



The Official Complete Do It Yourself Weddings Guide

**Full of information to save money and
make your wedding more personal.**

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Put together by Mary Redfoot Harnetiaux

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INTRODUCTION

He's popped the question. The ring is on your finger. Now comes the stressful part. **You want to throw the wedding of your dreams, but you're not Donald Trump's kid. What do you do?**



Statistics say the average wedding costs \$20,000. Most young girls dream of the fairytale wedding: long white gown, 8 bridesmaids, a sit-down dinner, the band everyone dances to.

Many brides have been dreaming about their wedding day since childhood. These dreams come with an expensive price tag and the realization of their fairytale day may be distant. Although weddings are very costly today, your dream day can happen. I am going to share some tips to cut corners and save money without making huge sacrifices.

By taking the time to plan and investigate, you will be amazed at the amount of money that you save.

Would you arrive at an interview for your dream job without prior preparation? No, you would not and that is why preparation and research will make your wedding a success without re-mortgaging the house!



It's only natural to want the Cinderella fantasy wedding, complete with ice sculptures, a heavenly cake, and thousands of guests who've flown in from around the world to enjoy the accompanying dinner. It's only human to cry at the bill that this dream can rack up.

Costs can add up quickly. Factor in the meal, the liquor, the music, the dress, the flowers, the photographer, the decorations and the dream wedding can seem way out of your league. But it doesn't have to be.

How can the average person have a beautiful wedding with all the bells and whistles on a working person's salary? Perhaps the three letters/words that say it best are – **DIY (do it yourself!)**

Spending your life savings on your big day is crazy. You can have elegant, beautiful weddings without breaking the bank.

Having a cheap wedding doesn't mean giving up style or sentimentality. It means using your imagination, using your own hands or the help of friends and family. Ask anyone you know to help out. Almost everyone will be happy to contribute to your big day.

This book will give you the best tips and tricks to have a truly memorable, beautiful wedding day. No one will know that your budget equals the grocery bill of a family of 4. They'll be oblivious as they toast the new couple and enjoy a party that puts all other party's to shame!

We'll explore ways to save on all aspects of your wedding. Don't think you have to give up anything because it can all be covered. All it takes is the cooperation of your family and friends coupled with a little positive self-talk and perseverance.

Throughout this book, I will tell you what we did to save money and still have an amazing wedding/reception. Hopefully, you can gain some insight into a dream event for not a lot of money – just like we had!

Let us show you how to throw your dream wedding on a shoestring budget!



GETTING STARTED

There's so much to do, it can be mind-numbing. Don't worry. I planned and held my first wedding in two months and my second wedding in three months. If you have the luxury of a year or more, feel lucky!



We'll provide you with a brides budget wedding planner at the end of this book to help plan your dream wedding. You may want to invest in a cheap folder to keep all of your notes in order. Print out the checklists at the end of this book and keep them in that folder along with any receipts and/or quotes that you get!

You need to decide who will pay for the wedding. The typical wedding planner dictates that the bride's parents pay for the wedding. Today weddings have outgrown that tradition. It should be discussed to avoid any problems on down the line.

My second husband and I both have two sets of parent. We had been living together for 8 years, but were ill equipped to throw our own wedding. We could contribute, sure, but to throw the whole shin-dig would be out of our realm. We asked each parent-couple to contribute \$500 and they all agreed wholeheartedly. **That gave us a budget of \$2,000 which was plenty!**

We're assuming you want a traditional ceremony as opposed to a "theme" wedding. That information alone could compose a whole other e-book. The first decisions to be made include: the date, your attendants, and where the reception will be held.

Normally, couples tie the knot on a Saturday. If you really want to save some cash, consider having your ceremony on a Thursday or Friday. How about having a Sunday service on a holiday weekend? You'll find that there are many more open dates on these days and you'll ultimately realize more savings by booking on these less traditional time frames. **Many reception locations will offer a discount for an off day. If they don't offer it, ask for it.**

Also, you may want to consider an early marriage and an early reception. An 11:00 marriage with a reception immediately following can realize great savings as most guests will have already had lunch before your ceremony and the reception will most likely be over by dinner, so all you'll have to provide is some light finger foods to tide over those rumbling tummies!

Additional savings may be realized by having your wedding in the months of November through April. These months are less busy for most wedding related services and locations. Again, ask for a discount for being off-season.

