



Weddings

February 2016

'Groom'ing Tips

*How grooms can
look their wedding day best*

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arrangements*

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Customize your ceremony to give it a unique touch

Steeped in tradition, weddings have featured many of the same components for centuries. Those about to tie the knot may feel somewhat limited in their ability to shape their weddings into unique celebrations of their relationships and love for one another. Although it may not seem like there are many opportunities to put your own stamp on the wedding, there are plenty of ways to do just that.

When looking to personalize your wedding ceremony, determine if there might be anything blocking you from doing so. For example, if yours will be a religious ceremony, there may be certain rites that need to be followed. Secular ceremonies may offer more opportunities to customize.

Vows: Vows are one of the easiest ways to put a personal touch on your wedding. You can select the words you want to exchange during the ceremony as well as any readings during the service. Work with your officiant to narrow down particular phrasing or sentiments that fit with your vision of the wedding and relationship.



Incorporate some custom elements into wedding ceremonies give them unique flair.

Participants: Wedding party members fulfill certain roles during the ceremony, but they are not limited to those tasks alone. Consider asking wedding party members or other friends

or family members to take on specialized roles in the wedding. They may be able to do certain readings, escort guests to their seats, light candles, or sing and participate in other ways.

Musical interludes: Choose music that connects with your personalities as a couple rather than selecting standard songs merely because they are the easier route. Work with the organist or other musicians and request that they perform or play musical pieces that you enjoy.

Candle lighting: Many couples like to incorporate candle-lighting components to their ceremonies. Lighting unity candles blends two families together into one in a symbolic way. Other couples choose different traditions, such as mixing two different-colored sands in a new vessel, to represent the joining of two lives together. You can consider these types of additions for your wedding ceremony or come up with your own unique tradition.

Impart a special touch to a wedding ceremony in any number of ways. Doing so will help set this special day apart in the minds of guests and make it even more memorable to look back on as a couple.



Helpful hints when planning floral arrangements

When planning their weddings, couples may find themselves becoming experts on subjects they previously never gave much thought. Thanks to the cost of weddings, today's couples must make each decision carefully, and that may result in hours of research and discussion.

One of the big decisions couples must make when planning their weddings concerns their floral arrangements. The right floral arrangements won't break the bank but will add substantial aesthetic appeal to ceremonies and receptions. It can be difficult for couples to achieve that balance of cost and look on their own, so the following are a few helpful hints for couples when choosing their wedding day floral arrangements.

Work with a florist you trust and like.

All florists are not the same, so finding one you can trust and will enjoy working with can make all the difference. Many couples have little or no experience with floral arrangements prior to planning their weddings, so it can calm couples' nerves

to work with someone they trust in such situations. Florists with significant wedding experience will no doubt make a host of recommendations based on couples' budgets and preferences, so couples might be more inclined to listen to that advice if they are working with someone they trust. Ask relatives, friends or coworkers if they can recommend any florists whose wedding work they are familiar with.

Choose in-season or native flowers.

Couples working with tight budgets may want to choose in-season flowers or those native to the area where they will be tying the knot. In-season and native flowers won't need to be ordered or shipped in from afar, which can be costly. In-season and native flowers tend to be more abundant as well, and the greater their availability the less couples are likely to pay for them.

Repurpose floral arrangements. Another way to save on floral arrangements is to repurpose flowers throughout the day. Once bridesmaids no longer need their bouquets, use them to decorate gift tables

or cocktail areas. Floral arrangements on display during the ceremony can be removed once you have both said "I do" and moved into the reception area where they can be enjoyed through the night. Go over any repurposing you plan to do with your reception hall manager prior to your wedding day so he knows where and when to move the arrangements.

Go big. Some flowers simply bloom larger than others, and choosing such flowers may help you save money since you won't need to buy as many flowers as you would if you were to go with smaller blooms. Once you find a florist to work with, discuss your options with regard to doing more with less. Many florists embrace the challenge to be creative within a budget, so you might just be surprised and impressed by what they come up with.

