



UNIT-6

Planning for the Big Day

Learning Outcomes

- ✓ The Importance of Site Layout
- ✓ Exploring Characteristics of Wedding Venues
- ✓ Identifying Venue Layout Requirements

Unit 6

Planning for the Big Day

Layout of Site

A reception may be formal or casual. It may be simply elegant. It all depends on the individual couple. Regardless of the reception venue setting, your goal is to make sure it is in line with the theme, formality and style of the wedding.

Selecting the Venue

There are so many options to choose from when deciding a wedding venue; from outdoor marquees to elegant mansions. You must carefully consider the chosen style, the mood, and the formality of the event when considering how to create the venue into the perfect site for an individual couple's taste. Think about whether or not the couple want to have a casual cocktail type event or a more formal sit-down dinner.

After the reception style has been decided, it is time to begin looking for the most appropriate venue. Browse through lots of wedding magazines, the internet, and local phone books.

It must be noted that, from here on, everything you plan will likely be influenced by the reception venue, its location and its style. For example, if the couple has chosen a grand mansion to hold their reception, it may not necessarily fit in with a casual beach themed ceremony or vice versa.

Take time to carefully consider all options and visualise the ideal outcome in your mind. This is good to do when choosing a venue as it helps you select the venue that best fits with your ideas for the wedding.

Inspecting Reception Venues

When you've located a few potential venues, pick up the phone and organise an appointment to personally inspect them. It is a good idea to select about 3 to 5 venues, if possible. It is highly advisable that you do not book any venue without first inspecting it. Photos in magazines and on the internet often look impressive, however, sometimes looks can be quite deceiving.

Don't rush through when inspecting a venue. Take your time. Take the size, cleanliness, layout, lighting, furnishings, gardens, any special features and of course, the overall ambience, into account. Ask lots of questions and make sure you write down everything.

Questions for the Reception Venue

Before heading out to inspect the venues, make sure you have a list of important questions to ask the venue operators. Make sure you have a clear idea of the type of style you want in a reception centre, such as buffet, sit-down dinner, cocktail event etc., how many guests you'll have, a wedding budget, a rough estimate of the date, and any particular requirements that may be needed for the reception.

You should feel comfortable enough to ask as many questions as you need to during the inspection. The list below can be used to assist you:

- How many guests can the venue accommodate?
- What style of reception does the venue cater for (buffet, sit down dinner, cocktails, etc.)?
- Can you have exclusive use of the venue, or will you have to share it with any others (before, during or after your particular reception)?
- Does the venue you're inspecting provide beverages and food, or will a caterer be required?
- Will the venue provide the wait staff?
- Are all the furnishings, crockery, cutlery etc. provided by the venue?
- What is included in the venue's wedding packages? This must be very precise.
- Do any special offers come with the venue's wedding packages, such as reduced prices for off-peak, Sunday or winter weddings?
- Can you alter the packages to suit your clients' individual needs?
- If alcohol is provided, is it based on the amount consumed or the number of guests? Does this also include spirits?
- Does the venue provide cake cutting and serving and is it included in the package? Will you need to provide the cake stand, the knife or the cake bags?
- Does the venue make allowances for any special dietary requirements such as gluten-free or diabetic meals?
- Can the venue offer reduced-cost meals for the photographer, the band members, or children?
- Are there any other expenses you should be made aware of?
- Are optional extras available such as extra time, extra courses, any upgrades for wines etc.?
- Is an Emcee (Master of Ceremonies) included?
- Will the venue provide decorations such as chair covers, table settings, or candelabras etc.? If they don't, are they able to set them up if you provide them?
- Is a dance floor available?
- Is any entertainment included in their package? Will there be any specific restrictions or requirements if you arrange the entertainment? This would include any noise restrictions.
- How long will the reception run and if it runs overtime will there be any fees if it does?
- What time does the venue close?
- Is a bridal room available for the bridal party throughout the reception?
- Does the venue have proper heating and/or air-conditioning?
- Are there cleaning requirements or costs associated with having a reception there?

- When are the deposits, the instalments and any final payments due? How much will they be exactly?
- Are there cancellation fees?

Further Considerations

You may also like to think about the following:

- Is the chosen venue within the budget?
- Does it fit the theme and style of the wedding?
- Is the venue available on the chosen wedding date?
- Are there any areas at the venue that are good for photo opportunities?
- Is the venue near the ceremony venue and also the photography location(s)?
- Is it easily accessible for guests?
- Are the staff there experienced and professional, and do you warm to them?
- Is the venue layout suitable for your entertainment/band or other aspects of your reception?
- Is the venue suitable for all types of weather?
- Are the venue facilities appropriate for your clients, their guests and others (caterers, the band or DJ etc.)?

Keeping all the above considerations in mind, it shouldn't be too difficult to select a suitable venue.

Things to Consider

Once you've found a suitable ceremony and reception venue, you will need to get started on the decorations and any equipment hire. There are some things you must consider, such as:

Ceremony Venue

For the ceremony site you have to consider certain elements when planning for what equipment to hire and what decorations have to be organised. First of all, if the ceremony is going to be held outside, make sure there is some shelter close by in case of unpredictable weather like rain or hail. An alternative would be to set up a marquee for such cases. It is also necessary to think about what time of the day the ceremony will be held. You will need to position the wedding party and guests with their backs against the sun. The photos will also turn out much better if the wedding party are not squinting all the time.

Consider the type of equipment that will be required for the actual ceremony and take into account:

- Your entrance/processional.
- Perhaps hiring a red carpet, or something similar to walk on.
- The actual point where the couple will exchange their vows.

- You can hire wedding arches and any other decorative items which you may need. These could add a romantic touch to the ceremony.
- If there will be any readings you may need to organize a stand for the readers.
- A location for the register signing.
- You may like to hire a chair and table set where the couple will sit to sign the register.
- Number of seats (if any) required for the guests, and where they are to be positioned.
- Other decorative items you might like to have.

Layout of Venue

The venue and its layout is of utmost importance. You can ask the manager of your chosen venue if it is possible to get a copy of the floor plan. If this is not available, you could make some rough sketches. This will give you ideas on what equipment you will need, where this equipment is to be positioned and also the size of the venue and its capacity. On the floor plan make a note of where a DJ or a band could be positioned, the caterers, the bar location (if needed or desired), gift table, dance floor and guest seating list. It is also a good idea to note down where the power points are located. It will also be necessary to note where the toilets are located as you definitely do not want to position the caterers near them.

Outdoor Considerations

Leaving the weather aside for a moment, other significant considerations for outdoor weddings are bugs and bathrooms. Even if the wedding will take place at someone's home, it is a good idea to rent bathrooms which can be set up outside the house. This will be necessary if there will be many people moving around the place. This will put a lot of pressure on the sewer systems, and homeowners have actually had their plumbing wiped during such events. Renting bathrooms from reputable companies will give you the choice of a simple holding tank or luxurious Executive Restroom Trailers complete with carpeting, air-conditioning, lighting, music, and sinks with running water. You will need at least one rental bathroom for every one hundred guests. Make sure they are placed away from the main activities.

Another consideration when holding a wedding outdoors is bugs. In warmer climates this can actually become an extreme irritation. You can imagine a Southern wedding in July in the U.S. for example: flies, wasps, mosquitos, gnats, ticks, yellow jackets, and the list goes on. They will be swarming all over the food and stinging guests. The smell of sugar will make them crazy and they will be drawn to the light if it is an outdoor evening wedding. It is possible to use citronella candles but you would need a lot of them and because of the smell they would need to be kept outside the marquee especially during meal times. Tent entryways can be useful as they control the flow of people as well as other outdoor elements. Spraying the area is something else you could do but because of the chemicals the sprays contain they could present safety issues especially for children. Another option is to have wait staff move around with trays of bug repellent or wipes. Supplies should be kept in the restrooms.

The site layout only needs to be a straightforward drawing which gives you a concise outline of spacing and placement. If no site map is available of the venue then use a blank page, one each for the ceremony and the reception site. Fill in all the essentials as covered in Table 6.1 below.

Site layouts are pretty straightforward when the weddings are to be held in established venues which do not offer many options for variations. As planning spaces become more open and more rentals become necessary, the site layout will become more complex. Outdoor weddings or receptions which are held in tents, for example, need more attention to detail and will increase the number of decisions that must be made.

Site Layout Essentials for Weddings

Table 6.1

Ceremony	Reception
• Parking • Room sizes/dimensions • Entrances and exits, with special marks for accessible paths, ramps and indications of controls (e.g.security check,metal detector) • Restroom facilities • Number of rows, and marks for any reserved areas, indications if areas are separated for the bride’s and groom’s guests • A waiting area for the bride, groom, and the wedding party before the ceremony • Indicators to show location for floral décor and any other special ceremony elements • Space for central focus usage (e.g.an altar, arch, or other visually accessible area) • Fire lanes and other emergency information	• Parking • Room measurements/dimensions • Entrances and exits, with special marks for accessible paths and ramps and indications of controls (e.g., metal detector, security check) • Restroom facilities • Cocktail hour area, if separate from reception space • Number of guest tables with marks for reserved tables • Head table and/or sweetheart table • Service stations for wait staff • Tables and areas associated with seating stationery, gifts, the cake, and favours • Kitchen and/or food-related areas • Bar area • Music and dance area • Areas for the placement of specialized lighting • Indicators for the location for specialized floral décor and other special reception elements • Fire lanes and other emergency information

The floor plan must be considered before choosing table shapes as they do come in many different shapes and different sizes. Knowing the floor plan and room dimension will allow you to figure out how many tables will comfortably fit into the room and their spacing. At least 48 inches must be between each table but 54 inches is preferable. This will allow enough space for movement so that guests do not feel crowded or cramped. It will also allow the wait staff to move around and do their job without being

encumbered. Knowing the venue spacing for every wedding that you plan will maximize safety and also comfort levels for the staff as well as the guests.

Wedding Ceremony Equipment

As already mentioned, so many options exist and the planning for the hire of decorations and equipment may seem to be an overwhelming task. The lists below may provide you with some assistance.

Making a ceremony unique and of course, memorable will depend upon many things. Here is a list of items you might like to purchase or hire:

- Aisle runner/carpet
- Baskets (for ceremony booklets etc.)
- Balloons
- Back drops
- Birds (for release)
- Butterflies (to be released)
- Chair covers
- Chair/Pew bows
- Candles
- Candelabras
- Candle holders
- Columns/pillars
- Confetti/flower petals/bubbles
- Flower pots/vases
- Floral arrangements
- Flooring
- General decorations and/or banners
- Heating or cooling
- Lectern/stand for readings or seating plans etc.)
- Lighting
- Linen/fabric
- Marquee/shelter
- Plants/pots/trees
- Piñatas
- Gazebo/rotunda
- Special effects/fireworks etc.
- Steamers/ribbons
- Table decorations
- Tables/chairs
- Trellis
- Umbrellas

- Wedding arch

Reception Venue Equipment

Once you have made a note of where everything is located on the floor, you can then start planning what you might want to hire for the reception. If it is a sit-down dinner, think about how many guests will be seated at every table. This way it will be easier to work out how many tables and chairs are needed. Just a note: if a venue has limited space, round tables will take up more space than rectangular ones.

It might be a good idea to also discuss any requirements the DJ or band may have regarding equipment. Usually, they will come prepared, however, it is always good to double check.

It is necessary to carefully consider all other services you might be employing for the reception and contact them to check if anything needs to be done from your side regarding equipment.

Below is a list showing items which may be needed for receptions:

- Back drops
- Bar
- Balloons
- Cake table
- Cake stand
- Candles
- Candle holders
- Candelabras
- Chair covers
- Catering equipment
- Columns/pillars
- Cutlery
- Crockery
- Dance floor
- Easel/stand for seating plans
- Floral Arrangements
- Flower pots/vases
- Flooring
- General decorations or banners
- Glassware
- Heating/cooling
- Jukebox
- Lectern/stand (for an MC and the speeches)

- Lighting
- Linen/fabric
- Marquee/shelter
- Microphone / P.A. system
- Napkins
- Napkin rings
- Place card holders
- Plants/pots/trees
- Piñatas
- Refrigeration and eskies
- Special effects/fireworks etc.
- Streamers/ribbons
- Tablecloths (for the bridal table, the cake table, guest's tables, and the gift table)
- Tables and chairs
- Table decorations
- Table centrepieces
- Table runners
- Wishing well

Equipment Hire/ Rental

Rentals are used for weddings in ways which are cost effective. If a couple had to purchase everything, their budget would most likely be blown way out. Tents, tables and chairs, tableware, linens, lighting, and other specialty pieces have a double purpose: firstly, every rental has its own specific purpose, and secondly, rentals bring out the theme and mood of a wedding. The theme might be traditional sophistication or all the way to a funky, modern element. This section provides essentials that wedding consultants will need to know regarding wedding rentals and the layouts, including:

- tables, chairs, linens, and tableware
- tents
- lighting
- other outdoor considerations
- bringing it together with the site layout

Tents

For ceremonies and receptions being held outdoors, tents are often rented usually because the weather is rarely perfect. Rain isn't the only thing to worry about. Wind, cold, too much heat, humidity, and bugs can make an outdoor wedding uncomfortable for everybody. In this section we will cover the three aspects of tent rental: (1) styles and accessories; (2) size and setup; and (3) the cost.