You need to decide how many attendants you will have so you can bestow the honor on them early enough! They can save the date and help you plan! Traditionally, the bridesmaids are responsible for their own wedding attire, but the bride usually has the final say on what they wear. Be mindful of your attendants' financial situation and don't choose that \$500 satin chiffon number.



Remember, you're trying to throw a wedding on a budget. Let them save some cash as well! We'll have some suggestions later on in this book for attendant attire, so keep that in the back of your mind!

Where your reception will be held is another huge decision that has to be made early on in the wedding planning stage. If you want to opt for a traditional reception hall, you'll have to book early to be sure you can get the venue of your choice.

If you or someone in your family is the member of a benevolent association (The Elks, The Moose, The American Legion), consider these as viable options. They often give discounts to members and you will probably have access to a huge area for your wedding reception as opposed to Aunt Emily's backyard! Just remember to book early!



With my first wedding, we married on a Saturday and held our reception in the church

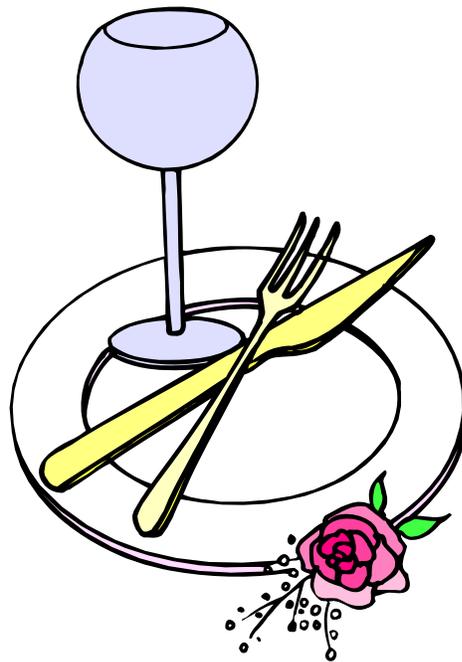
parish hall. It was a Catholic church and they graciously allowed us the ultimate leniency with liquor, food, etc. Since we were members of the church, we only paid \$50 to rent it for the afternoon.

My second husband and I chose to be married on a Saturday at our local church and held the reception at the local American Legion where both my (future) husband and my father were members. We saved a ton by booking the Legion the day after my husband and I decided to marry. Plus, we saved on the headache of trying to find a reception hall!

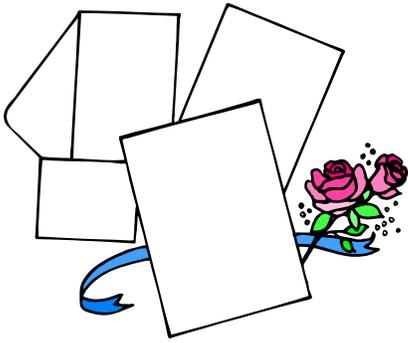
We'll have much more on the dream reception later in this book, but remember to book early. Having that out of the way will free up more of your time to concentrate on the little details that can mean so much!

You can also look to find a free place to hold your reception such as a friend's home, a church's reception hall, or even the local fire department's reception hall! You could look into a local park, art gallery, and even your own home.

You'll need to start on a guest list as soon as possible and begin thinking about invitations.



YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED...



Ideally, invitations should be mailed out 6-8 weeks before the big day to give guests time to make arrangements to attend and RSVP back to you.

The first step is to get organized. Remember when we suggested a folder earlier? This is where it comes in especially handy! Begin by making a list of the people you just can't stand to get married without them there. This will probably be mostly relatives and close friends. **Ask your parents and the groom's parents to provide you with a list of who they would like to invite. Make sure you have accurate addresses for your guests.**

One caution here: don't think you HAVE to invite everyone you know. If you haven't talked to your high school lab partner since graduation, he or she probably doesn't need to be invited. And don't get all caught up in possibly offending someone by not inviting them to your wedding.

Often, people get sick of attending weddings for people they barely know. Unless you talk to them every day, chances are pretty good that they won't give it a second thought when your invitation doesn't arrive. Remember, you're trying to save some money on your big day.

Once you have your guest list, you'll have an idea of how many invitations you'll need. Next, you'll need to pick a design.

Wedding invitations shouldn't be a big expense for you. Making your own can save money and still give a nice invite. Your invitation may be the first impression some of your guests will have. Make sure it has a neat, clean appearance. You won't have to spend a lot on them? Remember, we're trying to save money here!

The obvious thing to do with your invites is to create them yourself on your personal computer. Make beautiful invitations that are ALL you! The

back of this book has a recommendation if you don't know how to make your own.

