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to plan your dream wedding!

with

The On-line Massachusetts Wedding Guide
MaWeddingGuide.com

Weddings Tasks & Costs
including helpful worksheets

Bride's Beauty & Attire Tips
select the right dress and style

Groom's Attire Tips
it's his day, too!

Plan The Perfect Reception
from catering to decorating, make it right

Make your Ceremony Meaningful
personalize and make it unique

Hire the Right Photographer
don't skimp here - hire a professional

Great Entertainment
get your guests dancing

Honeymoons
relax and enjoy – you deserve it.

and much, much more!

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THE ON-LINE
Massachusetts Wedding Guide
WWW.MAWEDDINGGUIDE.COM

Planning - Local Professionals - Contests - Shopping - and Much More!

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Introduction

Congratulations on your engagement! As you begin to settle into your new role as wedding planner and soon to be Mrs. [insert your Fiancé's last name], you'll be faced with many decisions. Who? What? Where? When? Ok, so you've got the "who" (as in "who you are going to marry"). But what about the rest? The On-line Massachusetts Wedding Guide, MAWeddingGuide.com, has been helping brides plan their wedding since 1998. We offer wedding ideas and tips, as well as local wedding professionals who can fulfill your every need.

When you visit MAWeddingGuide.com, you will find:

Planning:
Hundreds of exceptional planning ideas and tips, including:

- Task Lists and Time Lines for you, the wedding party, and parents.
- How to select wedding attire for you and your groom.
- How to personalize your ceremony: wedding programs, reading and music selections, second marriages and more!
- Tips to plan every aspect of your reception: selecting your catering service, finding unique favors, writing a wedding toast, creating your guest list and so much more.
- Tips and questions to ask prospective wedding professionals, including questionnaires to take with you when interviewing wedding professionals.
- How to obtain a marriage license.
- And much, much more!

We've listed some of our most popular and helpful articles in this handbook to get you started!

Local Vendors:
Find hundreds of local wedding professionals known for their quality and service – from accessories to wedding cakes, we've got it all!

Reception Site Locator:
Find the perfect reception site that will accommodate your guest list and stay within your budget. Search by reception location or use our Reception Finder to enter the criteria *you need* for your reception.

Remember: your engagement is supposed to be fun and exciting! Most importantly, during this period is to enjoy this time! So take a deep breath, flip through this handbook and discover how easy planning your dream wedding can be with MAWeddingGuide.com.

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Wedding Tasks

Artistic Expressions Photography

After enjoying the excitement of being engaged, you may suddenly begin to panic thinking about all the wedding tasks that need to get done. You start to feel overwhelmed with uncertainty of where to begin. Wait, close your eyes, take a deep breath, relax, and now take another deep breath. **You can take on this task and enjoy it.** We'll make your wedding planning process an easy one!

***For all Wedding Task articles,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/planning/tasks/weddingtasks.htm

Timeline

We've compiled a list of the tasks you'll need to do before your wedding day. To help you stay on top of things, we've organized the tasks into the months prior to your wedding. This way you can easily see what you should be concerned with a year or even the week before your wedding.

Remember: this is a guideline! These are suggestions on what items to complete each month.

Twelve Months Before

[ ] Decide what type of wedding you would like to have (theme, size, setting, formality).

[ ] Create a budget.

[ ] Choose a wedding date and time. (Make your final decision after making sure the officiant and reception site are available for the date you chose).

[ ] Book your reception site.

[ ] Book the ceremony site and officiant.

[ ] Begin a guest list.

[ ] Create a task list.

[ ] Start interviewing possible photographers, caterers, musicians and videographers.

[ ] Choose your attendants.

[ ] Start your wedding dress shopping.

[ ] Start a health plan if you want to get in shape for your wedding.

Nine to Eleven Months Before

[ ] Contact your local newspaper to announce your engagement. Visit maweddingguide.com/planning/tasks/engagement.htm for local posting information.

[ ] Finalize your wedding gown decision. Order and set date for delivery.

[ ] Decide on color scheme for wedding.

[ ] Select and order bridesmaids' dresses and accessories.

[ ] Select your caterer and start working on the menu selections.

[ ] Book your photographer and videographer (be sure to get contracts!)

[ ] Book your DJ or band for reception (be sure to get contracts!)

[ ] Book the vocalist, pianist, and/or musicians for the ceremony.

[ ] Get ideas for your wedding invitations.

[ ] Start planning your honeymoon.

[ ] Let out-of-town guests know about the date you chose so they can start making plans.

[ ] Interview florists and get some ideas on what you would like for your ceremony and reception.

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Six to Eight Months Before

[ ] Order your wedding invitations and thank you notes.

[ ] Book florist and choose the color scheme for your wedding.

[ ] Reserve any wedding day rental equipment (chairs, tables, china, etc. - unless reception site is taking care of this).

[ ] Choose ceremony music.

[ ] Reserve hotel rooms for out-of-town guests.

[ ] Register for your wedding gifts.

[ ] Start shopping for the men's wedding attire.

[ ] Check with officiant to see if there are any marriage counseling requirements.

[ ] Select and book a baker for your wedding cake.

Three to Four Months Before

[ ] Finalize your guest list.

[ ] Order or make the wedding favors.

[ ] Finalize your order with the florist (make sure you have a contract).

[ ] Start addressing your invitations.

[ ] Take your Mom and Mother-in-Law shopping for their wedding attire.

[ ] Finalize the menu with the caterer.

[ ] Schedule fittings for the bride and the bridesmaids.

[ ] Purchase your wedding rings.

[ ] Choose the decorations you will be using at the ceremony and reception sites.

[ ] If you're traveling abroad, get passports and visas.

[ ] Choose the wedding attire for the groom and his groomsmen.

[ ] Ask family members or friends if they would like to do a special reading at the ceremony.

[ ] Arrange and plan your rehearsal dinner.

Two Months Before

[ ] Mail out your wedding invitations.

[ ] Prepare information regarding the hotel and special places to visit for your out-of-town guests.

[ ] Make or order your wedding programs.

[ ] Book wedding transportation for you and the wedding party.

[ ] Practice your wedding vows.

[ ] Finalize your honeymoon plans.

[ ] Have your hair and makeup done as a practice run before the wedding.

Six Weeks Before

[ ] Purchase gifts for the wedding party.

[ ] Purchase your going-away outfit.

[ ] Purchase all your wedding day accessories (such as shoes, pantyhose, lingerie, any hair accessories, pillow, garter, etc)

[ ] Have your bridesmaids purchase their shoes.

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Three to Four Weeks Before

[ ] Apply for marriage license at your local town hall.
[ ] Get your hair trimmed.
[ ] Meet with your officiant to make final arrangements.
[ ] Send out the invitations for the rehearsal dinner.
[ ] Prepare the seating arrangements.
[ ] Prepare a list of songs you want played at your wedding.
[ ] Make sure you finalize your readings and wedding vows.
[ ] Confirm your honeymoon reservations.
[ ] Start writing thank-you notes for your bridal shower.

One to Two Weeks Before

[ ] Make sure your marriage license is in order.
[ ] Purchase travel checks for your honeymoon.
[ ] Finalize the seating arrangements.
[ ] Pick up your wedding rings.
[ ] Contact the guests who did not R.S.V.P. to get final head-count.
[ ] Groom should get his haircut.
[ ] Pack your bag for the honeymoon.
[ ] Let your wedding party know what you would like them to do on the day of your wedding.
[ ] Make place cards.
[ ] Confirm location, date and time with the photographer, videographer, baker, florist and transportation.
[ ] Give the caterer the final head-count.
[ ] Pick up your gown and veil.
[ ] Groom should pick up his tux and make sure it fits properly (if possible, based on tuxedo rental shop).

One Day Before

[ ] Write final checks for your vendors. Put in an envelope and designate a reliable person to distribute them on your wedding day.
[ ] Figure out whom to tip and how much to tip. Put tips in envelopes and designate a reliable person to distribute.
[ ] Make sure you have all your wedding attire together (including accessories and makeup).
[ ] Give directions to your parents and to all the vendors.
[ ] Relax and get your nails done.
[ ] Rehearse for the ceremony.
[ ] Go to the rehearsal dinner.

Your Wedding Day

[ ] Most importantly - relax and enjoy!
[ ] Allow plenty of time to get dressed, apply your makeup and do your hair.
[ ] Don't forget the rings and the marriage license.

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Complete Task List

In an effort to help you organize all the aspects of planning your wedding, we've developed a check list of the major items that need to be completed. We've included columns for tracking each item's estimated and actual cost to help you keep track of the costs of your wedding.

Don't hesitate to ask your bridal party, family and friends to help you out with the wedding planning. People that have already planned a wedding will be able to offer you helpful suggestions and advice.

Category	Task	Complete	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Ceremony	Book site and minister, priest, or JP			
	Select music			
	Select readings			
	Purchase rings			
	Determine night of rehearsal			
Reception	Select reception site			
	Determine guest list			
	Order invitations			
	Write up directions			
	Mail invitations			
	Make favors			
Dinner	Select caterer			
	Select menu			
	Determine seating arrangement			
Wedding Cake	Select baker			
	Order cake			
	Select cake topping			
Flowers	Select florist			
	Order boutonnieres			
	Order bridal bouquet			
	Order bridal party bouquets			
	Order flowers for parents			
	Order flowers for grandparents			
	Order flowers for other special guests			
	Order flowers for reception: centerpieces, etc.			
	Order flowers for ceremony: altar, pews, etc.			
Music	Select DJ or band			
	Select music for first dance, etc.			
Photographer	Select photographer			
	Develop list of “must have” photos			
Videographer	Select videographer			
Attire/Clothing	Order bride's dress			

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	Purchase bride's shoes and veil, etc.			
	Final fitting			
	Order bridesmaid's dresses			
	Set up appointment for hair & makeup			
	Rent groom's tux			
	Rent best man and usher's tuxes			
Gifts	Gift for best man and ushers			
	Gift for maid of honor and bridal party			
	Gift for parents			
Marriage License	Apply for license			
	Pickup certificate			
Honeymoon	Book hotel for wedding night			
	Book honeymoon			
Travel	Make arrangements for out of state guests			

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Wedding Costs

Linda Jae Photography

It's time to buckle down and plan a budget. Here's the alarming news: the average cost of a wedding in Massachusetts is $25,000 - $30,000.

How much your wedding costs really depends upon how extravagant you want it. Will you invite just close family or friends or will you be inviting co-workers and acquaintances? First things first, sit down with your fiancé and decide what your budget will be. If money is a problem (due to debt, going to school, unemployment, etc), then you must be realistic when creating a wedding budget. Cut down on expenses by doing much of the work on your own.

The biggest portion of your budget will be put into the reception - ***a whopping 49% of your budget***!

Average Wedding Costs

The following is a general breakdown of estimated wedding costs. Miscellaneous expenses may include your marriage license, blood tests, officiant's fees, gratuities, etc.

		Estimated Costs for budget	
Item	**Percentage**	**$25,000**	**$30,000**
Reception	49%	$12,250	$14,700
Photography	10%	2,500	3,000
Flowers	8%	2,000	2,400
Bride's Attire (Including Accessories)	7%	1,750	2,100
Videography	6%	1,500	1,800
Music	6%	1,500	1,800
Wedding Bands	4%	1,000	1,200
Invitations	2%	500	600
Transportation	2%	500	600
Groom's Attire (Including Accessories)	1%	250	300
Miscellaneous (guest book, favors, etc)	5%	1,250	1,500
TOTALS	100%	$25,000	$30,000

Now remember, these are just **estimated costs** and percentages. Don't start panicking just yet! Perhaps you may spend more in one area and less in another. You may be able to reduce or even eliminate some of these expenses. Here are some helpful hints:

If you decide to wear your mother's wedding dress, this will eliminate, or at least reduce, the estimated cost of your bridal gown. The wedding dress of your dreams may be more than your budget allows. If this is the case, ask yourself where your priorities are. Would you rather spend more on your wedding dress and less on your photographs?