Floral arrangements can set the mood for a wedding ceremony and reception, and even couples with little or no experience choosing arrangements can end up with stunning displays.



Clever takes on the 'something old, new, borrowed, blue' tradition

Wedding day tokens of good luck come in many forms, but “the something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue (a sixpence in your shoe)” adage remains one of the most popular luck-enhancing wedding traditions. According to the bridal resource The Knot, this tradition stems from an Olde English rhyme. Something old represents continuity; something new is for optimism for the future; something borrowed stands for borrowed happiness; and something blue is for purity, love and fidelity. The sixpence in your shoe is a wish for good fortune and prosperity, but this is not a tradition widely celebrated outside of the United Kingdom or British territories.

These traditions can add some creative flair and personality to wedding ceremonies. There’s no end to the inventive combinations of items brides can carry to increase their good fortunes.



Something old

Something old is one of the easier mementos to obtain. There is a good chance that someone in the family is willing to pass an item down to the bride that she can include in her wedding wardrobe. It also can be something the bride may have in her own memory box. Beads taken from a grandmother’s dress or a swatch of fabric from a beloved toy doll are creative ideas that can be sewn into inconspicuous places on gowns.

Something new

Brides already purchase many new items for their wedding day

looks, so “something new” should not be too hard to find. Couples may want to work together to find something new they can both carry so they have a matching set upon tying the knot. Interlocking charm bracelets or keychains may work. What about the groom carrying a small padlock and the bride the key? Quirky couples can each wear one sock from a pair. Get clever and have fun.

Something borrowed

Much like something old, something borrowed is yet another way to pay homage to a friend or family member. It’s also one way to add a sentimental

twist to everyday items. Borrow a grandfather’s handkerchief to wrap around the stems of the wedding bouquet. Exchange vows with the original rings used by a distant relative at their own wedding. Flatter a close friend by wearing the same veil she did.

Something blue

There are many ways to incorporate “something blue” into your wedding ceremony. Brides can paint their toenails blue or wear blue shoes under their gowns. Sew a patch from a pair of denim jeans into the bodice of the dress. Paint the bottom of your shoes bright blue so they stand out when kneeling at the altar. Blue sapphire or topaz jewelry can add an exotic look to the wedding wardrobe.

With a little ingenuity, brides can easily incorporate “something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue” into their wedding ceremonies.



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Wedding day transportation tips

Couples must make many decisions when planning their weddings, including choosing transportation for guests to and from wedding ceremonies. Whereas couples once left guests' transportation up to their guests, nowadays it is customary to provide rides for guests so they can easily get to and from their hotel and the ceremony and reception safe and sound.

Many factors must be considered when choosing transportation for wedding guests, and the following are a handful of tips to make the decision a little easier.

Speak with your hotel before booking transportation. While professional shuttle services are an option, couples whose guests will be staying in a specific hotel or hotels should speak with

management of their hotels to determine if the hotels offer shuttle services for guests. Many hotels provide airport shuttle service to guests, and couples might be able to use such services to get their guests to and from their weddings and receptions. Hotels may charge a fee to use their shuttles, but they may offer discounts to couples whose guests book an agreed upon number of rooms. An added benefit to using the hotel shuttle services is that bus drivers won't get lost looking for the hotel.

Find an option that won't bust your budget. Wedding budgets tend to be big, and couples planning their weddings soon realize that budgets can quickly be busted. When choosing transportation for your guests, do not feel pressured to book especially lavish buses. So long as the buses are safe and on time, guests won't mind if they ride in a school bus or a fancy bus worthy of a touring rock band. If you are concerned about the appearance of a bus, ask if you can decorate the bus before the wedding to make it more inviting.

