



STYLISH WEDDINGS for LESS

HOW TO PLAN
YOUR DREAM WEDDING
ON A BUDGET

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A brunch will be less costly than a lunch at your chosen venue, and you'll save on liquor costs, too. And guests who have to travel a distance will be eternally grateful that they don't have to book another hotel night! Sunrise ceremony anyone? (It's sometimes considered a mischievous way to cut down a guest list.) If you and your fiancé are early risers, opt for a wedding breakfast (a favorite of British royals), which will run about the same or be slightly less expensive than a brunch. And with a breakfast fête, you can head to your honeymoon destination that much sooner.

- * **Sweet-talk.** The all-dessert reception is basically an update of the Champagne and cake celebration that once was the standard postnuptial party. Generally scheduled between 3 and 5 p.m., with Champagne and signature cocktails.
- * **Have a cocktail reception.** Typically held between 5 and 7 p.m., the hors d'oeuvres and drinks party is best scheduled for a non-workday, so guests can arrive in time.



Left: Trout caviar on a brioche star by Mary Cleaver of The Cleaver Company.

- * **Ask about the size of the fleet.** If it's small (and they contract out for additional cars from other vendors), find out how they'll guarantee you'll get the exact car you want for your wedding day.
- * **Do due diligence.** Insist on seeing the car. How new is it? What's the interior like? If you can, meet the driver. What will his attire be? What's his track record when it comes to being on time?
- * **Find out how often the cars are cleaned and waxed.**
- * **Get the overtime policy spelled out in detail.** The same for the tip—is the 15%-20% gratuity added to the final bill, or is a cash gratuity preferred (or expected)?
- * **No detail is too small to have in writing:** the car model, condition, condition of the interior, driver's attire, cleanliness, promptness, etc. Specify exact pickup times and that you won't be paying overtime if the driver shows up an hour earlier than booked.
- * **Have a detailed call sheet** if you're hiring a number of cars for your wedding. Regardless of the number, reconfirm a week before, then again several days or the day before the wedding.

OTHER COST-SAVING OPTIONS

- * **Rent a luxury sedan from a car rental company** and have a friend or family member drive it to the ceremony, reception, airport, etc. (Someone willing to be the designated driver and forgo alcohol at the reception.)
- * **Check in with antique and classic car groups** and associations to see if you can rent a fabulous vintage car. The fees could be quite reasonable.







The BIG PICTURE

Most wedding planners will tell you that photography is probably not the best area in which to cut corners. Photographers, of course, will tell you this, too! The reasoning is pretty fail-proof: Once-in-a-lifetime moments are just that, and who wants a blurry photo as you exchange your first just-married kiss, or worse, no photo documentation of it at all?

Photography averages 7% to 10% (some estimates go as high as 15%) of an overall wedding budget, with beginning packages starting at \$1,000, an entire day's booking at about \$3,000. For full coverage, expect a photographer to shoot about 2,000 pictures, from which he or she selects the 400 to 500 you then choose from. Whatever you decide to spend, here's how to maximize your precious photo dollars.

Destination beach wedding photography

Chris Mann, photographer at of Tropical Imaging Turks and Caicos (tropicalimaging.com), a photography studio based in Providenciales, Turks and Caicos, provides some detailed advice.

- * **Know your beach.** Before you finalize plans, find out as much as you can about a beach's location: the direction it faces, the sand composition, likely traffic and what surrounds it. A beach that is sunlit in the afternoon in January may be shaded in June.
- ◆ **Seek out a secluded or relatively secluded beach.** The beach nearest your hotel might not be the best option (too many well-wishing but nosy passersby).
- ◆ **Check out, or have someone report back to you about, the beach's sand quality.** Some Caribbean islands have beaches made of a black volcanic grit rather than soft white sand.
- ◆ **After high tide, does the beach accumulate seaweed** or any other flotsam? If so, make plans to have the beach swept and raked before your wedding.
- ◆ **Which direction does the beach face?** Before you select your ceremony site, make sure you won't have to look directly into the sun as it sets, otherwise there'll be a lot of squinting as you exchange your "I Do"s.
- ◆ **When's high tide?** No need to have your guests sitting unexpectedly in ankle-deep water.
- * **If the sun doesn't set over the ocean,** the effective sunset time will be up to half an hour earlier.
- * **Take note of whether and when the sun slips behind your hotel** or other nearby buildings, even a cluster of trees, once it begins to set, and determine how that will impact the light at your beachside ceremony.
- * **Know the exact sunset time.** The most popular time of day for a beach wedding is about an hour before sunset—the light is wonderful and the temperature is more comfortable than earlier in the day.
- * **Don't start your ceremony at sunset**—any delays in actual start time might have you exchanging vows in the dark. Sometimes Jewish couples will opt for a sunset start time in accordance with their faith, but they usually arrange for portrait photos to be taken before the ceremony, or on another day.