You can buy heavy card stock at any office supply or discount store. Consider some pre-printed stationery which is also available at most office supply stores.

Not really hyped up on using up all your printer's ink on your wedding invitations? Take them to a specialized copy shop or office supply store. They can usually copy onto whatever paper you want (heavy card stock, pre-printed, etc.) and in color if you choose.

You could also print out simple text of your invitation then use rubber stamps or embossing powder to decorate them. Keep in mind, though, the number of invitations you'll need to embellish. If you're looking at a few hundred, you could be up nights just decorating them!

The traditional practice for wedding invitations is to put the invitation inside an envelope and then place that envelope inside another envelope. Why bother? One envelope is plenty and you'll only need one stamp to mail if you use one.

If you're doing your own invitations, check with some small local print shops for leftover envelopes they might have. You can buy these a hugely discounted price. Don't get freaked out if you have several different sizes or styles. How many people are going to ask each other at your wedding what size envelope their invitation came in?

If you need to have RSVP's, consider putting it on a small postal size card. That way you eliminate an envelope and it adds to the convenience for your guests. All they have to do is fill it out and drop it in the mailbox. Of course, you'll have to provide the stamp for this card.

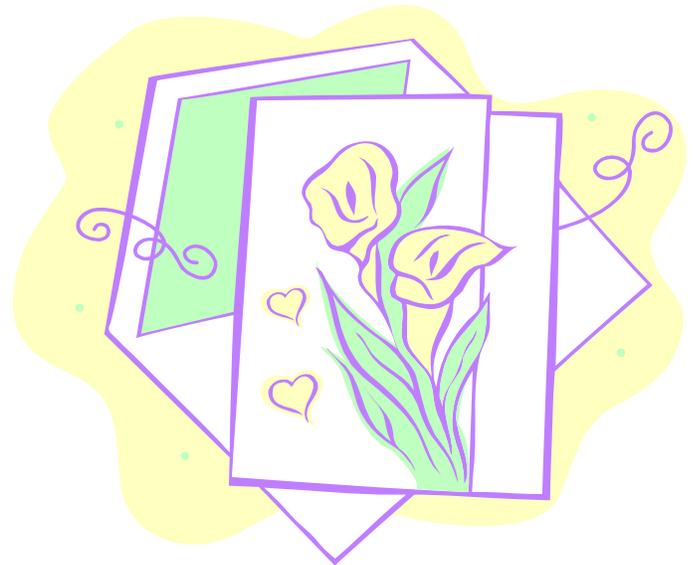
Consider also printing reception information directly on the invitation itself. For an RSVP, provide a phone number and/or e-mail address for guests to respond to. Not only will this save you on postage, you'll have all the information right there for your guests to refer to before the big day instead of them having to save a separate reception card.

Either hand address these, or custom address them to match your invitation. You can get information about calligraphy online or just use your best handwriting! I don't like labels on invitations.

Some brides don't want the hassle of do-it-yourself invitations. We happened to have a friend who sold wedding invitations as a side business at an incredible cheap rate and she offered up a discounted rate as a wedding gift. We ended up with 300 invitations for just \$90. Not everyone can be that lucky, however. Check out places online for the most savings.

Finally, when it comes to wedding invitations, one of your largest expenses is going to be the postage. You really have no control over that unless you're the Postmaster General and even then, I doubt it!

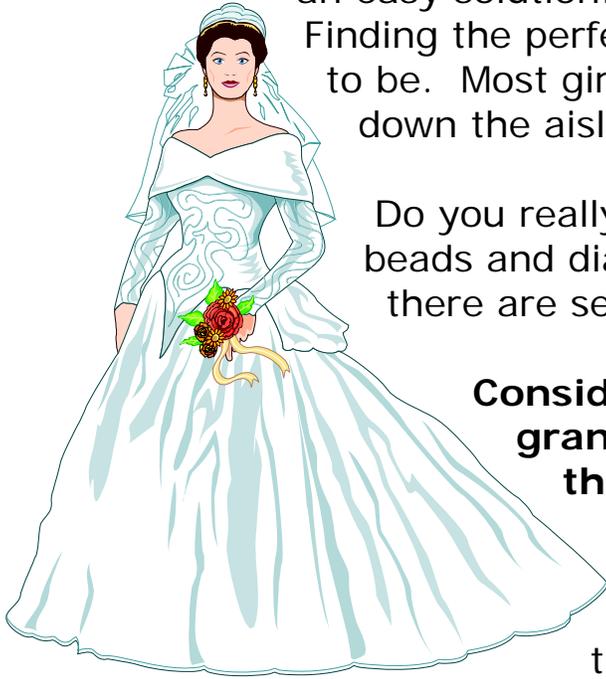
You may want to hand deliver some invitations to save on postage. I know I would prefer to have the bride or groom personally hand me their invitation. It tells me I'm special to them and I know it's saving them the cost of a stamp! Don't drive all over though, gas is not cheap!