Tent Styles and Accessories

The two main tent styles are frame tents and pole tents. There are also many others which fall under these two broad categories. Sugarplum Tent Company's David Richardson provides information below which will assist you in distinguishing the different tent styles. He explains that frame tents do not need interior poles as they have aluminium piping to do this which is located at the top and sides of the tent. Frame tents are needed when the site is on concrete or asphalt (or anywhere poles cannot be anchored). Frame tents are more self-supporting but it is still necessary to stake them down. Installing a frame tent will take more time and therefore these rentals are more expensive. The aluminium used to support the tent is usually unattractive so fabric liners are needed to make it look aesthetically pleasing.

Pole tents are upheld by interior and exterior poles which are anchored onto the ground. Modern pole tents are also called tension tents because high tension ratchets or winches are used to produce a taut appearance. Pole tents are a classic choice for a wedding as they allow for dramatic, high peaks and a sweeping billowy appearance. These interior poles can also be unattractive so they are usually wrapped in fabric or decorated with flowers and greenery.

Picking the tent style is one of many decisions which have to be made for tent rentals. Others would be: choosing the flooring, entrance canopies, sidewalls, lighting, electricity, liners, heating and/or air-conditioning and staging areas. The flooring must be taken into account, especially if the ground is uneven, gravelly or wet. It will stop the bride, groom and the guests from stumbling, resulting in, at the very least, an embarrassing moment, or at worst, an injury. The flooring can be made of wood, carpet, plastic or all-weather artificial turf. If there is to be a dance floor then you will have to select that as well.

Canopies, sidewalls and the ceiling could be clear which would allow for a more open look. This could be complimented with decorations and lighting. This means electricity is necessary, and a generator which will heat or cool the tent area. Steps and staging areas are commonly used for placing the head table and/or the band. When you put all of these things together, one can see that choosing a tent is not really done to save money on a reception site, but because it offers couples the opportunity to really tailor their event space.

Guidelines for Selecting the Correct Tent

	Tent Size If	Tent Size If
Number of Guests	Seated at Tables	Standing or Buffet
50	20x40	20 x30
100	30 x50	30 x30
150	40 x60	40 x40
200	40 x80	40 x60
250	60 x70	40 x80
300	60 x80	60 x 60

Tent Size and Setup

The Table above displays the basic guidelines for choosing the tent size. Dimensions can vary of course, but generally, tent sizes begin at 10 x10 feet. The length and width will increase in 10 foot increments. The guidelines above DO NOT include a dance floor which is usually another 600 square feet. So, if planning a wedding with 100 people, seated, it would be necessary to choose a 30x50 sized tent. This will give you 1,500 square feet of room. If the clients want a dance floor as well, then a minimum of 2,100 square feet would be necessary. You would have to consult with the tent vendor to find the closest available size. Going by the above chart, it might be a good idea to choose a 40x60 foot size as this will give you 2,400 square feet. Keep in mind that it's always better to have more room than not enough. If the area is cramped, guests, wait staff and the couple will be uncomfortable and this is not what you want on a special day.

Discuss any pricing with the tent vendor and make sure that it includes not only the rental of the tent but also the time needed to set it up and the number of workers who will be employed to do this. Another thing is to advise the clients that it is in their interest to hire a technician to stay for the entire event in case there are any problems with the tent. This person will be indispensable should any issues arise. For example, if heat has to be adjusted or sidewalls raised then this will be the person who can handle it easily and professionally without having to involve any members of the wedding. A good reputable tent company might be a little more expensive but it will be worth it as you don't want an unsafe tent on a wedding day.

Tables, Chairs, Linens, and Tableware

With the renting of a tent come many other items which will need to be rented. Tables, chairs, tableware and linen will be necessary. At indoor venues these items will sometimes need to be rented and any upgrades also paid for. At some venues you can only use the equipment provided there while others will be more flexible and you will be able to bring in your own rentals. You must check what a venue has available in advance in order to advise the couple and allow them to make their choices. You might also need to offer some alternatives.

Tables are the easiest to choose because they come in many different sizes. The most common guest tables are measured in 5 foot rounds and seat between 8 to 10 people. Another common table size is the 6 foot round which will seat between 10-12 people and 8 foot oblong tables which hold 8 to 10 people. Sweetheart tables are becoming more and more common for brides and grooms who prefer to be seated by themselves. If a couple decides they want to sit with their wedding party then a round head, not oblong table is a better choice.

Tables will also be needed for the gifts, the cake, escort cards, favours, and wait stations which will be used by catering staff. These tables will vary in size. A table for gifts, favours and escort cards should be a 6 foot or 8 foot oblong. The cake table can be a round 4 foot.

The variety available for chairs is smaller, with a budget conscious option being folding chairs. They come in different colours and can be made of wood, plastic or metal. Depending on the material they are made from the process will also vary. If the choice is to have padding on the folding chairs then this will incur an extra cost. For upscale weddings, a popular choice is Chiavari chairs. These are more formal type chairs, and very elegant, and they also come with cushions that can be covered in many different fabrics to match table linens. To give you an example of comparison price, a folding chair which is wooden and padded will cost around £3 while a cushioned Chiavari chair will cost around £9 per chair.

You must familiarize yourself with all regulations when bringing your own tables and chairs into a venue. In historic buildings, for example, tables cannot be rolled on the floor and every leg of every chair and table must have proper padding. All items have to be very carefully prepared and therefore staffing costs will need to be added.

Considering the very wide range of options regarding style, colour and material available for tableware and linen, it's a good idea to advise clients to have a clear idea of what they want in terms of theme, colours and/or floral décor when choosing the glassware, flatware, china and linens. It is usually the linens that are overlooked and most people do not look further than the usual white colour. However, the linen is one of the least expensive ways to make a huge impression. Many reception places will allow you to bring in your own rented linens. Rental companies will give you literally hundreds of options regarding style and cut as well as fabrics which range from damask to taffeta, to velvet and lace.

Linen is available in hundreds of styles and colours. They can be floral, iridescent, embroidered, striped and pin-tucked. The current trend is to layer linens to produce dramatic and memorable effects. Linens that are patterned and bold should be matched with simple, floral décor. This will create some balance. Linen will be needed for the escort table and the cake table. These may also need table skirts. Another trend is longer linens which don't require skirts. Linen must be long enough so that it covers table legs as often they can look rough from overuse.

When the clients have narrowed down their options re choice of linens, you might like to work with the company specialist who will likely send samples. After this, scheduling a time with the venue will be necessary. This will be used to set up three tables with three different types of linen to see which one looks best. At this time, it would be good to work together with the floral designer in order to have a centrepiece on hand. If the budget allows, it is a good idea to order one or two extra table cloths and napkins because spills do occur and a spare might be needed. Always check the linen delivery order when it arrives to ensure the right pattern and number is there. Clients will incur extra costs for missing pieces so it's important to do this. Check any and all rental items when they arrive for the same reasons.

The catering or rental staff will usually set the tables because they will know how to do it properly. Plates, cutlery, glasses and intricate folds must be placed in a specific way, especially for formal occasions such as weddings.

After the reception, you will have to re-count all the rentals again. You will need to return the exact numbers to the rental company. If someone has thrown a napkin away, for example, then your clients

will be charged. Linen will be more expensive than napkins as they are more difficult to replace. Specialty table linen is a lot more expensive and can average £30 or more. Replacement fees will be double that amount at least.

Lighting

Lighting is important to set the mood. Innovative lighting can transform a venue and bring it to life. If you can imagine that only a new coat of paint and some new carpeting can transform a house, then you can see how professional lighting would be able to take a bland venue and transform it into something glamorous.

Three areas of concern exist with lighting:

1. Centrepiece lighting;
2. Dance floor and wall lighting; and
3. Tent lighting.

Centrepiece Lighting

In ballrooms, where existing lights are already in place, the initial lighting consideration will relate to the centrepieces. This could include a wash of light or pin spotting. Pin spotting is a beam of light which is tightly focused and directed on the table centrepieces. This allows centrepieces to “pop,” as the light doesn’t spill over onto the rest of the table. Pin spots could even be placed under a table to shoot up through a clear glass centrepiece and create a very unique effect. This design was started as a response to centrepieces getting bigger and taller. For bigger arrangements, pin spotting allows for one hot spot on the arrangement but cannot capture the entire piece. A wash of light makes a wider beam which will light up the entire table. This light is especially effective when linens are spectacular, because the wash picks up any play or shimmer in the tablecloth. LED (light-emitting diode) lights are now quite trendy. They provide an even wash of light and use very little electricity. Regardless of the lighting style, white light should always be avoided because it doesn’t look becoming on people. Lighting is there to make the flowers, the room, and the guests look great. To achieve this effect, lighting specialists select from pink and amber colouring which are flattering and subtle.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Site Layout and Rentals

- Before meeting with a tent rental company, it will be necessary to familiarise yourself with all the different types of tents and accessories and prepare a draft of the desired site layout.
- Better to have too much room rather than not enough in a tent.
- The cost of a tent and all necessary associated rentals is usually much higher than renting a ballroom or other type of venue.
- Impress the guests with creative linen selections.
- When placing the linen order, add a few extra napkins and extra table cloths in case of spills.
- Count all rentals on delivery and before final pickup to ensure there are no missing items.
- Use lighting to transform a space from bland to glamorous.

- Remember that bugs and bathrooms are two important considerations with an outdoor wedding.
- Understand that site layout offers a concise overview of placement and spacing.

Wedding Attire

Bridal Gown Tradition

The white wedding dress was made popular in the 1400's by Anne of Brittany. White was worn to symbolize purity and therefore the bride's virginity. Before this time, blue was worn as a symbol of purity by the bride and the groom would wear a band around the bottom of their wedding clothes.

Queen Victoria again made the white wedding dress popular during her reign in the 1800's. Then, it was worn as a statement of social standing. This is because in those times, any woman able to afford a costly white gown was highly regarded in social circles. White fabric was expensive and dry cleaners of today were not available so it was almost impossible to keep it clean. This made it a rare item, made only for one-off occasions.

White fabric became more popular as time went on and modern technology advanced. White wedding gowns re-emerged as symbols of purity (in particular of the bride) and still continue to remain popular today. Coloured wedding gowns, including bold colours and pastel shades, are also working their way into wedding ceremonies and becoming more fashionable and stylish.

Wedding Attire and the Bridal Party

A future bride will start organising the wedding dress soon after becoming engaged. This is a very important decision. The gown's design can set the tone for the whole wedding. The bride must decide if her gown will be very formal with a long train, or more casual with a simple coloured sash. She must decide if it will be silk, taffeta, lace, organza, or satin. What about the colour? Will that be classic white or ivory, or perhaps have a modern flash of lime, blue or pink? These are only some of the things the bride will have to consider when choosing a gown.

Brides usually purchase their wedding gowns without advice from a wedding consultant. Bridal salons will be visited with their mothers or close friends to see what's on offer. Despite this, as a consultant, you must be familiar with wedding attire trends and styles. You will have to help brides match their gowns to other elements in their weddings and give advice for selecting the tuxedos, flowers girls' dresses and maybe even guiding their mothers to select gowns. Below we will look at wedding attire for both men and women, the wedding party, and also learn what to do in case of any wardrobe malfunctions.

Choosing the Wedding Gown

Possibly the most important feature of a wedding, the wedding gown needs to be given a great amount of consideration with regards the design, the colour, and the style. Brides often find choosing a bridal gown a daunting task, and understandably so.

Many factors must be considered when selecting a wedding gown to make sure it is an appropriate choice for both the bride wearing it and also the style of the wedding. Even though endless considerations exist when choosing a gown, the most important ones are:

- budget
- body shape
- personal style
- style or theme of the wedding
- the wedding colours
- the season in which the wedding will take place
- whether the ceremony will take place indoors or outdoors
- family expectations or traditions
- religion.

Different wedding styles will come and go which is why a planner must keep abreast of all the trends. Trade magazines and bridal fashion shows are two ways of doing this. The last thing you want to do is recommend a gown to a bride to have her friends tell her it looks like something her mother wore 30 years ago. Fashion conscious brides will be looking at New York and Paris runways to gain inspiration. Other methods of seeing what's in is watching shows like the Academy Awards where clothes are often copied and will become bridal wear for the general public. Today, gowns with lots of 'bling' (crystals, beading, pearls etc.) are making statements on runways. Some popular themes for gowns include skirts with tiered tulle layers, fabric trim specially designed by fashion icons, and voluminous bubble hems.

The brides of today have numerous options in terms of their wedding gowns. Fabric choices today are much broader than even twenty years ago. Polyester, rayon, nylon, and silk can all be woven to create stunning fabrics like charmeuse, crepe back satin, brocade, duchesse satin, lace, shantung, velvet, taffeta, georgette, and dupioni. These synthetic materials can be very versatile as well as affordable as opposed to materials such as pure silk. This gives designers even more selection for fabrics than ever before, which in turn means more choices for brides.

Some brides still prefer to wear gowns made of materials from the past despite the numerous contemporary styles available today. Some of the most famous wedding gowns would be those worn by Grace Kelly, Princess Diana, Jacqueline Kennedy, and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy. Indeed, Grace Kelly's gown which has been carefully preserved and sits in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, is one of the most popular and beloved objects there. For Grace Kelly's 50th anniversary to her wedding to Prince Rainer III

of Monaco, the museum decided to stage an exhibit of her gown with other elements of her wedding day such as the headdress, veil, and shoes that she wore. It also included the pearl and lace encrusted prayer book she carried down the aisle. This exhibition was extremely popular and was enjoyed by thousands of people.