Another way to reduce costs is to use flowers that are in season on your wedding day. Obviously if you use flowers that are not in season, it is going to cost you more.

These are just a few examples. You can decide what is best for your budget. Be flexible, if you spend more in one expense, reapportion it to another expense.

Creating a budget with your fiancé will probably save you a lot of headaches. Being realistic about costs and actually seeing the numbers written down on paper will help you from spending out of control. The key is to create the wedding of your dreams and stay within your budget!

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Estimate your Wedding

We've given you the estimated percentage for each item in most weddings. Now it's your turn to determine your budget. You may need a pencil (with eraser!) and calculator to determine your estimated costs. A few lines have been left blank in the event you need an extra item.

		Your Budget _____	
Item	**Suggested Percentage**	**Percentage**	**Estimated Costs**
		Your Estimate %	(Multiply % by Budget)
Reception	49%		
Photography	10%		
Flowers	8%		
Bride's Attire (Including Accessories)	7%		
Videography	6%		
Music	6%		
Wedding bands	4%		
Invitations	2%		
Transportation	2%		
Groom's Attire (Including Accessories)	1%		
Miscellaneous	5%		
TOTALS	100%	100%	

Saving for the Big Day

Gone are the days when the bride's parents were obligated to pay for their daughter's wedding. Nowadays couples are getting married later in life and are paying for their own wedding - after settling down and establishing a career. You're probably wondering how to pay for your dream wedding. Well, we'd like to give you a few pointers:

Shortly after you get engaged, you should start saving (hopefully you've already started!). Try and put about 10 - 20% of each paycheck aside. This may sound like a lot, but if you write down ***every*** expense you have in one day, you'll see that you can make certain sacrifices. Instead of going through the drive-thru for a cup of coffee or buying lunch, save money by making your own coffee and bringing your lunch to work. Instead of going to the movies (which nowadays can cost a small fortune!) rent a movie and microwave your own popcorn!

Tip: To estimate the amount of how much you can save towards your wedding: multiply your paycheck by .10 - .20 and then multiply how many months before your wedding. Do the same for your fiancé and then add the two totals together.

Have an account just for your wedding funds. This way you'll know exactly how much you have to spend. If you've already started saving, put some of the money in a CD or short-term mutual fund instead of a savings account. You'll earn more interest.

To cut down on vendor costs, do some of the work yourself, such as making your own centerpieces and favors. Invite your friends over for an "arts and crafts" night. I'm sure they will be more than happy to help you out! Here's a suggestion: don't start sipping the martinis until *after* the centerpieces or favors have been made!

Believe it or not - hire a wedding consultant. Couples tend to think that hiring a consultant can be expensive. Wrong! If you create a budget and give it to a wedding consultant, they will do their best to make the most of it. In many cases, a wedding consultant will actually save you money.

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Hiring Wedding Professionals

The best way to hire a wedding professional is to ask for referrals from friends and family. Have you recently gone to a wedding or party and enjoyed the entertainment? The decorations? The venue? Well, here's your chance to invite them to be part of your day. Put them on your list of people that you'd like to interview. Seek out other referrals and decide who you "clicked" with best. Building a good rapport with a vendor is very important. This person will be the one who makes your day special.

MaWeddingGuide.com Vendor Checklist

Vendor Checklists

To assist you in keeping track of your vendors, consider utilizing our Vendor Checklists at MAWeddingGuide.com. You can keep track of your vendors on-line in one spot! Save time with our convenient tracking, check-off lists, and the ability to make notes of YOUR potential and hired vendors.

Vendor Contracts

After you have chosen your wedding professional (florist, photographer, DJ, etc.), you'll want to sign a contract. If the person/persons you've chosen does not have a contract, you should consider finding another wedding professional. The contract will protect you and the vendor from any miscommunications and responsibilities. Make sure it lists all the pertinent details that you've discussed.

The contract should include the following information:

- The date and time of the wedding
- The length of their service. When will they start and when will they finish? (Be sure that they include setup and breakdown of their equipment.)
- Overtime rate
- An itemized list of ALL the goods and services that the vendor will be supplying
- Will backup services be available?
- Their cancellation policy
- Exact prices (including tax)
- Names and phone numbers where you can reach them easily
- Dress code policy
- Last dates to make any necessary changes
- If ordering any items, list the details about the item
- Delivery times

***Searching for a wedding professional? Find a complete list of local vendors,* visit:**
maweddingGuide.com/vendors

Accessories	Dance Instructors	Lodging
Alterations	Decorations	Musicians
Bachelor(ette) Party	Destination Wedding	Officiants
Bands	Disc Jockeys	Photographers
Beauty	Entertainment Agencies	Reception Sites
Bridal Fashions	Favors	Regional Directories
Bridal Registries	Florists	Rehearsal Dinners
Bridal Shows	Flower Preservation	Rental Agencies
Bridal Veils	Gifts	Transportation
Calligraphers	Honeymoons	Tuxedos
Candles	Invitations	Unique Ideas
Caterers	Jewelers	Videographers
Ceremony Sites	Linens / Chair Covers	Vocalists
Consultants/Planners	Lingerie	Wedding Cakes

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Bridal Shows

Bridal shows are a great way to kick off your wedding planning or find those last minute necessities/ideas.

You will be able to meet with local wedding professionals and see samples of their work (invitations, photographs, flowers, etc), attend a fashion show, sample cakes, meet other brides and much more. Whether you're recently engaged or searching for last minute ideas, a wedding show will be very helpful.

Beacon Hill Photography

Tips for Attending a Bridal Show

Bring a pen and notebook. There will be many opportunities to register for prizes and you will want to take notes. You may want to invest in a self-inking stamp or self adhesive labels that have your name, address, phone number, email address and wedding date on it. This will save you a lot of time if you want to leave your personal information with vendors.

Bring your calendar, datebook and checkbook. Book appointments and make deposits while you are there. This saves you time later. In addition, some exhibitors feature "show specials" which are savings you can only take advantage of if you attend that bridal show.

Take the time to talk to vendors. Do you remember when your mother told you "Don't talk to strangers"? Now is the time to forget that rule. It's the only way to learn more about their product or service. Exhibitors are there to answer your questions and concerns.

Bring your mother and/or bridal attendants. The fashion shows feature something for everyone - bridal gowns, bridesmaid dresses, mother-of-the-bride gowns, and tuxedos. It's also great to have another opinion when you find a professional or something you like.

Bring your fiancé. Most grooms are responsible for their formal wear, honeymoon arrangements, and selecting the transportation. This is a great opportunity for your fiancé to select a tux and accessories, see limos, and meet knowledgeable travel agents

Arrive at least 1/2 hour prior to each fashion show. Seating is on a first come, first serve basis. Try to leave your coat in the car because some facilities do not have coat checks. If you are unable to attend a show of your choice, send your mother or a friend to pick up information for you.

Wedding shows are designed to make your wedding planning easier and to save you time and money. **Relax, take your time and have fun!**

Tip: If a bridal show allows on-line registration, take advantage! It will save you time at the door. Many shows will also offer an incentive to registering on-line, such as discount tickets.

***Find a list of local bridal shows*, visit**:
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Bridal-Show.htm

Neto Studio

Hiring a Wedding Consultant

A wedding consultant can make your wedding planning easier. They can plan all aspects of your wedding or just some of the little details. We get so many emails from brides who are looking for the perfect reception site for their wedding. They are looking for a reception site that overlooks water, or an historic mansion with an outdoor ceremony site, or they have "champagne taste on a beer budget." Your best bet is to hire a wedding consultant. They can help you find the perfect reception site for your budget.

Selecting a Wedding Consultant

A wedding consultant or event planner plays many roles. They can design your wedding theme, choose vendors, book the reception site, negotiate contracts, schedule appointments, find the perfect centerpieces and the list goes on and on. Consultants help you come up with ideas to make your wedding day an unforgettable event.

A consultant's fee can range from 10 - 20 percent of the total wedding costs or they may charge a flat fee. It's important to interview wedding consultants to make sure they can work within your budget and also to make sure you are comfortable with the way they work. Ask for referrals from friends and relatives.

Before signing a contract with a consultant, make sure all fees, specific services and any deadlines to be met are listed.

Types of Wedding Consultants

Here is a list of several kinds of wedding consultants:

- **Independent Bridal Consultant**: this person will work directly with the bride and groom in helping them plan any/all aspects of their wedding. They do not work for a specific vendor.
- **Bridal Consultant**: they work for a specific vendor and help the bride and groom with their wedding arrangements (such as a consultant at a flower shop or a consultant at a photography studio).
- **Wedding Coordinator**: this person is an on-site consultant who coordinates the wedding activities (rehearsals and ceremony procedures).
- **Church Wedding Coordinator**: this person will work with the church to make sure that the church rules and regulations are being followed.
- **Wedding Day Coordinator**: this person conducts rehearsals and wedding-day activities. However, they do not coordinate the initial planning.

***Find a local wedding consultant*, visit**:
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Wedding-Planner.htm

Bride's Attire

Your wedding day is the day that you've always fantasized about. This was the day you were going to put Cinderella to shame! After searching through all the magazines and folding over the corners of pages of interest, now it's time to go on a treasure hunt. The treasure being your dress!

Richard Souza Photography

Tips Before You Get Started

Choosing your wedding dress can be overwhelming. Before you begin your hunt for the perfect dress, prepare yourself! We've listed steps to help you get started and what to expect from bridal shops. If you are not sure what style dress will look best on you, be sure to read about the different dress styles that are available.

The bride will be the center of attention as she walks down the aisle in her wedding dress. The dress will **set the level of formality** for both the ceremony and reception. Therefore, you must leave plenty of time to select your gown because your attendants can't start shopping until you've finished!

Choose a bridal shop that has a good reputation. Ask friends and relatives for referrals. You want and need a bridal retailer who will do whatever they can to ensure that you are happy. The retailer should be able to handle everything including customizing the gown, fittings, alterations, accessories and ordering and fitting attendants' dresses. You do not have to purchase your gown and bridesmaids' dresses from the same shop, but it can make things easier, such as fittings and purchasing accessories to compliment both your gown and the bridesmaids' dresses.

The **average cost of a wedding gown is approximately $1,000 - $1,800**. A designer gown can cost you thousands of dollars. If you decide on a one-of-a-kind wedding gown, plan on paying much more. The average headpiece can cost you anywhere from $150 - $300. Average cost of shoes: $60.

Get ideas on different styles by going through bridal magazines. Cut out any styles you like and show them to the bridal retailer. This way she can show you gowns similar to your taste. Don't be afraid to try on many different styles. You may be surprised on how they actually look on you.

It's a good idea to **bring along a trusting friend or relative** while you try on the gowns. This way they can give you their opinions on what particular style looks best on you. It's also a good idea to bring a pair of shoes with the same size heel that you plan on wearing on your wedding day. Fix your hair the way you are planning on wearing it at your wedding so you can get the full effect of the gown and headpiece.

> **Tip:** Bring a camera to snap photos of gowns you like. Then ask the opinion of a few trusting friends and family. What you may have liked in the store may change, especially as you try more and more dresses on! (Check with the shop to ensure its OK to snap a few photos).

You will need to **order your gown 9-11 months in advance**. This will allow time for the manufacturer to make your gown closest to your size. Most bridal styles are sized smaller than everyday dresses. If you are normally a size 8, don't be surprised if you need a size 10 wedding gown. When your gown comes in, allow yourself at least a month for alterations and fittings. Remember, alterations and fittings cost extra!

Make sure **you find out the cancellation policy** that the store has before you leave a deposit. Also, be sure to find out how much they charge for alterations. You may also opt to go to a local seamstress for alterations.