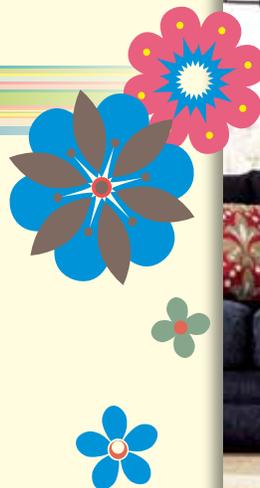
Comparison shop. Many companies cater to couples looking for transportation for their wedding guests, and couples should explore all of their options before committing to a particular company. Receive formal estimates from several companies before making your final decision, and speak to companies about matching offers. When comparing companies, try to consider both cost and quality. While the lowest estimate might be the most budget-friendly, you should choose the company that you feel is most trustworthy and capable of fulfilling your contract.

Read the contract. Transportation contracts should be gone over with a fine-tooth comb before couples sign on the dotted line. Check for hidden fees, such as mileage or overage charges if the reception runs a little late, and ask how much flexibility you might have with regard to those fees. Make sure any agreements you reach with regard to fees are written into the contract before you sign it.

Transportation for guests is one of many things couples must consider when planning their weddings. Make sure the option you choose is both guest- and budget-friendly.



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Wedding veils complete bridal look

The perfect dress is on the wish list of many a bride-to-be, but no bridal ensemble is truly complete until the bride chooses her veil.

Veils have been worn by brides at their weddings for centuries. Veils can be traced back to the Middle East, where veils helped protect against the weather while also preserving the modesty of the bride. In Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, veils were used as protection against evil spirits.

According to popular wedding website The Knot.com, until Vatican II, all Catholic women were required to have their heads covered in church, including during their wedding ceremonies. Veils were worn for this purpose, but they also symbolized trust in the groom and his love and companionship. Some Christians also see the veil as a visual representation of submission to the Church and to God. Others think of the veil as another beautiful accompaniment to their bridal gown, without attaching any additional meaning to the veil itself.

Veils come in various lengths and can complement the style of a wedding gown. They also tend to add

glamour to brides' looks. Here are the types of veils from shortest to longest.

Blusher: Blushers cover the face, though some extend only to mid-cheek on the bride.

Flyaway: Flyaways cover just the back of the head. Shorter veils may work better on petite women.

Shoulder: Shoulder veils are about 20 inches in length and will hit at the bride's shoulders or just below.

Waist: Waist-length veils cascade down to the middle of the bride's waist.

Fingertip: These veils extend down 38 to 42 inches, brushing against the bride's fingertips.

Waltz/Knee: For a dramatic look, many brides may opt for waltz-length veils, which fall to the back of the knees.

Chapel/Floor: Veils that extend to the floor may be referred to as "chapel" or "floor-length" veils. Such veils cascade slightly behind the bride.

Veils can complete brides' wedding day looks. Shorter veils may be comfortable to wear throughout the day and evening, but brides may want to consider detachable veils if they are selecting lengthier options.



Bridal veils come in many different lengths and can complement personalities and gown styles.

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Grooms: Look your wedding day best

Weddings are a chance for couples tying the knot to be the center of attention. All eyes will be glued to the bride and groom on this special day, which makes it even more important for couples to look their collective best.

Brides might garner most of the attention on a couple's wedding day, but dashing grooms also will get their share of attention. As a result, grooms must be just as diligent as their blushing brides with regard to grooming and appearance on their wedding days. To look picture-perfect, grooms may want to include these grooming tips in their wedding day preparation.

Hair

Schedule a haircut with a professional stylist roughly a

week before the wedding to get your hair shaped and trimmed. Although trendy hairstyles may show off creativity, keep in mind that photos last forever, and it's often better to stick with a classic cut. A barber or stylist may suggest styles that best suit your face shape and hair texture. Above all, the haircut should be neat. Resist the urge to wash your hair every day before the wedding. Allow some natural oils to build up and make your hair shine in a healthy way.