As mentioned, brides will not usually consult the wedding planner regarding the wedding gown. They may ask for some advice, however, regarding the top designers and where to shop for gowns and accessories. Many well-known designers are also known for bridal clothing. ReemAcra, Carolina Herrera, Vera Wang and many more are designing wedding attire.

In every city there will be many options for locating the perfect wedding dress. There will be couture shops, stand-alone bridal stores, shops with exclusive designer labels, outlet malls, department stores and bridal chains. E-Bay is another place some brides turn to in order to locate a gown they like. There, brides will find more than 9,000 wedding gowns for sale, both new and used. A savvy bride will be able to find the dress of her dreams at the right price. This auction site provides brides with another resource for locating bridal accessories. Usually, the prices will be a fraction of the cost of retail stores.

The bride's age will also be a factor when deciding on the gown's style. Something that works for someone in her 20s may not be comfortable for someone in her 40s. You may have heard of 'Camilla style' which came about after Camilla Parker Bowles married Prince Charles. Her choice of wedding attire had people raving about its flattering and tasteful guidance. The wedding gown is likely to be the most expensive clothing purchase for couples, with the average price being £1,000 and more. If clients ask for your guidance on their dress purchase you may offer these tips:

1. Get going. If a wedding dress is chosen less than six months before the wedding date, there will likely be a rush charge on the order. This can sometimes be as much as 25% of the gown cost.
2. Alteration fees can add up. Many brides will pay around £150 to £300 for alteration fees. Many brides do not account for this cost in the initial attire budget.
3. Size will matter. For brides who are smaller (0 to 2) or those who are plus sized (16 or larger), there could be an extra charge of 10 – 20% for the dress. This depends on the designer of course. Be prepared to mention this if you know that your brides fall into one of these sizing groups. Jennifer Johnston states that time is of the essence. Brides often have no sense of urgency because they often do not realise everything that is involved when starting the planning process. There is however, a rhyme and reason to creating the perfect look, and every step must be well thought out.

Once the bride has chosen her own gown, she must begin thinking about her bridesmaids. Once the bride has decided on the hairstyle she would like, she then decides on hair accessories and also on the style of veil. The veil must be given very careful consideration. Most of the favoured styles are the chapel

length which comes with blusher to cover the face. They often have lace. A laced veil can either match the wedding dress or complement a dress which is simple and unadorned. Consideration should also be given to the choice of bracelet, earrings, or necklace. Winter wedding brides (and autumn) would do well to consider a wrap and gloves which can be made of either fur or the same fabric as the dress.

The bride has to select her undergarments and her shoes before any fittings can start. For the shoes, the most important aspect is that they are comfortable. When put all together, the bridal accessories will complete the look the bride is going for. Depending on culture, bridal attire and bridal accessories will differ. The white wedding dress has become popular worldwide, however, many cultures still have their own distinctive bridal wear.

In most cases, brides do not have any specific cultural traditions which will influence their wedding clothing but many will want to keep four specific elements for sentimental value. These four things would be: something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue. Clients will probably ask for your suggestions for these four categories. Suggestions you can give to your clients are shown in the table below.

TABLE 6 .2 Sentimental “Something” Selections

Something old	Something new	Something borrowed	Something blue:
Items in this category will often come from the bride’s mother, grandmother, or mother of the groom. For example, a bride might wear a piece of jewellery which has been passed down through her family or the groom’s family. Alternatively, she might wear a vintage dress that belonged to her mother or grandmother, or she might have lace from a vintage dress incorporated into her own dress, veil, or handkerchief.	This is an easy decision because brides make many attire purchases. However, many wish to choose one of these that “count” as filling the category. If the dress is new, this is typically the chosen representation. Otherwise, her lingerie, veil, purse, shoes, or a decorative hairpin can be the something new.	Often, brides turn to close friends such as the maid of honour or a close family member to borrow something for her wedding day. She might borrow the dress worn by a friend or use the purse that a relative carried on her wedding day. Many brides do not have expensive jewellery, and often a close aunt or old family friend will insist that the bride wear her Tiffany	For brides who plan to wear a garter, they will often have a piece of blue silk sewn in the garter. This is a very simple way to incorporate the colour blue. If not wearing a garter, a linen handkerchief with blue embroidery is often chosen. Handkerchiefs might seem old fashioned but are actually quite practical. Many brides cry during their weddings, and it is nice to have something more attractive than a paper tissue to use. An embroidered handkerchief is also a lovely keepsake. If the colour scheme is also blue, a blue ribbon can be used for a hand-tied bouquet. Alternatively, the bride can wear a sapphire or blue topaz hairpin or bracelet.

		necklace or bracelet.	
--	--	-----------------------	--

Theme and Style

The bride's gown must be in keeping with the style and theme of her wedding. Making the wedding a visual delight will be achieved through the maintaining of simple themes which will flow through every aspect of the ceremony as well as the reception. The choosing of the wedding dress requires very careful consideration and preferably expert advice. If a wrong style of gown is selected is likely to change the overall style and theme of a wedding, and may create a different look altogether from that which was originally wanted. Generally speaking, if the couple opt for a traditional wedding then the gown should be in keeping with that. Styles like the Cinderella gown or ball gown which are quite heavily decorated, and fuller gowns, would suit this traditional wedding. More contemporary wedding gowns would be sleek and simple. Carefully consider the wedding theme and any advice given by the couturier/dressmaker as well as the ideas mentioned below.

Traditional

Traditional, formal dresses are usually full and often have embellishments like detailing or pearls. Patterned fabrics are popular in traditional wedding gowns. The ball and Cinderella gowns are two examples of the traditional styled wedding dresses.

An A-Line gown is also one that could be worn for traditional weddings. If you do not like the heavily beaded look, then an A-Line gown is a good choice. It may be dressed down a little (in comparison to the ball or Cinderella gown).

Formal weddings would be fine to have a cathedral length veil, gloves and a tiara. Just do not overdo it as this will take attention away from the bride herself.

Sophisticated and Elegant

For a more sophisticated wedding, a simple gown adorned with elegant accessories is the way to go. The princess gown, mermaid gown, sheath-styled gown, or any gown cut on the bias, all come under the

category of sophisticated gowns. They often look absolutely fabulous when adorned by accessories which contain crystals or other precious gemstones.

Romantic

Cinderella comes to mind when thinking romantic. The Cinderella wedding gown is probably the most romantically styled of all the gowns. It has the classic fairy tale look and is most often a winner.

Modern

For more contemporary gowns simplicity is the key. The styles are simple but elegant and would include the princess lines, sheath gowns, mermaid gowns and any gown cut on the bias. So many flattering and simply beautiful choices are available that brides can choose exist in the modern gown category. Brides could be more daring and go for something very unique, then accessorise it with simple yet stunning adornments.

Menswear

What about the groom? Must all the tuxes match or can the groomsmen wear their own tuxes? Are khakis a suitable match with navy blazers? Are the men able to wear their own blazers? What about the ties – should they match the bridesmaid's dresses? Should the tuxes be rented at the wedding destination or in the groomsman's individual hometown? Is it ok for the men to wear white shirts even if the bride's gown is off-white? The above are only a few questions that arise when the bride and groom begin considering menswear. The bride usually has a very clear idea of what she would like to wear, however, with regards to the men, a wedding consultant will often be asked for advice. For this reason, you must educate yourself on formal men's attire. It is a good idea to call and make an appointment to see the manager of your local tuxedo store. Ask questions about the process all the way from measuring, to ordering the outfits, to the pick up. You must also make sure you familiarise yourself with the store's policies.

At bridal shows, make sure you pay attention not only to bridal wear but also the men's fashion so that you can give updated advice on many different things. Is a vest currently in or out? Is a cummerbund passé? Also, the Academy Awards telecast, as with women's fashion, can be helpful. Be assured that if stars are wearing something today, many clients will request it in the coming days.

The most basic rule to remember is that bridesmaids and groomsmen must look as if they belong together. If the bridesmaids are wearing summery Lilly Pulitzer gowns, the groomsmen must also be in casual type summer attire such as navy blazers or khakis. If groomsmen will be wearing black tuxedos then the bridesmaids must be in formal gowns. Ties worn by the groomsmen must match bridesmaids' attire. They do not have to match exactly, but they do need to work well together.

The Wedding Party

The current trend for bridesmaids' dresses is either knee-length or below-the-knee style gowns. Jennifer Johnston states that these shorter styles could be worn in both the late afternoon as well as evening weddings when made from fabrics such as crepe black satin or chiffon. The bridesmaids' gowns must match, but do not need to be identical. Another trend is for the dresses to be made from the same fabrics but made in different styles which will suit different body types.

Brides usually do the choosing for the bridesmaids' dresses. Sometimes they will have help and sometimes they will do it all themselves. Wedding planners are not often asked for advice on this decision however, you may be asked where brides can buy accessories for their bridesmaids; things like wraps, jewellery, shoes, hair accessories, gloves, etc. Make sure you are prepared and have a list of stores that you are very familiar with and that you trust. Tuxedos are often rented or purchased from the same place the groom got his. It is also necessary to check if your local store rents tuxedos for toddlers and/or infants as well. The ring bearer especially will need to be in a tuxedo. The bride may also choose to have a replica of her own gown made for the flower girl. Having good relations with a designer who specialises in this will be handy.

Another trend is incorporating pets into weddings. They are often considered members of the family and as such will need special attire for the wedding day. Research where you can order good tuxes and other types of formalwear for animals because it is likely you will be asked for recommendations. Check the local pet shops as a start and then go online where you will find some fantastic online resources like trixieandpeanut.com which caters for both cats and dogs.

No details are too small when considering the attire for a wedding. The best wedding consultants will be able to assist people find suitable wedding attire for every member of the wedding party.

Wardrobe Malfunctions

It is not only important to know where to rent or buy wedding attire for the whole party, but also what to do in the event of a wardrobe malfunction on the big day itself. You can almost count on something coming unfastened, falling apart, or coming undone, heels snapping, or straps breaking at some point. It is up to you to save the day using tools in your well-stocked emergency kit. It must contain needle and threads, safety pins of all sizes, and baby wipes.

As well as fixing clothing issues, another important clothing skill for wedding planners is knowing how to:

- (1) bustle a bride's train; and
- (2) knot a tie or bow tie.

Bustling a bride's train is important as a precaution to stop the gown from becoming soiled and to keep the bride from tripping. Reviewing the bustling procedure with the bridal store before the wedding day is a good idea as every gown is bustled differently.

Many bustles will come undone during the reception if they are not designed in the right way. Be prepared with your emergency kit to remedy the situation. Know how to knot a tie as well, as this will come in handy. Grooms have been known to be too nervous to do their own ties on their wedding day. Many men have also never worn bow ties before so a little help will be necessary. Make sure you learn how to knot the tie fashionably and quickly. Similarly, knowing how to tie many bridesmaids' sashes into perfect bows before heading down the aisle is a good skill to have.

The Groom's Attire in Scotland

In some places, the groom's clothing is especially noteworthy. Scotland, for example, is where men will wear tartan kilts, sporrans, and dirks. Tartan kilts are easily recognizable Celtic garments. They come in many colours and plaid patterns and are representative of a wearer's clan. Grooms in Highland attire wear fur pouches too. They are known as sporrans. They also wear a small dirk, which is a very traditional Scottish knife. Brides might wear a clan tartan shawl with their contemporary dresses. Traditional Scottish attire and the romantic mood that often accompanies Scottish cultural traditions are really very appealing. So much so, in fact, that many couples who aren't even of Scottish descent, opt for Celtic-themed weddings. It is a way to step into the past momentarily.

Consultant/Planner Checklist and Reminders for Wedding Attire

- Set the wedding tone with the wedding gown.
- Make sure you familiarise yourself with wedding gown shops in your local area.
- Ensure you keep up-to-date on current fashion trends.
- Learn about menswear styles.
- See that groomsmen and bridesmaids look like they belong together.
- Ensure your clients know about any rush charges, all alteration fees, and any additional charges for gowns that are larger or smaller than average.
- Give brides many options regarding places they can purchase accessories.
- Do not be surprised if couples ask you to order a tuxedo for a cat or dog.
- Always be prepared for any type of wardrobe malfunction.
- Learn how to bustle a bridal train and to knot a bow tie properly.

Food and Beverages

The food and the beverages will usually be the most expensive elements of a wedding. They will almost certainly take a significant portion of the budgetary allowance for reception and rentals. Many people are not used to making menu decisions in such detail as is required for a wedding with large numbers of people. You, as the wedding consultant/planner will no doubt be consulted. Wedding consultants and caterers work together. Some vendors don't like using liaisons while others like to work with knowledgeable consultants. Caterers tend to fall into the latter category because they often become

planners by default if professional wedding consultants haven't been hired. Consultants often have ongoing relationships with caterers. It saves the caterer and in turn, the couple, a lot of valuable time. In this section we look at essential considerations regarding food, beverages and wedding cakes.

