead of a printing shop (it's a little cheaper). Mail order is another possibility.
- ✚ Order a plain invitation from a company and decorate it yourself. All you need is a hole-puncher and some ribbon and/or parchment paper.

I Don't Want to Spend a Fortune on Favors

- ✚ Please, go to a DOLLAR STORE first and check out their selection of party favors.
- ✚ Some stores decorate the gift for free and some don't, so make sure you ask.
- ✚ Instead of buying a trinket that will be tossed into a drawer, make a donation to a charity. This is a new trend that many brides are choosing. Pick a cause that means something to you. Your DJ can say something like: "Instead of favors, the couple has decided to make a donation in their name to the Lung Cancer Society. The bride's grandfather passed 3 years ago from this disease." Donations always get a round of applause...ever see anyone clap for a candy dish?

Wedding Cakes too expensive? No Problem!

- ✚ Buying a cake made with different flavored tiers will save you money as you wouldn't necessarily require a dessert table.
- ✚ To get away with not paying a cake cutting fee at your venue, purchase their sweet table but serve your wedding cake for dessert. This means you'll have to do your cake cutting as soon as your wedding party does their entrance. The staff will take the cake away and have it cut and plated in time for dessert.
- ✚ If you're having a dessert table, you really don't need to buy an elaborate wedding cake, try renting.
- ✚ Buy a plain wedding cake and decorate it yourself with silk or fresh flowers.

What about my Hair & Makeup?

- ✚ Try to hire one person or company that does both hair and makeup.
- ✚ Only the bride needs a trial.
- ✚ You can expect to pay anywhere from \$40 to \$100 for hair and \$30 to \$85 for makeup. Know that the more women you have that need these services, the cheaper the cost per person.
- ✚ If hair accessories are going to be put in anyone's hair, make sure you buy them yourself. If you leave this up to the hair stylist it'll cost more.
- ✚ If you have sensitive skin, we suggest that you do not go for a facial the week before your wedding. You don't want to be all broke out for the big day.
- ✚ Please get your nails done and make sure the groom's hands are also manicured. More than likely you'll be getting a picture that shows your hands and the wedding bands. People will be constantly asking to see your rings.
- ✚ Lastly, try to find a makeup and hair vendor that will do a trial a few months before the wedding. It gives you time to work out any areas you are not happy with and makes the wedding day process much quicker.

Using a Caterer & Choosing a Reception Venue

- ✚ Hire a caterer that supplies everything you need, plates, glassware, table cloths, etc.
- ✚ Make sure you're only charged for the services that you need. Some caterers have packages that include decorating and other items. If your venue is decorated already you won't need the extras. Extras should be deducted from the bill or replaced with something else you want.
- ✚ Pick fruits and vegetables that are in season.
- ✚ Stick to serving food that everyone is familiar with. Fancy food is expensive.
- ✚ Buffets generally cost a good deal less and give your guests the opportunity to get up and mingle with the other guests, and they can pick exactly what they would like to eat.
- ✚ Make sure to read your contract and check to see if the gratuity is included. This goes for all services.

- ✚ Booking a venue that allows you to buy your own liquor is more work but saves you money.
- ✚ Depending on your culture and where you live, having a cash bar is totally acceptable. This can be a huge money saver.
- ✚ Consider only serving wine and domestic beers.
- ✚ Liquor (vodka, rum, rye, scotch) plus all the different mixes you'll need adds to your expenses.
- ✚ Liqueurs like Grand Marnier, Sambucca, etc. can put a real strain on the liquor budget.
- ✚ Do you really need that Champagne toast?
- ✚ Common sense tip - the more guests the more cash you're going to put out.
- ✚ Holding your reception in a hotel has a lot of good points. They usually decorate, have professional services, i.e. DJ, can cater well to large groups, and most likely will include the honeymoon suite, with discounted rooms for out-of-town guests.
- ✚ If you're having a wedding with 75 guests or under, consider having your reception at your favorite restaurant. You will already know the staff and how the food is.
- ✚ Order child meals for kids under 11.
- ✚ Order a teen meal (same as adults but no liquor) for ages 12 to 17.
- ✚ Your reception is the biggest expense. It's also where you can save the most money if you shop around and plan well!

What about the Photographer & Videographer?

- ✚ Photographer's equipment and development costs alone are huge. Then there are batteries, film, an assistant and the hours of work on and after the wedding. You can save money on enlargements and albums but don't penny pinch when it comes to the photographer or videographer. After your wedding day, the only things you have left are your pictures and your video. These are the only 2 services that last a lifetime and can be passed down to the next generation.
- ✚ Biggest tip - hire a photographer that gives you your negatives, that way you can make as many copies of pictures from your wedding day as you want without having to order them from your photographer.
- ✚ If you choose a photographer that does not give you your negatives, always find out how long they keep your negatives on file and if you can obtain them when they are ready to discard them. Most photographers in general don't keep negatives past a couple of years. If your photographer still won't give you the negatives after that point without charging you money, I would question the ethics of the vendor.

Do I Have To Pay a Fortune for Transportation?

- ✚ Shop around; there is so many limousine companies out there. Prices do vary.
- ✚ There is no rule anywhere that says, "You have to have a stretch limousine." The smaller the car the cheaper.

- ✚ Other than the car and uniformed chauffeur, you really don't need any other extras.
- ✚ You can also save money by renting your vehicles from Budget, Hertz, etc. They all have new model luxury cars, sports cars and SUVs.
- ✚ You really don't need the limousine to take you home after the reception. Late-night pick-ups cost \$100.00+
- ✚ Before the ceremony, have the limo pick up the bride and her bridesmaids. The groom, groomsmen and parents can take their own vehicles to the church. After the ceremony, the bride and groom can take the limo and the bridesmaids can hop in the groomsmen's cars.
- ✚ You may already know someone that owns a Cadillac or Lincoln, a fancy sports car or for fun a Beetle or an antique car. Give this person a call.
- ✚ Some couples need more than one limo. If this is the case for you, compare the cost of 2 to 3 limos vs. the cost of 1 limo bus or Chartered Bus.

Choosing Your Music Service

- ✚ A really expensive package doesn't mean that your party will last longer or that your non-dancing guests will feel the need to shake their booty for the first time in their life. But a crappy DJ or band will ruin your reception.

Do I really need a Wedding Coordinator or Planner?

- ✚ Most wedding coordinators can save you money because they know...
 - about all the tips mentioned above plus more
 - what to say to and ask your vendors
 - They have connections in the industry.
- ✚ You really don't need a coordinator at your reception once the dance floor is open to your guests. That usually happens between 9-10pm.
- ✚ You could hire a wedding consultant to help with the final stages of your wedding; creating a detailed wedding day itinerary, making up a checklist for items at the ceremony & reception locations, and confirming with your vendors. While she won't be in attendance at your wedding, she has planned the day smoothly on paper. As long as you follow the times closely (not exactly) and do the events in the same order as the itinerary states, you'll be fine.
- ✚ You can appoint a friend or family member to be your honorary coordinator. Give her an itinerary, checklists (ceremony & reception items, photo and music list) and phone numbers for all your vendors. The honorary coordinator should be someone that's organized the more obsessive-compulsive the better and not scared to open her mouth when something goes wrong.