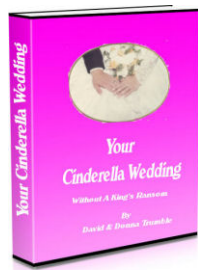


**Your Cinderella Wedding
Without Spending A King's Ransom
A Planning Guide To Maximizing Your Wedding.**

**By
David And Donna Trumble**



**Your
Cinderella Wedding
Without Spending A King's Ransom**
A Planning Guide To Maximizing Your Wedding.

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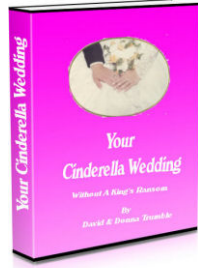


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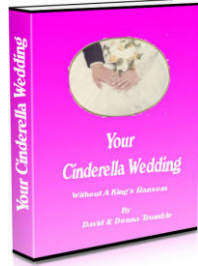
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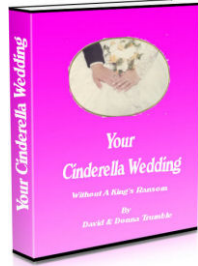
The author and publisher offer this ebook as a shared discussion of important wedding concerns. Ideas presented here are collected from a wide range of sources and personal experiences.

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About The Authors



Dr. David & Donna Trumble

Dr. David Trumble

David spent his teenage years on a small farm in rural Illinois with his three brothers and a sister.

He attended Milligan College in Tennessee where he graduated cum laude with majors in History, Ministerial Studies, and Education in 1971.

He met his wife at college in math class where both of them were struggling just a bit. In 1969, Donna's parents graciously provided an elegant wedding with all the trimmings in Farmington, Michigan.

From 1971 through 1975, He taught fourth grade in Darlington, Maryland; and served as Reading Specialist in Aberdeen, Maryland. He taught Essential Study Skills at Eastern Christian College in Bel Air, Maryland.

Beginning in the Fall of 1975, he has served as a Minister of The Gospel. His service has included preaching in Maryland, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, and Texas. He has performed over 300 weddings during his ministry.

Donna and David were blessed with five children: Jim, Jon, Jason, Jeremiah, and Joyanna.

He completed a M.Ed. degree at Towson University, and continued graduate studies at Morgan State University, Johns Hopkins University, Indiana University, and Fuller Theological. In 1985, he completed his D.Min. degree from International Bible Seminary.

He has officiated over weddings in many different settings including at a Large Southern Mansion, Inner City Cathedral, University Chapel, Large and Small Churches, Historic Monuments, a small wooden chapel over 140 years old, in parks, back yards, hilltop, flower garden, beech, under a large oak tree, a small island surrounded by water, a boat, a golf club community center, a swimming pool, and an airport.

He has worked with various traditions including wedding with a rabbi, catholic priest, Hebrew interpreter, and Hispanic Interpreter.

He believes that marriage is a sacred commitment between a man and a woman which can bring a lifetime of sharing and blessing to their whole family.

Dr. Trumble is currently semi-retired. He serves as the preaching minister of Castle Christian Church and performs weddings regularly.

Donna Trumble

Donna grew up in Lavonia, Michigan a suburb of Detroit with her four brothers and parents.

Following graduation as Valedictorian, she enrolled at Milligan College in North East Tennessee. It was here that she met David in Math class.

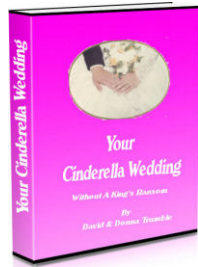
She quickly became popular on campus as the fashion and sewing expert. If you needed a button sewn on, pants hemmed, or other clothing repair, Donna was there.

She and David married at the beginning of their junior year. During her Senior year, she worked as a teacher with the National Teacher Corp teaching Kindergarten and Fifth Grade. Following graduation, she and David moved to Maryland where she taught second grade. Later she taught seventh grade in Chicago.

Donna and David have five children and nine grandchildren.

Donna has served as Pastor's Wife for over thirty five years.

Since her college days, Donna has actively helped brides and bridesmaids with their fashion design, alterations, and planning. Since 1992, she and David have operated their own custom sewing business including design, custom sewing, and a chain of sewing stores.



INTRODUCTION

As a minister, I have seen weddings mostly from the inside. Apart from my own wedding, I have usually been in charge or at least part of the organization efforts.

After performing some 300 weddings, I have seen a lot. I have seen the stresses and strains. Brides panic. Grooms collapse. Aunt Joan tries to take over. Uncle George stomps out of the reception hall.

The one consistent thing I have observed with almost every wedding is the elevated level of emotion. Weddings bring out the best and sometimes the worst in people.

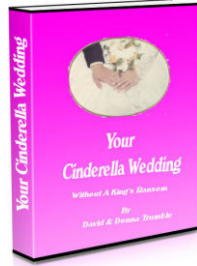
When emotions intensify many things can happen. Sometimes people unintentionally say the wrong things at the wrong time. Some people become so sensitive they are offended by the tiniest things. In the rush of the preparations and the event, people forget, overlook, and make blunders.

As you might expect, I have not always enjoyed weddings. They can be a nightmare, unless careful planning anticipates and prevents the problems.

Some of the most meaningful and beautiful weddings have cost less than \$1,000. Some of the most disastrous weddings have cost much much more. The amount of money you spend does not necessarily relate to the wonder of a beautiful moving wedding.

So, here is my question. How can you have a fabulous Cinderella like wedding without spending a King's Ransom?





YOUR CINDERELLA DREAM

I have heard it said that every girl dreams of a Cinderella wedding.

For a moment, revisit that dream.

The ordinary day to day drudgery of life is well captured by the image of the orphaned girl oppressed by her wicked step mother and selfish sisters. Unlike Cinderella, they are full of greed, selfishness, and malicious attitudes. But Cinderella, suffering from neglect and abuse, has a heart full of love, generosity, and grace.

Magically, the glorious Prince Charming catches a glimpse of this raving beauty is immediately spell bound by Cinderella. He swoops in and sings and dances and sweeps Cinderella off her feet.

While there are a few challenges over meddlers and near tragedy strikes, Cinderella emerges the center of attention. Her grace and charm mystify. Her beauty radiates. Everyone is captivated by her.

Finally, driven by love, Prince Charming drops to one knee and asks Cinderella for her hand in marriage. It is a glorious romantic moment full of electricity and enchantment.



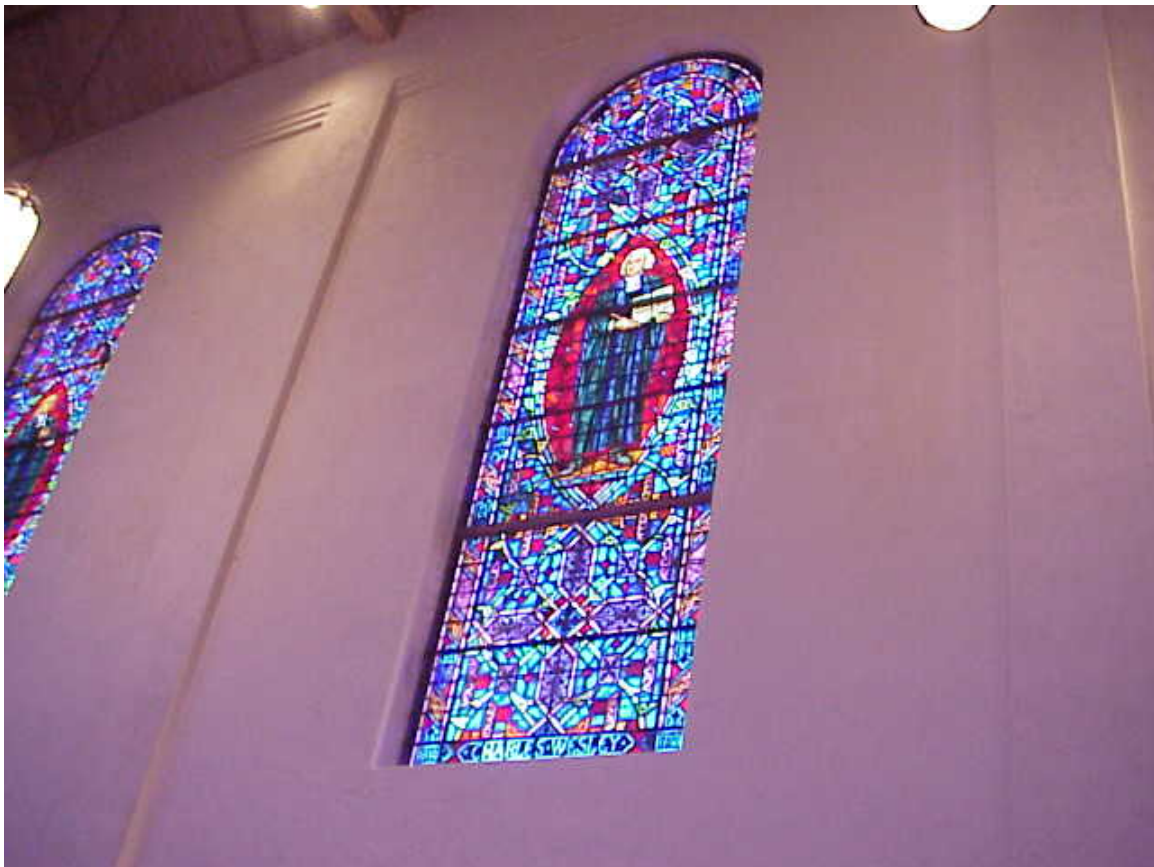
Prince Charming and Cinderella embrace. He places a ring upon her finger as a symbol of his love.

The trumpets sound. Messengers are sent all over the kingdom to announce the wedding of Prince Charming and Cinderella.

People come from far and wide to see and experience the most important event of the age. Everyone dresses up in their finest. They polish their coaches and hurry to the castle for the wedding of the ages.

Nothing could be more grand. Nothing could be more spectacular.

The castle is decorated with beautiful flowers everywhere. Elaborate ice sculptures add elegance.



Finely dressed ushers greet the guests. Each guest is given their special place of honor.

Thrilling music plays in the background and excitement fills the air.

At just the right moment, there is a hush that spreads over the crowd. Then a stirring musical announcement declares the arrival of the bride and her entourage. Flower girls, beautiful maids, and perhaps a ring bearer proceed down the aisle.



Suddenly, everyone rises. There Cinderella appears. The most beautiful, graceful, captivating bride ever begins her slow flowing journey to join Prince Charming.

The royal minister welcomes the royal assembly and speaks words of hope, encouragement, and love. He asks Prince Charming, "Do you take Cinderella to be your wife?"

Prince Charming looks deep into Cinderella's eyes and says, "I do."

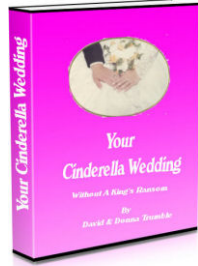
The minister asks Cinderella and she responds, "I do."

The royal couple exchange their vows and embrace.

Following the grand wedding, everyone joins in celebration.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.





YOUR DREAM WEDDING WITHOUT SPENDING A KING'S RANSOM?

How much does a dream wedding cost?

One authority says that the average wedding costs \$25,000. Perhaps you have attended a \$50,000 or even a \$100,000 wedding.

Recently, a couple were planning their wedding when the groom's father handed the groom a check for \$85,000 and said, "Make this the best wedding ever."

One couple decided to move in and live together until they could afford the kind of wedding they wanted. It turned out to be a story book wedding with all the frills five years and two children later.

Even if you are careful, the costs can skyrocket before you realize it. I suppose this is OK if you are made of money.

Everything costs: the wedding gown, the bridesmaids' dresses, the mother's dresses, the tuxedos, the flowers, the sit-down dinner, ice sculptures, beautiful cake, the band, the facility, the minister, the gifts, the security deposits, the limo... The costs keep growing.

With all these costs, Cinderella was blessed to have a King's Ransom to pay for it all.

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.

Is it possible to have the Dream Wedding Without spending a King's Ransom?

Over the next several pages, we will examine some of the cost areas and explore how those costs might be decreased without unduly affecting the dream.

By taking the time to plan and investigate, you may enjoy the amount of money that you can save.

No one would build a house without a detailed blueprint.

No one would attempt to fly to the moon without a detailed mission plan.



Certainly you would not attempt your dream wedding without careful planning and a well thought out plan. If you are careful you can insure your wedding is the marvelous success you dream of without mortgaging the marriage itself.

Every bride needs to feel loved, adored, and celebrated like Cinderella. Certainly, the trappings of a story book wedding can create a wonderful memory to launch a story book

marriage.

If the dream turns into a financial nightmare, however, the memories may not be so desirable. It's only human to cry at the bill that this dream can rack up.

So, exactly what costs should be anticipated?

Typical Areas Of Cost

Wedding Coordinator
Invitations
Programs For Wedding
Wedding Facility
Pre-Wedding Counseling
Officiate
Musician & Vocalist
Photographer & Videographer
Rehearsal Dinner
Bachelor & Bachelorette Parties
Decorations For Wedding- Flowers
Wedding Gown
Wedding Gown Alterations
Bridesmaids' Gowns
Mother's Dresses
Flower Girl's Dress
Ring Bearer's Suit
Ring Pillow
Unity Candle & Ceremony Items
Tuxedos
Flowers & Bouquets
Wedding Favors
Transportation For Selected Guests
Accommodations For Selected Guests
Limousine
Security Personnel For Wedding

Reception Hall
Decorations For Hall – Ice Sculptures
Caterer & Food
Beverages
Live Band Or Other Music
Master Of Ceremonies or DJ
Clean Up Crews
Miscellaneous Items

Costs can add up quickly. You might even be asking yourself if your dream wedding is beyond your reach. Or you might be thinking maybe it would be easier to give up on the dream all together. If you feel a bit hopeless, rest assured it doesn't have to be that bad.

There are two ingredients that can significantly reduce the costs while creating positive memories. First, plan. Second, make wise choices.

If you had to do all the work yourself, and there was no one you could hire or recruit to help you, what would you do?

Obviously, you would only do those things that were especially important to you. You would not waste time, energy, or money on things that were unimportant.



Usually, you can involve others; even hire a few people to help you without extreme cost. Still, the more you lay out your plan and do what is really important to you, the less you will have to depend on others. The less you depend on others, the less you will spend.

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 an inexpensive or low cost 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 oblige. They'll be

part of your special day which makes them special as well!

Get organized. Define what you want. Make lists of things to be done. Develop a plan you can follow, and have everyone you involve stick to the plan.

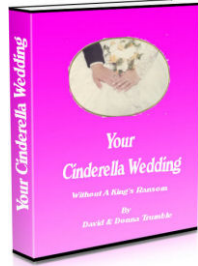
A few years ago, a young couple came to me to do their wedding. They had done very little planning. They did, however, have a budget. The budget was \$500. That is all they could spend. After listening and working with the couple for a few minutes, a wedding date was set. The church sanctuary, reception hall, and all the essentials were set.

Two days later, I got a phone call from the bride's aunt. She was all upset. She insisted that her niece could not get married without ... I listened. The things the aunt wanted were fine, except they would increase the costs for the couple by over \$1750. When the aunt stopped, I quietly

asked her, "Are you willing to pay the extra money for the wedding?"

Too often the couple has a plan, but also wants to please everyone else. This is a guaranteed plan for increased costs.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.



THE COURT MAGICIAN OR WEDDING COORDINATOR

To pull off the story book wedding requires organization and implementation. Someone must plan all the details, make the multitude of decisions, delegate, coordinate, and implement the plan. When this is done in an effective manner, the whole event flows smoothly and everyone is blessed.



The little things overlooked can be sources of major contention. Due to the emotionally charged setting, it is easy for people to get upset, irritated, and hurt.

When the wedding runs smoothly and wise choices are made in the planning, the costs tend to decrease as well.

For these and other reasons, it is important to find someone to organize the event from beginning to end.

Some couples will hire a wedding coordinator. An experienced well organized professional can make

everything run smoother from beginning to end. The couple authorizes the coordinator to develop the overall plan, assist with making choices, guide the bride and groom through the whole process, and implement their plan within a specified budget.

It is not inaccurate to describe the Wedding Coordinator as the Royal Magician, because she magically turns an ordinary event into a spectacular Cinderella Dream Wedding. The Royal Magician brings all the dreams, hopes, and aspirations into reality for the bride, groom, and their guests to enjoy.



This can be a real blessing. A really good wedding coordinator is worth her/his weight in gold. Excess spending is hereby controlled by the coordinator instead of the couple or couple's family shelling out money to satisfy everyone's whims. However, a wedding coordinator may cost the couple between \$1,000 and \$5,000 depending on the magnitude of the event and the overall budget.

It is important, however, whenever choosing a Professional Royal Magician to make sure they practice only white magic. That is, make sure the coordinator is a good person, friendly, enthusiastic, well organized, and committed to making your dreams reality. Check out their references. What kind of relationships does the coordinator leave behind after the wedding? How do the bride and groom feel about

the coordinator? Does the coordinator have the kinds of ideas, interests, experiences, and skills to fit your event?

Sometimes, wedding coordinators come with their own agenda. It is always good to listen to experts, but make sure that the coordinator is committed to achieving your dreams, not theirs.