Finding a caterer and working with him/her/them is a sales process from the beginning to the end. A consultant will usually start by suggesting a few different caterers for the couple to have a look at. You must suggest caterers who vary in their styles, services, and of course, prices. Narrow the bigger group down to three or even four and have initial meetings with them all. During this time the caterers should give information about their service options and their package options. In some cases, the caterers focus on the food and beverages which are non-alcoholic. Most of them should also be able to provide alcohol services as well as other services such as the wedding cakes, rentals and staffing. It is at this meeting that all the logistics will be discussed; things such as how many people, the time of day, the site, and also any information regarding any other vendors who will influence the catering services – such as the tent rental people.

Any dietary restrictions or special needs should be mentioned at this meeting. You must make sure that the caterers can accommodate specific requirements. An example would be caterers who work with set menus. They will not be able to create menus that strictly follow kosher Jewish dietary needs (Glatt kosher). A couple who wishes to have Glatt kosher meals should work with caterers who are kosher certified.

The three requirements in that case would be that:

- (1) shellfish, rabbit, and pork are forbidden;
- (2) meat and dairy cannot be eaten together; and
- (3) any grape products, (such as wine), must be produced by people of the Jewish faith.

Caters can certainly address some unique dietary requirements like vegetarian meals, however, this usually comes with additional fees. Wedding consultants must be aware of any menu restrictions beforehand in order to limit the initial caterer listing to those who can satisfy the couple's needs.

Sometimes, it will only be one or two people who will have special dietary requests. Other times the couple will just choose their specialised menu for everyone. An example would be if the bride or groom is allergic to nuts. In this case, the couple will likely request that no nuts or nut extracts are to be in any part of the menus. If one or the other is a diabetic then a separate sugar-free cake might be provided, or the entire cake could be sugar-free.

It is absolutely imperative that both you as the consultant, and the couple, communicate very clearly and early any special needs to your caterer. This must be done before the formal proposal is offered. You must also determine if it is possible to have any substitutions for any individuals with special dietary needs.

At the first meeting, the caterer will get to know the couple as well as their specific food and beverage desires. This information will then be used to create a targeted proposal. Rachel Gittins, who is an event

designer at Ridgewells, explains that the catering proposal should be presented after the initial meeting and will include the cost of food, staffing, equipment, gratuity, taxes, and delivery. Always check if there are any set-up costs or overtime charges. The proposal must sell to the couple's desires as stated in the first meeting. It must be accurate and well-organised, thorough, with no spelling or grammatical errors. It should contain the bride and groom's names, the venue the wedding will be held in, and any other specific details mentioned at the meeting. Make sure that all notes about specialized needs are included.

Gittins states that it is during this proposal stage that the caterer must try to 'wow' the clients. This could be done by the use of special touches which send a message to the couple that the catering company views their event as unique and will treat it that way. For example, if the couple happened to mention that the groom popped the question while holidaying in Australia and they would like an outback theme, the caterer might suggest a signature drink to accompany the wedding cake aptly named 'the koala café.' If the clients are avid gardeners the caterer's proposal could be presented on paper elegantly adorned in a floral design. Small things such as these will show the couple that the caterer was carefully listening to them at their meeting and clearly understood the focus of their wedding. More upscale caterers really like working with 'foodie brides.' These are women who understand and really appreciate fine cuisine. It doesn't matter if the proposal will first be sent to the wedding consultant and not the couple directly. These small and intimate touches will make a difference. The consultant and caterer will co-ordinate and put a proposal together which will incorporate the catering elements.

It is absolutely necessary for the clients to taste the food from the caterers they are considering. Top caterers will host formal tastings a few times a year. Couples and consultants who have expressed an interest in the particular caterer's services will be invited to this event which will show cases their food, the presentation, and their service. This is a savvy marketing technique as it exposes people to certain hors d'oeuvres, pastries, entrees and other food they might not have considered otherwise. It also gives the caterers a chance to highlight any new linens or tableware in a lovely, festive atmosphere.

Trends in Food and Beverages

Some cutting-edge caterers are indeed trendsetters and these trends will be witnessed at weddings or other events they service. Signature drinks are especially popular in the present time. It is a fun and a flexible trend because beverages are very versatile; even a simple drink can have flair when it's given a clever name, presented in a fun glass, given a unique straw, or even a non-traditional garnish. Drinkable desserts, chocolate fountains, monogrammed tuxedo and dress strawberries, edible pictures etc. are stylish ways of offering sweets as favours or before cutting the cake. Edible place cards can be made from white and dark chocolate and another unexpected treats, and are loads of fun.

Trends can also be highlighted by the presentation and style of the entrees. Specialty entrees could be designed and also named to go with the wedding theme. Providing split entrees is another current trend which blends the diversity of a buffet with the elegance of the plated service.

Trends can be seen in the caterer's equipment as well. Cutting-edge tableware will leave a lasting impression. An example would be cocktail stations instead of a traditional reception. They will present

the opportunity to showcase new and funky plates, cutlery and bowls. For example, guests wouldn't usually expect soup at cocktail stations, but using stylish shot or cordial glasses will create the opportunity for this.

Generally speaking, if a caterer is more upscale it is more likely the managers will be able to make things happen. Some caterers have set menus and do not offer much flexibility, but high-end business usually operates a la carte. In some rare cases, if a bride and groom want specialty equipment but the catering company doesn't own it, the manager could decide to buy it if it is deemed cutting-edge enough. Then it can be rented to the couple getting married and kept for further use. The more high-end caterers are usually more open to working with support caterers. If a couple wants a specific ethnic food that the catering company doesn't do, they will work with a support caterer to make sure they get and showcase the specific food item. It is against the law for a catering company to pick up something from a restaurant and take it to the wedding reception. It is not against the law to order something from a restaurant and have it delivered to the venue. The primary caterers will then present the food in a manner consistent with their own presentation. This gives couples a sense of satisfaction knowing that their caterer will go to great effort to make sure their food and their beverages are perfect.

Types of Services

It is food choices, the reception venue, and the formality level which will dictate the type of service which will be used during the main meal. There are three main types of service presentations. These are: plated, buffet, and French. The skills of the wait staff can vary a lot depending on the type of service. The buffet service is the least formal and is often chosen by couples who want to offer a large variety of food for their guests to choose from.

Keeping the buffet very clean and ensuring all empty dishes that come back are quickly changed is something that servers are very skilled at. Caterers know that it's not good form for a guest to see a chafing dish and not want to choose the last of any item. Also, people standing a few spots back should not be fearful that a specific dish will run out before they get there. A buffet must always look full and delicious, as it does in its original state. Be aware that a buffet type service is not necessarily convenient to every venue. Historic houses, which usually have many small rooms with many tables, would make it very difficult for guests to navigate back and forth. It would cause confusion. This type of venue needs a plated type of service. Most of the work would then be done in the kitchen, behind the scenes. This type of service also allows for the elegant arrangement of foods. Every plate will be carefully and quickly prepared then covered. This cover will be removed and any sauces added when it's time to serve the meal.

During plated services, a few waiters might work each table in order to ensure all plates come out as quickly as possible. This happens a lot at formal weddings. However, this may not be practical for some venues such as those with a kitchen on a different floor to the dining hall. This is where French service would come in. If a venue is not really favourable for plated services but it is a formal affair, French service would suit very well. The entire meal for everyone at the one table is brought out and is served

from one large platter or dish. All the servers wear white gloves and must be very dexterous with a spoon and fork because they must manoeuvre the utensils and the platter and the food very skilfully to ensure the meal is presented in an appealing manner. French service is good because it ensures every individual guest receives special attention. If this service is being considered, make sure you ask the caterer about the ratio of staffing. At top venues expect one waiter for every eight or ten guests (1:8 – 1:10) at most. In a venue which is less customer focused, the ratio would be one waiter for every twelve people or more.

For the buffet style service, fewer servers will be needed. If a cocktail hour is desired then servers will usually be there to pass around hors d'oeuvres. Here, one waiter per thirty or even thirty-five guests is acceptable (1:30-1:35). In certain cultures, such as the Portuguese, food services are all-day affairs.

Food and Beverage Costs

Quantity, quality, and variety will make a difference to the associated costs of food and beverages, as well as the geographic location of the wedding. The general cost of living in any specific vicinity will definitely affect the pricing as well. Certain customs within a locale will also make a difference to the food and beverage costs. Generally though, the cost can range from £15 to £500 and higher. For this reason you must familiarise yourself with your community's ranges.

For those who are on a very strict budget, there are some ways to cut down on the reception cost. Some caterers are fine with couples buying their own alcohol and only charging for the actual pouring. This must be discussed with the caterer before giving this as a suggestion to your clients. Another way to cut costs is to limit the alcohol to only wine and beer. Good wine, however, can cost more than liquor and will also have less servings per bottle. Sometimes the couple will opt for an alcohol free event and only have a champagne toast. This is quite acceptable, especially for afternoon receptions, for example. Another way of saving on costs is by having a cash bar where the guests will pay for alcoholic drinks. Be careful with this however, as it may be seen as offensive to some guests. Only do this if it is common practice in a specific region.

For receptions with a cocktail hour, money can be saved by having the servers pass around more expensive hors d'oeuvres instead of placing them on a table where people will most likely flock to devour them. If servers walk around with trays of shrimp, most people won't take more than one piece. You could then have the least expensive things such as cheese and crackers, and vegetables set out on the table.

There can also be savings for children and any vendors. Work out how many children will be at the events. For a plated event, options which are less expensive should be made available for children. Feeding vendors should also be done but at a cheaper rate. They do not have to have the same expensive meal as the guests. You cannot leave the vendors out of the food service altogether. They must be fed. Caterers can easily put together sandwich trays, chips and/or cookies for vendors. All of them have to be fed, including every member of the band or DJ.

The reception budget is where you will place all the food and beverages associated with rentals. Rentals such as tableware, linens, chairs etc. might come with the caterer but might be less expensive if rented from outside vendors. You must work out the policy of the caterer and also the venue before you engage the services of any outside vendors for these specific items. It is important to mention here that, you must never use unlicensed caterers as it may compromise guests' safety. Using a family member for a chef or bartender is also putting guests at some risk and should be avoided. Having food stations around the venue might seem like a good way to save money but is usually not so. Hors d'oeuvres can cost as much as £3 a piece or more. This will add up quickly if the couple want around six food stations.

Catering Styles

Couples must decide on the reception and catering style they want for their wedding right at the beginning. There are a few options they can choose from. These include:

- Afternoon Tea
- Cocktail Style
- Buffet (sit down or standing)
- Luncheon
- Finger Food
- Sit down formal dinner

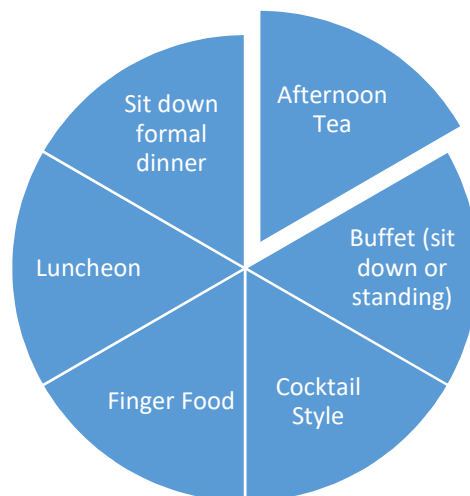


Fig. 6.1

When the reception style has been chosen, make sure the caterer you've selected is able to accommodate for this. In some cases, a caterer will only specialise in one style (like finger food or buffet only). Make sure you choose a caterer who has experience in the catering type you have selected. Some

caterers also only cater from a certain number of guests so you must know how many people will be at the reception.

Questions for the Caterer

Irrespective of the reception type, you must still consider asking the caterer these questions when you have your meeting:

- What is the style of catering they provide? Buffet, finger food, sit down dinner?
- Do they have a maximum or minimum number of guests they cater for?
- What meal or food options are available?
- Can they cater for special dietary needs (gluten free, vegetarian, diabetic, etc.)?
- Is the wait staff provided and, if yes, what is the ratio of staff to guests?
- Are menu changes possible?
- Do they provide the dinnerware, cutlery, tablecloths, glassware and napkins?
- Do they provide drinks (if desired)?
- Is there anything that they need in order to set up or operate?
- Is there anything that they do not provide?
- Are they insured?
- Do they clean up after guests have eaten?
- What are the final costings and will there be any added costs?
- What deposit is needed and when is final payment due?
- What is their cancellation / refund policy?
- Is there anything else that you should be made aware of?

Beverages

When the food has been organised, you must then think about the beverages. There are quite a few options as well as costs associated with the serving of the beverages. You will need to carefully consider them all including their pros and cons.

Tray Service

To help minimise costs, a couple might want a tray service. Advantages here are that it keeps the cost down, and it also prevents over consumption of alcohol. Disadvantages include a guest missing the drinks tray and then having to wait until the next round, or some guests might like a few more drinks.

Open Bar

Having an open bar will give guests an opportunity to drink unlimited quantities of beverages throughout the reception. The bar staff will keep track of all guests' orders then issue a bill at the end of the

reception. For guests this is probably the 'ultimate' when it comes to wedding receptions. This may be the case but it will not be the guests who will pay the bill at the end of the event.

Beverages on Guests' Tables

Placing bottles of wine, beer, soft drinks and/or juices on tables will allow guests to serve themselves whichever drinks they wish.