If you are on a tight budget, you may consider renting your gown. You can call your local formal-wear shop and check out their selection. Another alternative if you are on a tight budget would be to go to a second-hand shop. You will probably need alterations but the savings will still be great. You can also have your wedding dress sewn by a seamstress, friend or yourself. The price of the material and labor costs are often cheaper than designer gowns.

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Dress Styles

Your wedding gown will probably be the single most expensive dress that you will ever purchase. Regardless of price, you want the dress to look and make you feel beautiful. You'll want a dress that flatters your height, weight and body type. A dress that will accentuates your best features!

If you're not sure of what style dress would look best on you, below we've listed some of the popular dress styles and body types that looks best:

- **A-Line:** The A-Line dress has a fitted bodice which gradually flares wider from the bust down to the hemline (looks like the shape of the letter "A"). This dress flatters just about every body type.
- **Ball Gown:** The Ball gown has a full skirt with off-the-shoulder bodice and a natural waistline. An example would be Cinderella's Ball Gown. If you have a full-figure, this is a great dress for you.
- **Empire:** The Empire gown has a very high waist which starts right below the bust line. It has a slim, slightly flared skirt. If you're petite, this dress will tend to lengthen your look.
- **Sheath:** The Sheath gown fits snug. It has a straight skirt without a waist. If you have a well-proportioned figure this dress will look great on you.
- **Princess:** The Princess gown has a bodice that is slim-fitting and it accents the waistline. It has vertical seams that flow from the shoulders all the way down to the hemline of a flared skirt. This is another great gown for a petite woman. It will give her height.
- **Basque Waist:** The waistline of the Basque gown begins several inches below the waist. It has a V-shape or curved U-shape that fits the waist snug. This dress is a slenderizing dress for all body types. It gives the bride the appearance of a perfect hourglass shape.

Try on several different styles of dresses to see which looks best on you. Dresses look different on the hanger so try on a few different styles to see what best compliments your figure.

Dress Tips:
If you're looking to **minimize your hips,** choose an A-Line, Basque Waist or a dropped V-Line.
If you're **flat-chested**, strapless or sleeveless gowns with detailing on the bodice is a nice choice.

Ordering/Contract of Wedding Gown

Finding the perfect dress is just the beginning. We've listed helpful tips on saving, ordering, and what to look for in the wedding gown contract.

Saving on Your Gown

- One way to save money on a wedding gown is to buy the gown right off the rack (the sample dress). Of course, you'll have to try it on and make sure it's your size. Another thing you'll have to consider is that you will probably have to get it dry-cleaned before your wedding.
- Another way to save is to rent or borrow a gown. Go to a resale or rental store in your area and check out what they have to offer. You may be surprised at what you find!
- Consider buying a white bridesmaid's dress. They are much cheaper than a wedding gown and can be just as beautiful.
- Wear your mother's wedding gown. You'll probably have to make some alterations and perhaps add some beads or lace, but the costs will be considerably less than buying a new gown.
- The simpler the dress (less beading and lace), the less expensive.
- Consider purchasing a dress from a clothing retailer, such as Macy's, Bloomingdales or J. Crew.

Ordering Your Wedding Gown

Here are a few tips you need to know before you purchase your wedding gown:

- Be sure to find out who the designer of the dress is.
- Make sure the bridal shop is authorized to sell it.
- If you find a dress that you absolutely adore but would like a few minor changes (different neckline, sleeves, etc.), would the bridal shop be able to make these changes? If so, how much extra is it going to cost you?

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- Ask the bridal shop how long the dress will take to come in. You'll want to make sure you'll have it in time to make alterations before your wedding day.
- Be sure you look at some fabric samples. You'll want to see the exact color that you are ordering (sometimes sample dresses can get worn looking).
- Use a credit card to purchase your dress. This will protect you in case something goes wrong.
- Get a written estimate of how much the alterations will be before you buy the dress. Some bridal shops will charge you a flat fee while others will charge you by the work that needs to be done. (Alterations are usually not included in the price of the dress.)
- Find out if the bridal shop will allow you to borrow your gown for any bridal portraits that you are planning on having done. If so, will they press it and make it look fresh for your wedding day?

The Wedding Gown Contract

Now that you are ready to purchase your dress, you should make sure that the following items are listed on your wedding gown contract:

- The designer's name and style number
- Quoted price
- The size and color ordered
- The amount of the deposit that is required (and paid)
- Date that the dress will arrive
- Any special requests (such as any changes to the dress that will be made)
- List the alterations that need to be done and an estimate
- A payment schedule and when the last payment is due
- Any cancellation or refund policies

Wedding Shoes

On your wedding day, you'll have very little chance to sit. Be sure to choose a comfortable shoe. If you want heels, we recommend two inches or less. There are many styles to choose from - some of which are dyeable and can be dyed to match the hue of your dress. There are alternative to "bridal" shoes:

- Silk or satin pumps - plain or decorated with appliqués.
- Sandals with straps
- Closed or open-toed slingbacks
- Bridal boots (with ribbons for laces)
- Ballet slippers
- Doc Martens (white)
- Decorated sneakers
- Mary Janes

Wedding Gloves

Gloves come in different kinds of fabrics such as silk, lace, satin, cotton and knit. Gloves are worn mostly during the ceremony and for photographs; they should not be worn in the receiving line or while eating. If you're thinking about wearing gloves, here are a few guidelines:

- Brides with full upper arms should wear a pair of gloves that stop at their elbows. They should not wear over-the-elbow gloves.
- A petite bride should avoid wearing over-the-elbow gloves.
- If you are wearing a short-sleeved gown, wear wrist length gloves.
- If you are wearing a cap-sleeve gown, wear elbow length gloves.
- If you are wearing a strapless gown, wear over-the-elbow gloves.
- If you are wearing a long sleeved gown, do not wear gloves at all!

***Find a list of local bridal shops*, visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Massachusetts-Bridal-Shop.htm

“Something Old, Something New”

We've all heard of this old English wedding tradition. We've listed the meaning and some ideas of each part of the rhyme.

Something Old
Meaning: Continuity. This represents the link with the bride's family and the past.
Ideas: You can choose to wear a piece of your mother's or grandmother's wedding gown or perhaps a piece of their antique jewelry.

Something New
Meaning: Optimism and hope. This represents good fortune and much success in the bride's new life.
Ideas: Often the wedding gown is chosen as the new item. If you're wearing your mother's gown, your shoes could be the new item! Or give yourself a good excuse to buy yourself a nice piece of jewelry! Nice lingerie will also be a good choice.

Something Borrowed
Meaning: Happiness shared from happily married couples. A reminder to the bride that her family and friends will be there for her when help is needed.
Ideas: Choose something that belongs to a loved one. You can borrow your sister's veil or her earrings. Borrow your grandmother's lace handkerchief.

Something Blue
Meaning: Fidelity, love and purity. This represents faithfulness and loyalty.
Ideas: Most brides choose a blue garter. Don't like that idea? Paint your toenails blue! Or wear sapphire earrings.

A Silver Sixpence in her Shoe
Meaning: Life of fortune.
Ideas: Make sure you put that sixpence in your shoe for luck!

Shop on-line for “something blue,” visit:
theweddingoutlet.com.
Enter code MAGuide to receive 10% off

Happy Gatherings

Beauty & The Bride

On the day of your wedding you want your makeup to look perfect, creating a “blushing bride.” Finding the right makeup and the right amount varies from one bride to the next. The most important thing is you feel good about yourself and how you look. If you are not comfortable, then it will reflect that day and in your photos. The makeup should enhance your beauty, not hide it or make you feel uncomfortable.

< Makeup & Hair by Ann Marie Laurendeau, Anemone Makeup

Basic Beauty Tips

Here is a list of some basic beauty tips to help you look and feel beautiful on your special day:

- If you've decided to go for a facial, do it at least one month prior to your wedding. If you decide to have another facial done before your wedding, be sure to do it at least two weeks before the big day.
- If your skin is prone to breakouts, visit a dermatologist several months before the big day.
- Drink lots of water! Not only is it refreshing, but it will also flush out your skin.
- Have your eyebrows plucked and shaped at least a week before your wedding. Don't pluck them the day of your wedding or you may end up with red bumps.
- On the day of your wedding, you want your makeup to look natural. So be sure to blend your makeup well (go easy on the blush). Many brides think they have to go extra heavy on the makeup for their photographs. This is not true.
- Consider hiring a professional bridal makeup artist that specializes in wedding make-up. They have the experience to make sure you look your best in person and in your photographs.
- When choosing a lipstick, be sure to select one that lasts. Be sure you do not overline your lips with a dark lipliner.
- If you've decided to do your own makeup, don't run out the day before your wedding to choose your makeup. Visit a cosmetic counter about 1-2 months before your wedding and have the consultant try different colors to see what looks best on you. Remember, you want to feel beautiful.

Beauty Tip: Before walking down the aisle, have a friend check for lipstick on your teeth.

- Don't forget the waterproof mascara (just in case you get a little teary-eyed). Or you could get your eyelashes tinted to prevent any mascara runs.
- Use facial powder to prevent any shine on your face - be careful not to use too much.
- Keep your lipstick, facial powder and mascara in your purse in case you need to freshen up.
- If (I hate to say it) you happen to get a pimple on the day of your wedding, do NOT pop it. Use Visene (it's suppose to get the red out). Just dot the pimple with Visene and cover with concealer. Then use foundation and loose powder.
- Make sure you wear a button-down shirt when you have your makeup done. This way you won't have to pull the shirt over your head and take the chance that you may smudge up your makeup. Also, before slipping into your gown, put a towel or sheet over your face so you won't get any makeup on your gown.

***Find a local beauty expert*, visit**:
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Wedding-Makeup.htm

Emergency Wedding Kit

On such a special day you don't want anything to go wrong. So prepare an emergency kit for that "just in case" moment. Inside the kit you should include:

- clear nail polish (for runs in your pantyhose)
- safety pins
- tissues
- aspirin
- hair essentials
    - brush/comb
    - bobby pins
    - clips
    - elastics
    - hairspray
- toothbrush and toothpaste
- glue (in case of broken heels, jewelry, etc.)
- sanitary products
- mints or breath spray
- baby powder (in case of spills - this will absorb liquids.)
- white masking tape (for your hem)
- crackers or pretzels (just in case you start to feel a bit queasy!)

***Shop on-line for bridal purses to store your kit*, visit**:
theweddingoutlet.com.
Enter code MAGuide to receive 10% off

Groom's Attire

The groom and his attendants usually rent their wedding attire from a tuxedo shop about two to three months ahead of time. What the groom and attendants choose to wear is based upon the time of day of the wedding. A formal-wear specialist can help decide whether the attendants would be more appropriately dressed in a traditional or a contemporary style tuxedo.

Sage Studios

Basic Tips

Since it is the groom's big day, he should look as dapper as can be. He'll want to stand out from the rest of the groomsmen. Below we have listed some ways in which he can do so:

- If the best man and the groomsmen are wearing black, have the groom wear white.
- Put a different flower in his boutonniere.
- The groom can wear a different color vest than his groomsmen. There are many styles to select from -- solid or patterned.
- Wear a different colored or styled shirt than the groomsmen.

After you select the groom's and bridesmaids' attire, you should select the groomsmen's attire. Their attire should be similar in style and color to that of the groom's and should complement the bride, groom and attendants. The groomsmen can wear the same color shirt or vest as the bridesmaids' dresses.

The groomsmen's complete attire can be rented at the formalwear shop (including shoes!). Each groomsman is responsible for paying for his own attire. The formalwear shop will fill out measurement cards for each usher listing style, color, pieces and sizes.

If you have an out-of-town groomsman, ask your formalwear shop to send a measurement card. He can then go to his local shop to get measured. The shop will complete his card and he can mail the card back for you to bring to your formalwear shop. Make sure the groomsman arrives few days early for a fitting!

