



13 top tips for planning your dream day

1. Set a budget

When you first start planning, sit down together and work out your budget before you book anything, be realistic. Now use that as a reference point and try not to go over it. Decide what is most important to both of you and what is less important to you and split your budget accordingly.

2. Guests Come First

Get a grip on the approximate number of guests you'll invite before settling on a venue. This will ensure there's ample space for everyone. Decide on the type of wedding you would like whether it be sit down, canapés or a buffet. The number of guests and the room the venue will impact what style of wedding you will be able to have – remember to keep room for the dance floor, the cake and any other decorations or dessert buffets you would like to set up around the room.

3. Listen to Mother Nature

What season are you booking your wedding for? Winter, summer, spring and autumn they all have their advantages and disadvantages. Make sure you choose an appropriate venue, for example if you would like your wedding by the water and it's winter make sure there is ample heating and that your guests are aware it is going to be chilly. Equally if you are having it in the dead of summer in an open marquee with minimal shade make sure there are fans available and enough water so guests keep re-hydrated. It is best to plan down to the small details, if your ceremony is facing toward the setting sun it makes for a beautiful back drop but unfortunately the guests can't see anything so you can always supply small fans for the ladies to shade their eyes and disposable ray bans look great on the men. Make sure your photographer gets a picture of everyone holding their little gift.

4. Pay It Forward

Let one supplier lead you to another. Your wedding photographer can tell you which florist's blooms really pop, and your reception manager should know which band packs the dance floor. You can always go to a few places to see which style suits you and your partner's personality the most as well as the different price points.

5. Get Organisationally Focused

In a binder, compile all your correspondences with suppliers, notes you make during meetings, and photos or tear sheets from magazines you want suppliers to see. Set up a special email address dedicated to your wedding, and store important supplier numbers in your mobile phone. The email address is a great idea as then you have all of your correspondence in one place.

6. Take It One Step at a Time

Put together a wedding planning schedule and do things one by one, in a logical order, so you don't take on too much too fast and end up with everything snowballing around you. Don't hire any suppliers before

you've confirmed your date; don't design your cake before you've envisioned your flowers; and don't book a band before you've settled on a venue.

7. STOP!

Now you have your date, season, venue and budget in order, stop, take a breath. Don't do wedding planning every day, give yourself set days in the month to do jobs otherwise the planning will consume you and you will begin to hate it.

8. Send out your invites

Send out invitations earlier than you think you need to, people these days need plenty of notice. And always give a RSVP date earlier than you need it, guests will need to be chased for their reply.

9. Venue, photographer, dress, entertainment and caterer

Book the venue first, then photography, dress, catering, bar and entertainment, these are the things that get booked up way in advance. Try and get these booked as soon as you can to avoid disappointment.

10. Suppliers

Remember to always get a couple of quotes for different suppliers that you like and compare them to each other. Some companies offer things you would have never thought of. Pick the couple of things that mean most to you and your partner and make no exceptions for the way you want it to be. For some other things that don't mean as much to you, you may have to make exceptions to stay within budget. For example if catering and photography may be your main concerns and in that case the flowers and dresses and suits may not be as important or vice versa.

11. You are one week out

The week before draw up a list of everyone involved, the wedding party and all the suppliers including full contact details, give this out to the main people in the wedding party for any last minute emergencies. Make sure that everyone has allocated jobs. Write up a timeline for your suppliers – people like the photographer, the band, the wedding cars, the celebrant and the caterers will need to know what is happening and when so they are prepared. Make sure that you allow yourself a little extra time as things do tend to run over.

12. Wet weather

At this point you will know what the weather man is planning for your big day. If it is forecast to rain make sure you are starting to prepare a wet weather plan. Do you need extra marquees, transport for your guests, and change of location for photos?

13. Enjoy your day!

The day of the wedding take some time together away from the wedding party to reflect on the day. The day will fly past and you will hardly get to see each other. Take it all in and enjoy it. Try to accept you won't be able to talk to everyone for a long period of time, prioritize the people who have travelled far and you don't see as often.