Bar Tab

Bar tabs allow you to set a pre-determined amount of money i.e. the 'bar tab' to cover drinks for the guests. The bar staff will keep a note of all the drinks ordered by the guests. Guests can order whenever they want to throughout the reception. When the bar tab has been reached, they will have to buy their own.

Cash Bar

A cash bar allows couples to free themselves of any beverage expenses. Here, guests must pay for their own drinks just like at any other bar. Many couples will choose this option combined with some of the ones mentioned above.

Self-Catering Beverages

In the case where the caterer or reception venue doesn't cater for alcohol or provide it, a couple may be able to buy the alcohol and have the wait staff serve it.

History of the Wedding Cake

The wedding cake tradition is very old. In fact, it dates back over 2,000 years to ancient Greece. Originally, it was fruit, nuts and honey given as offerings to the gods. It was believed that this would ensure the gods blessed the marriage and bestow happiness on the couple getting married. It later developed into a tradition of showering the couple with little cakes. The guests would gather round the bride and eat leftover crumbs as a sign of wealth, happiness, and good luck.

Julius Caesar later brought this custom to Britain. It changed into sharing the wedding cake with local villagers. Wedding cakes were usually reserved for wealthy families.

The tradition of the wedding cake has transformed slowly from what it once was. In Scotland and England, wedding guests started bringing buns or little cakes for the couple. These delights were piled on top of each other until a large, sticky, and sweet tiered structure was formed. The couple would then have their first kiss over the pile of cakes and if it was done successfully they would be blessed with prosperity, fertility, and longevity.

One legend has it that a French chef came up with the idea of how to serve a tower of small cakes by seeing an English wedding. He decided that the cake piling was unhygienic and tedious, and made his own tower of sweet buns. He held them together with a sticky, sweet toffee and the first wedding cake was born. It was called the croquembouche.

From this, many different adaptations were designed. Wedding cakes started being made with three tiers, looking like the croquembouche and also the spire of St. Bride's church which is in London. Bakers and chefs changed the sweets to fruit as the base and slowly began to move away from the pastry of the croquembouche. These cakes were iced with white marzipan which symbolized the purity of the bride. Sugar was a very rare item and usually only affordable for the wealthier people. The sweeter and whiter the icing, the wealthier the bride's family.

This three-tiered and iced fruitcake is now the wedding cake of today. The newlyweds will cut the cake in the later half of the reception. This is traditionally understood to be a symbol of the bride about to lose her virginity. Of course today it is viewed as a happy gesture of celebration for the newlyweds and their new life together. It will then be cut into small pieces and served to all the guests, sometimes with coffee. Some people say that if the unmarried place a piece of wedding cake under their pillow they'll dream about their future husband or wife.

Selecting the Wedding Cake

Today, many couples opt for more personal designs and not the three-tiered fruitcake. The wedding cake trends are constantly changing and cake artists can create pretty much anything for a couple, from chocolate mud wedding cake, to strawberry or vanilla crème mousse, to a 3D replica of wedding cars. The possibilities are endless.

Help your clients choose a wedding cake that reflects who they are and their personal taste and style. You could also tie in the cake with the theme or colour of the wedding.

Shape and Style

Many couples today are opting for individual styles and moving away from the traditional wedding cake style and size. Circular, oval, or square shaped cakes are still very popular. They could be on their own or piled on top of one another. Making each tier a different shape is a new trend and becoming very popular. Having a square for the base, an oval in the middle and a circular shape on top creates a very nice effect.

Keeping with the theme and style of the wedding is what many couples also do today. For example, if a bride and groom are having a beach wedding, you might suggest a cake in the shape of a starfish or a beach ball. You might also like to match the cake pattern to the wedding dress design and use the icing to replicate the gown detail.

Another popular cake design recently is the 'present' cake which is three-tiered and styled as a gift wrapped present stacked one on top of the other. These presents can be made in any style, any shape or colour and they come with matching bows which are edible. This is a lovely surprise for the couple and guests. This cake style is very lovely and a wonderful alternative to traditional wedding cakes.

Couples can get any style of cake they want and the only limit is their own imagination. Considering this, allow yourselves to be creative with the designs and have lots of fun.

Wedding Cake Flavours

The flavour of a wedding cake is not limited either. Couples can get pretty much any flavour they desire. The traditional fruitcake is still the most popular by far for wedding cakes. It has a rich flavour and keeps well, and it has also long been the symbol of longevity and fidelity. It is also sturdy which makes it very suitable for larger cakes which are heavily decorated. In the hotter months it is not likely to melt and this is very helpful for those who choose to have their weddings in the hotter months.

For the many reasons mentioned above, do not overlook the traditional fruitcake. As well as all the other positives, it is also possible to keep this cake and store it for the future, perhaps to be eaten on the first anniversary or the birth of a first child.

Cake artists are usually quite adventurous when it comes to wedding cake textures and flavours. Some have decided against the traditional fruitcake and choose instead to go with more of a variety of different flavours. Chocolate mud cake, for example, is actually as popular as the traditional fruitcake because it tastes great and is also a strong and versatile base for wedding cakes. It can be covered or decorated in almost any kind of icing – ganache, fondant, more traditional 'heavy' icing, fruit, and confectionary, just to name a few.

The mud cake is another good choice for wedding held in hotter months. You just need to be careful with the icing you choose. It can also be kept frozen for two or three months after the event and therefore can be enjoyed when couples return from their honeymoon. If a couple wishes to keep a piece or two of their wedding cake for their first anniversary or birth of a child then it's best to go with the traditional fruitcake.

Some couples will not want a fruitcake or a mud cake. Below there are some other suggestions which you can recommend to clients:

- Banana
- A crepe wedding cake (made from crepes)
- Butter cake
- Black forest
- Carrot cake

- Caramel mud
- Chocolate mousse
- Cheesecake
- Croquembouche
- Cupcakes (made into a tower)
- Crème brûlée
- Ice cream
- Meringue
- Mocha
- Marble mud
- Orange/Madeira
- Nougatine
- Strawberry Mousse
- Sponge
- White chocolate
- Vanilla Crème

The list could go on and on...

Another alternative is to have a variety of flavours for a wedding cake. For example, the bottom layer might be dark chocolate, the middle layer white chocolate mud, and the top layer could be caramel.

Another decision to make when deciding on the wedding cake is whether or not to include a filling. Some popular cake fillings include milk, dark or white chocolate, coconut, mocha, hazelnut, strawberry crème, mousse, caramel or a choice of jams or preserve fillings.

It is suggested that you meet with the cake artist to sample some of their culinary delights before you decide on a specific flavour. If a couple have a favourite dessert or cake that isn't on the cake maker's list, just ask. It is likely they will be able and willing to create something that will suit any and all individual tastes and needs.

Selecting the Cake Size

The cake size will usually be determined by the number of guests invited to a wedding. Cake artists can also make cakes 'look' larger or smaller if that's what a couple wants.

If a couple would like a big 'showstopper' but there are only a small number of guests, it is possible to still have the big cake show they desire. One way of doing this is by adding fake tiers or false sections to the cake and decorate them with icing so they look like a real part of the cake. When it's time to cut the cake, the false section/s are removed only leaving the edible layers which will then be served. If you ensure you work with a reputable cake maker, neither the couple nor their guests will be able to notice the difference between the real part of the cake and the false parts.

If a couple would like a smaller cake design but have a lot of guests, they could opt for a separate cutting cake to be made. This way, the couple can have their smaller cake which they can cut at the reception, while another one will be in the kitchen being cut and then served to the guests. These options allow couples to have exactly what type of cake they want regardless of the number of guests.

The size of the cake should be decided upon based on whether a couple wants to serve the cake as a dessert for the guests, with their coffee, or as a slice to take home. The usual size would be a 5cm by 2.5 cm cake slice. The cake artist will help work this out and make sure the cake is big enough to ensure no-one is left hungry.

A few extra slices to be given to parents might be a nice idea for any special guests who have perhaps helped out with the wedding.

Selecting the Cake Decorations

Once the flavour, style and size of the wedding cake has been decided, it's time to think about the decoration. Fruitcakes and mud cakes allow for almost any type of decoration. Other cake types, however, could have limitations. Cheesecakes, sponges, and mousses, for example, can only handle light weight icing and decoration. Traditional 'heavy' icing will actually crush the cake. The most popular cake toppings or icings include:

- Traditional white, soft icing (this can be coloured to match a wedding theme)
- Chocolate
- Ganache
- Rolled fondant icing (especially for a smooth and elegant look)
- Cream
- Fruit
- Confectionery
- Marzipan
- Cream cheese (for banana or carrot cake in particular)

The colour of the icing may be tied in with the bridesmaids' dresses or any other wedding colour themes. Once you have decided on the icing you can then begin thinking about finishing touches which will include more specific decorations.

Today, cake decorations are becoming unique and more personalized to reflect the couples' personalities. The old cake toppers of a plastic bride and groom, for example, are not used as often. Many brides choose to decorate their cakes with sentimental items like intricate crystal designs or hand crafted replicas of the bride and groom. These can be kept as a memento.

Many wedding cakes are still decorated with flowers which are made of edible icing or silk. Another thing that's popular is using fresh flowers which can be ordered by the cake artist. Florists and cake artists

could also work together to make sure the flowers on the cake match the wedding bouquet, or any other floral arrangements.

Fresh flowers always add a lovely touch to any wedding cake. They can also be made into various formations from cascading bouquets to small arrangements. This can be discussed with the cake vendor in order to decide upon the most suitable flowers and arrangement for the cake design.

Some other decorations which are very popular are lace, tulle and ribbons. These can complement any wedding colour scheme. Ornaments which represent the interests of the bride and groom, such as a snow ski or a surf board, can also be used. It is important to remember that with wedding cakes, there are so many choices that couples can get exactly what they want.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Food, Beverage, and the Wedding Cake

- Ensure that the pastry chef and caterer are licensed and insured. Sometimes permits might be needed if using an off-premises caterer.
- Make sure any menu or dietary restrictions are mentioned in the first meeting with the caterer to find out if they can accommodate your needs.
- Have tastingsessions with your chosen caterer and/or pastry chef.
- Consider having a signature drink which matches the wedding theme.
- Ask caterers to specify staffing ratio.
- Ensure that all taxes, staffing, delivery,equipment, gratuity, and other fees are included in the proposal estimates of the caterer.
- Establish how long the caterer will need for setup and teardown.
- Think about the formality of the reception and anyvenue restrictions when choosing a service style.
- Pass around the most expensive hors d'oeuvres instead of setting them out on a table.
- Consider downsizing the ceremonial cake and supplementing with a sheet cake for cost cutting.
- Avoid butter cream icing during warmer months.

Photography

Photography makes up around 10% of a wedding budget but many couples spend even more than that. This is because the memories captured on film and in photos will last a lifetime. Many consultants advise their clients to find the best photographer they can afford because of the importance of wedding photos.

There have been many changes in technology and they have revolutionized wedding photography. Below you will learn about (1) the movement from film to digital photography, (2) the two main styles of photography, and (3) album designs and trends in photography.

The Movement from Film to Digital Photography

Most wedding photographers now use digital equipment instead of film because it has a lot more benefits to offer clients. Firstly, the digital improvements which have occurred in the past few years allow for colour, saturation, and also sharpness which are all superior to anything film could achieve. Secondly, digital allows photographers to do online proofing. This means that clients and their guests can go through all the proofs no matter where they reside. Thirdly, digital also allows for almost instant feedback.

Lastly, it is easy to safely store digital images in many different locations. This guards against losing any original work. Many people, however, believe that digital media is cheaper to use than film. The top photographers actually run about five or more very high-end computers which have enormous storage capacity in order to handle the huge processing flow. They also have to constantly update camera equipment and have the latest technology. In fact, digital processing usually takes around three times more effort than film processing. This is due to the high number of images that are captured and also the creativity that is involved in modern album designing. When advising your clients and comparing prices, make sure that the photographer's packages include the photo shoot time, the production time, the album design, any reprint costs, and other options regarding access to the digital negatives.

Choosing a Photographer

Choosing the right photographer is a really important part of planning any wedding. It can seem like a daunting task but there are a few simple steps you should follow to make sure everything goes well on the big day.

Some couples prefer a photojournalistic style and there are many photographers who still like the traditional style of photography. As the consultant, you must present both styles and let your clients choose the one they feel would best suit them. The amount of images taken by a photographer on a wedding day will vary depending on personal approach and style. Therefore, it will be necessary to consider this when comparing photographers. It would be wise to advise your clients to meet with at least two photographers to get to know them in person and to look at their sample albums. A photographer's personality is as important as his/her skills and couples must feel that they can easily get along with the photographer they choose. Every couple will have an idea of what they would like their album to look like. As the consultant, you will be the main point of contact between the two parties and can advise the photographer what picture types are preferred and also collect the ones that will feature in the images. This will allow the couple to enjoy their wedding day while you do the running around getting the bridal party, family and friends ready for key photos. A photographer must also be aware of any cultural needs your clients may have. The time and place and the 'how' of wedding photos can vary quite a lot depending on culture.

Consider the Client's Photographic Needs

Once you have made appointments to meet with various photographers, you must think about what your clients actually need from them and exactly what your expectations are, regarding both their work and personal style.