Once you decide upon a coordinator, you should insist upon a written contract in which both the couple and the coordinator affirm their commitments and desires as well as fees to be paid.

An alternative to the professional wedding coordinator is the Bride's Maid or close friend who loves doing weddings. In most large or extended families, there is that special person who is gifted with grace and organizational skills. Often the bride can recruit that person to volunteer to serve as coordinator.



Again it is vital that expectations be clearly defined. What exactly will the volunteer "Royal Magician" do and not do? There may be several people who pitch in for specific parts of the event. Just make sure that people you entrust your dreams to, are dependable, gracious, and committed to making your dreams come true. Avoid those people who have their own agenda.

Usually, when you are working with volunteers contracts and written orders are not used. However, it is essential that

the progress and activities of volunteers be monitored and managed. Your volunteer Royal Magician is the right person to do this, if you have made it clear to everyone involved.

Sometimes, the bride herself or the mother of the bride or Aunt Suzzie will assume this coordinating or controlling role. When this is done, watch out for problems. Aunt Suzzie may be exactly the right person to serve as coordinator, but make sure she is before she takes over.

In smaller weddings and those weddings on very limited budgets, it is quite common for the couple to work with the Minister as coordinator. Usually, the Minister does not get involved with planning the wedding dress, colors, flowers, food, and transportation. However, he often streamlines the whole process by planning the wedding ceremony with the couple.

Regardless how serves as the Royal Magician or Wedding Coordinator, the bride and groom must approach the wedding with careful thought and consideration for one another. Often this is the purview of the bride, however, the groom must remain receptive and supportive throughout the whole process.

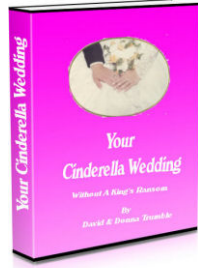
In your planning, you will need to think through many details, research many sources, and consider many options. Throughout the process use some common sense. Do not allow wishful thinking to disrupt your dream. Be practical while you craft your story book event.

If you put together your wedding with one eye on the dream and one eye on your pocketbook, you will come out richly blessed. No one will know your budget. No one really cares. They'll be oblivious as they toast the new couple and enjoy a party to put all other party's to shame!

Hopefully, as we explore the possibilities together, you can gain some insight into a dream event for not a lot of money.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.





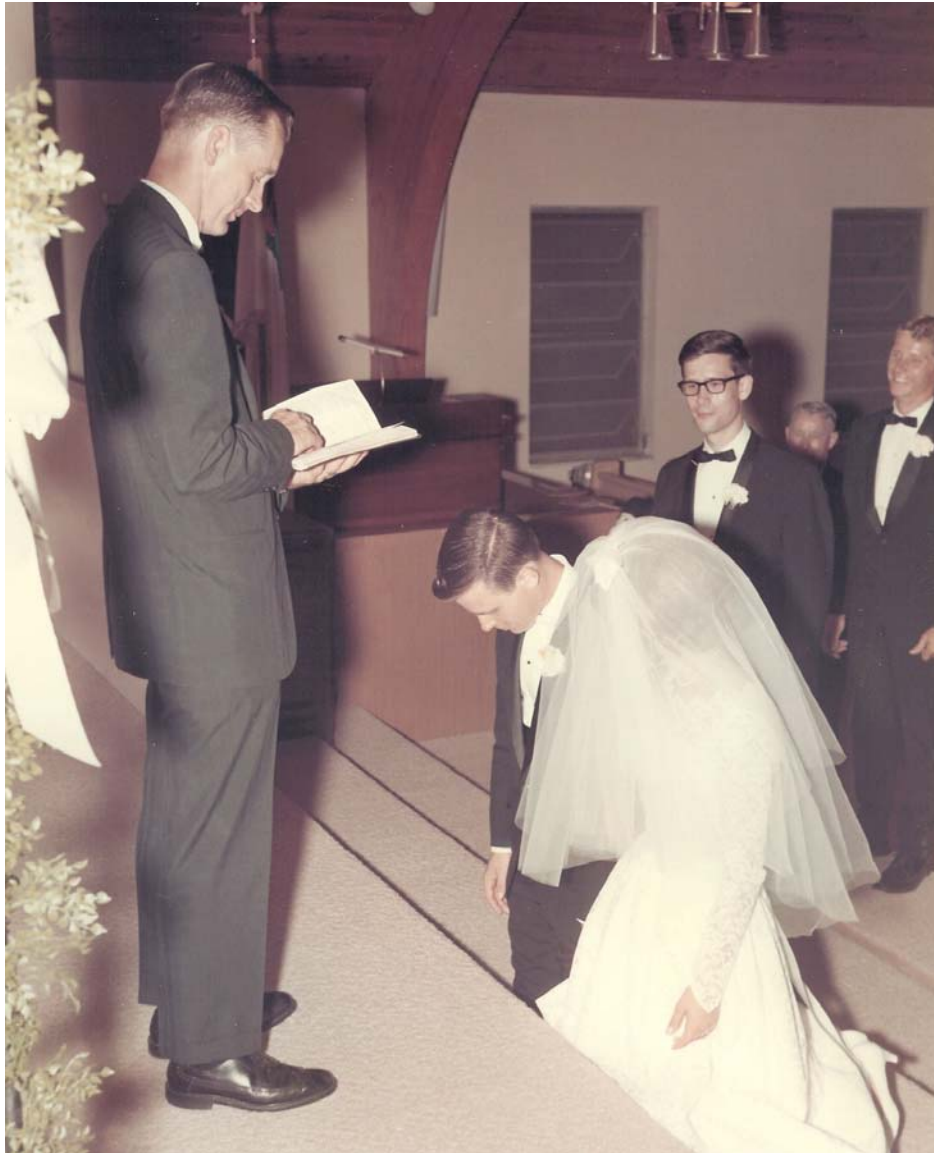
THE DIVINE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICIATING MINISTER

Apart from the bride and groom, the officiating minister is the central actor of the wedding ceremony. The officiate may be a rabbi, priest, minister, Justice of the Peace, judge, ship's captain, or other official authorized by the state to conduct weddings.

The minister usually represents a religious or governmental hierarchy. Personally, I have been an ordained minister with the Independent Christian Church since 1973. Whenever I officiate a wedding, I do so as a Minister of the Gospel. Certain values, beliefs, and conduct are inherent in all of my services. I value marriage, family, and commitment. I believe God blesses couples who seek his favor. I always work to convey God's unconditional love as the model for human companionship. Regardless of a minister's affiliations, he represents certain traditions, values, and beliefs.

If your preferred tradition is Islamic, seek out an Islamic Rabbi. If your preferred tradition is Catholic, look for a Catholic Priest. If you prefer a secular officiate, you might seek out the Justice of the Peace or a local Judge. Just remember, whoever you choose will bring the associations with them. Many people consider themselves generally Christians, but do not have specific membership connections. In this case, there are many Christian,

Independent, and mainstream ministers that might be a good fit.



State law usually defines and controls those individuals permitted to conduct weddings because, in part, they act as agents of the state. They are charged with the responsibility to implement a legally binding contract between a man and a woman. This individual has completed specifically required education, sometimes many years of training, and is bound by several laws governing their performance. For example, in the state of Texas, failure of a minister to properly file the

completed wedding certificate within thirty days of the wedding constitutes a misdemeanor that carries a \$500 fine.

The minister is a professional. He/She may have spent years training and many years more practicing their craft just so they will be available to bless your wedding. Be sure that you give your officiate all the respect they deserve.

Compensation for the officiating minister may vary considerably. If you are an active member of the minister's church, he may perform your wedding for free or at a very minimal charge. Many churches have established policies both for the use of the facilities as well as the services of the ministers. Typical fees will run between \$500 and \$1,000 for non member couples.



Consider how much time and effort the minister is providing.

They may provide several hours of pre-wedding counseling or planning.



The development of the wedding content suited to your needs and desires may required many hours of research, writing, and development.

The rehearsal usually involves at least two to four hours.

The day of the wedding, the minister typically is involved before, during, and following the wedding.

He may spend several hours involved with your reception as well.

Keep in mind that his services are not completed in the fifteen minutes or so that you are reciting your vows.

Do your own calculations based on your circumstances. Multiply that amount of time by a typical professional rate of \$40 to \$60 per hour. If the minister spends ten hours in total, you can easily see how the standard fee of \$500 is derived.

One way to reduce this cost is to begin attending the church of your choice regularly. Join the church a few months before announcing your wedding. In many cases, you will find that the church is very generous and its minister even more so.

When choosing a minister to officiate your wedding, what do you look for?

What values, ideas, or beliefs does the minister hold? What can he be expected to teach during the ceremony?

Is the minister interested in you? Does he care about helping you achieve your dream wedding?

Does the minister have expectations of you as a couple? If so, are you comfortable with those expectations? He may require a series of marriage preparation classes or counseling sessions. He may have other demands. You must decide whether you are agreeable to meeting those demands.

What does the minister look like? You may not be overly concerned about this, but ministers come in all shapes, sizes, and styles. You may not want a four hundred pound five foot minister or a seven foot bean pole either.



The minister speaks the message, theme, and framework of the wedding. What he says can have serious implications on

a couple, their families, and friends for many years. If the minister uplifts and encourages positive views of marriage, family, and life in general; he can richly bless the whole group. If, however, he speaks crudely, rashly, or inappropriately, he can turn your dream wedding into a disaster.



Exactly, what is the message you want to flow through your wedding?

What tone do you aim for in your ceremony?

What do you want to communicate to your partner?

What do you want to share with your family and friends?

If everything flows smoothly, you may indeed forget the words spoken in your ceremony. However, if they go badly, you may remember them for a life time.

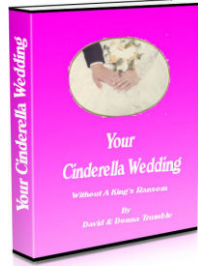
Your selection of officiating minister is one of the most important decisions you can make while planning your wedding. Make sure you have a good fit and the right choice.

Often the minister will provide a series of marriage classes or pre-marriage counseling sessions to assist the couple in strengthening their relationship. These sessions are often very educational and serve to prevent problems in the relationship down the line. These sessions may be designed as pre-wedding sessions or simply as preparation for marriage without regard to wedding preparations.

The minister will usually work with the bridal couple to plan the wedding ceremony. He will ask loads of questions about your interests and desires. He will make a few suggestions. During this pre-wedding planning session, it is vital for you to express your thoughts, hopes, fears, and desires. This is a mutual planning session.

When I do a wedding, I put together a formal ceremony booklet which is used during the wedding. Following the wedding, I make it a gift to the couple. This booklet includes verbatim content of the wedding sermon, prayers, devotions, vows, pledges, and associated wedding elements.

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PLANNING THE DIVINE CEREMONY

Many couples make the mistake of glossing over the content of the wedding itself due to concerns over all the peripherals of flowers, caterers, and attire. This is a huge mistake.

A wedding ceremony may last between fifteen minutes up to an hour. The ceremony expresses the values, commitments, and desires of the event.

If the wedding is designed to be a religious event, the ceremony might include a sermon with associated doctrinal assertions.

If the wedding is intended to be a strictly secular event, the ceremony might include discussions of social and community obligations and values.

If the wedding is built around a given theme, the ceremony will most likely express the theme with its associated focus.

In all such settings, the Minister will call upon the bride and groom to make to statements of commitment. First, each one is asked to make a pledge to society that they will be responsible in the marriage relationship. Second, each one vows their commitments to each other.

In most cases the bride and groom exchange rings and describe their love for each other embodied in their rings as symbols of their commitment.

Traditionally, the Minister concludes the ceremony by declaring the couple to be husband and wife. Following this pronouncement, the bride and groom kiss to publicly consummate their marriage.

Below is an example of a typical wedding ceremony.

SAMPLE WEDDING CEREMONY

PRELUDE:

Musician plays background music while guests are seated.

PROCESSIONAL:

Musician plays the processional march and bridal march.

Men enter from front and assemble to the right of the altar. Ladies proceed down the aisle. Flower Girl, Bridesmaids, Maid of Honor, Ring Bearer. Bride and Father enter and proceed down the center on cue.

Giving Away of the Bride:

Minister,

“Who gives this woman to be married to this man?”

Response, “We do.” (Father sits in front row.)

PRAYER:

Our Father, thank you for the gift of life and love. Thank you for the sacred privilege you designed for a Man and Woman to share their lives intimately for a lifetime. Thank you for giving us this moment to share as family and friends with (Bride) and (Groom). Please bless us all with your love. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

WEDDING SERMON:

God wants only the best for you. God wants you to enjoy a full life of love, joy, and peace. God want to bless you forever.

God himself designed marriage to bless families. So I join Paul in challenging you to build your marriage by God's Design.

(Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33)

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ love us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice of God....

Give to one another out of reverence for Christ.
Yes, Marriage is a Giving Relationship.

As a Wife (Bride), give to your husband as to the Lord. Give Jeremiah what he needs to know he is loved. Respect him. Honor him. Share a precious life of intimate giving. Love your husband like the church loves Christ.

As a Husband, (Groom), love (Bride), just as Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself for her. Give what Jennifer needs to know she is loved. Remember, it is your responsibility to give your wife the emotional support she needs. Protect her. Provide for her. Cherish her. Your bride is a beautiful gift from God. Always let her know your

awe, admiration, and appreciations. Prove your love every day.

Give freely to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Always remember Marriage is a Giving Relationship. Focus your thoughts and your efforts on giving love to your partner in ways they will understand love.

Forget about your expectations, rights, or demands. These are the seeds of disappointment, frustration, and pain. Avoid complaining, criticizing, or whining, because these hurt your marriage.

Always focus on giving Love as your partner understands love never disappoints. Discover the true meaning of love.

"Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud. Love is never haughty or selfish or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do wrong. Love does not rejoice in sin, but rejoices in true goodness."

"If you love someone you will be loyal and faithful no matter the cost. You will always believe in and expect the best. You will always stand your ground defending your love. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things."

"Love Never Fails!"

"Three things remain forever, FAITH, HOPE, LOVE -- the greatest of these is Love." (I Corinthians 13)

(Groom) & (Bride), you have come today to be joined in the sacred bond of marriage. Your family and friends love you. God loves you. We want what is best for you. But this

is your special moment to choose how you will live, the kind of home and life you will create.

The choices you make, the words you say, the things you do will forever impact your life together. If you make wise choices, you can expect a life of love, joy, & peace. If you make bad choices, you can expect pain, sorrow, and frustration. But the choices are always yours to make.

WEDDING PLEDGES:

(Bride) & (Groom), you have come today to join together as husband and wife. Because this is your desire, will you now make your public commitment to God, to Society, and to this congregation.

TO GROOM

Minister:

“(Groom), do you in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, promise to love, honor, comfort, and protect (Bride), to provide for her in sickness and in health; to be true to her; and, forsaking all others, to keep yourself only unto her as long as you both shall live?”

And do you take her to be your lawfully wedded wife?”

Groom: “I do”

TO BRIDE

Minister:

“(Bride), do you in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, promise to love, honor and respect (Groom); to be true and faithful to him; and, forsaking all

others, to keep yourself only unto him as long as you both shall live?

And do you take him to be your lawfully wedded husband?"

Bride: "I do."

WEDDING VOWS

Minister:

"Since you declare this to be your intention, will you now repeat your vows to each other..."

TO GROOM:

"I (Groom) take you (Bride) to be my wedded wife; to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health to Love and to Cherish till death do us part.

And, thereto, I pledge you my faithfulness."

TO BRIDE:

"I (Bride) take you (Groom) to be my wedded husband; to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health to love, honor, and respect till death do us part. And, thereto I pledge you my faithfulness."

RING CEREMONY

Minister: "Are there rings with which you would seal these vows?"

The Wedding Ring symbolizes many facets of love and marriage. Notice it is formed in a circle, depicting a never ending love. It is made of the most precious of metals symbolizing a love that is precious, of highest value, untarnished with selfishness or flaw. It also speaks to us of great strength for it is love that enables us to endure the strains and stresses of human companionship. The wedding ring symbolizes your link, your bond, your union.

Description To Groom:

“(Groom), this ring represents your life and your love. Whenever you see it on your wife’s finger, remember your love. Now, place this ring on (Bride’s) finger and repeat after me...”

TO GROOM:

“(Bride), I love you and I give you this ring as a sign of my love and devotion.”

Description To Bride:

“(Bride), love is not one sided. It must be shared. This ring will forever represent your life and your love. Whenever you see it, remember your love. Now, place the ring on (Groom’s) finger and repeat...”

TO BRIDE:

“(Groom), I love you and I give you this ring as a sign of my love and devotion.”

SPECIAL MUSIC: Vocalist & Musician

UNITY CANDLE CEREMONY

Minister:

The Glowing flickering flame of life is so vividly symbolized by the candle as it burns, lighting its small place in the world. Alone each one burned, but now as **Flames of Love Unite**, a new life begins. And "two shall become one flesh". May the light of love and hope and harmony always glow brightly.

SPECIAL MUSIC: Vocalist & Musician

COMMUNION:

God himself created and designed marriage. So it is fitting for (Groom) and (Bride) to dedicate their marriage to God. The bread represents the body of Jesus sacrificed on the cross of Love. The cup represents the blood of Jesus shed to create new life of Grace. May God's blessing be forever on your marriage.