Selecting the Tux Style

Choosing a style that best fits can be difficult! We've listed various body types and what tuxedo or suit will look best for that particular body type.

Tall & Thin: The tall and thin groom can wear just about anything. He can wear just about any color and style. If the groom is very thin, he can try a double-breasted jacket. This will give him a little extra padding in the chest area. If you want to look broader in the shoulders, ask for more padding in the shoulders. A pleated shirt will also look great on a very thin groom.

Short & Thin: A short and thin groom should NOT wear double-breasted jackets. He'll end up looking lost in it! A three-button jacket with pleated trousers or tuxedo pants is a great look for that short and thin groom.

Tall & Broad: The tall and broad groom should also stay away from the double-breasted jackets. It will just make him look huskier. He should also avoid a pleated shirt and cummerbund (the cummerbund will draw attention to his waistline and the vest will hide it). Rather select a vest to compliment the wedding party.

Short & Broad: The short and broad groom should wear a single-breasted jacket. A one-button or two-button jacket that closes near his waistline is a perfect choice. Once again, if he has a large waistline, he should wear a vest rather than a cummerbund. Padded shoulders will also draw the attention away from the waistline up to the shoulders.

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Most importantly, the groom should be comfortable! His jacket should fit comfortably around his neck and shoulders and should button easily. When the groom tries on his tux or suit, he should try sitting with the jacket buttoned to make sure it still fits comfortably.

The groom's shirt should also fit comfortably around his neck, shoulders and waist. His cuffs should be one-quarter to one-half inch below his jacket sleeve.

If he chooses to wear a vest, it should fall just over the trousers waistband. Vests usually have a slide strap to adjust it to their waistline. It should fit comfortably across the chest and the buttons should line up to the front of his jacket.

The groom's trousers should button comfortably - you don't want him popping a button when he sits down! Many trousers have waistbands that are adjustable. The hem of the trousers should come just over his shoe tops.

***Find a local tuxedo shop*, visit**:
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Tuxedo-Rental.htm

Catering

Catering takes an average of 45 to 50 percent of your wedding costs, so be sure to choose a caterer carefully.

After deciding on a caterer, make an appointment to discuss the menu. Let the caterer know whether you would prefer a buffet, sit-down dinner or cocktail and hors d'oeuvres reception. At a sit-down dinner it is easier to control the flow of events (cutting of the wedding cake, dancing, etc.). A buffet dinner allows your guests to mingle - it isn't necessarily cheaper than a sit-down dinner because the caterer must prepare more food per person to keep the buffet looking presentable.

Not only is the taste of the food important but the presentation of the food is equally important. A good caterer knows how to present and garnish foods.

To cut down on catering costs, avoid foods that require time-consuming kitchen preparation or foods that require carving at the table.

Hull Grenier Photography

Selecting a Caterer

Ask your friends for referrals. It is a good idea to meet with at least three caterers and sample their food.

You may hire a caterer who will tailor the menu specifically to your preferences or you may choose a caterer that lets you choose from a specified list of dishes. This tends to be cheaper. A good caterer will work within your budget so don't choose a caterer on cost alone.

Questions to Ask the Caterer

(See appendix for interview worksheet)

Here is a list of questions you will want to ask your caterer:

- How long have you been in business?
- Where did you receive your culinary training?
- Can I have a list of recent customers to call?
- What are your specialties?
- Can we request a specific menu or do you work from a set menu or package?
- Are you licensed to serve liquor?
- Is the cost of the service staff included in the price?
- What will the servers wear?
- Do you require a guaranteed number of guests?
- When is the deposit due? When is the balance due?
- When is the final guest count due?
- Have you ever catered a wedding reception at the reception site that we have chosen?
- Are there any extra fees for cake-cutting, linens, corkage, rental of furniture, setup charges, bar setup?
- Do you handle the cleanup and rental return?
- Do you provide the wedding cake?
- Do you supply the linens, china, glassware, silverware, tables and chairs?

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Caterer Contract

Believe it or not, the cost of the reception meal will be almost half of your wedding budget! Whether you are having an on-site caterer, a catering company or a restaurant, you'll want to make sure that you have a contract that includes the following information:

- The date of your wedding. Be sure to include the exact location and room (there may be more than one wedding going on at the same time).
- The type of service you are having (whether it be a seated meal, French service, buffet, tea, cocktails, etc.)
- The staff-to-guest ratio.
- The name of the person who is representing the catering company.
- Proof of license.
- Your exact food selections (including any liquor).
- The total cost and what the payment schedule will be. List any sales tax, gratuities, bar and waiter fees, any over-time expenses.
- Date when the final payment is due.
- Date when the caterer will need the final head count.
- Be sure to get the contact information for the morning of the wedding (cell phone number where person can be reached in case you need to get in touch).
- List the cancellation and refund policy.

Find a list of local caterers, visit:
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Caterer.htm

Reception

The reception is the biggest (and hardest) part of your wedding to plan. There's so much to think of such as:

- Food
- Drinks
- Music
- Decorations
- Flowers
- Favors
- Seating Arrangements

But don't worry, take it one step at a time and you can make it through this!

Adryanto Photography

Selecting a Reception Site

Choosing a reception site can be overwhelming. The first thing we suggest you do is to sit down and discuss what you are both looking for in a reception site. For instance, are you interested in getting married outdoors in a garden? Or perhaps the thought of a historic mansion appeals to you?

Make a list of all the reception sites that appeal to both of you, making sure that each site has the essentials that you are looking for. Give the reception site a call and set up an appointment to visit. While on the phone, make sure that the person on the receiving end is helpful in answering all your questions. This person will probably be the one who helps plan your wedding. So you want them to be as helpful and courteous as they can be.

To save time in choosing a reception site, plan on visiting more than one site in a day. But try not to visit more than three sites in a day - or things just start to blend together and you tend to forget the little details! It's a good idea to bring along a camera and notebook to take notes. Make notes on how clean and neat each site is kept. Make sure that the furnishings and the carpets are clean (not to mention the restrooms!).

When speaking with the reception manager, make sure you feel comfortable with them. This will be the person who helps you coordinate the details of your wedding. You want to deal with someone that you can trust. If your reception site is catering your meal, you should be sure that you taste the food. You may have to make another appointment to come back to sample the food.

When should you reserve the reception site? It's never too early, especially if you are having your wedding during "peak season" or at a popular destination. The only disadvantage to booking your site early is that you'll have to sign a contract and leave a non-refundable deposit.

Find a list of local reception sites,
including a helpful Reception Finder tool to search for sites that match your needs:
maweddingguide.com/sitelocator/index.htm

Sample Itinerary

Not sure of the time line for your wedding reception? The following is a sample itinerary for an evening wedding. This itinerary can easily be adjusted for a day wedding.

Time/Activity
6:30 - 7pm: Receiving Line
Occurs as guests leave the ceremony or enter the reception site.

7pm - 8pm: Cocktail hour
Drinks and hors d'oeuvres are served to guests
Formal portraits are taken

8pm - 9:30pm: Meal
Toasts are made before meal is served
Meal is served

9:30pm to end: Entertainment
First Dance
Dancing
Cake Cutting
Bouquet Toss/Garter Toss
Final Dance

Favor Ideas

Having favors at your wedding is not required. However, it can be a fun way to say "Thank You!" Looking for great ideas for wedding favors? Here are a few suggestions:

- Crystal, gold, or silver wedding bells (guests can ring to initiate a kiss between the two of you)
- Bottle of wine with a personalized label
- Picture frames that can also be used as place card frames
- Candles and candleholders
- Unique place card holders that match your wedding theme
- Porcelain vase or small potted plant
- Seedlings for planting in celebration of your marriage
- Wedding bubbles for blowing during the last dance (check with facility if this is OK)
- Wine goblets or wine goblet place card holders
- Sugar coated almonds or chocolates tied wrapped in tulle
- Cookies
- Potpourri wrapped in tulle and tied with a ribbon
- Homemade CDs of the bride & groom's wedding songs along with some personal favorites
- Small vases with a single short stemmed rose or flower with a tag for guest seating arrangements
- Baseballs marked with the bride & groom's name and date (for the sports fanatic)
- Use Christmas bulbs to print your names and date - attach a thank you note and festive ribbon
- Chocolate bars with personalized wrappers
- Put a slice of your wedding cake in a personalized box
- In lieu of favors, make a donation to a local charity

It's a great idea to personalize your favors with names, date, and perhaps a little poem or thank you note.

When selecting favors for your wedding, be sure to use your imagination. If you are having a theme wedding, find favors that go with the theme. For instance: if you are going to Hawaii for your honeymoon, give out leis. Be creative! The choice is yours.

***Shop on-line for bridal favors*, visit**:
theweddingoutlet.com.
Enter code MAGuide to receive 10% off

Creating Your Guest List

You've decided to limit your guest list to 150 people. However, before you know it, your list grows longer and longer. Your first priority is to list your family and friends for both the bride and groom. These are your most important guests. Then divide whatever is left over between the two families. For example, if you have 100 family and friends that you definitely want to invite, you'll have 50 more guests that you can invite. Allow the groom's family to invite 25 guests and the bride's family to invite 25 guests.

TheWeddingOutlet.com

If you are still having a hard time trimming down the list, here are a few suggestions:

- If you have a large family, cut the list off at aunts and uncles or first cousins. You can then have an informal family reception for any uninvited guests at a later date.
- If you have a lot of single guests, do not allow them to bring dates.
- Don't go inviting the entire office. Eliminate your office friends and keep it personal.
- Do not invite any children under the age of 18.

Here are a few ways that you CANNOT trim your guest list:

- You cannot trim your guest list by failing to invite the clergy or your officiant and their spouse to the reception.
- Do not fail to include the parents of your ring bearer and flower girls. Also, do not fail to invite the spouses or fiancés of anyone in your wedding party.
- You cannot trim your guest list by inviting some guests to the ceremony only and not to the reception. However, if your ceremony site is limited to a number of guests, you can invite guests to the reception only.
- You must invite guests who have attended a pre-wedding party or shower. You do not have to invite coworkers who gave you an office shower (unless they are close, personal friends).

Suggestions on inviting co-workers:

- If you've decided that you just can't afford to invite all your co-workers due to financial constraints, don't be afraid to tell them. Just let them know that you don't want to hurt their feelings but have decided to invite immediate family only. Don't worry - most people will understand.
- If you've decided not to invite co-workers to the reception, DO NOT invite them to the ceremony only.
- If you've decided to include your co-workers and you work in a small place of business (and are relatively close to all of them!), then invite them all. Don't leave someone out - it may cause tension in the work-place.
- If you work in a large office and only want to invite a few people, make sure you tell the guests that you are inviting not to talk about it. You don't want to make it an awkward situation for other co-workers.
- Not sure whether to invite the big boss? If you have a good relationship with him/her, why not invite him/her? However, you shouldn't feel obligated to invite anyone.

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Guest Book Ideas

TheWeddingOutlet.com

A wedding guest book can be a treasure that will last forever. A guest book is filled with memories of those that shared your wedding day with you.

If you are looking for something different other than the traditional, leather-bound keepsake book, here are a few suggestions:

- Have a blank book on a table in the entranceway and have your guests attach a Polaroid picture of themselves as they arrive. Then your guests can write their greetings next to the picture.
- Place a porcelain platter or vase and an engraving pen on the table and have your guests sign their names as they arrive.
- Have your guests bring a photo of themselves with you (or both of you). They can paste the picture in a memory book and write their comments next to the photo.
- Frame your engagement photo or a special image of the two of you with a large photo matt, then have your guests sign the matt as they arrive. Perfect for hanging up after the big day.
- Have your videographer create an electronic memory "book" for you to enjoy. Your guests will say their comments while your videographer tapes them.
- Have your guests sign a signature scroll.
- Have guests write well wishes on a small piece of paper and place them into a vase or well wisher book.