Questions for the Photographer

Make sure you have questions prepared before meeting with the photographer. Below is a list which may assist you:

- Does the photographer have any recent examples of his/her work? - This is usually in the form of a display album. Make sure the albums you view are examples of the actual photographer's work and not someone else who works for the same studio/company.
- Is the photographer you actually meet with (at your appointment), the one who will be taking the photos on the wedding day? Often studios have more than one photographer, and it could be that the one you meet with may not be the one who will be booked for the ceremony.
- How long have you been working in the industry, and what are your qualifications? -Experience could make a big difference when it comes to wedding photography.
- Are you (or your studio) accredited with any professional associations?
- Do you use film or digital cameras (or perhaps both)?
- Do you have back-up equipment? (If you as the consultant are familiar with photo equipment, you could ask about the type of cameras and lenses used, etc.)
- How much do you charge? - This is a tricky one. Make sure you know exactly what you will get and how much it will cost. Check the section below for more information on wedding photography costs.
- Do you sign a contract with me? What does it involve and do you guarantee your work? – Make sure that if *you* sign the contract with the photographer that you have read it and understood it in its entirety. You could compare contracts from one photographer to the next to ensure that you will get the 'best deal.' Always get an original copy for your records.
- How long do you take to prepare and deliver the album after the wedding?
- Will the couple be able to keep the negatives (if the photos are film) or a copy of the photos on disc (if in digital format)? If so, are there any extra costs for this service?
- Are there any optional extras available that we should know about? - A lot of photographers offer many extras when it comes to wedding photography. This might include options like parent albums, pre-wedding portraits, enlargements, photo frames, and extra pages for the wedding albums.

Viewing the Portfolio of the Photographers

When you meet with a photographer, you will have an opportunity to look through a portfolio of his/her work. These are usually display albums, but will vary for every photographer. This is your opportunity to

look for whatever your clients prefer so you must know what you are actually looking for. Checking the quality and clarity is a must.

Here are a few things to think about when looking through the photos:

- What are your first impressions? Do you like what you see? Do these photos catch your eye?
- What do you feel when looking at the photos? Do you sigh in awe or disappointment from the photos?
- Are the photos the type that you dream of, or dread for your wedding album?
- Do the people in the photos look content and happy?
- Do the photos look natural or 'posed/set up'?
- Are the colours bright and crisp, and do they have good clarity?
- Is the technical aspect good?
- Are the photos in focus?
- Are the layouts and designs of the albums appealing to you?
- Are the photos printed on good quality paper and have they been well presented?
- Are the wedding albums of a style that suit your tastes and budget? Are there several to choose from?
- Are the pages used in the wedding albums acid free?
- Are the albums well-constructed and do they protect the photos from dust and light?
- Can additional pages be added to the albums?

Do not be afraid to be critical when looking through portfolios and display albums. You will pay good money for wedding photos, and you only get one chance at taking them.

Wedding Photography Cost

The costs will vary from one photographer to another. You should be able to find a very 'general' consensus amongst them regarding different fees that they charge and any optional extras.

Below is a list that will give you a general idea of costs you may encounter regarding wedding day photos:

- A set price package deal which includes wedding ceremony, reception, album, photos etc. You must read through all inclusions thoroughly to make sure that become aware of what is included and what is not.
- Location fees. In some cases, photographers may charge a fee if they have to travel over a certain distance to get to your wedding. Fees may also apply if you want to take photos at various locations throughout the day.
- Fees for any extra pages in the wedding album.

- A fee to stay throughout the entire reception (after the ceremony).
- Extra fees for extra photos that you want taken (a photographer might have limits on the amount that they will take in one day).
- Fees for different styles of photography. For example, photographers may provide only digital images and you may request film and digital.
- Assistant fees.
- Fees for a copy of the negatives or images on disc.
- Fees for hand colouring on black and white prints.
- Fees for extra albums (like parent’s albums) etc.
- Fees for enlargement of photos.
- Fees for thank you cards and envelopes.
- Fees for placing photos on the internet.
- Framing fees.
- Fees for other custom designed options.

Photography Styles

Photojournalistic and traditional are the two main styles of photography. Think about the wedding albums of your parents or grandparents. You will likely see a lot of black and white and all pictures carefully posed. In the traditional style of photography, a reception may even be stopped to stage a moment. The couple, for example, might pretend to cut the wedding cake and get a good pose. After that they will move on to another staged moment. In the past, wedding albums would have only photos of the couple and groups lined up.

Table 6.3

Comparing Two Wedding Photography Styles	
Traditional Style	Photojournalistic Style
Posed	Natural
Directed	Candid
Staged	All Angles
Front and Centre	Spontaneous
Significant Communication	Little Communication
Hands-on	Hands-Off
Traditional mount album	Flush mount Album

The last ten years has seen the evolution of the photojournalistic style of wedding photography. This means the photographer documents real moments and it’s like telling a story. It will be fluid, candid, spontaneous, and also versatile. Photos are taken from many different directions and the pictures from

certain angled positions instead of always front and centre. Most couples still want a few photos which are staged, but most images will be of real moments.

Most of the time, a photographer will have at least one assistant (more if the guest list tops 500). Using an assistant, one photographer will be able to shoot images of the bride preparing herself and another of the groom getting ready. At the ceremony and reception venues one photographer can be on the floor and the other getting an overhead shot from a balcony. It is also important to note that some venues have very strict policies on photographer locations and also flashes. Photographers who are experienced will know how to use available light instead of a flash. They know how to be unobtrusive, use telephoto lenses, and collect images from the back of the ceremony.

Album Design and Photography Trends

The two different styles of photography will obviously produce different albums. The traditional album will have photographs which are bound and also bordered. The couple could open the page and pull out the photograph. With digital photojournalistic photography, a flush mount album has come about. This allows for a photo or group of photos to be the actual page, much like pictures in a magazine. The top flush mount album companies actually offer a 200 year guarantee. The pages are coated and in this way are protected from any fading or spills etc.

Remember that you will get what you pay for so the leading photograph companies will offer superior quality and it will come at a price. Only the best companies will have a patented binding system which will allow the centre seam to be flat thus giving a panoramic spread but without the bulky midpoint.

Album sizes have also increased due to the flush mounted album. The traditional way was that a couple would have only one album and then some individual photos reprinted for close family and/or friends. Today, a duplicate of the entire album in smaller sizes can be achieved.

Most often, couples want some colour and some black and white photos. With the flush mounted style you will get a seamless integration of both. Sepia or black and white photos are timeless. The absence of bright colours lets the viewer focus on certain details, so rather than noticing the yellows and pinks in a flower bouquet, the eye will be drawn to the petal shape and the curve of the ribbon. Black and white is also more forgiving in cases of inconsistent makeup or perhaps an unexpected stain on a white piece of clothing. The black and white photos allow for more consistent documentation.

Advise clients to ask about average processing times for a wedding album. These times may be influenced by a photographer's style and the process for creating and designing the album post wedding, clients' turnaround time including proof reviews, final selections and feedback of album layout, and the album company itself and its production time.

Fig. 6.2



A lack of bright colours allows the viewer to focus on specific details.

There are another three specific trends in photography. These are: engagement photos, photo guest books, and photo-video hybrids. The best photographers will have engagement photo sessions two or maybe three times a year. Autumn and spring are the usual times. Often, the photographers will choose a lovely outdoor setting and will meet with twelve or more clients within a few hours instead of making individual appointments. These engagement photos can be for save-the-date cards, newspaper announcements, or holiday greeting cards.

More recently, the trend is to flush mount the engagement photos which creates a more personalized guest book. The photo-video hybrid is able to capture audio too and this is a good option for couples who wish to capture specific moments like the exchange of their wedding vows, or perhaps a vocalist singing their signature song. More creative placement of the images in slide shows with music can be achieved through digital photography and certain related software products. Digital capabilities are continually evolving and more couples might decide on hiring photo-video hybrid specialists.

Plan for the Day

When the couple has chosen their photographer, you must make a meeting in advance to plan for the photos. This is done to ensure you and the photographer have the same understanding of exactly how the day should proceed and that the client's photographic needs are covered.

During the meeting the travel time should be discussed, sunset time, traffic, ceremony and reception beginning and finishing times, and the weather. You will need to have back up locations to fall back on in case of bad weather.

Consultant Checklist and Photography Reminders

- Familiarise clients with both traditional and photojournalistic photography styles. Include sample albums which will determine the ones that best suit their personalities.
- Make yourself aware of the engagement photography dates available for the photographers who hold them two or maybe three times each year.
- Assist clients to make a list of “must have” photos, i.e. the ones they want to be taken.
- Make sure you are familiar with the rules for photography at places of worship or reception venues.
- Check to make sure the photographer will have an assistant on the wedding day.
- Ask the photographer what his/her average number of images is at weddings.
- Determine if the chosen photographer will shoot all colour or have a percentage of black and white photos.
- When you compare packages, make sure the photographer’s options include the photo shoot time, the design and production times, album options, any reprint costs, and the option to purchase the digital negatives.

Floral Décor

Flowers and other related elements of decoration will set the mood/tone of a wedding. They are also a significant expense which usually takes around 7%(or more) of the budget.

Firstly, let’s discuss the bridal bouquet. This dates all the way back to ancient times when brides and grooms would wear a garland around their necks. These were mostly made from strong scented herbs and spices which people believed contained mystical powers that would ward off bad spirits. As well as this, the shape of the garland which is, of course, circular, was symbolic of new life, of hope and also fertility so it was worn like a blessing for the couple.

The usual custom would involve the bride gathering some of the blooms and foliage from every garland to create a small posy which she would carry to the ceremony. The modern day bridal posy which is now made up mostly of flowers, replaced this ancient tradition. There have been many different variations over time, from small posies to arm sheaves and longer bouquets in the early 1900’s. Later, there were the teardrop and princess bouquets in the 1980’s. Flowers have therefore become a very important accessory for a bride. Today, this floral tradition is still strong and this means flowers have a very important role in today’s weddings. Floral displays for other aspects of the wedding will also be used. There could be bouquets, posies, boutonnieres, pew decorations, centerpieces and corsages. You can include any or all of these.

The role of flowers at a wedding cannot be underestimated. One must take time and carefully consider the floral decorations of a wedding day. The flowers should complement the style, colour and theme of a wedding, and leave a lasting impression.

The bridal bouquet is a good place to start when choosing the flowers. The bouquet will likely be the most photographed flower arrangement at the wedding and therefore should inform choices for the rest of the wedding party and indeed, the rest of the floral décor. When choosing flowers for a wedding, there are five main things to consider: the season, the colours, the scent, the size and the shape.

Firstly, floral elements that are available will be dictated by the season. People who are on a budget usually have some creative flair and could buy most of their floral decorations at a farmer's market. These markets are seasonal but also have the best blooms in local areas at those times. Many floral designers also use local materials as well as having a list of international distributors from whom they can purchase more flowers, ensuring they have flowers of all kinds available throughout the year.

In some cases, the most popular wedding flowers have very short seasons. A good example would be lily of the valley which only has a season of three to four weeks in May. These small stems could be priced as much as £15 each and very small bouquets can start at £400. In fact, these flowers are so expensive that a lot of florists won't stock them. Flowers which have a very short season are usually extremely expensive, therefore it will be necessary to work closely with your florist to make sure you know their seasons. If a specific flower is not available, some florists can offer silk accents or arrangements.

Another consideration when choosing the flowers is the colour. Usually, a bride will choose an all-white bouquet. This gives a fresh and elegant look. The main focus of the day really should be the bride (and groom) so if the bride is carrying dark coloured flowers against a white gown the eye will be drawn to the flowers and not the person carrying them. Around 30% of brides will have some colour mixture in their bouquets, usually light coloured ones – pale yellow, pink, lilac, or peach. Bolder and darker bouquets are becoming more popular and make quite a dramatic statement. Simple gowns benefit from more dramatic flower arrangements while more elaborate gowns are complimented by simple floral bouquets.

Bridesmaids' bouquets tend to be mixed with some brighter colours. The emerging trend today however, is for bridesmaids to carry a small purse, a fan, or a muff highlighted with silk or real flowers. This chosen ornament will usually be a gift from the bride.

The scent of the flower arrangement for the wedding is another consideration. This is important when choosing the centerpieces because any scent that is heavy will likely interfere with the meal. Some flower varieties which should not be on the tables are gardenias, magnolias and stargazer lilies, just to name a few. Some of these flowers also bruise and brown very easily so it's better to use them in wreaths and not in table centerpieces.

The shape of the flowers is something else to think about. Bridal bouquets usually come in three main shapes, these being: round, cascade, and hand-tied. The round and cascade bouquets have a well-arranged appearance. They are usually mounted on a bouquet holder which also has a handle. The

classic round bouquet is made up of hundreds of very delicate stephanotis blossoms and every stem is hand wrapped and tied. Pearl pins are often placed in the centre of each flower which gives it an elegance, then it is brought together in something that looks like a round ball. Round bouquets tend to use roses a lot of the time. Round and hand-tied bouquets can also be collared, meaning they have a collar of green which creates a border around them. Hand-tied bouquets look more natural and can be tailored or have a mixed arrangement. Some bouquets which are hand-tied are held by a simple ribbon. Others might have the stems taped or wired and tied to complete the look.

A cascade bouquet is also known as a waterfall or teardrop shape. It is usually the biggest and heaviest. It incorporates long stems which give the bouquet its drape and length.