PRONOUNCEMENT:

"For as much as (Groom) & (Bride) have consented together in Holy Wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God in this company, and thereto have given and pledged their faithfulness to each other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving of rings, and by joining hands...

Let Us Seal this bond in Prayer:

WEDDING PRAYER

"Almighty Heavenly Father, Creator of Life & Love.

Look into the Hearts of Jeremiah & (Bride) now and see their desire for each other. See their commitment to give and share and bless each other.

Examine their thoughts and their deepest motivations and draw them to you. Cleanse them. Purify them. Heal them. Bless Them. Remove all the obstacles, all the distractions, all the hindrances, and guide them into the full life you intend.

Take all the good, all the love, all the joy, all the hopes, all the dreams, and magnify them together. Guide Jeremiah and Jennifer to abundant blessings. Bless them with a rich vibrant marriage. Bless their home.

And Lord, most of all, when this life draws to an end bless them with your eternal gift of love and life. In the blessed name of Jesus, I pray.

DECLARATION:

I now pronounce that you are husband and wife. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and Of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

SALUTE::

"You may kiss the bride."

PRESENTATION:

May I present Mr. & Mrs.....

RECESSIONAL:

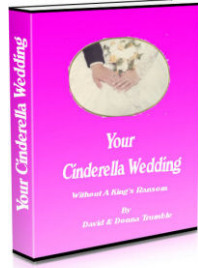
Musician plays recessional music.

The content of the ceremony is easily customized to fit the theme of the wedding and the wedding dream.

However, the bride and groom must actively participate in the development of the ceremony content in order for the content to reflect their special interests.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.





MAKE ROYAL PLANS AND DIVINE CHOICES

Your dream wedding is among the biggest events of your lifetime. It marks the end of life before marriage, and celebrates the love and possibilities of new life in marriage.

Obviously, it is going to require many different things. There's so much to do, it can be mind-numbing.

Don't worry.

This is your dream, if you have a week or a year to plan and put together all the finishing touches, the most important thing to remember is that this is your moment as a bride and groom.

Make it truly special.

Begin by creating your own checklist based on your dreams. Work with your coordinator if you have one.

Here is a sample checklist. You may have items to add or delete. Once you have your own checklists, set out your budget. How much are you willing to spend for each item? Get bids/estimates. Keep track of all your expenses.

CHECKLISTS

Here's a table to keep track of your budget to make sure you don't overspend.

Budget Sheet	Budgeted	Actual	Done
Gown			
Wedding Coordinator			
Minister-Officiate			
Wedding Facility			
Flowers			
Invitation & Postage			
Printing/Programs			
Pre-Wedding Counselling			
Musician & Vocalist			
Photographer			
Video			
Rehearsal Dinner			
Bachelor & Bachelorette Parties			
Bridesmaid Gowns			
Mothers' Gowns			
Flower Girl Dresses			
Ring Pillow			
Tuxedos			
Ceremonial Items Like Incense or Unity Candle			

Transportation/Limo			
Rings			
Ushers/Security			
DJ/Band/ Master of Ceremonies			
Food			
Drink			
Cake			
Reception hall Rental			
Church Décor			
Reception Décor			
Attendant Gifts			
Reception Guest Favors			
Clean Up Crews			
Travel & Meal Expenses for Special Guests			
Honeymoon			
Miscellaneous			
Total			

Here Is A Sample To Do List

Create your own based on those things that apply to your situation.

Pick a date: _____

Announce your engagement in the local paper. Decide how it will be worded

Pick your attendants: Bridesmaids & Groomsmen

Choose your coordinator.

Choose your Minister or Officiate.

Choose your colors.

Choose a location for the ceremony.

Choose a location for the reception.

Choose your gown and veil.

Choose your bridesmaid's and groomsmen's attire.

Arrange for fittings and alterations if needed.

Decide on a honeymoon.

Begin registering with bridal registries.

Select invitations – Decide on wording.

What food will you serve? Will it be catered?

What beverages will you serve?

Find a photographer.

Find a videographer.

DJ/Band for the reception/Master of Ceremonies.

Find Musician/Vocalist/Ceremony music.

Choose and order wedding rings.

Decide on reception decorations.

Select your table decorations.

Make/order table decorations.

Select attendant flowers.

Item	# Needed
* Bridal bouquet	_____
* Bridesmaids	_____
* Groom's Flower	_____
* Groomsmen	_____
* Flower Girl	_____
* Ring Bearer	_____
* Corsages	
Moms'	_____
Grandmas'	_____
Wedding assistants'	_____

Make/order attendant flowers.

Select flowers and decorations for the ceremony.

Complete the guest list.

Make honeymoon reservations.

Confirm dates and times with all involved in the wedding.

Decide on transportation after the ceremony.

Decide on the wedding cake. Make/order wedding cake.

Make/Order invitations. Address and mail invitations.

Get your marriage license.

Contact hotels for out-of-town guest accommodations.

Buy/make bridal party gifts.

Make/print wedding programs.

Arrange for a final fitting of your gown.

Other:

Planning is essential, so your checklist could be your best friend! You may want to invest in a cheap folder to keep all of your notes in order. Print out your checklists and keep them in that folder along with any receipts and/or quotes that you get!

A very important question must be asked and answered before you go any further.

The question is: Who will pay for what?

Who will pay for the Bachelor or Bachelorette Parties?

Who will pay for the Rehearsal Dinner?

Who will pay for the gowns and tuxedos?

Who will pay for the out of town guests travel, food, and lodging?

Who will pay for the Wedding Ceremony?

Who will pay for the Reception?

Who will pay for the Honeymoon?

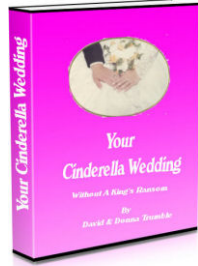
In the past there have been some traditions relative to who pays for what, but it is quite common for these to be set aside due to a variety of situations.

The typical wedding planner dictates that the bride's parents pay for the wedding. In reality, these days that isn't always the norm.

One couple had a more typical situation. The bride had two sets of parents, and the groom had two sets of parents. As a couple, they did not have the money to pay for the kind of wedding they wanted themselves. The couple decided to ask each set of parents to contribute \$500 each, and agreed that the couple themselves would cover the remainder of the expenses. This gave the couple a small but workable budget from which to begin planning.

In your planning, you have many different decisions to make. Traditional weddings have a certain design followed by most everybody which makes them easier in some ways to pull off. However, it has become fashionable today, for couples to launch "theme" weddings. These enable the couple to incorporate special things of interest to them. It offers the opportunity for greater creativity and flexibility. In either case, make sure all the details are properly planned and executed to produce a smooth flowing event.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.



TIME AND SETTING

Choose the date and time for your wedding.

Typically, couples get married on Friday night, Saturday, or Sunday. This avoids conflicts with work schedules for both the wedding party and the guests. However, an unintended consequence results from this schedule. Costs go up when demand goes up. Since everybody wants to get married at the same time, the costs for wedding chapels, reception halls, and numerous services go up. Choosing a mid-week date and time cuts costs because there is far less competition for these time slots.

A 10:00 AM wedding on Thursday may end up costing half of the same wedding held on Saturday at 10:00AM.

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 wedding and an early reception. A 10:00AM wedding immediately followed by a reception may avoid having to provide a full meal, because most guests will not expect lunch until after noon. Arranging a 1:00 PM wedding with a reception immediately following can realize great savings. 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!

The time of year can also affect costs. June is the peak wedding month. Therefore, you can expect the competition for wedding and reception sites to be much greater and costs accordingly. Therefore you should expect to save money by planning your wedding when there is less competition such as 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.



Choose the setting for your wedding.

Notice the term used is “setting” instead of place. Many couple automatically think of a church wedding at the neighborhood church. This is great and thousands of couples have been blessed by this kind of choice. However, this is a choice.

In today’s world of mega-churches that seat thousands, it can be difficult to find a church setting that fits your particular needs. If you expect a thousand guests, a mega-church would be fine, but what if you expect 50 guests?

Now think back to your dream wedding. What makes it your dream?



Consider the setting you want for your wedding.

Perhaps, there are locations that would better fit your dream than the neighborhood church building. Many beautiful

weddings have been held in Historic Buildings, Bed And Breakfasts, Mansions, even the public library. Today it is popular to hold outside weddings in pristine settings like parks, along the river bank, on the sea shore, in the woods. Use your imagination.

Once you have an idea of the setting you want for your wedding, contact the appropriate authorities to secure permission and reserve you setting for the specified time and date.



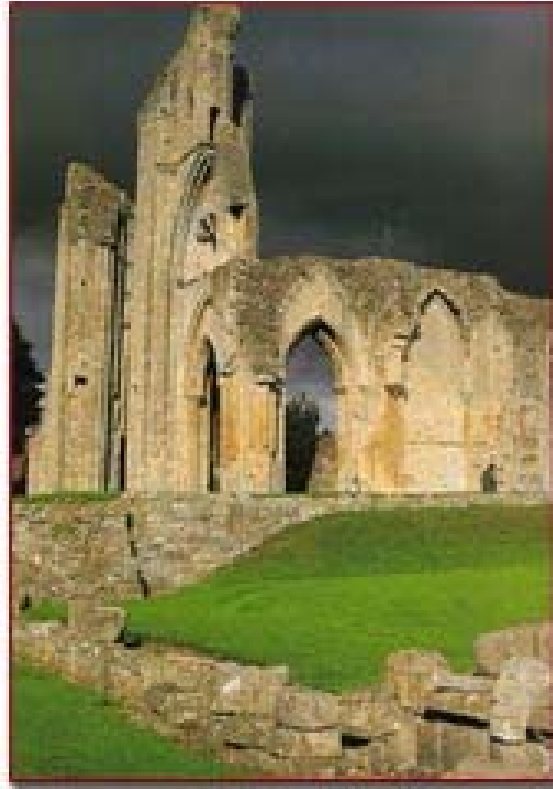
With the rise of theme weddings, you may need to adjust your thinking to accommodate the theme of your dreams.

If you envision a Medieval Theme, you might want to look for a setting in or near facilities that are castle like. Or consider a recreational area with plenty of space. You might even have someone built a castle backdrop for your wedding.

If you envision a Deep Southern theme, holding your wedding at southern styled mansion.

If you envision a Star Trek theme, a building with a modern styling might fit in well.

Whatever theme or setting you decide upon, choose your location and reserve it.



Typically, you can save big by going outdoors. In many cases nature itself provides all the flowers and decoration you need. The facility rentals are far less or even free.

If you choose to hold an outdoor setting, consider the weather and potential for needed alternative. Use of a large tent or canopy may save everything on a rainy day.

Here in Texas, June weddings outdoors after noon are a disaster. Temperatures commonly reach 100 degrees in the shade. Use some common sense and plan accordingly.

The location and setting of your wedding may be the same as that of your reception or it may be different. If you arrange for a traditional church wedding in a medium sized church, the church building will likely have a large reception hall as well as sanctuary. This makes it simple for guests to move directly from the ceremony to the reception.



If you are planning to use a church facility, however, it is essential that you check their expectations. Many churches will not permit smoking or alcoholic beverages on their premises. It is essential that you respect these conditions. Some will frown on dancing, while others will not. Just check to see what the church specifies as appropriate wedding activity.

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. You may conduct the wedding at the hall, and follow with a reception. Or you may hold the wedding miles away

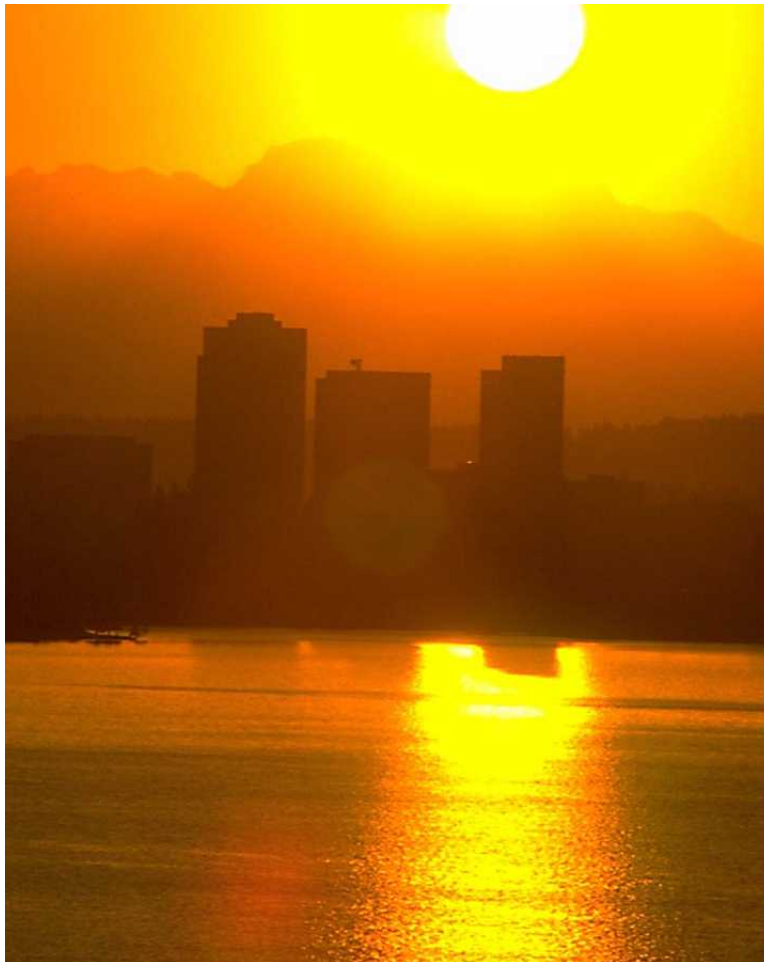
in one facility, and set a time for the reception allowing for travel between facilities.



It is usually less expensive to rent one facility, however, plan your budget accordingly.

If you or someone in your family is the member of a benevolent association (The Elks, The Moose, The American Legion), consider these facilities as viable options. They often give discounts to members. You will probably have access to a huge area for your wedding reception as

opposed to Aunt Suzzy's backyard! Just remember to book early!



When Donna and I got married in 1969, we held our wedding in a beautiful church sanctuary. Down the hall was a great reception hall. It only cost us Donna's father \$150.00. Obviously that was a few years ago.

In the six churches that I have personally served as Minister and performed weddings, the church graciously made the facilities available at very minimal costs. They did, however, expect the wedding party to thoroughly clean up after themselves and did not permit smoking or alcoholic beverages.

Each church has their own policies.

My daughter chose to be married in an historic Episcopal Church building that barely seated 100 people. Following the wedding, the guests walked across a parking lot to a reception hall for a catered meal and dancing.



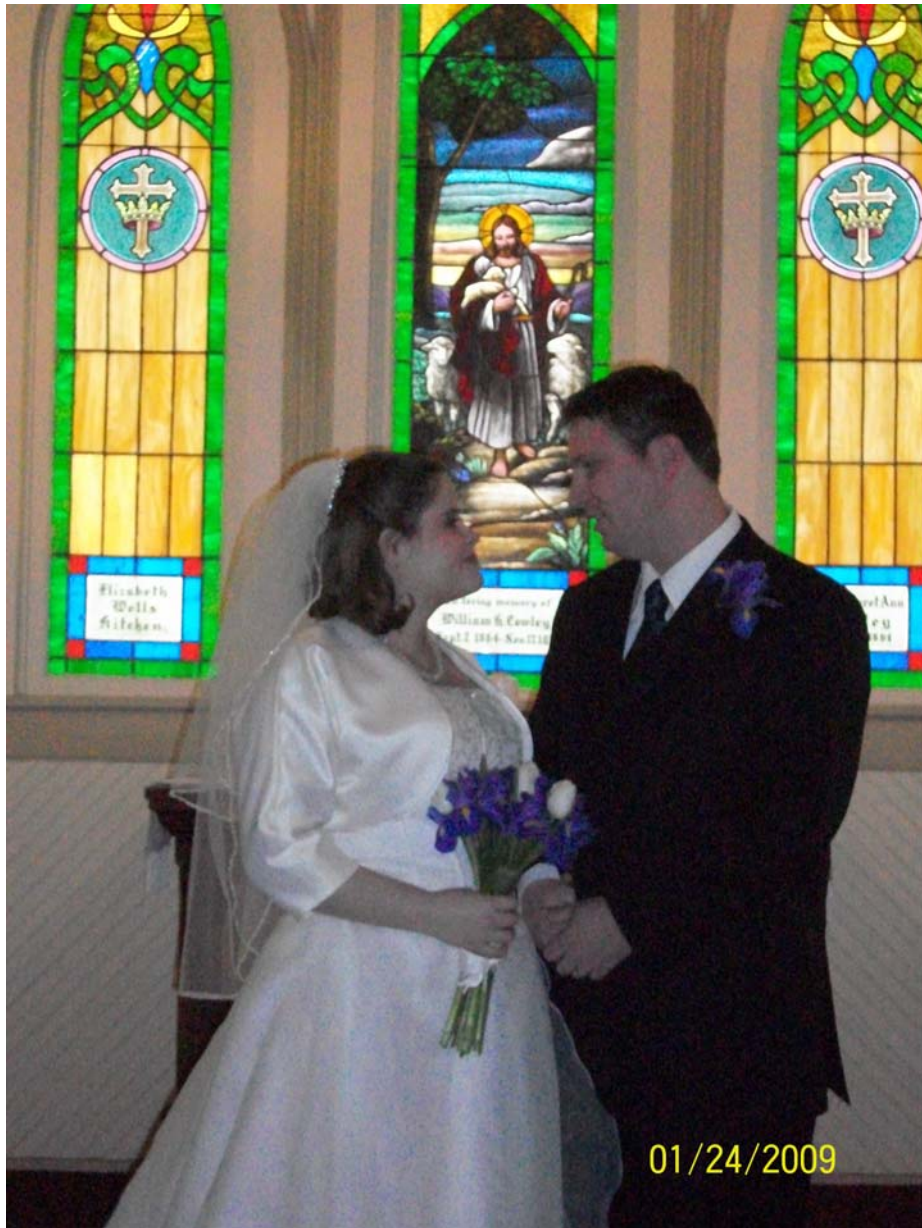
Plan ahead. Book early. Leave nothing to chance.