Receiving Line

The receiving line is a great way to formally greet all your guests. It is also a sure way that you will be able to speak with each guest. The receiving line can be done directly after the ceremony or at the beginning of the reception.

If you decide to do the receiving line after the ceremony, you can have it right outside the ceremony site's doors, such as in the hallway, vestibule or even outside. If you are holding the receiving line at the beginning of the reception, you can have it right before your guests enter the function hall doors, in the lounge or in the lobby.

Traditionally, the bride's parents will line up first in the receiving line. They will be the first to greet the guests. The bride and groom will stand next to them in line, followed by the groom's parents. If you would like to include your attendants, they will follow the groom's parents in line.

Not sure what to say? You can start by introducing your guests to your parents if they haven't met yet. Then make sure that you thank them for coming.

You may choose to forgo the receiving line. If this is the case, you must make sure that you say a few words of thanks at the reception.

***From creating a guest list to decorating the site, find helpful tips and articles to plan the perfect reception*, visit:**
maweddingguide.com/planning/reception/mareception.htm

The Henry Studio

Ceremony

Many couples focus their planning on the reception party and leave the details of their ceremony to their minister or justice of the peace. It's up to you as to how involved you want to be. Sit down and speak with your minister or justice of the peace and give them some ideas as to how you would like to set the tone of your ceremony.

Your ceremony should be meaningful and heartfelt – your love is the reason behind this wonderful celebration.

Obtaining a Marriage License

One of the most important things you'll need to do is to get your wedding license. Every couple getting married in Massachusetts must have a marriage license issued in Massachusetts.

Please note: the laws changed in 2005. You no longer need blood work to apply for a marriage license.

Step 1: Apply for a Marriage License
You apply for your marriage license with any city or town clerk, most will apply at their local town hall. Both of you must be present when applying.

It usually takes 3 business days for the clerk to prepare the license and you should expect to pay a nominal processing fee. (The fee will vary from community to community.) A marriage license is good for 60 days. Therefore, you should apply for your license within 2 months of your wedding date.

Step 2: Return the Signed License
You should give your officiant your marriage license before the wedding ceremony. Many couples will give their officiant the marriage license during the ceremony rehearsal.

After the ceremony has been conducted, your officiant or justice-of-the-peace must complete and sign the original license. They are responsible for returning the license to the clerk that issued it. A few weeks after the wedding, you may pick up a copy of your wedding certificate at the clerk's office.

Special Considerations
If you are divorced and are about to remarry, you must be certain that your divorce is final. You must wait 90 days after your divorce is final before remarrying.

If your officiant is from out of state, they must obtain a Certificate of Authorization from the Massachusetts Secretary of State. Contact the Division of Public Records at (617) 727-2832 for more details.

You must be 18 years or older to get married in the state of Massachusetts.

Need more information?
For more info on obtaining a marriage license, contact your city or town clerk. You may also contact:

Citizen Information Service (CIS)
Secretary of the Commonwealth
One Ashburton Place, Room 1611
Boston, MA 02108-1512
Tel: (617) 727-7030/Toll Free: 1-800-392-6090 (within Mass. only)/TTY: (617) 878-3889
Fax: (617) 742-4528
www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cisidx.htm
E-mail: **cis@sec.state.ma.us**

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Questions to Ask an Officiant/Justice of the Peace

(See appendix for interview worksheet)

Your ceremony will be conducted by a clergy member, Officiant or Justice of the Peace. If possible, select an officiant that knows both of you. Unless the two of you belong to the same parish, this may be difficult to do. Take the time to meet with more than one and select one that makes you feel at ease.

Here are a few questions you may want to ask your officiant:

- How long have you been officiating wedding ceremonies?
- What will you wear to the ceremony?
- May we write our own vows?
- Can you provide a list of traditional vows?
- May we select readings? Do they need to be religious?
- Will there be a rehearsal for the ceremony? If so, when?
- Can we bring our own musicians or vocalists?
- Are there restrictions on wedding attire? (ex. bare shoulders, back, head)
- Are there restrictions on using flash photography?
- Are there locations for the bride and groom to wait for the ceremony to begin?
- Are guests allowed to throw rice? To blow bubbles?

***Find a list of local wedding officiants,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Massachusetts-Justice-Peace.htm

Personalizing the Ceremony

You may opt for the traditional ceremony held in a church or may decide to have a unique event. Couples have been married jumping from a plane or on the top of a mountain, ship, beach, backyard, city hall, etc.

Wherever your ceremony is, you may want to personalize it by including some of these ideas:

- Select readings or quotations that reflect how you feel about one another. These can be taken from the bible, poetry, works of fiction, etc.
- Lighting of a unity candle. This may include two small candles which are lit by bride and groom's parents. The candles are then used by bride and groom to light the larger unity candle.
- Print up a wedding program with a special message and distribute it to guests at the ceremony.
- Remember deceased relatives and friends with a photo or memorial candle.
- The bride hands a flower to each mother and/or to other guests.
- Have a talented friend sing or play an instrument at an appropriate time during the ceremony.
- Consider releasing doves at the end of the ceremony.

Special Touches

We've had some great ideas on special touches for the ceremony sent to us from our readers. If you have ideas you would like to share, email us at **news@maweddingguide.com** - we'd love to share them!

- The bride and groom can face their guests during the ceremony.
- The bride can walk down an aisle runner made up of fresh rose petals.
- Have a Unity Cup. This is when each family fills up its own cup with wine. Then the bride and groom will each pour half of their family cup into one, shared cup. They each take a sip. The shared cup represents their union and the half-filled family cups represent their individuality.
- Have butterflies, balloons or doves released during the ceremony.
- The bride can hand a rose to each guest (if it's a small wedding, because this can be costly!).
- If you're uniting two families together, have a Family Medallion Ceremony.

***Learn more about these Special Touches and others,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/planning/Ceremony/ceremony.htm

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The Wedding Outlet

Wedding Programs

Wedding programs are a nice way to outline the events of your wedding. It will allow your guests to follow along with any unfamiliar rituals that you have decided to include in the ceremony.

The ushers can hand out programs as they are guiding your guests to their seats. Or if you are looking for a way to include children, have them hand to your guests as they arrive. You may also place them on the chairs or in the pews.

There are four parts to a wedding program:

1. Program Title
2. Order of Service
3. Participants
4. Special Note

Program Title
The first section, the Program Title, includes the bride's name, groom's name, date and day, time, ceremony location, city and state.

Order of Service
This section outlines segments such as: prelude, processional, solo, invocation, readings, marriage ceremony, lighting of the unity candle, recessional, etc. You can also include music titles with composer, scripture passages with readers, words for short congregational prayers and any special notations you may have. Usually there is not enough room to include entire songs or readings. If they are not listed in the prayer books, you can print them on the backside of the wedding program.

Participants
The third section lists the participants in the wedding. You can list the participants under separate headings (such as "Maid of Honor", "Best Man", etc.) or you can list everyone under the same heading (such as: "Wedding Participants"). Remember to use proper names. Use titles such as Mrs., Ms. or Miss. Do not use nicknames.

Special Note
In the last section, you can write your special thanks to all your guests. You can include a special thank-you message to your guests who have traveled long distances to be with you on your special day. You can also honor a deceased relative or friend. Instead of a personal message, you can have a special prayer or poem for your guests. This will make a nice keepsake. In this section you can also include any necessary information for your guests (such as information regarding the reception).

You may have your wedding programs printed by the business you ordered your invitations through or you may decide to print your own. Many office supply stores have specialty paper you can or shop on-line bridal accessory sites for a large selection of 'print your own' programs.

Tip: When ordering or making your own wedding program, make sure that you save a few extra copies for yourself. It will make a nice keepsake for your scrapbook.

***Shop on-line for wedding programs*, visit**:
theweddingoutlet.com.
Enter code MAGuide to receive 10% off

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Photography

Bob Goguen Photography

Your wedding photographs will be timeless memories of your wedding day. From getting ready to the last dance, these memories are ones that you will want to share with friends, families - and even future generations!

An experienced wedding photographer should be selected. If you trust this task to an amateur, you may be very disappointed. Ask friends for recommendations and take a look at their wedding albums to get a sense of what you like or dislike about their wedding photography style.

When meeting with a photographer, take the time to review their photography work and make sure you are reviewing the work of the photographer that would actually be at your wedding. Check the compositions and sharpness of the pictures. Are these pictures what you'd like to see in your own wedding album?

Questions to Ask Your Photographer

(See appendix for interview worksheet)

Concerning the wedding photographer:

- How many years have you been taking wedding photos?
- Do you have a backup, in case of an emergency?
- May I have a list of recent customers to call?
- What does the photography package price include?
- Do you have an assistant?
- What will you be wearing?

Concerning Coverage:

- How many hours of coverage will we have?
- How long will it take for posed photos - before the reception begins?
- Are you familiar with both our ceremony and reception sites?

Concerning the Photos:

- What type of camera do you use?
- Can we give you a list of wedding photographs we'd like?
- How many photos will you take?
- When will we get the proofs? Can we view them on-line?
- Can you do retouching? If so, at what charge?
- Do you do any special effects? If so, what?
- How long are the images kept on file?

Concerning Albums:

- What types of albums do you have?
- How long after selecting proofs, can I expect to receive the album?

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Photography Contract

Your best bet for finding a great wedding photographer is by word of mouth or by searching the internet. Ask your friends, and relatives for any referrals. When you search the internet, you'll be able to view a sampling of the photographer's work.

When you've selected a photographer and you're ready to sign the contract, make sure that it includes the following information:

- Number of posed and candid shots
- Number of proofs
- The schedule
- The photographer's cancellation policy
- Whether you get to keep the negatives
- Include the length of time the negatives will be held
- How long will the prices be in effect?
- Do all the reprints have to be ordered at the same time?
- Delivery times
- Rights of ownership and reproduction

Posing for the Camera

Your wedding photographer will capture wedding moments for your wedding album. This will be the ultimate wedding keepsake. The photographs will narrate the story of your wedding, from the moment you put your gown on until you leave for your honeymoon. It will be enjoyed by future generations to come. Therefore, you want to make sure you look your best.

Here are a few tips when posing for the camera:

- The obvious is to be sure to smile. However, you don't want that "stiff" look. Try to remember something funny (a joke or a funny moment you and your significant other had).
- You don't want to look awkward in your photographs. A good way to avoid this is to show some action, such as hugging your Mom, kissing your Dad, laughing and showing some affection.
- Afraid of having a double-chin in your photographs? Be sure to stand tall and hold your head up high (try not to look as though you are bird watching!)
- Be sure to stay out of direct sunlight. The sun will shadow your face (which will make your nose appear bigger and your eyes smaller).
- Be sure that your hair is out of your eyes. Tuck any stray hairs behind your ears.
- If you are afraid that you are going to blink, do NOT widen your eyes. This will give you a creased forehead. Instead, shut your eyes quickly before the photo is taken and then open them.
- Most people have a "good" side and a "bad" side. For obvious reasons, make sure that you point the good side to the camera as much as possible (you'll enjoy your photos more!).
- When actually posing for a photograph, point your body at a forty-five degree angle toward the camera. Then turn your head to face the lens directly. Point the foot closest to the camera directly toward it and point the other foot parallel to it. You don't want your head and body to face the camera straight on. Practice - like we said before, you don't want to look stiff and awkward.

***Find a list of local wedding photographers,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Wedding-Photographer.htm

Suggested Photos

(See appendix for checklist)

Experienced wedding photographers will review a list of standard photos with you to determine which photos you'd like to have of your wedding day. We've listed some wedding photos that most wedding photographers consider to be standard shots.