Size is something else to consider when choosing the floral décor for a wedding. In the past, the bride's bouquet would be bigger, however, large bouquets can sometimes overwhelm the bride and make her look as if she is all flower. A large bouquet is also too heavy for someone to carry around for long periods of time. Today, bridal bouquets are more compact and boutonnieres are considered better if they are smaller. The floral designer will advise that the boutonnieres match with an aspect of the bride's bouquet. Mini call lilies and single roses are very popular options and they can easily be co-ordinated.

The flowers must be in keeping with the style and theme of the wedding. They are intended to compliment, not to overpower the bridal gown or gowns worn by the bridal party. Usually, for a traditional wedding you will need a traditional arrangement like masses of roses. Contemporary weddings, however, are more effective using single blooms such as lilies complemented by lush greenery. Couples and the consultant should carefully consider the wedding theme and any advice the floral designer gives as well as any ideas mentioned below.

Traditional

A formal, traditional, arrangement usually consists of masses of one type of flower. Some examples would include tulips or roses. Roses are still the most popular choice for many brides today. It is necessary to remember that large bouquets are quite heavy to carry.

Sophisticated and Elegant

A wedding with a more sophisticated theme will need a smaller posy with elegant blooms which will complement the bride's gown and maybe even combine colours from bridesmaids' gowns. A posy of orchids which is wired, frangipanis wrapped in ribbon stems, or perhaps a string of pearls or crystals will blend with the bridal gown and it is certain to look stunning. Tropical leaves surrounding oriental lily flowers are another way to make elegant accessories with flowers.

Bright and Fun

Bright blooms are mostly seen in summer wedding ceremonies but will create a warming effect for a winter wedding. Pink and yellow frangipanis, gerberas, hot pink lilies, and tuber roses provide a dramatic

and bright impact. These are colourful blooms and will be perfect for garden or beach weddings. They bring a sense of happiness and fun. Exotic foliage and blooms, the use of seeds and berries, and vines also complement bright, fun arrangements. You can be as creative as you want and allow the floral designer you choose to experiment with colours and some daring displays which will leave the guests with a lasting impression.

Romantic

When you think romance, think garden fresh flowers. Perfumed flowers like lavender, freesias, roses, and hyacinths make beautiful bouquets mixed with sweet scented geranium or strawberry leaves and are sure to produce an ambience of romance. A romantic theme is also complimented by soft pastels.

Modern

Modern flower arrangements use simplicity and this is the key to their success. Simple blooms like orchids and lilies are popular and are nicely complimented by lush greenery. These make lovely modern bouquets. Berries and foliage are fashionable for today's brides as well as pepper berries, rose hips, hypericum and cranberry viburnums. Many exotic and beautiful variations and choices exist that will make your flowers stand out.

The colour of wedding blooms holds equal importance and must be given careful consideration. The right colour combinations will guarantee the flowers compliment the gowns, their fabrics, and other accessories. Flowers are intended to compliment, not overwhelm or overshadow the colour scheme of the wedding. Take a swatch of fabric from the bride and bridesmaids' dresses when you meet with the floral designer and discuss any ideas you have for the bloom colours and how they'll work with the wedding colours. Also discuss the bridal jewellery and accessories colours because gems and other precious metals can influence the bouquet colours.

Flowers for All Seasons

It is important to think carefully about whether or not the bloom you choose is actually in season and therefore, easily available. If your clients really want a beautiful tulip bouquet for their summer wedding, or perhaps some sunflowers to bring warmth to a winter bouquet, you need to work out if the choice of flowers for the bouquet is practical. There are many factors which will have an influence on which flowers to choose. These are: where the clients live and the weather at the time of year when the wedding will be held. These factors will have an impact on the availability of the blooms.

Roses and lilies are the most popular wedding flowers and are pretty much available all year. Some variety of flower might not be however, as they are subject to seasonality. Despite this, good florists can usually source desired flowers from interstate or abroad. Even though this option is possible, it might not be the best thing to do. One factor to take into account is the weather. Shipping tulips in during warmer

times will not necessarily ensure they will not wilt during the wedding day. In such circumstances it's better to go for seasonal flower varieties. No bride wants to have a bruised or wilted bouquet.

The most popular wedding flower varieties are listed below, as well as the season in which they will be their best.

Spring

Azaleas, Boronias, Cyclamen, Daffodils, Dahlias (late spring), Hyacinths, Jonquils (early spring), Lilacs, Peony Roses, Phalaenopsis orchids, Poppies, Queen Anne's Lace, Rhododendron, Ranunculus, Sweet Williams, Tulips, Tuberoses, Yellow Bells, and Zinnia.

Autumn

Chrysanthemum, Cattleya orchids, Daffodils, Dahlias, Hyacinths, Hydrangeas, Misty, Nerines, Tulips, Zinnias.

Winter

Azalea, Apple blossoms, Blushing brides, Cyclamens, Hyacinths, Jonquils, Love in the Mist, Poppies, Rhododendrons, Sweet Williams, Tulips, and Violets.

Summer

Agapanthus, Christmas bells, Christmas bush, Dahlias, Frangipanis, Ginger, Hibiscus, Hydrangeas, Lilacs, Lily-of-the-valley, Marigold, Misty, Poinsettia, Queen Anne's lace, Tuberoses, Violets (Jan), and Zinnia.

All Year Round

African Violets, Alstromerias, Asiatic lilies, Asters, Baby's Breath, Begonias, Birds of Paradise (Feb-Oct), Camellias, Carnations, Cornflower, Daisies, Delphiniums, Exotic leaves, Forget-Me-Nots, Freesias, Gerberas, Gladiolus, Eucalyptus, Iris, Ivy, Jasmine, Lavender, Lisianthus, Maidenhair ferns, November Lily, Orchid, Oriental lily, Paper daisy, Peace lily, Peony, Roses, Snapdragons, Sunflowers, Sweet Peas.

Four things to take into consideration when choosing the flowers are:

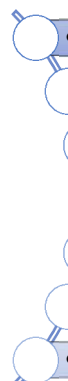
- (1) the recipients and the locations that require flowers;
- (2) choosing flowers;
- (3) centrepieces and any other decorative elements; and
- (4) the installation and removal.

Recipients and Locations

- Bridal bouquets
- Toss bouquets
- Other bridal flowers (e.g., hair, dresses)
- Number of bridesmaids, (this includes the maid of honor)
- Number of flower girls (petals/basket)
- Number of mothers (corsages/nosegays)
- Number of grandmothers (corsages/nosegays)
- Other women needing personal flowers
- Groom's boutonniere
- Number of groomsmen, (this includes the best man)
- Number of ushers
- Ring bearer (boutonniere and pillow)
- Number of fathers
- Number of grandfathers
- Other men needing personal flowers

The “other” category may include people such as the officiant, the readers, any soloists, the guestbook attendant, and, in some cases, if flowers are used for favours, all the guests. For instance, the company Speaking Roses (2006) will custom emboss flowers with personalised messages or photographs. This brings a unique type of monogrammed flavour to a wedding.

Ceremony

- 
- Entrance flowers and greenery, decorative wreaths, and bows
 - Freestanding arrangements
 - Altar arrangements
 - Pew/chair décor
 - Aisle runner(s)
 - Ceremony special elements (e.g., arch, chuppah, gazebo)
 - Other ceremony flowers (e.g., unity candle décor, kneeling bench décor)

Reception

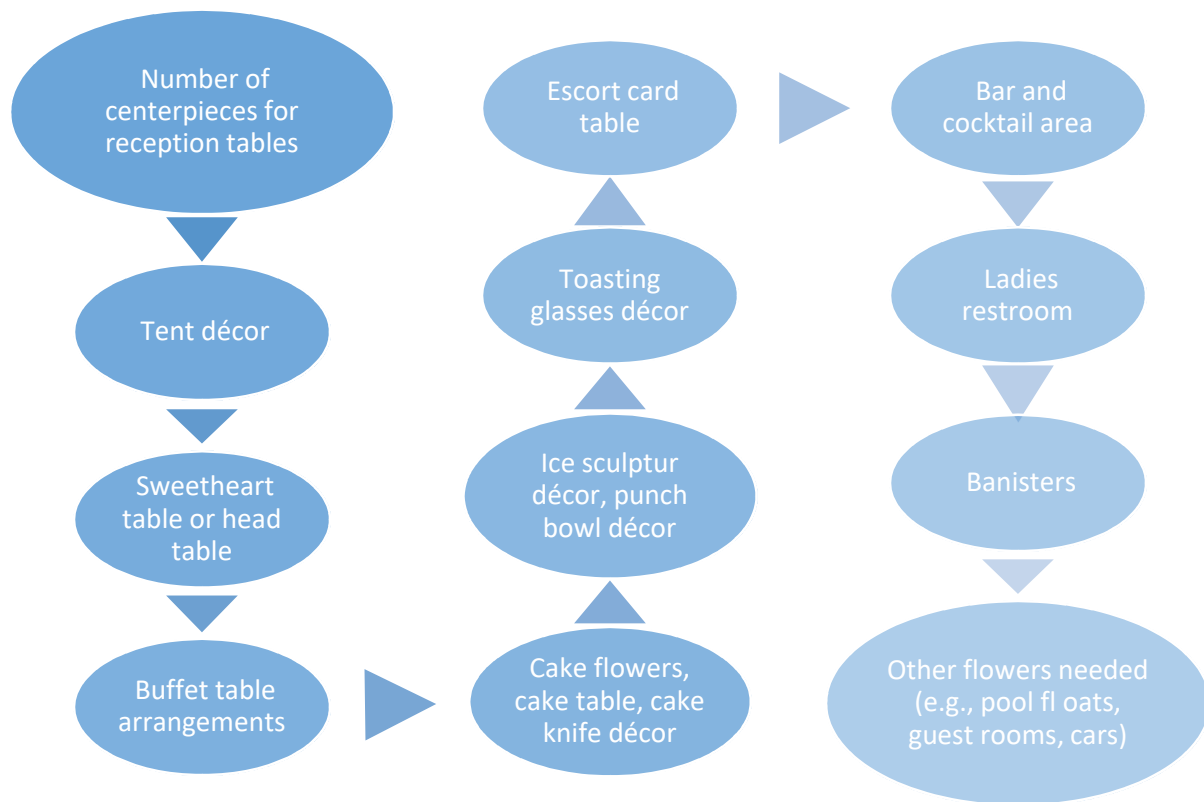


Fig. 6.3

The first chance to make a great impression will be at the entrance to the ceremony site. Here you will also have the chance to tie in the wedding theme. Before entering, most of the guests will only have seen save-the-date-cards and the invitation so it is at the entrance that the stage will be set for the entire day. When considering flower placement and any greenery at the entrance location, keep in mind that it is important to remember that garlands will be a graceful and gentle welcome for the guests without adding too much expense.

The doorway with a hint of colour, such as wreaths, swags, or garlands made from berries, leaves, herbs, pine, or ribbons and twigs artfully arranged, will make a big impact but will not be a great expense. Another choice could be ornamental trees or topiaries trimmed in different unique shapes which will add an ethereal feel when combining them with bows or tulle.

If the clients like this idea, they can rent trees or large potted plants. This will be cost effective and also make a bold statement. Entrances can be marked beautifully with floral wreaths and remember that because of their portability, wreaths can be moved from the ceremony site to the reception and then to the brunch the next day. A wreath can then be dried and kept for many years after the wedding. Wreaths do not only come in a round shape but can be made into heart shapes, squares, and vertical shapes, all offering a distinctive option.

For outdoor weddings, wreaths can offer a focal point for the actual ceremony if one is not obvious. Outdoor weddings don't need as many flowers beyond the focal point as the outdoors will provide a lot of the scenery as well. Weddings held outside allow for floral décor along aisle runners as well as real petals to be used by flower girls. Indoor ceremonies often prohibit these due to the fact that they can stain wood and carpeted floors, and even at outdoor weddings, choose a lighter coloured petal because darker ones could stain the bride's gown. Silk petals which are darker in colour can also stain as the dyes that are used on them often leave marks.

Canopies, arches, or other structures where couples will stand can be found at both indoor and outdoor weddings. These structures are beautifully highlighted with flowers. Arrangements are usually placed close to the couple and they bring an elegance to any ceremony photograph. Pews and rows can be marked by pomanders which are little flower balls.

Centrepieces and Other Decorative Elements

Most of the time couples will be quite traditional when choosing their bouquets, boutonnieres and their ceremony décor. To add some contrast and bring a contemporary feel to a traditional wedding, choose centerpieces and other decorative components which make a more modern statement. Upon entering the reception site, guests will usually see the escort card table first and it is a key focal point which could set the tone of the reception. This table is usually decorated quite lavishly. An example of this would be a wedding with a beach theme having an escort table with cards surrounded in sand and exotic flowers and perhaps shells.

The budget will limit the centerpiece options as well as the floral designer's creativity. Some couples continue to choose the more classic designs like candelabras interlaced with flowers. Other couples use the designer's imagination and will have elaborate flower arrangements tied into their wedding theme. A difference in the floral décor formality can exist but it should not be so dramatic that it results in an imbalance.

The trend in centerpieces today is to use large, glass vases of different modern shapes on top of which are flowers which sit in a plastic, removable riser. Underneath this tray anything can be placed, such as berries, vegetables, bright fruits, coloured lights, glass, or live grass growing in soil. These are just a few ideas but there are many more. The sky is the limit.