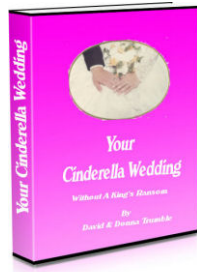
One wedding was all planned and everything ready to go. It was just three days away. The Mother of the bride called the restaurant to finalize the guest list. Unfortunately, the manager of the restaurant had failed to record the booking made several weeks earlier. Can you imagine the panic?

Fortunately, the manager of the restaurant was able to book a space at a competitor's hall and everything worked out. It might not have. So, always double check.

Here are some alternatives for receptions: Church reception hall, legion hall, fire department hall, restaurant, reception hall, large home, back yard, park, art gallery, empty parking lot... If you use a little creativity, you can save big dollars.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.





THE ROYAL WEDDING PARTY

The Royal Princess and Prince Charming stand before the Bishop to declare their affections, their commitments, and to receive the blessing of God and society. Beside them are the company of Ladies in Waiting and Groomsmen. They are there to lend their support and encouragement to the royal couple.

One of the obvious questions is just how many attendants do you have?

In the past and perhaps in certain localities even today, witnesses were required to affirm the wedding. Generally, however, there is no requirement for any attendants from a legal perspective.

One view is to have a Maid of Honor and a Best Man plus one or two attendants. Some couples want a whole group of attendants. Some are content with only a Maid of Honor and a Best Man or none at all.

You need to decide how many attendants. Then bestow the honor on them early enough for them to adjust their schedules and get excited about your special event. They can save the date and help you plan!

Your attendants may serve as your wedding planning and implementing team, or they may just stand there and be pretty for the photographer.



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 situations and don't choose that \$500 satin chiffon number unless everyone can afford it. The groomsmen usually cover the cost of their own tuxedo or suit. Respect the budgets of your attendants as well as your own.

If you plan a theme wedding in which you expect your wedding party to wear certain costumes, consider the availability and cost of said costumes as well.

While it is common for bridesmaids and groomsmen to cover their costs, there are times when they expect the bridal couple to cover those costs. Make sure that you answer the question: Who pays for what?



One able seamstress chose to custom design and create not only her own gorgeous wedding gown, but also bridesmaid dresses for four attendants and one flower girl's dress. This was her special gift to each of her special friends.

Certainly, there are many different arrangements that arise. The important thing is to plan it out and make sure the costs are not an undue burden on anyone. Remember, your dream wedding is not about money. It is about creating a story book event full of fantasy and memories.

When considering the individuals to serve as your attendants, ask yourself several questions.

Who is truly among your best friends?

Whom can you trust?

Who will be excited about helping you pull off your dream wedding?

Who will really help your photos look good?

There are many reasons to invite someone to participate in your wedding. There are good ones and bad ones.



Do fill your attendants with people who love you.

Do fill your attendants with people who encourage you and support you.

Do fill you're attendants with people who want the best for you.



Do fill your attendants with people who you enjoy being with.

Do fill your attendants with people both you and your partner enjoy, respect, and appreciate and who return the favor.

Do fill your attendants with people who are eager and capable of helping make your dreams come true.

Avoid filling your attendants with people that clash.

Avoid filling your attendants with negative, selfish, stubborn, or irritating people.

Avoid filling you attendants with ugly, repulsive, disagreeable, or domineering people.

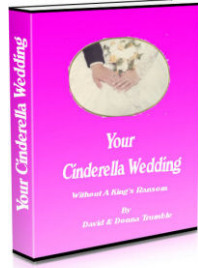
Avoid filling your attendants with miscellaneous fill ins.

Avoid filling your attendants with x-boyfriends or x-girlfriends.

Your wedding party is indeed the royalty of your dream wedding. Make sure each one of your royal entourage is royal in character and performance.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.



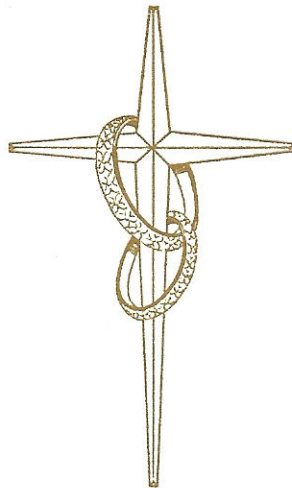


ROYAL INVITATION

**YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED
TO OUR DREAM WEDDING AND GRAND BALL.**

In addition to your wedding party, you will want to give some serious thought to your guests.

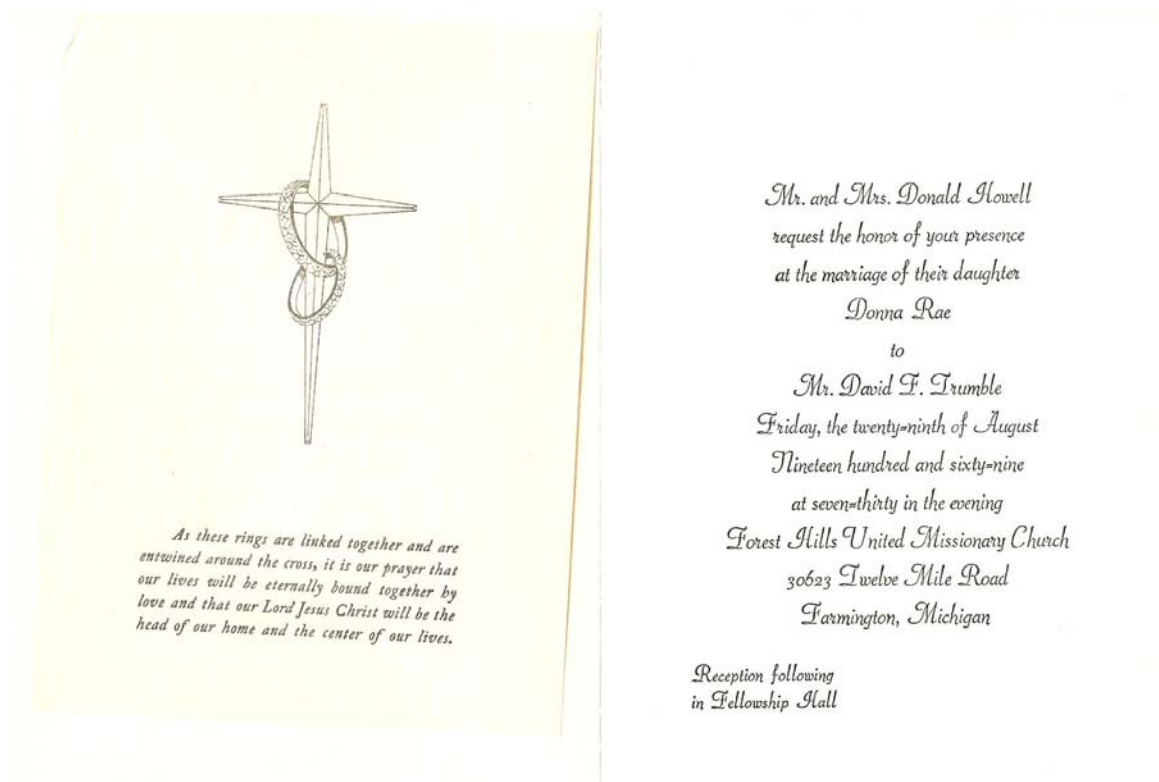
Who do you want to be part of your dream wedding?



You will want to spend considerable time thinking about the people that might want to attend even though you really do not have strong feelings. Often friends of your parents will want to attend. Work associates, old school classmates,

extended family, immediate family members, and any of their friends that just might like to attend.

Make your list. Fine tune it.



Keep in mind that not everyone you invite will attend. There are many reasons people fail to attend. Work, business, yard work, illness, kids, expenses, and a hundred other reasons can keep people away. As a rule of thumb, if you invite 100 couples or families; fifty will RSVP. Of those who RSVP, about half will actually attend. Unfortunately, such estimates are not trustworthy.

Just in the past few months, one wedding saw 25 invitations turn into a reception of 70 guests. Another saw 300 invitations turn into 250 RSVP and only 75 actually attending the reception.

In most cases, when you have your wedding catered or hosted at a restaurant buffet; you are charged by the

reservations plus the plate. If you expect 50 people, and tell your host you plan for 50 people. It costs you 50 times whatever the going rate might be. Example 50 times \$20.00 or a total of \$1000.00. Often the reception hall will also charge by the plate, so if you schedule 50 and 60 show up or 10 of the fifty take an extra plate; you would pay for the extra ten plates. However, the added plate charge is often half again the base rate. Simply, get firm commitments of who will attend the reception.

Some couples make invitations to many potential guests specifically for the wedding and not for the reception. This cuts costs, but has the potential of offending sensitive guests.

One way to reduce this offense is to schedule the wedding and reception significantly apart. For example, a 10:00AM wedding with limited reception might be followed by a more extravagant reception at 7:00PM that evening. The reception group might be drawn from a much smaller guest list without offending more extended guests.

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 people they would like to invite. Make sure you have accurate addresses for your guests.

Take a deep breath. No one expects you to invite the whole world. However, many do things you should invite them. 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 frequently, chances are pretty good that they won't give it a second thought when your invitation doesn't arrive.

Keep in mind, you're trying to save some money on your big day. Extra people mean extra expense – cut corners here.

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. Yes, when it's delivered all pretty in its customized envelope and small tissue square inside, it can make an impression – for about a minute! Most people read it once, note the date, take out the RSVP card and throw the invite away. So why spend a lot on them?

Remember, we're trying to save money here!

When it comes to invitations, you have many options. You can order them over the internet. You can get them at your local printer. Or you might even do your own invitations on your personal computer. You can use Microsoft Word or Publisher to create beautiful invitations that are ALL you!

There also are inexpensive programs out there specifically made for creating invitations and greeting cards. The best part about buying programs like this is being able to use it again after the wedding is over.

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. If you are really concerned about doing it right, this is good.

However, 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.

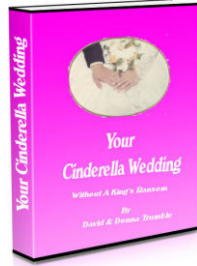
You can use labels to print out addresses on your computer. We would suggest getting the clear labels as it just looks better. The most prominent label maker is Avery. Their website offers free templates to print out your labels, so you may want to check that out before struggling with a software program.

If you don't like the impersonal nature of address labels, address the envelopes by hand. You can get information about calligraphy online or just use your best handwriting!

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 \$60. 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!

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.



WHAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE A FAIRY GODMOTHER?

In the wondrous story of Cinderella popularized by Disney Studios, the gown for the ball was stitched together by adoring mice. Then Cinderella's Fairy Godmother magically transformed the dress into a spectacular gown. Later, her wedding gown was magically created at the wave of a magic wand.

So what do you do, if you don't have a fairy godmother?

Finding the perfect gown can be a long and tedious process. Only the right wedding gown will do when you say those precious words "I Do".

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! You can look like a princess without spending a whole month's rent on your dress!

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.



First and foremost, consider wearing your mother or grandmother's wedding gown if available. This honors them, gives the bride distinction, and saves money. Can you 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 \$200 – well less than the cost of a new, off the rack wedding gown!

For many years, my wife Donna has operated her own sewing business. Designing, altering, and bustling wedding dresses is a mainstay of her Spring and Summer business. If you want custom designing and creation, expect to pay for it. Buying a dress of the rack is far less expensive than hiring a skilled designer to fashion a gown for you. However, when you walk down the aisle in a perfect fitting one of a



kind wedding gown, there is something special about it.



We have found that altering a wedding dress purchased off the rack, is less expensive and usually gets better results when you have a pro do it instead of depending on in store alterations people.

Why not opt for a second-hand wedding dress? It's probably only been worn once anyway. 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.

My daughter recently got married. She didn't want to overburden her mother to design a dress, so she went shopping. She went to several high class bridal shops. At one of them they noticed a \$700 dress marked down to \$99.00. It had a flaw in it and needed repair. She bought the dress and saved \$601.00. She brought



the dress to her mother who fixed the dress and made a few minor alterations. Wow! What a deal.

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!

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.

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 she only needed it for one night, who really cares?

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.

If you have a special dream gown designed by a famous designer and pictured in Bride's magazine for \$10,000. You might consider finding a skilled seamstress to copy or imitate the design using less expensive fabrics. 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 or imitate the design with less exotic fabrics 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 fabric 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.



You can splurge on a to-die-for long beaded veil with a Juliet cap costing more than the wedding gown itself. It can even make a crowning piece for the whole wedding experience.

Imagine what it would be like to create your own tulle veil and tiara for just a few dollars. Save the \$200 dollars for the head piece, and make your own. Or have someone make it for you.

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. Most tiaras come with built in combs.

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.

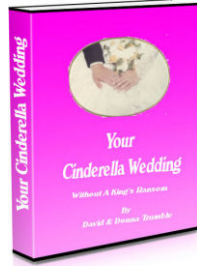
Also consider having simple flowers or baby's breath in your wedding coiffure. It's a beautifully simple touch to a beautiful day that will make you look like a goddess in the process!

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.

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PRINCE CHARMING'S UNIFORM

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

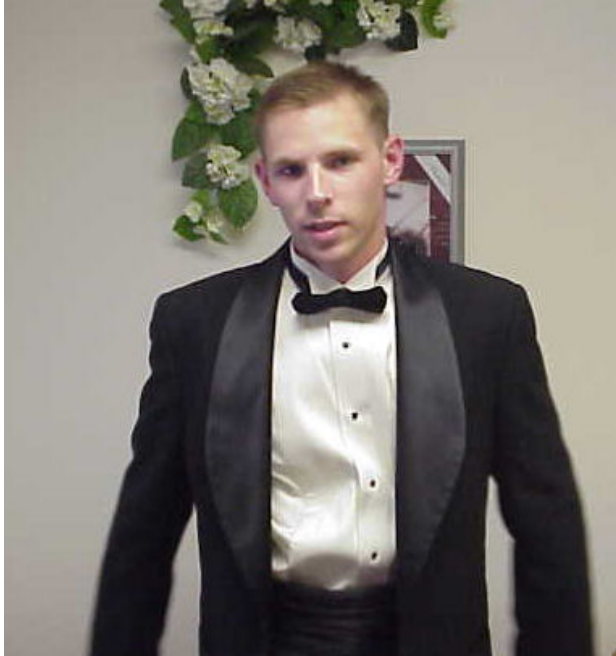
While the story book may portray Prince Charming in a decorated uniform, glistening royal attire; the traditional choice for the groom is a tuxedo.



Some grooms may choose to purchase a tuxedo, but usually renting is more common. 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 \$700. This is not exactly the way to go when trying to save

money on a wedding!

When I got married, I was skinny. I weighted all of 135 pounds and had a 30 inch waist. I proudly had an exquisite custom suit made for the wedding. Within just a few months, I outgrew that suit. While I think I still have the suit, I have not even a dream of ever fitting into it again. The \$200 might have been better spent on many other things.



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 the 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.

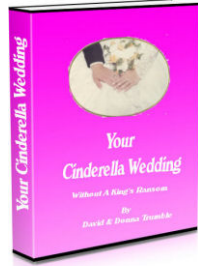
Not every wedding party has to be ultra formal. It's all up to you.

If you choose a theme wedding, the groom may and his attendants may consider various costume options.

Keep in mind that you have many options. You can purchase from department stores, specialty shops, second hand shops, consignment shops, Goodwill stores, and even off the internet. You can also rent from several sources including mail order shops, specialty shops, and department stores. You can wear a tuxedo, a suit, informal attire, or even a theme based costume.

If you need a bit of alterations or adjustments, look for a capable seamstress.

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VISIONS OF LOVELINESS

Once decisions are made with regard to the bride's wedding gown and the attire of the groom, consider the vision of your wedding party positioned in front of your congregation. What the attendants wear will define that image beyond the bride and groom.

What they wear can be just as important as what you wear!



Commonly the groomsmen will match what the groom is wearing. If he wears a tuxedo, they usually do as well. If the groom wears a suit, the attendants wear suits. If the

groom wears informal attire, so do they. If the groom wears a theme based costume, so do they.

Often 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!