Shaving

Shaving is another thing grooms must consider. If you have a beard, make sure it is clean, combed and trimmed. Men who shave the day of their weddings may find their skin is sensitive and irritated, which can lead to

redness. Unless your facial hair grows especially fast, shave the evening before. This is a good time to splurge on a professional shave with a straight razor at a barber shop. A hot shave from a professional will produce a close shave with the least amount of irritation when done correctly.

Hands

Grooms also may want to book a manicure. Keep in mind that salons will do men's nonpolish manicures and pedicures, and they can be well worth the investment. Photos of entwined hands or close-ups of the ring exchange will have guests zeroing in on your fingers. Have hands look their best with clean, shaped fingernails and trimmed cuticles.

Skin

Get plenty of sleep the night prior to the wedding. Being well rested will help reduce puffy eyes, dark circles and sallowness. It will also put you in a more positive mood, which can help you enjoy the day even more.

The day of the wedding, shower using water and a mild soap. Avoid any skin irritation by patting your face and body dry, rather than rubbing it with the towel. Moisturize your skin to avoid dry patches. Stores sell many moisturizers geared toward men's needs, often in unscented or more masculine fragrances.

Reducing shine is key for wedding day photos. Rely on face and hair products that will not add unnecessary sheen to your skin or hair to avoid



making you look greasy. Matte hair waxes and sprays will tame tresses. Also, ask your fiancé to pick you up a package of blotting tissues if you are prone to oily skin. These absorbent, typically rice-paper sheets will remove oil from your face and keep sheen to a minimum.

Smile

Make sure your teeth have been thoroughly brushed and that you have used a minty mouthwash so you're primed for that first kiss. Many grooms also opt for whitening treatments prior to the wedding so they have a dazzling smile.

On their wedding days, grooms will likely be photographed more than any other time in their lives. That means putting extra effort into personal grooming to look their best.



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Tips when choosing a honeymoon destination

As couples cope with the stress and struggles of planning a wedding, many begin to see their honeymoons as a time when they can finally unwind and relax without having to worry about seating arrangements, vendor negotiations or the host of other responsibilities that come with planning a wedding. But securing the perfect honeymoon can be nearly as difficult as planning the wedding.

The biggest dilemma couples face when planning a honeymoon is where to spend that first week or so as a married couple. The right locale for a honeymoon varies depending on the couple. Some might prefer a Hawaiian island while others might find a week spent camping in a national park is more their style. Whatever you and your future spouse's style may be, the following are a few tips to ensure you both have the time of your lives.

* Decide what you can afford. The days when the bride's father

takes care of the bill for the wedding are largely a thing of the past. Many of today's couples finance their own weddings, which can leave little money leftover for the honeymoon. When shopping for a honeymoon destination, know what you can and can't afford. Your honeymoon budget may narrow your options considerably, but it will help you ensure you aren't spending your first trip as a married couple pinching pennies.

* Play around with the length of your trip. Many couples aim to spend at least one week on their honeymoons. But one way to save money on the honeymoon or make a more expensive locale more affordable is to reduce the length of your stay. An extra two days in paradise might break your honeymoon budget, but what about a shorter stay? You will likely want to spend at least five days at your chosen destination, but a five-day trip can prove considerably less expensive than a full

week, especially if you arrive and depart on a weekday.

* Travel in the offseason. While many couples deserve an immediate getaway after planning and financing their weddings, you might get a better deal if you delay your honeymoon until the offseason, when resorts tend to offer more attractive packages after the tourist season has peaked. A honeymoon in the offseason is likely to offer more privacy than one taken during the peak of the season, so you might find such a honeymoon is more romantic. If you do decide to delay your honeymoon, you might still want to plan a short getaway to a nearby locale for a few days after you tie the knot. Even a short trip can help you unwind after all that planning and coordinating.

* Establish a honeymoon registry. In addition to who's paying for the wedding, one of the ways in which today's couples are different from those of yesteryear is the fact that many couples

now live together before tying the knot. That reality has made the traditional registry somewhat obsolete, as many of today's couples already own their own furniture and already have a fully stocked kitchen. But couples can still have a honeymoon registry, which allows their guests to donate money they would otherwise be spending on a wedding gift to a fund that will be used specifically to fund the couple's honeymoon and any adventures they choose to enjoy on their trip. Guests may even prefer such a registry, as it saves them the trouble of wrapping a gift and carrying it to the wedding while ensuring the happy couple will truly enjoy their gift.