So what's next? The bride, of course! Finding the perfect gown can be a long and tedious procedure. Read on for tips to save money while finding the most beautiful dress for you to say "I Do" in!

WHAT TO WEAR, WHAT TO WEAR?

Cinderella's princess gown was tailored by mice. In fairytales, that's an easy solution! In real life, it's much more daunting! Finding the perfect gown is very important to every bride to be. Most girls want to feel like a princess as they walk down the aisle to their prince charming.



Do you really need a hand-made wedding dress with beads and diamantes? This is where the big cost is and there are several options in cutting the cost

Consider wearing your mother or grandmother's wedding gown – assuming they still have them. Imagine the pride on their faces as they watch you stroll down the aisle toward your future husband wearing the very gown they wore doing the same thing?

Think that gown is a bit out of date? If you don't like the style, consider hiring a seamstress to update the cut a bit. You can often find a seamstress or tailor for around \$100 – well less than the cost of a new, off the rack wedding gown!

Why not opt for a second-hand wedding dress? It's probably only been worn once anyway and you can get a once expensive dress for half the price. Check out consignment shops or thrift stores to see what they have to offer. Better yet, check out ebay.com. Again, if you can get a great deal on a gown and only need some alterations, a seamstress will be only a fraction of the cost to buy the gown outright.

Consider buying an evening gown/cocktail dress from a department store. Look around prom season. These days, many prom dresses can look like wedding gowns. A lot of specialty shops will run specials prior to prom hoping to cull their inventory. You can come across a great deal on a beautiful dress and look like a prom queen in the process!

For my second marriage, this is what I did. It wasn't prom season, but homecoming season. I found the most gorgeous dress off the rack that fit me like a dream. They wanted to get rid of it and I managed to talk the owner into discounting it 40%!

You may want to look around for closing out sales or liquidation sales at bridal shops in your area. One word of caution: don't drive the equivalent of halfway across the country just to find a gown. With my first wedding, they were having a going out of business sale at the local bridal shop. I found a stunning gown that retailed for \$800 for a mere \$100 just because it was two days before they closed their doors!

Another option is to rent your wedding gown. When my brother got married, his wife rented her gown. It was a stunning number that retailed for over \$3,500. She rented it for \$75. Sure, she couldn't keep it, but considering that my first wedding gown is still in the vacuum sealed box untouched for over 20 years, who really cares? I doubt my daughter will want to wear it, although I will certainly steer her toward this option – with a seamstress on stand-by, of course!

Consider shopping online at a discount wedding store or even e-bay. You won't get the pampering you do at a bridal shop, but you can save up to 40% by going this route! You can have the dress altered locally if it doesn't fit just right.

Finally, you can realize incredible savings on your dream gown by picking one out and asking a local seamstress to copy the design. This probably won't be the most cost-cutting measure, but you can have a designer gown for about half the cost you would pay directly from the designer. If you find a good seamstress, they should be able to copy the design for a significant savings.

What would be even better than that? If you or someone you know sews! Pick out a pattern at the local discount store, buy the fabric and notions, and make the dress your own, for a fraction of the cost!

What about the veil? Many brides these days eschew the traditional veil over the face in favor of a more contemporary design. That's fine and even beautiful. It's all a matter of preference! But don't fall for the inflated prices of a handmade veil at the local bridal shop.

I splurged on my first wedding for a to-die-for long beaded veil with a Juliet cap that cost more than my dress. It was a gift from my grandmother, so I didn't feel guilty. It was the ultimate headpiece for my dream wedding and I love putting it on for kicks to this day!

For my second wedding, I fell in love with a flowing tiara veil on display. The price tag, however, brought me back to reality. Imagine my surprise when my mother found a similar tiara at Claire's for \$1.99 and bought the tulle for the veil at just \$.99 a yard! She added satin ribbon to match the satin ribbon on my gown, and a headpiece that would have cost me over \$200 adorned my head for a mere \$10!

Want to know how to make your own wedding veil? It's much easier than you think! Follow the directions below and you can have a headpiece that's amazing!