Keep in mind that there are really no rules when it comes to your wedding. If you wish to have the groom wear a tuxedo and the attendants wear suits; it is ok. It is your wedding. The general practice in this regard is to dress down attendants in relationship to the groom. The attendants should all generally look the same. No one attendant should stand out

from the group. The groom should be the center of attention and appear a cut above the rest. If you have a theme based wedding, the grooms costume should be more elaborate, distinctive, attractive than that of attendants.

Bridesmaids should add to the overall scene of loveliness and draw attention to the bride. They should enhance rather than detract.

Consider the overall style and imagery you are attempting to create. Color, texture, design, and style are all major considerations when planning for bridesmaid dresses.



You should already have answered the question of who is going to pay for what, however, it is important to consider everyone's financial situation. 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. These are your friends and family. Honor them in your planning regardless who pays the bills.

A wedding party is often made up of people of very different shapes and sizes. You may have a tall girl, a short one, a skinny teen, or even a pregnant bridesmaid.

You may be able to choose a style of dress that accommodates your bridesmaids and order the dresses to fit.

You may be able to find the dresses on sale and purchase them as a set. A skilled seamstress should be able to make most alterations to accommodate sizes, shapes, and body types within reason.

You may even contract with a custom sewing expert to design and produce gowns for each attendant including appropriate fittings and adjustments.

Shop around. See what you can find. Remember that pink chiffon rarely works well at other places besides a wedding reception. When considering attire for your attendants, think about practicalities. Choose styles and fabrics that 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. If they fall in love with the dress, they may wear it to all manner of parties, church activities, and social events. If they hate the dress, they may wear it once and hang it 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!

Do consider the sizes, shapes, and body types of your bridesmaids?

Do consider the practicality of the dresses you choose?

Do consider color, style, and texture?

Avoid letting pride disrupt your wedding. An occasional mistake is made when a bride elects to dress bridesmaids in unattractive attire just to elevate her own status. When everyone looks their best, everyone is blessed. There really is no excuse for ugly bridesmaid dresses.

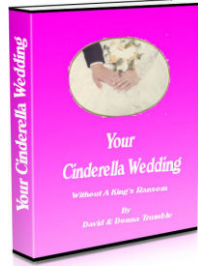
Avoid fabrics that work for some but not all of your bridesmaids.

Avoid styles that work for some but not all of your bridesmaids.

Avoid costs that work for some but not all of your bridesmaids.

When your guests gaze upon your royal wedding party, you want them to see beauty, majesty, and grace. Your selection of attire will go a long way to create that image.

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CORSAGES & BOUQUETS THAT ENHANCE

How do you create visual imagery that is attractive, tasteful, and suitable for the grand ball and the dream wedding?

The most common way couples achieve this is through carrying and wearing flowers. Indeed, this is often one area that becomes extremely expensive.



If you choose to cut costs here, it does not necessarily mean that your wedding flowers can't be beautiful. All flowers are lovely no matter what they cost. They can cost you a bundle, but there are many ways to save yourself a bundle as well.

Corsages, bouquets, and boutonnières' can be very expensive if you depend on a professional to create your custom adornments.



Real flowers are very popular and add a touch of elegance. The selection of flowers, however, can greatly affect their cost. For example, decorating with imported flowers will increase their cost. Using orchids is more expensive than roses. Using roses is more expensive than carnations. Using home grown flowers from your own or a friends flower garden may be least expensive of all.

Keep in mind that real flowers need to be nurtured even up to the moment you say "I Do". If you have someone who can monitor the freshness of your real flowers, by all means, have them! If you want to save yourself and your loved ones a little stress, choose silk!

Silk flowers are also popular. They look good. They are easy to work with. They are reusable. In the long run, they are much less expensive than live flowers.

If you do choose fresh flowers, we recommend commissioning the services of a professional florist. Working with real flowers is an art that probably shouldn't be taken on by a novice.



If you do commission a florist, avoid using the "W" word (wedding) as they will most often charge you much more for wedding flowers as opposed to a few bouquets for a random

event. Keep in mind that a professional florist will not save you any money. They come at a premium price, so be prepared.

Consider ordering fresh flowers from an online wholesaler. You can get some of the best prices around. However, as we mentioned, unlike at a florist, you will be responsible for all of the prep work of cleaning and trimming them, and keeping them alive until the wedding.

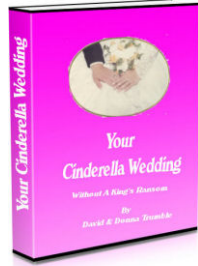
If you're going for a simple look, you might want to contact a local farmer. An iris farm might sell you bulk irises at a discounted rate. Find your local farmer's market and pick up some freshly cut flowers for a simple bouquet. Consider also picking flowers from your own garden.

Remember that flowers are simply garnishes. There's no need to go overboard with nosegays or hand-held masterpieces for the ceremony. The real stars of the show are you, your intended, and your wedding party. The flowers simply add to the overall package.

Consider calling a local community college for your flowers. Many local colleges offer courses in flower arranging. For a small fee, they may be quite accommodating in allowing their students to "practice" for your wedding at a huge discounted price – often for the cost of the flowers alone. Just be prepared for what you get. It might be beautiful, it might be mediocre. As stated before, don't place too much emphasis on the flowers – they are simply garnishes.

An alternative to decorating with flowers is to select a natural setting for the event. A well groomed lawn, an attractive old tree, a running stream, a flower garden backdrop, or a hillside may well replace the need for flowers to foster a glamorous setting.

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HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN CORSAGES, BOUQUETS, AND BUTTONNIERS

Of course, making your own flowers is probably the most frugal choice. But where do you start? Read on!

There are plenty of wholesale stores who will sell silk flowers at a greatly discounted price. Working with silk flowers is easy and can be done by almost anyone. My mother put together all the bouquets, boutonnieres, and corsages for both my weddings. She had no professional training. She simply had a bunch of flowers and some florist tape. They were utterly beautiful!

Some basic equipment you'll need are floral wire, floral tape, wire cutters, flowers, greenery, and decorative accents like baby's breath or smaller flowers. These instructions are mainly for silk flowers, but can be used with real flowers as well. Silk flowers can be manipulated much easier than real ones, so keep that in mind!

Tips for creating your own flowers are abundant. A beautifully simple idea for a gorgeous bridal bouquet is to take several white roses, bunch them together into a bouquet, wrap the bottom with floral tape tightly, and wrap satin ribbon around the stems. Attach long pieces of satin ribbon to flow down as you hold the bouquet and it'll be stunning!

You can use this technique with either silk or fresh flowers, and it doesn't have to be all roses. For a unique look, try out different flowers in your wedding colors. You can also buy plastic nosegay holders at many discount stores that make preparing bouquets super easy!

Don't worry if you can see the tape or wire. You can always disguise it with ribbon or filler.



For your bridesmaids, you can have them carry the traditional nosegay. Assemble it in the same way outlined above for the bridal bouquet. A very elegant look is to have each attendant carry a single flower or a few flowers put together with greenery and ribbon that they carry cradled in their arms. These are super easy to put together. Just take

a few flowers, greenery, and accents, gather the stems together, wrap with floral tape and add ribbon.

For the boutonnieres, simple is best, especially since they will be worn by the men in your wedding party. Most guys don't want garish flowers adorning their bodies – it's just a guy thing!



To put together a boutonniere, take a single flower, add a few green leaves, and maybe a sprig of baby's breath. Wrap the stem in floral tape tightly and voila! Your boutonniere! You can, if you wish, add a little bit of ribbon, but don't go too overboard – remember the "guy thing"!

To make corsages, use an odd number of flowers – 3 or 5 is recommended. Make it just like you would the boutonniere, gather the stems, and add greenery and filler. You'll want the

corsage to be in a round shape, or a long row. Once you have gathered all the flowers together, wrap tightly with floral tape and adjust the stems for comfort. Be sure to add some pretty ribbon for accents.

Many people just aren't sure how to pin on a corsage, so here's a most helpful tip for anyone! The corsage should bend slightly over the collar bone, so don't pin too far down. The wearer should be able to tip her head slightly to smell the flowers.

Stick the pin into the fabric at the bottom left corner of the stem. Weave the pin back out from under the fabric. Push it through about 1 inch, laying it at an angle over the top of the stem. Stick the tip of the pin back into the fabric on the other side of the stem. Insure that the stem is tightly in place with the length of the pin pushing it down. Weave the pin back out of the fabric once more. Be sure that the very tip of the pin does not stick out, nor does it poke under the fabric and touch the skin.

Don't forget the pins! Go for the straight pin with a pretty pearl head on it. They can be found at most craft store quite inexpensively. Have plenty on hand – just in case!

The flower girl basket is probably the easiest of all wedding ceremony flowers. Just take a small basket – preferably white – and decorate it with ribbon and some small flowers. Many local florists will sell you rose petals for the flower girl to strew down the aisle quite cheaply. If they have some roses they aren't able to sell that are going bad, they will usually part with the petals at a low price.

Just as important could be the ring bearer pillow. Want to know how to make your own? Read on!

The ring pillow from a wedding can become a treasured keepsake of a very special day and a family heirloom as

well. Use high-quality materials for the pillow and be creative. Experiment with different patterns, materials and textures before you decide on a final design.

Choose two pieces of fabric that each measure between 8 and 10 inches square. Use white or off-white satin, silk or brocade. If possible, use the same fabric and lace that is used for the wedding dress.

Choose lace and ribbon to decorate the pillow if desired. The amounts required will depend on how the materials are used. About 2 to 3 yards each of ribbon and lace will be adequate



Use two or three pieces of polyester batting as stuffing for the pillow. Each piece should be equal to the dimensions of the fabric squares in step 1.

Use a fabric cutting board, ruler and fabric marking pen to mark and measure out two equal squares of fabric. Make all markings on the wrong side of the fabric. Test the pen on a

scrap of the pillow fabric to make sure that the marks will fade.

Do any embroidery or needlework before continuing to the next step. Add any other decoration to the face of the fabric as well. Embellishments such as small ribbons, charms and delicate lace can be tacked or sewn on to the fabric by hand.

Add a lace ruffle to the pillow by pinning the straight edge of the ruffle to the right side of the fabric square that will form the pillow top. Pin so that the edges line up evenly and the right sides (if there is a right side to the ruffle) are together.

Pin the ruffle very loosely onto the fabric or gather the ruffle slightly as you pin in order to create a fuller ruffle.

Pin the fabric pieces with the right sides together. Edges should match up evenly. Pins should be placed about 1/2 inch apart and should be at right angles to the fabric edges. Make sure that the pinned edge of the ruffle is caught securely between the two fabric layers.

Use a sewing machine to stitch three sides of the pillow, 1/2 inch from the fabric edges. Turn the pillow right side out and stuff the batting layers inside. If you would like a fuller pillow, insert additional batting.

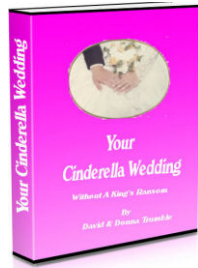
Fold the edges of the un-sewn seam into the pillow 1/2 inch, and stitch closed by hand. Use a slipstitch done by hand or carefully topstitch the edges with your machine.

Add a 10- or 12-inch length of 1/4-inch satin or silk ribbon to the top of the pillow. Stitch the ribbon by hand to the pillow at the ribbon's center point. Add a silk or satin bow made from the same ribbon to cover the stitching. Use the two ribbon strands to loosely tie the wedding rings to the pillows.

You might schedule a party with your attendants to create your ceremony flowers.

You may have a group of teens make the flowers as a wedding project.

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DECORATING FOR THE CEREMONY

As far as flowers and plants as decorations are concerned, this can be a great enhancement to your ceremony. Many churches already have floral adornments on their altars. If you get married around the time of a church celebration, you may be able to buy a few flowers and take advantage of those that are already there.

For example, around Easter, lilies are the flower of choice in most churches. Many people will buy Easter lilies in remembrance of their loved ones. Offer to buy a couple of Easter lilies to add to the existing ones, and you have a beautiful decoration on the altar. Or save the money and just go with the decorations already present.

The same applies around Christmas. Poinsettias are the flower of choice at this time of year. Offer up a few poinsettia plants to add to those already there and you'll have some beautiful altar decorations.

Large arrangements on an altar will only be seen from far away. Use inexpensive flowers such as carnations, or large filling flowers such as snowball mums to fill in greater detail.

If you are getting married in a church, almost all have some type of floral/tree decorations that they have all the time.

All you need to do in this situation is to add a few personal touches and you'll have a beautiful backdrop for your ceremony. This is what we did for my second marriage. We took the artificial ficus trees and arranged them around our other flowers to make for a beautiful altar.

If you are getting married outside, take advantage of nature. Cultivate what Mother Nature has to offer. When my cousin got married, he did so at a local park overlooking a lake. The flowers were in full bloom and it was beautiful. His wife later told me that she had been out at that park every day for two weeks just to make sure that the flowers would be gorgeous -- and they were!

Talk to your venues and see if any other brides have booked for the same day. If the two of you can coordinate flowers and split the cost, you'll save a lot of money. I would imagine both of you wouldn't turn your nose up at saving a ton of money on church decorations and flowers!

Some party rental places will rent large potted plants such as tropical palms or ficus. They visually fill a lot of space, and will help frame your ceremony site or warm up your reception. Best of all, renting a potted plant is far cheaper than buying large flower arrangements. Also, you may consider purchasing these large plants and using them in your home afterwards to get more use out of them.

Ask your friends for decorative house plants, artificial trees, or flowering plants.

Don't try to move your ceremony flowers to the reception hall. Many churches require you leave them anyway, but moving large arrangements can be tedious and simply not worth the time or effort. The last thing you want is to have your reception held up waiting for flowers!

Decorating the place where you will take your vows is just as important as how you decorate your reception.

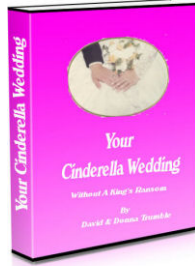
We've covered the floral decorations for a church wedding, but what else do you need to decorate the sanctuary.

Keep in mind that you are working to create your dream wedding without spending a king's ransom.

With budget in mind, remember that less is more. Most wedding ceremonies are short and sweet, so why spend a majority of your money decorating a place where people are most likely only going to be for a half hour or so?

If you want pew bows, they can be made quite inexpensively, but don't decorate each pew. Decorate every other one for the first 10 rows or so. Ribbon for bows can get quite expensive, so doing every other pew is the frugal thing to do.

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HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN PEW BOWS

Speaking from experience, initial bow making can be extremely frustrating. Give yourself plenty of time and practice when you start this craft. While it may take a few tries to finally master it, once you do, you'll start cranking out the bows fairly quickly. Below are instructions for two different types of bows that can be layered for a more elaborate effect.

You will need approximately 4.5 feet of 1" wired ribbon; approximately 4.5 feet of 6" tulle (more or less depending on how long you want the tails); craft wire, wire cutter, scissors.

The Tulle Base:

Lay the ribbon horizontally. Find the middle of your strip of tulle and pinch together with your left hand.

With your right hand, pinch the tulle on the right side about 8" away from the middle.

Bring the second pinched spot to the center, moving underneath. This should form half of a bow. Pinch together the middle with your right hand.

Repeat the same thing with the left side, only this time instead of bringing the tulle underneath to form the bow, bring it over the top.

You should now have a simple bow. Secure the middle by twisting craft wire around it. If you'd like to stop here, hot glue a silk flower in the middle to finish this simple project. However, if you want your bow more ornate, follow the next set of instructions to add a second layer.

The Second Ribbon Layer:

Lay the wired ribbon vertically on a table or flat surface, moving away from you. Take the end closest to you, bring it up and then tuck it in to form a small loop. Pinch the loop in place. This will be the middle of the ribbon.

Just after where you are now pinching, twist the longer end of the ribbon 180 degrees. Keep the twist tight and "hide" it underneath the middle loop. Grab the long piece of ribbon about 6" away from the middle. Then form a loop by bringing the ribbon underneath and back to the center. Pinch together.

Twist the long piece of ribbon again just after the center pinch. Make an equal sized loop on the other side using the same technique.

Continue making equal-sized loops that rest directly underneath each other by using the same technique. Stop when you have three on each side.

Secure the middle with craft wire and leave some extra wire in order to attach it to the tulle base.

Cut off any tail you might have left over from the ribbon.

Spread out the loops to create the look you desire.

Attaching:

With the extra wire from the second layer, attach the ribbon bow to the middle of the tulle base. Consider adding long wire hooks or extra ribbon to the back for easy attachment to the pews.

You may want to consider using simple floral swags at the end of each pew as well. These can be found inexpensively and made even more inexpensively!

Many churches have single candle holders that you can use or rent for a nominal fee. If you are a member of the church, ask! The clergy has had exposure to many weddings. He or she might have some terrific, low-cost ideas you may not have thought about!

You might even consider going to a discount store and finding battery operated candles. These are the same kind people put in their windows around Christmas time. Certain times of the year these will be on clearance. Otherwise they are usually pretty inexpensive. They can also be found at craft stores or craft warehouses pretty cheaply.