A couple's honeymoon is a great opportunity to unwind and enjoy some rest and relaxation on their first trip together as man and wife. And by putting a few savvy suggestions to good use, couples can ensure their honeymoon is all they hoped it would be and much, much more.

Tips for writing your own wedding vows

A wedding is a once-in-a-lifetime event for many couples, so brides and grooms wish for the event to be momentous and memorable. As such, couples are increasingly integrating personal nuances into their ceremonies and receptions to tailor weddings to their unique visions. The desire to include personalized wedding vows continues to be a popular trend.

If you are considering personalized wedding vows, first realize that it may not be a simple task. That's because you want the message conveyed to be dear to your heart, and that can be challenging when faced with the pressures and planning of the rest of the wedding. That isn't to say that writing your own vows is impossible. Here are some guidelines for personalizing your ceremony with your own sentiments.

* Schedule time for writing. Amid the bustle of dress fittings and interviews with photographers, it can be easy to put off the important task of writing vows for another day. But as any

great writer can attest, it takes writing -- and rewriting -- to achieve a finished product you can be proud of. Give the task of writing your vows your undivided attention. Mark it in on your calendar or set a reminder on your computer just as you would any other appointment.

* Be aware of ceremony guidelines. It is best to check with your officiant and confirm that personalized wedding vows are allowed. During civil ceremonies it's often acceptable to customize vows as you see fit. However, during religious ceremonies there may be lines of scripture that need to be read or certain passages required. Before you spend hours working on the task, be sure that it is allowed and that your spouse and you are on the same page.

* Jot down your feelings. Answer some questions about what marriage means to you and how you feel about your spouse. Try to avoid trite sayings and think from your heart and personal experiences. Think about what is the most important thing you

want to promise to your future partner. These notes can serve as the starting points for the actual vows.

* Read inspirational writings. Perhaps there is an author or a poet who inspires you? You can quote certain writers in your vows or let the tone of their works help shape the words of your vows. There also are suggested wedding readings and other quotes about marriage readily available at the library or with a quick search online.

* Decide on a tone. Although the day is based on love and affection, you may not feel comfortable spouting words of adoration in front of friends and family. Feel free to tap into your unique personality. Humor can be used if it aligns with the way you normally express your affections. Be sure to weave this tone into more traditional passages to create a cohesive expression of your feelings.

* Establish an outline. Put together all of the words and phrases you've jotted down into

an outline to help you organize the flow of the vows, using these words as a blueprint for the vows and building upon them. Make sure the vows will be concise. Aim for your entire speech to be around 1 minute in length to keep everyone engaged and the ceremony moving along.

* Put everything together. Draft your vows and then practice them by reading out loud. You want to avoid long sentences or anything that trips you up. Although large words may sound impressive, they could make the vows seem too academic and not necessarily heartfelt. Enlist the help of a friend or two to act as your audience to see if the vows sound good and are easily understandable.

Writing your own vows can be a way to include personal expressions of love into a couple's wedding day. Public speaking is seldom easy, nor is finding the perfect words to convey feelings about a future spouse. However, with some practice and inspiration, anyone can draft personalized vows.





Inspiration boards bring wedding plans to life

Making the wedding of your dreams a reality may require some creativity. It can be challenging to organize all of the creative ideas swimming around in your head, but inspiration boards may be able to help.

Inspiration boards, sometimes referred to as idea boards, are commonly used by interior designers, artists, writers, and even wedding planners. Such boards can serve a great purpose when starting a new project, especially if all of your creative ideas seem to lack cohesion. Sometimes seeing things together, rather than in bits and pieces on their own, can fuel even more creativity.