- Start with a base. Many stores such as Claire's have cheap tiaras that can serve as your base. If you're not quite into a tiara, just have on hand some craft wire and some plastic combs to hold the veil in place.
- Have a glue gun on hand. Get some tulle and attach it to whatever base you have. If it's a tiara, just glue directly to the headpiece. If it's combs, you'll need to create a "halo" to attach the tulle to. Add the combs so you can put it in your hair.
- Simply glue the tulle to your base and add any embellishments you want – flowers, baby's breath, etc. Add accents like ribbons and bows for a special look.

Also consider having simple flowers or baby's breath in your wedding coiffure. It's a beautifully simple touch to a beautiful day that will make you look like a goddess in the process!

One note here about hair and makeup. You could splurge and have a beauty shop do you and your bridal party's hair, but that's an extra expense that is really un-needed. Once again, call on family or friends to help.

Do you know someone whose hair is always stunning? See if she'll help you out. Maybe you have a distant cousin who is a hairdresser. See if she'll donate her services as a wedding gift.

When it comes to make-up, the best look is your natural look. Most people want to see the bride dressed up in her finery but looking like the same gal they know. No need to cake on foundation if you normally don't wear it. Go for some light eye shadow, mascara, a little blush and a pale lip color. You know how to do your own makeup – do it on your wedding day too.

Now that you're outfitted, what will your groom wear?



WHAT TO WEAR --- FOR HIM



The traditional choice for the groom is a tuxedo.

Where I come from, buying a tuxedo is virtually unheard of. Renting is probably the way to go to realize the ultimate savings on the groom's attire. If you were to buy a tuxedo, the average cost would be somewhere between \$300 and \$500. This is not exactly the way to go when trying to save money on a wedding!

If you do want to buy your tux, check in thrift stores, consignment shops, and online to find discounted tuxes. Buying off the rack will run you a lot more money.

Renting a tux will run anywhere from \$50 to \$100 typically. That rental will include everything your groom will need to look like Prince Charming. This means cuff links, shoes, vest, and tie.

Many places offer the grooms tux rental free when the wedding party rents from the same store. Be sure to ask about a perk like this.

If your groom wants to own his own tuxedo, we suggest a local thrift store or consignment shop. You may also want to consider a discount wedding store or even online at e-bay again.

Yet another great consideration when outfitting the guys in your wedding party is to have them wear nice suits or even casual slacks and a nice shirt. Not every wedding party has to be ultra formal; it's all up to you!

Now that you and your groom are outfitted, let's talk about those loved ones who will be standing up with you. What they wear can be just as important as what you wear!



The general rule of thumb for guys is that they will mimic what the groom is wearing. If the groom wears a tuxedo, they will wear similar tuxedos as well. If the groom is outfitted in a suit, they will wear similar suits.

Remember our previous tip about renting tuxedos. Usually a rental shop will give the groom his tux rental for free if the groomsmen rent their tuxedos at the same shop. This can result in huge savings for everyone concerned!

As far as the bridesmaids are concerned, there are several more options to consider. First and foremost, the style of dress you want them to wear. Traditionally, bridesmaids are expected to pay for their own wedding attire. Because of this, you, as the bride, should use good manners when deciding on what your attendants will wear. Please remember that not all bodies are built alike and not all dress styles look good on all types of people.

In my second wedding, my attendants included my 14 year old daughter (size 0), my baby sister (size 4), and my best friend who would be 8 months pregnant on wedding day (normally size 7, but at the time of the wedding, size who knows!) My sister found 3 dresses exactly the same on clearance at a department store in the exact sizes we needed. Two of them were little bitty for her and my daughter, the third one was bigger for my friend but which we altered to fit her "condition". Total cost for all 3 dresses --- \$50!

Shop around are the key words here! See what you can find with the parameters you have in mind! And please remember that pink chiffon rarely works well at other places besides a wedding reception! If at all possible, pick a style that will enable the bridesmaid to wear the dress at

other places and other times. This will make them less reluctant to plunk down big bucks for a dress they'll wear once and have it hang in their closet until their next rummage sale!



If you know someone who sews, pick out a pattern and fabric at your local discount store and stitch up a masterpiece.

Just as our tips for finding a wedding gown, check out the bridal shops and see what you can find off their racks. Don't be afraid to ask for a discounted price. Many times, they will grant your request just to clear their inventory!

Now that we're outfitted, what comes next? Let's look at the wedding flowers!

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