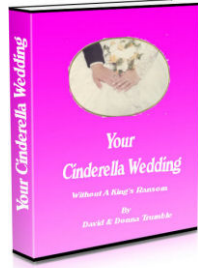
Attach a Velcro strip to the bottom of each candle and attach a strip to the end of each pew. We bought a huge pack of batteries and attached one to the end of each pew. An eight or ten year old might be responsible for twisting the base of each candle to turn them on right before the ceremony. Remember to get as many people involved in your wedding as possible. Use your creativity to make the sanctuary truly gorgeous.

If you're planning an outdoor wedding, the scenery will be your most dramatic decoration. Most couples opt for the traditional gazebo or arch when getting married outdoors. These are often very inexpensive. You can also rent the archway from a party rental place. Decorate it with flowers, Christmas lights, or greenery to make it beautiful.

Seating at an outdoor wedding usually consists of folding chairs. These can usually be found at a benevolent association like The American Legion. This is an excellent place to find seating especially if you're having your reception there. Also check out churches or community centers. Even if you have to pay a few dollars to rent them, it will be worth it!

Decorate the ends of the chairs with greenery and flowers to match your wedding bouquets along with strategically placed ribbon. To set off the "important guest" area (parents, grandparents, etc.) cover the backs of the chairs with simple white pillowcases.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.



SOUND THE TRUMPETS THE MAGIC OF MUSIC

All weddings are made much more special with an added touch contributed by music before, during, and after the ceremony.

A professional pianist, organist, guitarist, or even live band can create a magical setting for your wedding.

Capable vocalists can transform an ordinary wedding into a truly memorable wedding. Soloists, ensembles, or even choirs can greatly enhance the ceremony.

If you use live musicians and vocalists, expect to pay professional level honorariums. Occasionally, you may have a friend who sings regularly in church or plays music for church that is willing to volunteer for your special day.

Do you know someone who plays the piano, organ, or guitar? Ask them to play for you at your ceremony. Nothing sounds as poignant as an acoustic guitar playing a beautiful ballad! Call your local high school or college for musicians.

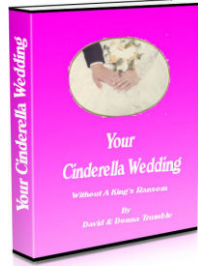
Ask your minister for recommendations of capable musicians and vocalists.

Recruit someone you know to sing during the ceremony. If you don't know anyone who sings, find a place where they're having karaoke and pick the singer you like best. Offer them a small fee to sing at your wedding. VOILA! You have a vocalist to make your day special!

Music for your wedding ceremony could consist of live or recorded performances.

Another alternative is to prepare recorded music for use before, during, and following the ceremony. For pre-wedding music, make a CD of songs that are meaningful to you as a couple. You can also use this CD for the processional and recessional marches.

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CHERISH THE MEMORIES AND SMILE PRETTY

You want to be sure to have plenty of photos to remember your special day. Unfortunately, a professional photographer can be a real budget buster! Read on for tips on how to save with wedding photography.

Pictures are priceless, and you want to be sure you have plenty of good pictures of your special day.



Unfortunately, if you're on budget, professional photographers can eat up most of your money. While they are definitely worth the price, they're not always feasible for people who need to save some money.

So how can you get beautiful photos of your wedding day without breaking the bank?



Hiring a professional photographer is certainly the best way to get top quality photos to capture your event. However, a typical pro will set of photos will cost between \$1,000 and \$5,000.

Explore your options. You may have a family member or close friend who loves to take pictures and envisions themselves as a capable photographer. In years past, you might pay for the film and developing, while your volunteer

snapped the photos for the ceremony and reception. The pictures were beautiful and we made our own albums at a fraction of the cost.

Today, we live in a digital world where film is no longer an issue. A capable amateur can produce very nice digital photos that can easily be touched up, adjusted, even embellished on your computer. You can then print out the shots you want or take them to the local Wal-Mart or photo processing studio. They will provide you with multiple copies and even enlargements quite cheaply. Ask friends and family to see if anyone likes to experiment with photography as a hobby.

So how can you find capable people?



Try the community college. Check with participants in photography classes. Students are eager to practice their

craft for a nominal fee or even just the experience. Talk to the instructor, however, to be sure you're getting the cream of the crop – the top in the class. You don't want to take a chance and get the beginner for your big day.

Don't be afraid to call the local newspaper and ask to speak with the staff photographer. You don't have to know anyone at the paper to offer up the chance for them to make some extra money. Many will perform the service for a small fee.



A neat idea is to get your guests involved. At the reception, place disposable cameras on each table for guests to take pictures at your reception. A word of caution here: place a note on the table that asks the adults to please monitor the use of these cameras. I have been to many a reception where children have gotten hold of these cameras and the bride was left with many, many pictures of people's feet and – um – hind ends!

Disposable cameras can be found – again – at bulk warehouse stores or even online. Shop around for the best price and use them sparingly. If you don't want to put the cameras on the table, another idea is to place the cameras in a basket at the door as guests enter the reception. The ones who really care about taking pictures will take the cameras. Have your guest book attendant monitor who takes them or even have the attendant hand them out to adults only.



When it comes to chic, elegant wedding pictures, nothing beats the look of Black and White photos. Black and white film can be much cheaper than color film as well. Black and White photos can be combined with all of the money saving ideas above.

You can even take color digital photos and retouch them to give them the classic image of brown tone, gray tone, or black and white. After the wedding, the photos can be blown up and dry mounted for a long-lasting keepsake.

As far as video is concerned, consider what a video will mean to you. Sure, a video of your wedding is a pretty nice thing to have, but let's face it, who really watches this video? Your family may watch it once after the wedding is over, and you and your future spouse may bring it out on your anniversary every year, but other than that the most public viewing of your wedding video will probably be at your 50th anniversary party (and by then you will have had to pay a couple hundred dollars to have your video converted to the latest format. ex. DVD). Again seek out volunteers as much as possible.

I think a great way to save a thousand bucks is to ask yourself and family before your wedding, "Who owns a video camera that I know?" "Who do I know who has a hobby of videotaping?" Maybe you know one person who owns a video camera but hates to tape, and another person who has the patience and artistic ability to video, but doesn't own a camera. Voila! You have your own videographer, if both parties are willing to play their part (and I think you will find that almost everyone is willing to help in whatever small way they can to help make your wedding a success).

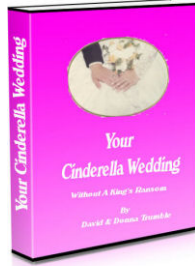
Of course, it would probably be a good idea to lay down some rules for your videographer since they are using

someone else's camera (such as, keep the camera with you at all times and don't let anyone else use the camera, etc.)

Video was virtually unheard of in 1969, when Donna and I got married. But it is quite accessible today. Set up the camera on a tripod and catch some very personal moments when the time is right.

If you do have a friend or family member do your wedding video, there are many studios around who can cut and splice parts of the video together and add background music later if you want a precious keepsake. You can do this later, however, when you can afford it and not have to figure it into your wedding budget.

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THE GRAND BANQUET YOUR RECEPTION HALL

Your wedding reception is where your guests will spend the most time. As we've said before, you should count on spending at least 40 percent of your budget on the reception. This includes the food, decorations, drinks, music, etc. But a beautiful reception doesn't have to break the bank. Once again, count on your friends and family to help out. You cannot imagine how many halls have been decorated just because someone asked.



Call in your favors when your big day comes!

Begin by considering the setting for your reception. Think about its existing décor. While it may not be all you dream, you can make it work for you.



Consider flowers and table decorations.

If you're having your reception in a hall like the Legion or the moose, be prepared to deal with the décor that is already there. A multitude of war memorabilia everywhere may not fit your vision. Since war and war heroes are probably not the focus of your wedding. What can you do to quickly and easily alter the setting.

Be creative. Use your imagination. If you have a particular theme for your wedding, you may be able to recruit volunteers to create interesting backdrops that relate to

your theme. Hanging drapery, cardboard display walls, and special lighting can go a long way toward turning your warehouse into your wonderland. Strands of Christmas tree lights, drapings of streamers, and colorful backdrops can create a whole new fantasy world.



Spread some butcher paper over all the tables for tablecloths, or get some white sheets. Get some battery operated candles and place them in glass vases. Scatter some flower peddles down the center of the table. Sprinkle glitter for a little glitz. and every other one had floating candles in glass vases that we found wholesale at a craft store.

If you decide to use glitter, use it sparsely and keep it mostly toward the center of the table! Glitter can be a huge mess if it's strewn about too randomly! It looks great, but

some guests won't be crazy about getting glitter on their "good" clothes!



Use the bridesmaid's bouquets to decorate the tables, the head table, or the cake table. You don't have to have expensive floral arrangements everywhere to make a beautiful reception hall.

There are many, many alternatives and most can be put together with supplies from the dollar store. Use supplies from the dollar store and make gorgeous table decorations.

Create Your Own Centerpiece.

Buy some glass cereal bowls and place colored glass marbles in the bottom. Add water half way up and put a floating candle in each. Instead of floating candles, just add a regular votive in the middle of the marbles. When the reception is over, the bride and groom will have a matching set of bowls.

Try This Centerpiece Idea.

Get some small terracotta pots and some florists foam. Pick out some silk flowers in your wedding colors along with some greenery. Stick the flowers in the foam bunched tightly together and arrange to your heart's delight!

Here Is Another Centerpiece Possibility.

Take a silk rose and separate the bud from the stem. Disassemble the bud into individual petals. With a clear votive holder and a glue gun, you will glue the petals onto the holder. Start at the top with the smaller rose petals. Place one petal next to another, with the sides touching slightly.

Once your first row is completed, you can start on the next. Make sure to cover any bare areas at the bottom of the first row, and work your way down the holder until the rose petals cover the entire surface. Take the leaf from the flower and attach to the bottom of the holder. This will give the illusion of a lighted rose once a candle is placed inside and lit!

Picture Frame Centerpiece.

Find picture frames of varying sizes. Gather together your favorite pictures of the bride and groom. Put the pictures in the frames and arrange on the tables surrounding them by clear glass marbles and some greenery.

Basket Centerpiece.

Get some small baskets and decorate with ribbon. Print out some index cards that say "Advice For The Newlyweds" and lay them on the table with pens and/or pencils. Encourage guests to write something on the cards and place them in the baskets. Surround the baskets with flowers, greenery or pebbles. This can be a great ice-breaker for people who don't know each other. Be prepared,

too, for the jokesters in the crowd who may offer up some ridiculous and sometimes bawdy advice.

Centerpiece Grapevine.

Take small grapevine wreaths and decorate with tulle and ribbon. Place a bottle of champagne in the center or a bottle of wine from a local winery. For extra fun, attach a balloon to the bottle.

Champagne Glasses And Hot Glue.

Take two plastic champagne glasses and hot glue them together so that they cross when laying down. Hot glue four clear glass marbles inside each glass and tie a helium balloon to each. It will look like there are bubbles flowing out of your glasses as they lay on the table!

We had balloons at both of my wedding receptions. Not only are they festive and fun, they can help keep bored children entertained. Most dollar stores have helium balloons they will fill with purchase. However, you may want to look into a portable helium tank and do it yourself. Wal-Mart offers a balloon party kit with helium tank and forty balloons.

Glass Fish Bowl.

Buy glass fish bowls at the dollar store and fill them with – fish! You can find goldfish pretty inexpensively either at Wal-Mart or a local pet store. If you have the money, try to find beta fish in your wedding colors! One word of caution if using live fish: be sure to give their water lots of surface area to provide enough oxygen. The last thing you want is a bunch of dead fish decorating your tables. Let the children in attendance take the fish home – with the permission of their parents, of course.

Boardgames.

One couple wanted to be whimsical at their reception, so they collected up all the board games they loved as children – Ants in the Pants, Monopoly, Sorry, etc. These were arranged on the tables with decorative accents surrounding them. This can be great for the children in attendance, but don't be surprised if the adults play with them too.

Beer Bottles.

Another bride wanted to reflect the personalities of her and her groom. They were "country people", she says and liked a cold beer on occasion. She took longneck beer bottles and steamed the labels off of them. She created their own beer labels on her computer and glued them on with a hot glue gun. She splatter painted them before attaching the labels and tied each with a piece of twine. Truly unique, we think!

The Mason Jar.

We like the idea of taking a pint sized Mason jar and wrapping it with tissue paper tying a ribbon around the neck to secure it. Place flowers in the jar, potpourri or whatever you think fits you as a couple.

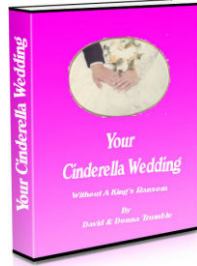
Holiday Decorations.

If you're getting married around a holiday, you can come across some fun decorations that celebrate that holiday. At Christmas, spray paint pine cones silver and gold and surround them with pine sprigs. Having an Easter wedding? Use plastic Easter eggs and that annoying plastic grass you put in the Easter baskets.

Live Flowers.

If you're having an outdoor reception, decorate around that. Use lots of live flowers and greenery to reflect the beauty of Mother Nature surrounding you. If it's windy, avoid using candles and be sure any balloons are secured so they don't blow away!

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without a King's Ransom.



DIVINE WEDDING FAVORS

Now that you've got the place decorated, you may want to consider using favors as additional decorations.

Some brides don't like the idea of giving gifts to her guests, but we think it's a nice gesture as a thank you for attending your special day. These favors can be elegant, fun, or practical. We prefer the practical. Here are some great suggestions for fun and unique wedding favors.

Divinity fudge makes delicious cheap wedding favors. Wrapped up in white tulle and tied with a white ribbon it would be beautiful. Add a tag; you make yourself, with a little message like "Love is divine". Cut out the tag with scallop scissors and punch a hole for the ribbon. One warning, divinity doesn't come out well in high humidity.

Regular candles are nice too for cheap wedding favors. Wrap in tulle and tie with ribbon. Stick a small flower in the ribbon.

Tree seedlings, such as citrus or any kind of tree, are something everybody would love. They will always remember your wedding with this unique wedding favor idea. Wrap the plastic pot to disguise.

Flower seedlings or seed packets are a nice wedding favors. Wrap in anyway that is appropriate for your wedding. Tie with ribbon, raffia or paper ribbon.

Make wine glass markers from wire and beads. You can find instructions at the craft store. One is enough for a wedding party favor. Place in a small box and tie with ribbon.

Sachets made from lavender. Make a small bag from lace. Sew up three sides, put the lavender in and sew up fourth side. Attach a small silk flower. Potpourris in drawstring bags made of lace or tulle are pretty. They smell nice too. You can use any kind of bag that's easy for you to make.

Everybody loves herbs. Buy small ones and place plastic container right into a small terracotta pot. Put some moss around the top to disguise the plastic planter. Include a pretty tag with instructions for care and attach to a ribbon tied around the pot.

A strawberry plant is another live wedding favor idea. It can be presented in the same way as an herb. Anything of this nature that is in season is appreciated.

Candies, such as M&Ms in your wedding colors, Kisses or Hugs, mints, a wonderful piece of chocolate or any kind that you would like, look great in a cupcake liner. They come in different sizes and colors.

Get M and M's in your wedding colors (www.colorworks.com), place them in plastic bags and tie a ribbon on them.

For an outdoor wedding, consider buying umbrellas for a dollar a piece at the dollar store. Wrap them in ribbons with your colors. This, of course, is for a smaller wedding only, but can be a great gift to help shield guests from inclement weather or the sun.

Buy plain chocolate bars in bulk or get the miniature version. Print out new labels on your computer that you personalize for yourself and wrap them around the bars.

Make your own CD using your favorite songs. Include the First Dance song, the cake-cutting song and all the traditional songs. Make CD covers with your picture on it and gave all your guests a copy of the CD. You can also make general mix CD's with all of your favorite songs on it – not just the wedding ones!

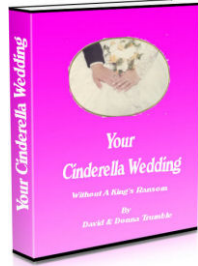
For a Christmas wedding, give each guest a Christmas ornament. Take a plain ball type ornament and use a paint pen to personalize with your name and the date of your wedding.

Do you and your intended share a love of something unique? Are you big Nascar fans? Love to golf? Rabid about a sports team? Gear your favors around these unique characteristics that are you.

Also, unless you have your heart set on taking home your table decorations, consider giving them away to guests. A fun way to do this is to take a hint from most class reunions. Give one to the guests that traveled the farthest, the ones who have married the longest, married the shortest, etc. This helps bring people into your reception and make them feel like a bigger part of your special day!

Perhaps the largest expense of your reception is food. Let's look at some viable options for feeding you and your guests without having to mortgage your house.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.



YUMMY YUMMY TASTES OF THE DIVINE

Food can take a huge chunk out of your wedding budget. It's often difficult to figure out what's acceptable as it is an area in which expert's (etiquette or otherwise) opinions vary widely. It can also be difficult to choose what type of food to serve at your reception...especially when you consider all of the different varieties of food available to you.



If you are having your reception at a hall that offers food service as part of the package, choose your menu wisely. While you may dream of a steak and lobster meal at your reception, this will be quite expensive and is not really viable when throwing a wedding on a budget.

There's nothing wrong with an elegantly prepared chicken breast for your wedding meal. Perhaps offer a vegetarian alternative like fish as well. Beef tends to be more expensive than poultry or fish, so be completely committed if you must have steak, you'll pay for it!