Prior to the Wedding Ceremony

- Bride alone
- Bride getting ready
- Bride w/ mother
- Bride w/ father
- Bride w/ both parents
- Bride w/ maid of honor
- Bride w/ bridesmaids
- Bride leaving
- Groom alone
- Groom w/ mother
- Groom w/ father
- Groom w/ both parents
- Groom w/ groomsmen putting on boutonnieres
- Groom checking watch
- Groom w/ best man
- Groom w/ groomsmen
- Groom leaving

Wedding Ceremony

- Guests Arriving
- Bride getting out of car
- Groomsmen seating guests
- Parents being seated
- Flower girl & ring bearer
- Groom & Groomsmen at altar
- Bride down aisle
- Bride meeting groom
- Exchanging vows
- Exchanging rings
- The kiss
- Announcement of marriage
- Bride & groom down aisle
- Recessional
- Bride & groom w/ guests
- Bride & groom getting into car
- Bride & groom leaving in car

Before the Reception/Posed Wedding Photos

- Bride & groom
- w/ best man & maid of honor
- w/ wedding party
- w/ bride's parents
- w/ groom's parents
- w/ bride's family
- w/ groom's family
- w/ both families together
- w/ officiant
- w/ children
- Groom w/ groomsmen
- Bride w/ bridesmaids
- Rings
- Bridal bouquet

Wedding Reception

- Getting out of car
- Entering reception
- Receiving line
- First dance
- Bride dancing w/ father
- Groom dancing w/ mother
- Wedding party dancing
- Head table
- Best man's toast
- Cake
- Cake cutting
- Guest tables
- Special guests
- Kissing
- The band
- Throwing bouquet
- Removing garter
- Throwing garter
- Last dance
- Leaving

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Videography

A Dream Picture – Photo & Video

Can you afford *NOT* to squeeze a wedding video into your budget?
Many brides opt to save a few dollars by eliminating the wedding video. If you are still debating whether to hire a videographer, you should seriously consider this: a wedding video allows you and future generations to be able to relive your wedding moments. Plus, during your wedding, there are so many places you'll need to be that you'll miss many of the events of your wedding.

Wedding videos can range from simple to detailed. Some videographers even offer multiple cameras to ensure they capture every detail.

Selecting a Videographer

The price for a video package can range anywhere from $900 to several thousand dollars. The fee will depend upon many factors such as:

- Quality of the equipment
- Number of cameras used
- Amount of editing needed
- Time spent by the videographer at the wedding

Whether you search for a videographer through the yellow pages or on the internet, be sure to check with the Better Business Bureau for any complaints. Of course, the best reference is by word of mouth. Ask friends and relatives. Also, view their demonstration tapes carefully. Look for the following details:

- Be sure the lighting looks natural
- Is the camera held steady?
- Make sure the sound is clear and not muffled
- Be sure that there is not too much background noise
- Be sure that the picture is sharp and clear
- The video should look seamless as it fades from one shot to the next; make sure the video doesn't jump from one subject to the next without finishing the story
- Most importantly, the video should capture all the major events of the wedding

Questions to Ask a Videographer

(See appendix for interview worksheet)

About the Videographer:

- How many years have you been taking wedding videos?
- What will you wear?
- Do you have a backup in case of an emergency?
- May I have a list of recent customers to call?

About the Coverage:

- What does your package include?
- What type of tape do you use?
- How many hours of coverage will we have?
- How many people will be taking video?
- Are you familiar with both our ceremony and reception sites?
- Do you do any special affects? If so, what?
- What type of microphone do you use?
- What type of flash/lighting do you use?

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About the Final Video:

- What type of editing do you provide?
- When will the final video be ready?
- What format will the video be in? How many copies are included in the package?
- How much does it cost for additional copies?
- Will you include video and/or photos we give you? For example, baby photos and current photos, footage of parent's weddings.

Videography Contract

After finding your videographer, be sure to sign a contract. If the videographer you've chosen does not have a contract, you should consider finding another videographer. The contract will protect you and the vendor from any miscommunications and responsibilities.

A videographer's contract should include the following:

- Your wedding date and arrival time.
- The videographer's name.
- In case of emergency, be sure there is an acceptable back-up videographer's name.
- The names and addresses of the locations where the videographer will be videotaping.
- The hours the videographer will be working.
- Number of cameras he/she will have. (Make sure that there will be a backup camera in case of an emergency.)
- Will there be an assistant videographer?
- The hours of footage to be taken.
- Total edited time of the finished video.
- Be sure that they list any special effects or editing features that you agreed upon.
- List overtime rates.
- Cost of additional videos.
- Date the final video will be done.
- Total cost.

***Find a list of local wedding videographers,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Wedding-Videographer.htm

Entertainment

A variety of music styles will be the source of entertainment at your reception. The music you choose will set the tone and atmosphere. You'll need to make the decision on whether you prefer a live band or a DJ. Whichever you choose, make sure you include music that both you and your guests will enjoy.

There are many different styles of music: classical, rock, pop, jazz, rhythm and blues, etc. The music you choose should match the setting. For example: serene background music played during the meal will allow guests to converse and top 40 music will get your guests dancing and in a more festive mood.

Magic Shot Studios

Disc Jockeys

DJs tend to be a less-expensive alternative to live wedding bands. Most DJs will also act as Master of Ceremonies and announce all the events taking place at the reception. DJ packages vary greatly depending on services (lighting, props, etc.), experience, and area. DJ packages begin at $800. Greater Boston DJs and other large cities generally begin at $1,200.

Selecting a DJ

You should hire a DJ at least six to twelve months in advance. If possible, set up an appointment to see them perform live. A disc jockey with a good personality will get your guests up and dancing and participating in events such as the bouquet and garter toss. You want a disc jockey that will make your reception more enjoyable and memorable.

Questions to ask a DJ

(See appendix for interview worksheet)

- How long have you been a DJ? How many weddings have you done?
- Do you have a back up in case of an emergency?
- May I have a list of recent references?
- What does your rate include? How much if wedding goes into overtime?
- Do you provide a written contract?
- What will you wear?
- Will you be Master of Ceremonies and announce special events such as cutting the cake, first dance, etc?
- What is your style? Ie: conservative, interactive, entertainer, etc.
- Do you have a special sound system?
- Do you need linens/table for your equipment?
- Will you take requests from guests?
- Can I provide a requested song list before the wedding?
- Can I provide a "do not play" list?
- Will I be required to provide a meal for you?
- Do you take a break? If yes, how long? Will there be music played during the break?

***Find a list of local disc jockeys,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Wedding-DJ.htm

Live Wedding Bands

You should hire a band as far as 12-18 months in advance. Popular bands will book quickly, especially during wedding season. For a five-piece band, expect to pay from $1,700-$4,500+ for four hours.

Selecting a Wedding Band

Set up an appointment to listen to them live. If you are unable to do so, ask for a demo or video. It's a good idea to get a recommendation but an even better idea to listen to them in person.

Make sure that the band is able to play requests. The band must be able to play a wide variety of music in order to keep your guests entertained. Ask if the bandleader will act as Master of Ceremonies. If so, he'll need a list of attendants and the events with specific songs to be played during them.

Questions to ask a Band

(See appendix for interview worksheet)

About the Band:

- How long has the band been together?
- Do you have a backup, in case of an emergency?
- How long has the band been playing weddings?
- What will the band wear?
- How extensive is your play list? Do you have a playlist?
- Do you have a DVD or video that I may have?
- Have you performed at my reception site?
- May I have a list of recent references?

About the Performance:

- How many hours of coverage? Is there an extra charge if needed longer?
- How many breaks will you take? How long will each break be?
- Will you be able to provide continuous music or taped music during the breaks?
- Will you take requests from guests?
- Can I provide a "do not play" list?
- If you do not know a specific song that I want, will you learn it?
- Will you act as the Master of Ceremonies?
- How much space do you need at the reception?
- Do you need linens/table for your equipment?
- Will I be required to provide a meal for the band?
- Can you offer services for the ceremony? (ie: vocalist or piano music)
- Are there any extra costs not included in your quoted fee?
- What is your payment schedule and cancellation policy?
- Do you offer a contract?

***Find a list of local wedding bands,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Wedding-Band.htm

Musicians

Hiring a musician(s) is a wonderful way to add to the romance of your wedding day. You may want to hire them for your ceremony, cocktail hour or reception. You may want to consider one of the following:

- Bagpiper
- Chamber Music
- Guitarist
- Harpist
- Pianist
- Trombone Player
- Trumpeter

Selecting a Wedding Musician

You'll want to hear the musician(s) perform before hiring. Try to go to a performance or another event to hear them live. Make sure they can play or are willing to learn the pieces you'd like to be played.

Questions to ask a Musician

About the Musician

- How long have you been performing?
- How many weddings have you performed at?
- Do you have a back up in case of emergency?
- What will you wear?
- Do you have a list of songs you play?
- Do you have a list of recommended songs for parts of the ceremony?
- Do you have a DVD or video I may have?
- Have you performed at my ceremony site? my reception site?
- May I have a list of recent references to contact?

About the Performance:

- How many hours of coverage? Is there an extra charge if needed longer?
- Can you play the selections I want? If not, will you learn them?
- How many breaks will you take? How long?
- Will you be able to provide continuous music or taped music during the breaks?
- How much space will you need for the cermeony? for the reception?
- Do you need linens/table for your equipment?
- Are there any extra costs not included in your quoted fee?
- What is your payment schedule and cancellation policy?
- Do you offer a contract?

***Find a list of local wedding musicians,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Musician.htm

Suggested Songs

The following is a list of music suggestions for your wedding reception. We recommend that you create a request list for your disc jockey or band.

Cocktail Hour

- Classical
- Jazz
- Contemporary
- Top 40 (keep it on the light side)

Bridal Party Announcement

- Blues Brothers Intro (Blues Brothers)
- David Letterman Theme (Paul Shaffer)
- Take the "A" Train (Duke Ellington)
- Rock & Roll Part II (Gary Glitter)
- Get Ready For This (Two Unlimited)
- In the Mood (Glenn Miller)
- Peter Gunn Theme (Blues Brothers)
- World Championship (Alan Parsons)

Bride and & Groom

- Spend My Life with You (Eric Benet & Tamia)
- Ribbon in the Sky (Stevie Wonder)
- Back at One (Brian McKnight)
- Can I have this Dance? (Ann Murray)
- The Way You Look Tonight (Frank Sinatra)
- Tonight, I Celebrate My Love (Roberta Flack & Peabo Bryson)
- All My Life (Linda Ronstadt & Aaron Neville)
- When I Saw You (Mariah Carey)
- First Day of My Life (Bright Eyes)
- You & Me (Lifehouse)
- My Baby You (Mark Anthony)
- Your Love Amazes Me (John Berry)
- Lost in the Moment (Big & Rich)
- My Best Friend (Tim McGraw & Faith Hill)
- Truly, Madly, Deeply (Savage Garden)
- I Could Not Ask for More (Edwin McCain)
- You Had Me from Hello (Kenny Chesney)
- Come Away with Me (Norah Jones)
- Everytime I Close My Eyes (Babyface)
- In My Life (The Beatles)
- Destiny (Jim Bickman)
- When You Kiss Me (Shania Twain)
- This I Swear (Nick Lachey)
- I Melt (Rascal Flatts)
- You're Still the One (Shania Twain)
- It's Your Love (Tim McGraw & Faith Hill)
- You are the Love of My Life (Sammy Keshaw)
- To Make You Feel My Love (Garth Brooks)
- Me and You (Kenny Chesney)

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Father/Daughter Dance

- And Then They Do (Trace Adkins)
- I'll Remember (Madonna)
- In My Daughter's Eyes (Martina McBride)
- Daddy's Girl (Red Sovino)
- Dance with My Father (Luther Vandross)
- There You'll Be (Faith Hill)
- A Song for My Daughter (Ray Allaire)
- Can You Feel the Love Tonight? (Elton John)
- You Raise Me Up (Josh Groban)
- Daddy's Little Girl (Michael Bolton)