Inspiration boards can include magazine clippings, photographs, fabric swatches, quotes or literary passages, and color swatches. As the idea board grows, you may find a common denominator among your inspirational elements. This can help determine a theme for your wedding or jump-start other planning.

While poster boards may be more traditional idea boards, creative ideas also can be compiled in binders or scrapbooks, which work especially well at keeping all items organized and concise. Plus, they're portable, which means you can take a scrapbook

to a meeting with a wedding vendor and show him or her your concepts for the wedding.

Later, when photographers, florists and other vendors have been booked, you can attach receipts or agreements to the inspiration board for future reference. This keeps all of your important wedding information in one place rather than requiring you to search through different folders or files for important documents. In addition, if friends or family members ask for advice on vendors and planning their own weddings in the future, you can readily access your inspiration board.

To start building your own board or book, take clippings of photos or articles that resonate with you. As you visit bridal shops and other stores, take fabric swatches and pictures of particular looks. Attend bridal shows and take home promotional materials. Remember, inspiration may not always come from bridal-related resources. Anything you come across in your daily life — such as window-shopping at a furniture store or passing an art exhibit — may inspire some creativity.

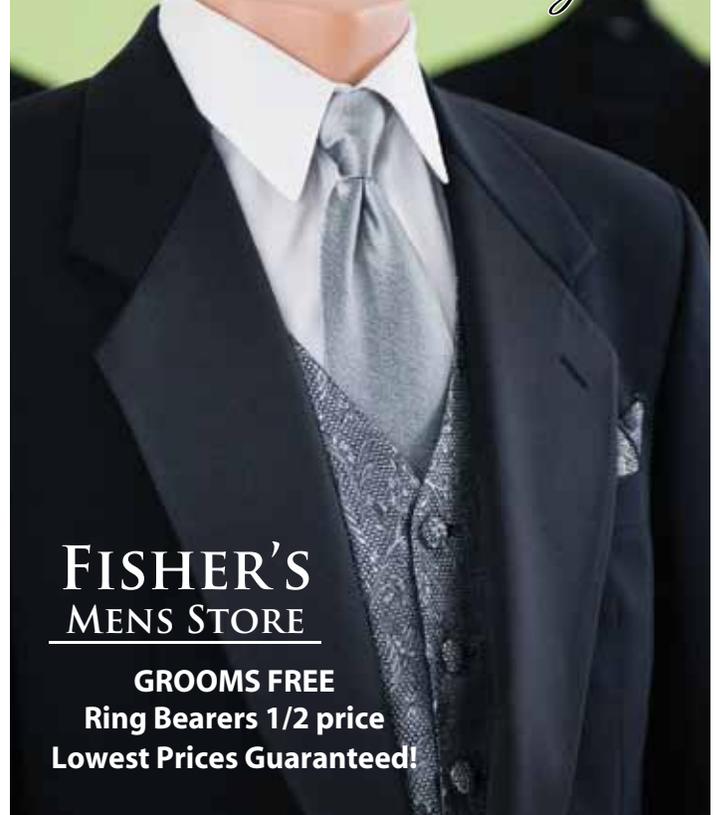
Inspiration boards are used by top design professionals and can be a handy resource for couples planning their weddings.

Did you know?

Pets play important roles in their owners' lives and are increasingly included in more activities, such as vacations, dining out and even weddings. The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters says more couples are customizing their wedding celebrations and bridal parties to include pets. Dogs and cats are turning up in wedding photos as well as trips down the aisle. Some pets even serve as ring bearers. Before giving your pet a job for the wedding, consider his personality and temperament. How does the pet react around crowds? A dog or cat accustomed to a quiet home may behave differently when placed in a room full of excited people. In addition, confirm that pets are allowed inside your ceremony space. Certain venues may not allow animals that are not service dogs. Make sure to inform guests that an animal will be present, so those with allergies can take precautions. If it isn't practical to have animals in the ceremony, give them a primary spot in wedding or engagement photos.



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