Consider having hors d'oeuvres if your reception hall will be catering. Almost always, these will be cheaper than a sit down meal, and guests can enjoy them just as much.



Here are some general tips for your wedding dinner catered by your reception hall:

It's a myth that a buffet-style meal is less expensive than a served one. In reality, buffets require more food and more labor so their cost is higher.

If you are working with a smaller group (say 40 to 70), piggyback onto another group's menu. This allows the hotel to buy in bulk and lowers your price.

Whenever possible, order in bulk yourself.

Consider other main entrees besides beef and chicken. Chefs can do a lot of things with pastas and the price is usually very reasonable

Allow the chef to try out his new, original recipes with your group. Most welcome the chance to be creative and lower the price per serving in exchange for the group's feedback. Be careful that it's not something too exotic, though. Lamb or swordfish might not appeal to everyone in your party!

Negotiate house wine price with dinner versus a specialty wine.

Find out how the caterer/hotel taxes food. If gratuity is part of the taxed bill, the cost will be more.

For halls that will allow you to bring in your own caterer, the key here is to shop around. Check with a local family restaurant and see if they have bulk meals they will offer for your reception. Almost all will or at the very least, will try for the money.

From Kentucky Fried Chicken or other chain restaurant, you might arrange dinners for less than \$5.00 per person. At just \$5.00 a plate for 200 people, you can feed the whole group for about \$1,000. You could create your own buffet

with fried chicken and ham, mashed potatoes, green beans, corn, rolls, butter, coffee, tea, and all the utensils including plates and napkins. All of your guests can eat till they are full and you might even have food left over! It can be very much worth the cost.

The truly frugal bride will probably want to do what we did at my second wedding, though. As I've mentioned – what is this, the hundredth time? – Family and friends pitched in a lot for us as a wedding gift.

If you have a rather large family, you may get many involved in preparing and serving the reception dinner. Along those lines, you may want to explore a potluck reception.

Each might offer up a dish in traditional potluck fashion. One might make macaroni salad, another potato salad. You could have coleslaw, a green tossed salad, green bean casserole, and baked beans. Bags of potato chips are quick and easy. Be creative. Try some homemade and very tasty meal ideas.



The Potluck Reception

Don't be shy to pursue this potluck reception idea. It is truly the traditional way to celebrate. And, it is truly the number one low budget wedding option.

Today's weddings are so commercialized. You will learn that caterers offer very limited menus to very limited budgets! Guests will likely be very pleased and welcome the idea of a potluck reception.

The potluck reception goes well with any wedding theme. If you are shy about approaching this option you can simply call it an "Old Time Traditional Wedding Celebration" The potluck dinner will suit this theme quite naturally and no-one will even question it!

You may even want to pick an "Old Time" theme for your decorating and favors. This will further incorporate the idea

of an old time tradition theme. Why not try a 50's theme or a 20's theme. These are both popular old time themes.

Simply slip an added note with the invite, or on the invite, to give guests this option. For example the note might read...

~Our reception will be an
"Old Time Traditional Celebration"
with a potluck dinner.

_____. Please check here
if you would like to bring a dish
for the reception in place of a wedding gift.
Call with dish suggestions please.

Have them call to get or offer suggestions on a dish so you have control over the menu. No one is obligated to participate, but I'm sure you will be surprised at how many guests will opt for this.

You and your guests will be equally surprised at the great variety and quality of the dishes provided. Guests will want to bring only their best recipes to a grand occasion such as a wedding reception!

Here are some descriptions of a few reception types in which a full meal is not served. All of these options are less expensive than a full meal (whether buffet style or sit-down) if you are willing to do most of the work yourself. All of these receptions are acceptable if you aren't holding the reception during meal-time.

Breakfast is often served around 8:00 a.m., Lunch at 12:00 p.m. and Dinner at 6:00 p.m., and these are the times in which a full meal is generally expected by guests. These times also vary depending on your area. You should hold your reception two hours before or after these times if not considering a full meal.



Cake and Punch Reception

The most common time of day that this type of reception is held is early afternoon (approximately 2:00 p.m.), but it can also occur in mid-morning (approximately 10:00 a.m.). A cake and punch reception generally consists of the wedding cake and refreshments. Refreshments can include: punch, coffee, tea, champagne, etc. You can also supplement the wedding cake with other types of cake in different flavors and textures.



Dessert Reception

This type of reception is one in which desserts are served. Desserts can include pies, cakes, doughnuts, cookies, pastries, brownies, etc. Another option, which can be combined with a normal dessert reception if you'd like, is a sundae bar.

In this type of reception, you serve bowls of ice cream (usually vanilla) and let your guests choose their topping. Toppings can include chocolate or fudge sauce, shredded coconut, chocolate chips, crushed walnuts, whipped cream, fruit toppings, etc.

Basically, the same things you'd find in any sundae bar. Summer is the most common time of year for a sundae bar. A normal dessert bar can be used year round though as there are desserts specific to season. For example, pumpkin

pie and apple pie would be a great choice for fall weddings. This type of reception is also an example of an inexpensive choice if you purchase the items on your own.

Hors D'oeuvres Reception

There are actually two distinct types of hors d'oeuvres receptions. The first is light hors d'oeuvres and consists of a lighter fare than the second which is a heavy hors d'oeuvres menu.

A light menu often includes items such as: crackers, vegetable platters with dip, fruit, cheese, etc. A heavy hors d'oeuvres often includes these as well as items such as: meat and cheese trays, chicken fingers, egg rolls, etc.

These types of receptions are also (casually) called "finger-food receptions" in some areas. In order to save money on this type of reception, check your local grocery store deli for prices on "meat and cheese" trays as well as "vegetable" and "cracker and cheese" platters. Their prices are often very reasonable. Another option is to buy the ingredients yourself.



Tea (or Coffee) Reception

This type of reception is a relic from a bygone era.

Originally, tea receptions were meant to reflect the mood of an "afternoon tea."

An authentic tea reception will include items such as petit fours, watercress sandwiches, cucumber sandwiches, scones (biscuits), etc.

Be sure to cut the crusts off the sandwiches and cut in a diagonal cross (X shape) for an authentic look. If you're looking for a more modern approach...you can serve coffee with (or in place of) the tea. You can also serve: bite-size pieces of cake (such as carrot), any manner of sandwich which is easy to cut, cinnamon rolls, etc.

This type of reception is relatively inexpensive (depending on the items you decide to serve) and can be relaxing for both the couple and the guests.

Salad Reception

This choice is becoming more popular and is a viable choice for vegetarians who don't want to serve a full meal. Items served can include: green (lettuce, spinach) salads, fruit salads, pasta salads, potato salads (lacto-ovo), coleslaw (lacto- ovo), etc.

A veggie bar (to supplement green salads) can be added as well and may have such choices as: chopped onions, carrots (baby or sliced), celery, broccoli, mushrooms, diced tomatoes, sliced cucumbers, etc.

A salad dressing bar can be chosen as well and may include such choices as: vinegar and oil, Italian dressing, garlic and olive oil, balsamic vinegar and lemon juice, etc. If you're a lacto-ovo vegetarian other dressing choices could include: bleu cheese, green goddess, ranch, French, etc. This type of reception is also inexpensive if you prepare most of the items yourself.

Some other general ideas for do-it-yourself food at the reception include:

Try a pasta reception in which your guests are served plain pasta with their choice of toppings

Have a Mexican buffet

Provide simple lunch meats and cheeses with bread for sandwiches

If you're a member of a church and will be having your reception there, check with the ladies auxiliary and see if they'll do the food in exchange for a donation to their organization.

Try a local service organization: the Kiwanis, the Jaycees

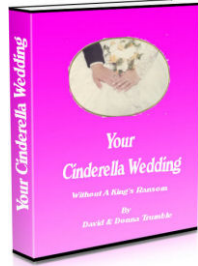
Call a community college and see if their culinary students would cook for you if you provide the food

There is some debate on whether it's a good idea to add a line on your invitation stating what type of reception is occurring. Some examples of this are: "Cake and Punch Reception to Follow Ceremony", "Light hors d'oeuvres reception to follow at two o'clock" and "Dessert Reception Following Ceremony".

My personal opinion is that it makes it easier--not only for the couple...but for the guests as well. It's a clear way for the couple to inform guests that a full meal should not be expected...and guests have the option of eating a meal (if needed) prior to or after the wedding.

Another important aspect of cuisine at the wedding is the cake. You don't have to spend a fortune to have a delicious and beautiful wedding cake.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.



THE GLORIOUS WEDDING CAKE MASTERPIECE

Your cake is the centerpiece of the reception. It is a scrumptious dessert as well as part of a tradition- the beautiful or messy cutting-of-the-cake.



Look at lots of different ideas before you decide what you want. Visit bakeries and peruse bridal magazines. You might

also find inspiration at a toy store, in china patterns or from your favorite candies.

Remember fancy cakes from the bakery are expensive, anywhere from three dollars to fifteen dollars a slice plus other charges like delivery, etc.



Simple cakes can be very elegant. We'll give you great ideas to have a marvelous confection that will long be remembered after it's eaten and smashed in the face of the bride and groom.

Consider simplicity with your cake. The actual one you have on display doesn't have to fee your entire guest list. Try out a simple two-tiered number and then have a sheet cake in the kitchen to serve to guests.

For several of our events we our daughter in law has created wonderful tiered cakes. Check with your friends, neighbors, and associates for possible cake makers and decorators who would graciously take on this challenge.

Why not try cupcakes as an alternative to the traditional tiered cake. These can be made in a variety of flavors and arranged on a tiered rack or in a creative design on the cake table.



Of course, if you are skilled at baking, you can save big by making your own. Consider the cost of some cake mixes

and frosting, and you can see how baking your own cake can save money.

Wedding cakes don't have to be elaborate, just tasty. When decorating, consider using fresh flowers. This will add some real class to the cake and bring in the colors of your wedding too.



The cake topper is another place where you can show your uniqueness as a couple. One found some miniature (really small) plastic drivers that just happened to be white. She tied them together with ribbon and this is what adorned our cake.

Consider a matchbox car for the Nascar fans. How about one of those headliner figures in your favorite team for a sports couple?

Do you both like to fish? No, don't put a fish on top of your cake, but you can put a lure or bobber up there. Please, though, buy it new – don't just grab something from your tackle box!

Many couples want to have mints and nuts to go along with the cake. This is fine, but you should buy the nuts in bulk from a warehouse store, and make the mints yourself. Homemade mints can be frozen well in advance and still taste delicious when they're thawed out.

Try this delicious recipe:

WEDDING CREAM MINTS

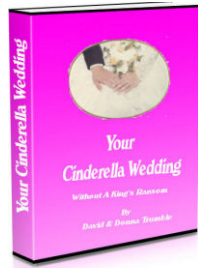
1 three-ounce package cream cheese softened
3 cups powdered sugar
Food coloring (in your wedding colors)
Flavoring (available at most grocery stores) – peppermint preferably

Mix cheese, flavoring, and coloring till well blended. Slowly add sugar. Knead in with fingers as mixture thickens. Roll into small balls then into granulated sugar. Press flat with a spoon. Refrigerate or freeze. If freezing, thaw in refrigerator 1-2 days prior to serving.

This makes 50-75 mints. Plan 2 mints per person.

Guests need more than food and cake alone at your reception.

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.



TO PARTY OR NOT TO PARTY

Let's explore the question of beverages.

The question of whether or not to serve alcohol at your wedding is one that can cause dissension in the ranks of family. We'll address that in a moment.



Plan to have on hand coffee. You can borrow a large coffee dispenser from the local church, or your reception hall will

probably have one on hand for you to use. Buy a large can of coffee on sale and brew it yourself.



Iced tea is always good to have as well. You can get family size tea bags at most grocery stores and brew the tea in your coffee pot. Rinse it out good first! Put the brewed tea in a large cooler dispenser, add some water and ice. If you want to add sugar, do, but many guests prefer to add their own, so we suggest leaving it unsweetened and providing sugar at the tables.

Soda can be expensive, but is a great hit with the kids! Buy 2 liter bottles and plastic cups instead of cans. Have a large cooler filled with ice as well. We recommend the smaller cups since the guests are more likely to drink it all instead of leaving some in the bottom. It's a small way to conserve on the amount used. Unless you're rabid about the taste of

name-brand sodas, the store brand can often be just as good and much less expensive.



Punch is always good to have at a wedding reception. We're willing to bet you know someone who owns a punch bowl, so borrow it. Don't go overboard on the punch, though. Many people will only have a cup or two and you don't want to have leftover. It's not that great the second day!

A good basic punch recipe is to mix together a 2 liter bottle of lemon-lime soda, a can/bottle of fruit punch, and

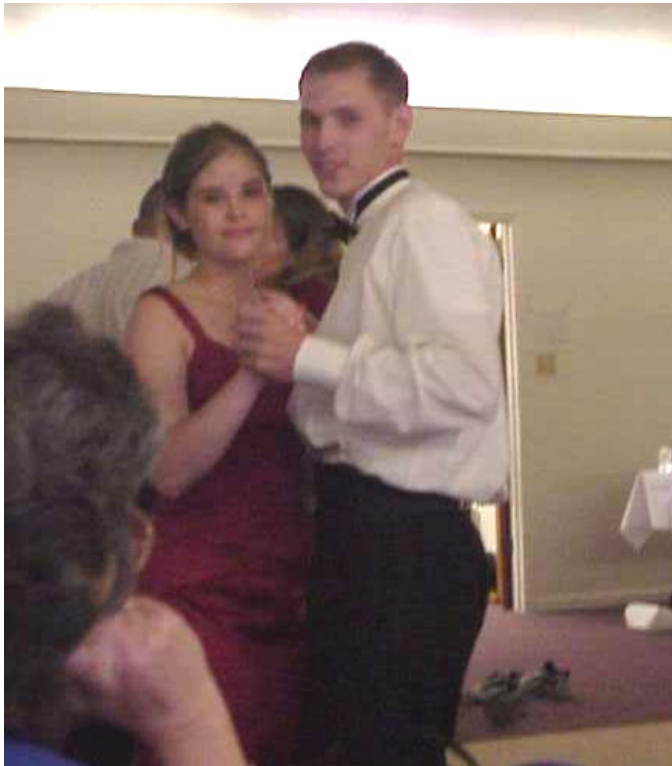
flavored sherbet. You can also use plain vanilla ice cream. Stir together until the sherbet or ice cream is melted. Add ice.

Now let's address the alcohol question. For some people, it's a no-brainer. No alcohol, no drunken relatives to spoil the day. In many families, this option is a must.

I'm reminded of the reception where the bride's grandma got drunk and picked a fight with the groom's grandma. They ended up tangling on the floor and an ambulance had to be called. No bride wants that as a memory of their special day.

Usually, you can satisfy most of your guests with non alcoholic champagne or non-alcoholic wines.

For some, it's just not a proper wedding reception without drinks. For the frugal bride on a budget, however, alcohol can be a huge cost. There are ways you can save if you will be having cocktails at your wedding.



You must check with the reception hall to make sure there are no rules against alcoholic beverages. Most churches will prohibit alcoholic drinks.

First, you need to check with your reception hall to see if you must purchase liquor directly from them or if you can bring it in yourself. If you have to get it from them, negotiate a price. They're usually willing to give a little knowing that you're investing your money in them for the reception.

Most people can't afford to have an open bar for the duration of the reception. Just to clarify, an open bar is one where guests can drink whatever and how much



they want and the bride and groom pay the bill.

We suggest having open bar for only an hour or two. You can calculate just how much you're able to pay for a bar bill and instruct the bartender to cut off the open bar when you've reached that point.



Some experts think it's an insult to ask guests to pay for their own drinks. We beg to differ on this point. Drinking is optional. With the couple providing a meal, music, and socialization, asking them to pay for everyone's drunk is just not feasible for the everyday Joe.

If you do want to have an open bar, it's a good idea to limit that to beer and wine only and opting out of pricey mixed drinks that can add up quickly. Insist that bartenders use shot

glasses. This keeps drinks uniform, and if you're charged per bottle, prevents bartenders from "pouring heavy" to go through more bottles.

If you are allowed to provide your own liquor, this, of course, would be the best way to save on alcohol at your wedding. For large groups, buy beer by the keg, not the bottle. Contact a nearby winery and ask about bulk discounts. Buy liquor at warehouse stores like Sam's or Costco as well.

Don't think you have to have absolutely every type of liquor on hand. If guests want an exotic drink, they're out of luck. Buy only the basics: vodka, whiskey, rum, and possibly gin. We suggest having on hand some juices as well: orange, cranberry, and pineapple. You should also have cola and lemon-lime sodas.

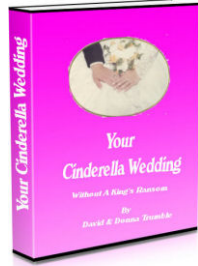
Having a bartender on hand instead relieves your guests of making their own drinks. You might find yourself running out of liquor quite quickly that way! Perhaps enlist the services of a friend to pour drinks. Better yet, ask several friends to take a turn for an hour at a time. Your reception hall might have someone willing to do it as well.

A rather unconventional, but sometimes feasible idea for liquor is to have guests bring their own alcohol. That way, they have what they prefer, and you don't have the expense!