Mother/Son Dance

- Perfect Fan (Back Street Boys)
- Hero (Mariah Carey)
- A Song for Mama (Boys II Men)
- There You'll Be (Faith Hill)
- I'm Your Angel (R. Kelly & Celine Dion)
- In My Life (Bette Midler)
- I Turn to You (Christina Aguilera)
- You've Got a Friend (James Taylor)
- Greatest Love of All (Whitney Houston)
- What a Wonderful World (Louis Armstrong

Bouquet Toss

- This One Is for the Girls (Martina McBride)
- It's Raining Men (The Weather Girls)
- I Feel Like a Woman (Shania Twain)
- Just a Girl (No Doubt)
- Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend (Marilyn Monroe)
- Another One Bites the Dust (Queen)
- Whoomp There It Is (Tag Team)
- I'm Too Sexy (Right Said Fred)

Bridal Party Announcement

- Blues Brothers Intro (Blues Brothers)
- I want to Grow Old With You (Adam Sandler)
- Ain't that a Kick in the Head (Dean Martin)
- Bittersweet Symphony (The Verve)
- Celebration (Kool n the Gang)
- All You Need is Love (The Beatles)
- At the Beginning (Richard Marx with Donna Lewis)
- You Shoot Me (AC/DC)
- Two Step (Dave Matthews Band)
- I'm Too Sexy (Right Said Fred)

***For a complete song list, including First Dance Suggestions*, visit:**
maweddingguide.com/planning/entertainment/suggestions.htm

Krys Streeter Photography

Invitations

Your invitations will let your guests know just how formal or informal your wedding will be. There are thousands of invitations to choose from. Some things you need to consider are: color, theme, style, wording, how many, etc. Also, will you consider engraving, thermography, or calligraphy? Don't forget the thank you notes and envelopes!

Selecting a Stationer

The best way to choose an invitation specialist is to ask friends and relatives for recommendations. It's a good idea to visit at least three specialists so that you can get a better sense of styles and prices. Here are a few tips when choosing a stationer:

- Ask the stationer for examples of their work.
- If possible, contact other references.
- Get it in writing! Be sure you sign a contract that lists all the details!
- What is the stationer's liability for any printing mistakes?
- Be sure to set a reasonable price for any extra orders you may need.
- Proofread BEFORE you order and also be sure to proofread AFTER you pick up the order.

Stationer's Contract

You've selected your invitation, now it's time to place your order. Every wedding vendor should have a contract. The contract for your wedding invitations should include the following:

- Your name, address, telephone number.
- The name of the vendor and his/her name, address, and telephone number.
- The EXACT wording of the invitation and all enclosures. Don't forget to include all line breaks.
- The paper stock and color, plus the ink color.
- Which font you have decided to use (attach a sample).
- The style, whether it be thermography or engraving.
- If you decide to order other stationery (Thank You’s, etc), list the description and amount.
- Be sure that the contract lists the date that the order will be ready. You want to give yourself ample time to address the invitations and send them out.
- The number of invitations, envelopes and any enclosures should be listed.
- The grand total, the deposit amount, and the balance and date due should also be listed.
- Refund policy.
- Be sure you get the stationer's signature.

Proofreading

When it's time to pick up your invitations, you MUST proofread them very carefully. Bring a friend with you so they can double-check for any errors. Here are a few things you should be sure to proofread:

- Make sure all the names are spelled correctly.
- Be sure the times and dates are correct.
- Check the addresses and directions.
- Be sure there are periods after each abbreviation.
- Make sure the card size, style, color and any designs are correct.
- Check to be sure that all the lines end at the appropriate spaces.
- Be sure all the numbers are spelled out.
- Make sure the words "honour" and "o'clock" are spelled out.
- Here's a tricky one: make sure that the day of the week corresponds with the date.

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Assembling Your Invitations

Here is the proper way to "stuff" the envelopes for your wedding invitations:

- The response card will go in its' own envelope.
- Place tissue paper over the invitation to ensure against any smudging.
- Place the invitation in the ungummed inside envelope. Be sure that the fold-side is down and face-side is toward the flap.
- All other enclosures are placed inside that envelope on top of the invitation.
- Place the inside envelope in the outer mailing envelope.
- Be sure it is face-side toward the flap.

Addressing and Mailing Invitations

Your wedding invitations should be addressed by hand using black or blue ink. Some brides address their invitations using the theme color of the wedding.

- Common titles such as Mr., Mrs., and Ms. can be abbreviated.
- Formal titles such as Doctor, Reverend, and Captain should be written (see below for more)
- If you are sending an invitation to a teenager, be sure to put a title before their name (Miss, Mr.).
- If you are sending an invitation to a guest and their children, do not put the children's names on the outer envelope. Address it to the parents and include the children's names on the inner envelope. Their name should be listed below the parents' names on the inner envelope.
- Be sure to also include the street address and zip codes on the outer envelope. The street name *and state* should be spelled out.

You should mail your invitations six to eight weeks before your wedding. If your wedding is taking place during a busy time of the year, such as Christmas or a three-day weekend, you should mail your invitations ten to twelve weeks before the big day. This will give your guests ample time to plan their holidays and weekends around your wedding day.

Also, if you are having a destination wedding, you should mail your invitations early. A good time would be about ten to twelve weeks before the wedding. You want your guests to be able to make their travel plans in order to attend your wedding. Not only will they have to make travel plans, but they will also have to make sure that they have vacation time off from work.

Formal Title Examples

Minister:
Outer envelope: The Reverend Henry Jones
Inner envelope: The Reverend Jones
(Roman Catholics would use Father)

Rabbi:
Outer envelope: Rabbi John Bachman
Inner envelope: Rabbi Bachman

Lawyer:
Outer envelope: Ms. Pamela Graham, Esq.
Inner envelope: Ms. Graham

Judge:
Outer envelope: The Honorable Michelle Harris
Inner envelope: Judge Harris

Captain:
Outer envelope: Captain James Hook
Inner envelope: Captain Hook

Doctor:
Outer envelope: Joe Smith, M.D. or Doctor Joe Smith
Inner envelope: Dr. Smith

Professor:
Outer envelope: Professor Jill Vill or Jill Vill, Ph.D.
Inner envelope: Prof. Vill

***Find a list of local stationers*, visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Wedding-Invitation.htm

***Find a list of local calligraphers,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/MA-Wedding-Calligraphy.htm

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Florists

Flowers are an important part of any wedding. They help set the tone you've selected for your wedding. They can be used to transform your wedding reception site with their beautiful colors and scents. They may also represent a significant part of your wedding costs.

Selecting a Florist

You want to be sure to select a florist that has experience with weddings. You'll not only be relying on them to provide the perfect flowers for your wedding, but to prepare and deliver them on time.

It's a good idea to view some of their work, whether its photographs of past weddings or going to visit a site that they've prepared. You want to select a florist that listens to you and offers suggestions that are appropriate. You may want to check how many weddings they plan on doing that day.

Who Should Receive Flowers?

Flowers are used in weddings to designate the special people in the couples' lives. Each of your wedding participants, parents/stepparents, grandparents and any other person the couple decides to honor will receive either a boutonniere or a bouquet of flowers.

Bride
The bridal bouquet should be selected based on the style of your wedding dress and your proportions. The bridal bouquet shouldn't overpower you! You'll want to have a picture of your wedding dress with you when you go to your florist.

The most popular flower for the bridal bouquet is the rose. Other popular flowers include: lilies, orchids and stephanotis. Bouquets are held together by two methods: hand wired or inserted into a plastic bouquet holder. Hand wired bouquets are less bulky and more stable.

There are several different styles of bouquets:

- Nosegay/Clutch
- Hand-tied
- Cascade
- Arm Arrangement

Bridesmaids
The bridesmaids bouquets are selected to compliment their dresses and represent the wedding colors. Bridesmaids may also choose to wear fresh flowers in their hair.

Flower Girl
The flower girl usually carries a basket of flowers or rose petals to be sprinkled as she walks down the aisle. The rose petals don't have to be real – you can use silk petals if you'd rather.

Groom
The groom usually wears a boutonniere or a spray from the bridal bouquet. The boutonniere may be a rose, stephanotis or lily of the valley. The boutonniere is always worn on the LEFT lapel. You may want to ask your florist to pin the boutonnieres to ensure that they are placed correctly and will stay on throughout the day.

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Ushers
The usher's boutonniere is usually a carnation or rose that matches the colors of the bridesmaids' dresses.

Parents
The mothers of both the bride and groom usually receive a corsage that compliments their dress. The corsage may either be designed to pin on their dress or be worn on the wrist. This would depend on the style of the dress.

The fathers of both the bride and groom usually receive boutonnieres that are different from those of the ushers.

Grandparents
Traditionally, grandparents receive corsages and boutonnieres.

Other Special Guests
You may have other guests that you want to acknowledge as well. In the case of a second marriage, you may have children that you want to make feel special. This may easily be done with a corsage, boutonniere or even a long-stemmed rose.

You should also consider flowers for your officiant or musicians, or any special assistants, such as the guest book or gift attendant.

Questions to ask a Florist

(See appendix for interview worksheet)

- Do you specialize in weddings?
- How long have you been in business? How long have you been doing wedding flowers?
- Do you provide a written contract?
- May you have a list of recent wedding customers?
- Are you familiar with the ceremony and reception sites?
- Where and when will the flowers be delivered? Is there an extra charge?
- How will the bouquets be assembled?
- Can you see samples of your floral designer's work? Be sure to see work from the floral designer that will be working on your wedding.
- How many weddings will the florist do on that day - or even that weekend? You want to be sure that they spend the time on your floral arrangements without feeling rushed.
- What flowers will be in season when my wedding takes place?
- If you have a specific budget for your flowers, ask the florist how you can get the most for your money.
- What is the current trend in wedding bouquets? Is it something you're interested in or would you rather a more traditional bouquet?
- If you are looking for arches, trellises, vases, potted plants, can they rent them to you? Or do you have to go to a rental agency?
- If you would like to preserve your bouquet after the wedding, can she do it? If so, how?

***Find a list of local wedding florists,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Florist.htm

Popular Wedding Flowers

Contributing editor: Jeri Solomon, Owner,
Jeri Solomon Floral Designs, jerifloraldesign.com

Some brides select their wedding flowers by what they symbolize. Below is a list of the most popular wedding flowers, when they are in season, brief description and their meanings.