Also, consider making your own wine spritzers. One couple I know rented a champagne fountain from a party rental place and put the spritzer in it instead of champagne. Mix equal parts of lemon-lime soda and wine and you have a tasty alternative to straight wine or beer.

Above all, make sure that any of your guests who have had too much to drink won't be driving home. You may want to have on hand the number of a taxi service or provide one yourself with teenage family members. Have someone in charge of keeping an eye on those who are inebriated and someone else to enforce the requirement that they not drink and drive. They may be angry that night, but they'll thank you in the morning – through the haze of their hangover!

You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.



BOOGIE OOGIE OOGIE

The final aspect of your reception you'll need to decide on is music.

A wedding reception is a party to celebrate the union of two special people. Most celebrations include music to express the joy everyone is feeling. What are your options when you're on a budget? Varied!



Most people like to have a disc jockey at their reception – if only because they have a large selection of music available to please the various age groups you'll have there. Disc jockeys are probably less expensive than bands, but they can be a bit pricey too.

Consider, too that with a DJ, you'll also have an emcee to move the reception along.

We suggest you shop around extensively when looking for a DJ. Consider calling a local college to see if they can

recommend a talented TV/R major who might be willing to take the job.

When picking out music, make sure you take into consideration the guests. An all-rap repertoire probably isn't appropriate, but all big band music isn't either. Make sure there's a mix of both to please both young and old.



To encourage guests to dance, assign each table a love song, when the band (or DJ) plays that song that table should get up to dance. You know likely know whether this would work or not with your crowd, but is a neat idea.

To be honest, really a very small percentage of the human race enjoys the Chicken Dance, Macarena, and Electric Slide. Know your guests, and if you know this will be uncomfortable for them, make sure your DJ does not include

them. They can be embarrassing, but they can be great fun as well. It's truly a matter of preference!

If your hearts are set on live music, look for bands that have day jobs and "jam" for fun. Don't rule out high school-aged bands. Or hire a child violin virtuoso to perform for the ceremony -- there won't be a dry eye in the place.

A rock-bottom budget option is to make your own tapes of your musical favorites. If you know of someone who has an awesome stereo system, see if they would be willing to loan it to you for the day and have people volunteer to man it to make sure you don't have any silent times.



The good part about mix CD's is that if you take some time, you can put it together so that it plays straight through and no one will have to switch discs. You can mix it up with an

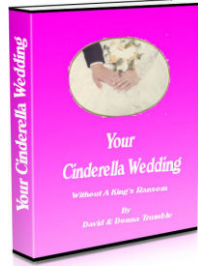
equal balance of fast and slow songs and add in all your favorites as well.

Another fun option for music is to have a karaoke set-up. You can maximize on the talents of some of your guests and laugh at the not-so-great talents of others. Some people really come to life with karaoke, you may as well maximize on that!



If you don't own a karaoke machine or know someone who does, look into renting one. You can download karaoke songs (music without the lyrics) online to make your own karaoke CD's. Go to lyrics.com to get the words and arrange it all in a simple 3-ring binder for your guests to refer to.

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ODDS AND ENDS

There are a lot of other miscellaneous ways to save money on your wedding. The next section covers some of these tips.

Wedding Rings:

Wedding rings symbolize the union of two people joined by the ring finger. Some people say the ring finger has an artery that leads straight to the heart. I don't know if that's true but it is romantic.



Once married most people don't take off their wedding bands, as a sign of their faithfulness to each other. It's also a good idea to leave them on because it is surprisingly easy to lose your rings.

Here is the buzz on saving a few bucks on your wedding rings:

Simple gold bands are the cheapest. They can run \$125 to \$400 each. They are also classic and elegant.

Silver bands are modern and cheap.

Don't buy the designer version of gold bands. That will save you a bunch.

If you want white metal, opt for white gold. Platinum is almost double the price.

You'll save almost half if you buy a coordinating set or trio (engagement ring, your wedding band and his band.)

If you want a ring with a stone, don't forget semi-precious stones are beautiful. You don't have to have diamonds in your wedding rings.

Family wedding bands are a romantic heirloom and free.

Shopping online can save you money. Make sure you pick a secure site with great customer service.

Check out local pawn shops too.

Consider stones other than diamonds. Princess Diana had a sapphire ring, you could too!

If you really want something more-make a plan-start saving now and decide to upgrade your wedding rings on your fifth

anniversary or your tenth anniversary. Maybe you could plan to renew your vows then too!

Attendant Gifts:

For the girls, go practical. Buy pantyhose and a pretty necklace to wear at the wedding. You can often find strands of faux pearls cheaply in a jewelry shop like Claire's. If you get a really good deal, pop for earrings too!

For the guys, a money clip can run from \$5.00 to \$10.00 depending on where you look. Try Dollar General. You can even start them off with a dollar bill in it if you get them cheap enough.

The flower girl would probably love a stuffed animal. Maybe a set of bears dressed in bride and groom attire. Since the flower girl and ring bearer are the youngest members of the wedding party, you may want to throw practicality out the door and just buy them a toy you know they'll love.

If you want to get creative, consider making each of your bridesmaids a photo collage or a small scrapbook with photos of you and them together. Small photo albums can be found at the dollar store and it takes just a glue gun and some imagination to decorate.

You can buy each attendant a book picked out especially for them. Write a personal inscription in the front of it. Gift certificates are also usually good gifts.

Consider also making your own bath products to give as gifts. Bath salts and soaps are actually quite easy and inexpensive to make. Recipes and directions can be found online or at the local craft store.

The Honeymoon:

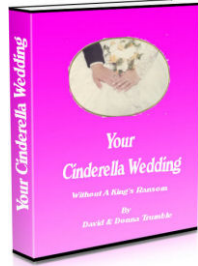
Unless you have a rich relative who's willing to send you on a honeymoon cruise, a lavish honeymoon is probably out of the realm of possibility. But that doesn't mean you can't have a nice getaway after your wedding.

Consider local travel. Stay at a bed and breakfast. What about a theme park honeymoon? Some couples relish the idea of camping. Rent an RV and get to an RV park for a secluded honeymoon where you can enjoy each other exclusively.

If you can get away for your honeymoon, be sure to plan early. The earlier you book your trip, the better chance you have of getting a good rate. Consider an all-inclusive vacation or a cruise. These can be relatively low-cost and immensely enjoyable!

Don't be afraid to ask for freebies. Everyone loves newlyweds, so take advantage of this nearly universal sentimentality by asking for discounts or freebies, suggests Ingram. If you tell your waiter that you're on your honeymoon, you may get a free dessert or bottle of wine. Ask the desk clerk at the hotel where you're staying for any free upgrades, as well.

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A FEW GENERAL TIPS

Make a list of your dreams and prioritize them. Do the important things first.

Purchase shoes, hose, undergarments, etc., that you can use for work after the wedding.

Plan ahead, and do as much as you can yourself...but make sure the week of your wedding is free to relax and rest, so you can be at your best for the big day.

For out of town guests, negotiate with a local hotel for a flat, group rate. Ask that the rate extend to a day or two before and after your wedding. Ask for group parking discounts too.

Rent a Cadillac or other luxury vehicle just for the Bride, Groom, Maid/Matron of Honor, and Best Man to save on the expense of a limousine. The other members of the Bridal Party will most likely want to ride with their spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend to the reception.

Kids can get bored during the wedding reception. So instead of having kids seated at the same table with the adults, you can have an area where kids can be more casual and can have a small party of their own.

Instead of the traditional guest book, have a framed canvas for your guest to sign. This is something you can hang in your home as a unique memory of your wedding day. Leave blank squares to mount snap shots, from the ceremony to make as a collage.

Marriage is a union of families. During the wedding rites, if possible, you may alter some of the practices to include the children of the bride or groom from previous marriage or the parents and families of the couple. Having them perform a special union rite will signify that the wedding is not just a union of two people but also of two families.

We did this in my second marriage. I have two children from my previous marriage and wanted to have them included in the ceremony. After my husband and I said our vows, we recited a separate set of vows to them promising to be loving parents and a happy family – in good times and bad. We've certainly had both!

After we said vows to them, my husband presented my daughter with her own "wedding ring" – a simple gold band with a small stone – and my son with a cross necklace. They loved it and it really united us as a family.

When the bride and groom come out of the church, it is tradition to shower them with something. This tradition relates to wishing fertility on them in their marriage.

Traditionally, they have been showered with rice (uncooked, of course!) More and more people have gone toward bird seed which is more environmentally friendly. And no, birds won't explode if they eat the rice!

Another great idea besides rice or bird seed is to have the guests hold sparklers as the newlyweds exit the ceremony.

Make sure any speeches are given early on in the reception. The longer the reception lasts, the more possibility of having an intoxicated, and probably inappropriate, toast!

If you want an outdoor wedding, have a back-up plan in case of inclement weather.

Rent, borrow, or make as many items as possible! Some items to borrow from a friend or relative are a cake knife and serving set, toasting glasses, jewelry and the bride's shoes. To reduce costs, you can make several items or enlist a few friends to help you with ribbons, pew bows, veil and headpiece, church programs, bridesmaids' dresses, bridal purse, ring bearer pillow and the cake topper.

Though we've said it before, it bears repeating. Forget the "W" Word. While I have noticed a small change in recent years, this still holds true for a lot of cases. People expect weddings to be more expensive, and are charged accordingly. Refer to your wedding as a family get-together or a gathering. It's unfortunate, but when you associate an item with a wedding, you will often find that the price goes up.

Tulle can be a fairly inexpensive decorating tool (no pun intended). Tulle can be draped along staircases, balconies and fireplaces. Tulle bows can be tied around chairs. Some reception locations may not have the most "attractive" chairs. The tulle bows look beautiful and romantic and make a great "cover-up".

Consider keeping the theme of your wedding and reception all the way into the restrooms! For example, if your theme is daisies then cut a few daisy heads off and lay them around the sinks. Perhaps you also might add soap and lotion for your guests to use that have the same scent as your wedding flowers.

You will have to pay the officiant, so budget this into your expenses.

The rehearsal dinner is traditionally given by the groom's family. But let's face it, sometimes tradition can go out the door in the best interest of the couple.

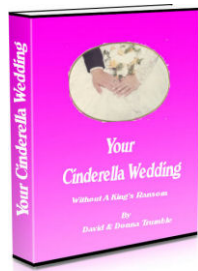
The rehearsal dinner of today doesn't have to be a formal sit-down dinner. More and more couples are opting for casual, simple get-togethers on the day before their marriage.

You can gather at someone's house and order pizza to eat while you socialize. You could also get sub sandwiches from the local sub shop.

Maybe simple pot luck would suffice for you. Why not put out some lunch meat and cheese for sandwiches?

Remember, you'll be stressed enough the next day, so relax on rehearsal night!

Here are the checklists we promised! Print them out and refer to them often. They can help keep you organized and insure that you have a beautiful wedding with no detail left untouched!



The Grand Finale

Weddings should reflect the individual personalities and priorities of the couple getting married. The focus of this special day need not be about how much was spent or saved. It should be about the event itself and the couple's commitment to each other.

Remember, it's not the price of the wedding that determines the quality of your marriage or that dictates a good time for all involved!

A successful wedding does not have to be an expensive wedding. Success should be determined by whether the bride, groom and the guests enjoyed themselves.

Having a wedding on a tight budget does not mean having to give up style or the fond memories. It just takes some planning and shopping around.

No matter how much money you spend, if your wedding is cookie cutter and seems rehearsed no one will remember it and most will not enjoy it. Make it your own, make it part of you both, not part of a book you read, or do things you think you "have" to do! Share with your guests part of who you both are!

Weddings are expensive if you want them to be. But if you want to keep money aside for a deposit on a house or a honeymoon to remember, then there are many cost cutting ideas. All you need is a little imagination, and some help

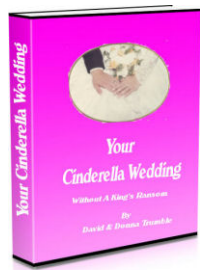
from friends and family and you too can have a luxury wedding with all the trimmings.

Getting married should not be expensive. After all, the essence of marriage is in the union and not in the celebration. You shouldn't also try too hard to please the guests. Your family and friends are there to rejoice this wonderful event with you and not to criticize your wedding.

Think of your wedding as a collaboration of loving hands coming together to form the perfect day. Follow these tips and you'll have a beautiful wedding and reception and you won't have to start out married life in debt. You'll have a gorgeous and memorable ceremony to remember for years to come!



You too can enjoy a Cinderella Wedding without spending a King's Ransom.



WEDDING RESOURCES



The Following Resources
May Be Helpful In Your Planning.

WEDDING RESOURCES

The following resources are grouped for your convenience. First are those services only available locally here in central Texas. Then resources are listed for Wedding Planning, Creating Or Selecting Vows, Themes, Speeches, Flowers, Music, Bridal Shower, Reception and Video Production.

This resource list takes full advantage of the digital capabilities of this media. To access a resource simply **click to select** the linked item. You will be taken to the website or resource over the internet and find your selection fully explained there.

CENTRAL TEXAS –

Austin to Temple to Killeen. Including North Austin suburbs of Georgetown, Cedar Park, and Round Rock.

Castle Christian – <http://www.CastleChr.Com>. Info@CastleChr.Com

Dr. David Trumble is available to serve as Minister for Pre-Planning, Planning, Rehearsal, Officiating, And Follow Up as desired. Phone Contact: (512) 487- 1056.

Wedding Coordinator – Wed@CastleChr.Com (254) 371-1564.

Jennifer Trumble provides expert planning and assistance for couples as they look forward to their dream wedding.

Custom Design, Sewing, Alterations – (512) 635-0421.

<http://www.DonnaTrumble.Com> Donna@DonnaTrumble.Com

Donna Trumble has provided expert professional Design, Sewing, And Alterations services for over 30 years. If you want a one of a kind designer gown or simply have a gown altered to properly fit; you will be thrilled with the quality of service Donna provides.

WEDDING PLANNING RESOURCES:

[Amazing Wedding Planning.](#)

[Wedding Planning On A Budget.](#)

[Wedding Planning Secrets.](#)

How To Have Your Fairytale Wedding On A Shoestring Budget.

[How To Plan Your Fabulous Wedding?](#) A Simple, Step-By-Step Guide To Throwing The Most Unforgettable Wedding-And Learn How You Can Avoid All The Unnecessary Hassle In The Making Of Your Wedding!

[Wedding Planning For Brides And Grooms.](#)
Comes With Free Software.

CREATING OR SELECTING YOUR VOWS:

[The Ultimate Wedding Vow Toolkit.](#)
All The Tools You Need To Write Vows
That Are A Romantic Masterpiece.

[Marriage Vows And Marriage Vows.](#)

[Weddings Weddings!](#) Wedding Ceremony Book.
Over 10,500 Sold.

[101 Wedding Vows.](#)
Perfect Wedding Vows
To Help You Say Exactly How You Feel.

PERFECT WEDDING THEMES:

[Create A Theme Wedding As Unique As Your Love.](#)
Discover The Secrets Of Planning Your Theme Wedding The Right Way. This Book Is An Extensive Wedding Theme Book Containing Specific Details On How To Plan A Theme Wedding.

[Wedding Themes And More.](#)
An Excellent Source Of Unique Wedding Books
and Theme Ideas.

[My Perfect Beach Wedding.](#)
'They All Groaned When I Said I Wanted To Get Married At The Beach... But The Groaning Turned To Excitement (And Envy) When I Showed Them How Stress Free, Inexpensive, And Easy It Would Be...

WEDDING SPEECHES & SPEECH RESOURCES:

[All Types Of Wedding Speeches.](#)

[The Wedding Mc Jokebook For Masters of Ceremonies.](#)

[Best Man Wedding Speech.](#) The Best A Best Man Can Get. Best Man Speech Guide, Samples, Templates, Toasts, Jokes, Quotes, One-liners...

[World's #1 Selling Wedding MC Guide.](#)

[The Wedding Mc: A Guide To Success.](#) A Complete Guide To Success For The Master Of Ceremonies.

[Speeches And Toasts.](#) Professionally Written, Fill In The Blank Speech Templates. Speeches for all occasions.

WEDDING FLOWERS

[Create Your Own Wedding Flowers.](#)

Step-by-step Guide To Creating Fantastic Wedding Flowers.

WEDDING MUSIC

[Classical Sheet Music Albums For Weddings,](#) Funerals, & Occasions. Download PDF Albums (with Midi Files) of Classical Wedding Music Including the 4 Volume "Top Ten Classics Series".

BRIDAL SHOWER

[Best Bridal Shower Games And More](#) - Printable Games, Themes and More. Everything You Need To Know About Planning And Hosting, A Fun And Entertaining Wedding Shower. 25 Printable Gabes, 22 Unique Themes, Gift Ideas, Ultimate Checklist, Tips And So Much More!

RECEPTION PLANNING

[The Wedding Reception Kit.](#) Includes Everything A Bride And Groom Needs To Plan Their Reception Easily. Song Ideas, Templates, Tools and Many Secrets!

WEDDING VIDEO – DO IT YOURSELF

[Wedding Video Secrets](#): A Professionals Guide For Doing-It-Yourself. This is a Comprehensive Do-It-Yourself Wedding Video Production Guide.