Calla Lily: Graceful, trumpet shaped flowers with elegant, sleek, light green stems. The full sized variety comes in white and green. The miniature variety comes in a variety of colors such as white, shades of yellow, orange, pink, red and purple. Best used in bouquets, boutonnieres and centerpieces.
In season: Miniature available year round. The large white are best October through May.
Meaning: Magnificent beauty

Carnation: These ruffle-edged, spice scented flowers come in a standard and miniature variety. Their colors range the entire spectrum with the exception of blue. Though once considered common, they are making a comeback in style, especially when they are massed together for a burst of color. Best used in bouquets, boutonnieres and arrangements
In season: Year round
Meaning: Love, devotion

Chrysanthemum: Mums come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors. The "button poms" can be a small as a nickel while "football mum" are as large as a softball (not quite as big as a football!) Like the carnation, the mum has experienced a revival of sorts. It is a great flower for autumn weddings used in a large quantity for splashes of color. Best used in bouquets and arrangements.
In season: Year round
Meaning: Wealth, abundance, truth

Delphinium: Delphinium are tall flowers with small blossoms rising up the stem. This flower comes in its standard variety in a deep cobalt blue, light periwinkle blue and white. The impressive hybrid varieties are much taller and come in shades of blue, lavender, purple and white. Best used in arrangements and bouquets.
In season: Year round, Best in summer
Meaning: Swiftness, lightness

Gardenia: This round, white flower is a classic for weddings. It has a very sweet smell and is used for bouquets, corsages and as an elegant accent for garlands and topiary trees.
In season: Year round
Meaning: Grace

Gerbera Daisy: This happy, daisy-like flower comes in a standard size (4" in diameter) and miniature size (2" in diameter). Gerbera come in shades of red, pink, orange, peach, yellow and white. Best used in bouquets and arrangements.
In season: Year round
Meaning: Beauty

Ivy: This trailing vine is a classic foliage used for weddings. Long tendrils can be used in arrangements and centerpieces and single leaves can be used to accent boutonnieres, corsages and bouquets.
In season: Year round
Meaning: Fidelity, friendship, marriage

Lily: This is a large, impressive, star-shaped flower. Each stem can have two to five blossoms. The different varieties range in size from 4” to 8” in diameter. The color selection include: shades of pink, yellow, orange and white. Best used in bouquets and arrangements.
In season: Year round
Meaning: Majesty, truth, honor

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Lily of the Valley: This is a classic and traditional flower for weddings. Its' small, bell-shaped blossoms grow along a delicate arching stem. It comes in white and very rarely blush-pink and has a gentle sweet fragrance. Best used in bouquets and small arrangements.
In season: May. Available year round, but very expensive.
Meaning: Happiness

Orchid: This flower can be found in many varieties. Most orchids will have a number of blossoms on a single stem. The size of the blossom can be as small as half an inch or as large as 5" in diameter. The color spectrum is as varied as the size and shape of this romantic, tropical flower. Colors include white, pink, yellow, orange, red, green, purple and lavender. Can be used in large arrangements, centerpieces and personal flowers.
In season: Year round
Meaning: Love, beauty

Rose: The rose is one of the most versatile flowers because of its variety of sizes, shapes and colors. This is a traditional wedding flower used in full bloom or buds. It can be used for large arrangements, centerpieces and personal flowers.
In season: Year round
Meaning: Love, joy, beauty

Stephanotis: This is also a traditional bridal flower. They are star-shaped blossoms that come only in pure white and have a subtle jasmine-like fragrance. Best used in personal flowers such as bouquets, boutonnieres and corsages.
In season: Year round
Meaning: Marital happiness

Stock: This tall flower has a multitude of ruffled blossoms arranged vertically on the stem. It has a light spicy fragrance and comes in shades of white, yellow, pink, red, purple and peach. Best used as in arrangements and bouquets.
In season: Year round. Best in summer
Meaning: Lasting beauty

Sweet Pea: This small delicate flower has three or four blossoms arranged vertically on a thin stem. It has a soft appearance and fragrance and comes in shades of white, pink, purple, peach and cream. Best used in small arrangements and bouquets.
In season: Late spring and early summer.
Meaning: Lasting pleasure

Tulip: This simple sleek flower comes in several sizes and varieties. They come in every color of the rainbow except blue. Best used in arrangements and bouquets.
In season: November through May
Meaning: Love, passion

Throwing the Bouquet...or Not

Nowadays, it seems as though many brides are no longer opting to throw the bouquet, instead they prefer to do something special and unique with the bouquet.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Present the bouquet to a special friend or relative (such as your maid of honor, grandparents, Godparents).
- Have your florist make up a bouquet of individual stems tied up with ribbon and give each single woman a flower.

Traditionally, the bride throws a replica of her bouquet. She does not throw the bouquet that she walked down the aisle with. Most brides like to preserve their bouquets.

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Wedding Cake

Next to the bride and groom, the cake is the showpiece for the wedding. Although most cakes still have white frosting, the actual flavors and shapes vary greatly. Just about any flavor cake may be used - carrot, chocolate, lemon, etc.

The traditional wedding cake is round and consists of three tiers, which may be set on top of each other or separated by columns. Some bakers can prepare cakes in special shapes, such as squares, rectangles, octagons, etc. Or how about cupcakes layered into the shape of a cake? If you're looking for a unique and special shape, verify that the baker has done something like this before and be sure to view his portfolio.

Cake decorations may consist of fresh flowers or greenery, ribbons, edible leaves, flowers shaped from icing or molded sugar decorations. The cost of the cake largely depends on the labor required, the more elaborate the decorations, the costlier the cake. You may elect to use a cake topper. Traditionally this is a bride and groom figurine, but there are many other options.

Daniel Doke Photography

Selecting a Baker

Once again, check with friends for recommendations. When you visit a wedding cake bakery, be sure to taste test the type of cake you are interested in. The baker should have pictures of cakes they have done so that you may select a style you like.

If you'd like to save the top layer for your first anniversary, be sure to let the baker know this up front. Since a frozen cake may not be tasty, many couples have the baker prepare a fresh cake on their first anniversary.

Questions to ask a Baker

(See appendix for interview worksheet)

- How long have you been baking wedding cakes?
- May I see photos/portfolio of cakes you have done?
- When will the cake be made? (often it can take a 3-5 days to prepare a cake depending on how elaborate the design).
- Will the cake be fresh or frozen ahead of time?
- What flavors do you offer?
- What fillings do you offer?
- Do you have a specialty cake?
- Do you create custom cakes or are there set designs to choose from?
- Where will the cake be assembled?
- How do you charge (by the slice?) and what are the fees involved?
- How will the cake be delivered? Is there an extra fee?
- Do you rent accessories, such as knife/server, topper, fountain, stands, etc)? Fees involved?
- Do you offer fresh flowers for the topper? If yes, do you provide flowers or do I need to coordinate with my florist?
- Do you have taste-testing appointments? When may I taste the flavors you offer?
- Do you have references?

***Find a list of local wedding cake bakers*, visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Massachusetts-Wedding-Cake.htm

Bobbie Bush Photography

Wedding Transportation

The type of transportation you select will add to the overall atmosphere of your wedding. Not to mention, the ease of the day as you are transported from one location to the next in your gown! Imagine pulling up in a shiny white or black limousine. All eyes will be on you.

Looking for something other than the traditional limousine? How about a horse and carriage, trolley or Rolls Royce?

Types of Transportation

Depending on the location of the ceremony and reception, you may need to arrange for transportation. The type of transportation you select will add to the overall atmosphere of your wedding. Imagine walking down the aisle as man and wife and stepping into a Rolls Royce or Horse 'n Buggy! Choose the transportation that best suits your budget and style.

Here are some options to consider:

Limousines
Limousines are available in many different sizes. You may want to rent a limousine to accommodate the entire wedding party or just the bride and groom. Gone are the days when you have to choose a white limo – how about a shiny black one?

Horse & Carriage
A horse and carriage provide a dramatic and romantic way to travel from the ceremony to the reception. You'll feel like Cinderella!

Vans /Luxury Bus
If you have many guests from out of town, you may want to consider renting a van or luxury bus to transport guests from and to their hotel. This is especially helpful if you expect your guests to consume alcohol!

***Find a list of local transportation companies,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/mawedding/Boston-Limousine.htm

Honeymoon

Captivation Photo Studio

After the hustle and bustle of planning your dream wedding, you'll be ready for a long over due vacation to de-stress – not to mention celebrate your marriage to one another. Wedding etiquette states that traditionally the groom handles all the honeymoon details, from airfare to destination. However, nowadays most brides and grooms plan their honeymoon together.

General Information for Planning Your Honeymoon

For the best rates, you should book your honeymoon at least six to eight months in advance. If you know you will be traveling to a destination during their peak season, it is a good idea to make reservations as soon as you have the wedding date set. Traveling during off-season can save up to 50%, plus it will be quieter and less crowded.

The average honeymoon costs between $4,000 and $7,000. Before you decide where you to go, you should create a budget. Creating a budget will help you determine how much you can afford to spend.

After determining your budget, look through travel magazines, search the internet, go to the library or go to your favorite bookstore and check out the travel section. Do you want to be adventurous or would you rather kick back and relax on the beach?

After narrowing down your choices, go to a travel agent and get all the facts and details. A travel agent will save you money, time and a lot of aggravation because they have instant access to all the necessary information. Go to a travel agent that has experience in personal and vacation travel as opposed to business travel. A good agent will take the time to meet with you and explore all your options. They should also be able to give you advice regarding currency exchanges, legal requirements and a list of attractions to see and do. Ask them about any honeymoon packages or all-inclusive packages. They may seem expensive up front but they may save you on the cost of meals and activities.

Remember to splurge a little. Get a room with a spectacular view, take a helicopter ride, go to a special show or an elegant restaurant. This is a once-in-a-lifetime trip - relax, enjoy and remember it always!

Tipping on Your Honeymoon

The following is a list of who, when and how much to tip while you're on your honeymoon:

- **Taxi Drivers:** You should tip a taxi driver 15% of the cab's fare. If he puts your luggage in the trunk, you should include an extra $1-$2.
- **Sky Caps:** A sky cap is the person who takes your luggage from the curbside and brings it to the appropriate baggage cart. They prevent you from having to stand in the long line at the airport so you can check in your baggage. Tip $1 per bag if you check-in curbside; $2 per bag if skycap takes bags to check-in counter.
- **Bellboys:** $1 per bag – but a minimum of $2. IE: $2 for 1 bag; $2 for 2 bags; $3 for 3 bags, etc.
- **Chambermaid:** $2 per day, more if it was exceptional service.
- **Cruise Personnel:** You can ask your travel agent for the guidelines on. However, most cruise lines will inform you of the appropriate tip amount. The cabin steward and table steward usually receive about $5.00 each per day. You can also tip other cruise personnel such as the dining room captain, deck captain, and recreation director.

Just remember that tipping is paid to people who give you good service. If you feel that you received poor service, then complain to the management and tip accordingly.

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Honeymoon Budget

Use the following chart to help determine your honeymoon budget.

Transportation		
Air, ship, rail, car	$	
Airport limo	$	
Gas	$	
Tips	$	
Taxes for Departure	$	
Tolls	$	
Taxi	$	
Rental car	$	
Total Transportation		*$*
Accommodations		
Daily rate x # of days	$	
Daily surcharges & taxes x # of days	$	
Tips & gratuities	$	
Total Accommodations		*$*
Food		
Breakfast x # of days	$	
Lunch x # of days	$	
Dinner x # of days	$	
Snacks and beverages x # of days	$	
Total Food		*$*
Extras		
Shopping	$	
Tours	$	
Theater	$	
Rentals (Sports)	$	
Total Extra		*$*
Total Expenses (add columns in far right)		$
Add 10% to total for unexpected expenses (Total Expenses x .10)		$
Grand Total		**$**

Packing

Here is a list of some of the more essential items you will need to bring with you on your honeymoon:

- Driver's license / Passport
- Sunblock
- Sunglasses
- Camera
- Any prescription medicine, ie: birth control
- Cash or traveler's checks, bring one credit card and a cash card
- Toothbrush
- Books
- If you're going to a foreign country, don't forget a voltage converter
- List of addresses so you can send your friends and relatives postcards!
- Stamps

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Appendix

Contributing Photographers

Front Page:
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Wedding Tasks, Page 4:
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Wedding Costs, Page 9:
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Bridal Shows, Page 12:
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Hiring a Consultant, Page 13:
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Bride's Attire, Page 14:
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Beauty & The Bride, Page 18:
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Videography, Page 34:
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Invitations, Page 41:
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Honeymoon, Page 49:
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Interview Worksheets

To assist you in asking the right questions to each of the wedding professionals you interview, we have compiled worksheets that can be printed and brought with you to the interview. Print or copy each worksheet to take with you on an interview.

- Caterers
- Photographers
- Videographers
- Disc Jockeys
- Bands
- Musicians
- Florist
- Officiants/Justice of the Peace
- Wedding Cake/Baker

***Find worksheets on-line,* visit:**
maweddingguide.com/features/index.htm