The size of the centerpieces must be dictated by the size of the table upon which they will be placed. As a general rule, make sure a centerpiece isn't so big that it inhibits conversation. Once a couple has decided on a centerpiece, most florists will want a sample showing so the clients can see their choice and discuss any changes that might be necessary with the designer. The larger arrangements such as rented palm trees or bamboo for tropical themes, should be displayed prominently to ensure the couple feels their investment was worth it. Certain flower types, like alstroemeria or carnations, are usually avoided at weddings as they are often seen to be 'grocery store flowers.' Don't let this thinking influence you, however, because these flowers can make spectacular wreaths and arrangements which would not be

affordable otherwise. Add some greenery, some unique twigs or bold ribbon and it can truly make a fabulous statement for a lesser price.

Before meeting with the florist, it's best to inform the clients of any charges they may incur for packing, delivery, installation, and also removal. Such fees can often be quite high depending on the design complexity, the travel distance, and the size of the order. You can probably anticipate a minimum fee of £150. The installation charges are mostly based on time and in certain cases the large arrangements have to be built on site as they cannot be transported. An example would be a floral chuppah which must be raised and also decorated at the actual venue. This will take around an hour, minimum, to set up. A tent decorated with flowers and greenery on each pole will take several hours. If the ceremony and reception will be held at the same site then the floral designer has to wait there until the ceremony is over and then do the changeover. This could increase the cost, but it might be the same as the travel charge which will apply in the case of the ceremony and reception being in separate locations.

Most venues prohibit the use of nails and tape. Hanging designs will therefore be installed with decorative ropes or clips, and ribbons. Once the floral designer has completed the installation, you should take a walk through to ensure that all areas are neat and clean and that no extra materials or trash has been left behind.

The removal will also be handled by the floral designer. It's quite common for the ceremony arrangements to be transported to the site of the reception. You must be well aware of the policies regarding floral décor in houses of worship because some places require a donation while others will insist they be removed. Others do not allow any floral décor at all. If flowers are required to remain, couples will usually choose more modest flower decorations.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Floral Décor

- Ask your clients to make a list of everyone who will be receiving personal flowers before your meeting with the florist.
- Remember that seasonality will often dictate availability and price.
- Your local farmers' markets are excellent places to find flowers for clients who are working on a stricter budget.
- The flowers create a focal point for the ceremony and set the scene for a wedding.
- Dark petals of both the live and the silk type can easily stain carpets, floors and clothing.
- Ensure the clients budget for the packing, delivery, the installation and the removal of the floral décor.
- Familiarise yourself with the policies of all the ceremony and reception venues you will use.

Music

Music will enhance any occasion and wherever there is celebration, there is music! Couples will want to choose their special music, whether it be for the seating of the guests to the newlywed's farewell. Your

clients will rely on you as the wedding planner to guide them when choosing a soundtrack for their special day. Music should always be used to enhance and not overshadow any point of a wedding day. It is used to show the couple's commitment to each other. Consider each stage of the wedding day carefully as you choose the music. Different types of music will be required for the ceremony, for the cocktail hour, and different stages of the reception.

Ceremony Music

Clients will likely turn to you for music recommendations for the wedding ceremony. You will have to assist your clients to choose the right music to accentuate significant moments during the ceremony and reception, from the entrance of the bride to the recessional. The music will set the atmosphere and tone of an event. Most often, softer and more subtle music is chosen for the time before and during the ceremony, and more upbeat music chosen for the dance floor at the reception.

One of the first decisions to make is whether to have live music or recorded music and in what form. Choices might be a string quartet, a soloist, live bands, a DJ, or a simple MP3 or CD recording. Clients could choose a variety of these or only one. Just make sure the music chosen suits the bride and groom's personal style as well as their budget.

The guide below may be of assistance:

Dramatic

- Choir
- Bagpipes
- String quartets.

Formal

- Harpists
- Classical singers
- Pianists
- Organists
- Violinists
- String quartets
- Trumpeters

Fun

- Live bands
- DJs
- Guitarists
- Jukebox
- Jazz Ensembles

- Pop ensembles
- Pianists
- Singers
- Vocal ensembles
- Saxophone quartets

Romantic

- Harpists
- Classical guitarists
- Pianists
- Flautists
- String quartets
- Violinists
- Singers

Questions To Ask the Entertainer

As with all things regarding the wedding, make sure you have some questions prepared for the entertainers before you have your meeting with them. Have a look at the questions below:

- Do you have a demo CD of your recent work? - Demo CD's are a really good way to get an idea of the DJs /band / entertainer's style and their repertoire. The down side of this is that a demo CD often contains only brief examples of the entertainer's work – you might not get the 'entire' picture.
- Can we view the DJ / band/ entertainer live? - This is actually the best way to see exactly what you'll be getting. If you are happy with their live performance, then it is most likely quite an accurate interpretation of what they will bring to your wedding.
- Is the DJ / band / entertainer registered as a business and are they insured? - This is important. They should be recognised as a wedding business and also be fully insured, including public liability insurance.
- How long has the band been together or DJ / entertainer been performing? Are you experienced in weddings? - It is important that the entertainers have experience in performing together and are also familiar with weddings.
- Are you able to deliver the music / entertainment that we want to have for our wedding? - Discuss your needs to ensure that you are on the same page regarding the wedding requirements.
- Do you have a copy of your song list? – Make sure the list includes songs or music that your clients want to hear on their wedding day.
- Are you willing to add compilations or songs to your music list upon our request? - If there is a particular song that you cannot see on the list, ask if it's possible for it to be added. When dealing with DJs, this should be simple enough. For a band or soloist, they might have to learn the lyrics and practise with their musicians. Keep in mind that this may incur additional costs.

- Do you have back-up singers or staff to step in if someone is unable to attend the performance? - It is important that the wedding day not be spoiled in the event that an entertainer is unable to attend the wedding on the day for whatever reason.
- How much do you charge? – Make sure you know exactly what you are getting and how much it will cost.
- Do we sign a contract with you and what does it involve? Do you guarantee your work? – Make sure that if you sign a contract with the entertainer, you have read it in its entirety and clearly understand it. It's a good idea to compare contracts from one entertainer to another to check if you're getting the 'best deal.' Always get a copy of the original for your records.

You will have to book an entertainer around 9-12 months before the wedding, at least. Popular entertainers are usually booked 12-18 months ahead for weddings so make sure you allow enough time to check around.

Once you've booked the entertainment you must think about what music you want to be played during the different aspects of the wedding day. Information provided below will give you an idea of when to have certain music played. It will also provide you with popular music choices that many brides opt for today.

The wedding ceremony can be seen as having 5 main parts, these being: the prelude, the processional, the ceremony, the recessional, and the postlude.

Prelude

The musical prelude for a ceremony sets the scene for the service which will follow. The music chosen should be a reflection of the couple's personalities, the formality of the ceremony, and also the setting. If a wedding is on the beach, the prelude music could include steel drums, ukuleles, or slack key guitars. If the wedding will take place at St. Patrick's, a large, gothic-style, Catholic cathedral, a classical string quartet and a trumpet player is a suitable choice. Plan for around 30-45 minutes of the prelude music before changing to processional music.

Table 6.4

Options for Live Music During the Prelude
• Children's choir
• Chamber music ensemble (a small orchestra with strings, wind instruments, and percussion)
• Church choir
• Classical guitar
• Church organ
• Guitar, cello, and flute
• Flute and keyboard
• Gospel choir

• Harp
• Harp and flute
• Solo violin
• Piano
• String quartet (two violins, viola, and cello)
• Vocalist
• String trio (violin, viola, and cello)
• Wind trio or quartet (assorted wind instruments such as clarinet, flute, oboe, trumpet, French horn, bassoon)

The Processional

When the wedding party walks down the aisle (the wedding processional), think about the aisle length and how many people in the wedding party itself before choosing the music. It's a good idea to time the aisle walk, especially with an unfamiliar venue. In some cases, the processional will only be one song, but usually it is two songs or more which are played to differentiate between the wedding party members and the bride's arrival. Processional music should build anticipation as wedding party members enter, and then continue to build until the bride appears.

The most traditional selection for processionals is Bridal Chorus for Lohengrin by Wagner. This is better known as the song *Here Comes the Bride*. Another popular option is Trumpet Voluntary by Stanley, Canon in D by Pachelbel, and Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring by Bach. For less traditional and more contemporary music, couples might choose Broadway show tunes, pop songs or classical jazz. The couple should decide (with your expert advice) what suits them. If a wedding will be in a house of worship, make sure you check that secular music choices are ok with the officiant well before the wedding day. In some cases, non-religious music may not be allowed.

The Ceremony

Musical interludes may occur during the ceremony. These may be for group prayers, responses, taking communion, making special offerings, or lighting a unity candle. In these moments you can incorporate a special hymn or another piece of music. Ceremonies usually include a soloist performance or perhaps a choir. If the clients choose to use musical interludes make sure they are chosen well in advance and that they are co-ordinated with the officiant's needs. Sometimes couples will ask a close friend to be the soloist and if this is the case it will be necessary for this person to practice during the rehearsals in order to make him/herself familiar with the facility's acoustics and the style of an accompanist.

The Recessional

When the couple are officially married and pronounced husband and wife, the music should change to a more festive and celebratory style. Recessional music will occur as the wedding party leaves the ceremony venue and it will set the tone for the celebrations that are to follow. Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, Mendelssohn's *Wedding March*, or Handel's *Water Music* are popular choices. For more contemporary

music, couples could choose any type of music they like. Popular choices include artists such as Shania Twain, U2, Stevie Wonder, Garth Brooks, Destiny’s Child, and Adele. Whatever the choice, the music should be something that is meaningful and joyful for the couple.

More creative sounds to highlight the wedding party’s departure should be considered for the recessional. Couples might decide to use a bell choir or a bagpiper to play at the church door, for example. If the ceremony is held at a hotel, a marching band or a blue grass band might be considered. The choices are many when deciding on the recessional music but the most important thing is to make sure it is uplifting, celebratory and of course, personalized.

Postlude

Ceremonies are not over until the last guest leaves. Planning the music for the postlude, continuous music which is played as the guests leave the ceremony site, is important, especially if there are a lot of people. Allow for around 10 minutes of postlude music. This will allow the guests to exit the site smartly and quickly to upbeat music instead of hearing only feet shuffling. Sometimes, the ceremony and the reception will be held at the same venue and for these the music is especially important as there is no real change of scenery from one wedding part to the next. The music must show the transition from ceremony to reception. Music helps to encourage movement so choose wisely.

Table 6.5

Examples of Cocktail Hour Music
• The Beatles • Michael Bublé • Louis Armstrong • Mariah Carey • Jim Brickman • Ray Charles • Harry Connick, Jr. • Patsy Cline • Norah Jones • Vince Gill • Michael McDonald • Yo-Yo Ma • Sarah McLachlan • Tim McGraw • Rod Stewart • Van Morrison • George Winston • Vivaldi

Cocktail Hour Music and Entertainment

Cocktail hour music is best kept light and breezy. This way it doesn't interfere with conversation. During wedding ceremonies there are often limited opportunities for guests to converse so the cocktail hour becomes a perfect place to chat and mingle. The reception will get off on the right foot during cocktail hour if the music is carefully chosen and kept light such as big band or light jazz music. Above, in Table 6.5 is a list of artists whose music is great for cocktail hour.

If you have the good fortune to have a piano at the reception site, you could hire a pianist for the cocktail hour. Ensure the piano has been tuned and is in good working condition before the actual day. If there is no piano (or your clients don't want this option) you might like to think about a violin and flute duo, a jazz trio, or a guitarist. When searching for the musical talent to play on the day, check out local music schools for up-and-coming talent. This will save some money as well. You might also ask the reception managers at the venue. They are often excellent sources for locating specific types of musicians such as salsa bands or German polka bands, for example.

When you are giving your clients advice on music options for the cocktail hour or the reception, make sure you keep in mind the space limitations at the venue. A single acoustic guitar will be lost in a larger space, or too many musicians in a smaller place would be overwhelming for the guests. You must know about any noise restrictions which might be policy at the venue or the surrounding area. Amplified music is often not allowed in residential areas. Limits on musician numbers might also apply. If a venue is in a quieter neighbourhood you could be looking at an 11:00 finish, or even earlier. Check any specifications with the venue and make sure to discuss them with your clients. The music contract should contain these restrictions as well.

Reception Music and Entertainment

When the cocktail hour is over and guests are ushered to their seats so the reception can begin, the entertainment and music will take a new direction. For the actual dinner, music will likely be similar to that played during the cocktail hour to allow for conversation. After dinner, specific moments should be highlighted through dancing and music. These would include the first dance the couple have together as husband and wife, the father/bride and mother/groom dance, the cake cutting ceremony, the garter and bouquet toss, music for the couple's departure, and the last dance of the evening. In between these the reception is usually devoted to celebration and dancing.

Having live music will depend on the decisions of each couple. They may ask you for your advice on whether to hire a live band or a DJ. You must be able to present both sides objectively and allow the couple to consider them. Below, in Table 6.6 is a list of pros and cons of both live and non-live music. You, as the consultant, must also keep up to date on the latest artists and music. If clients say they are after a specific sound, you must know what it is and advise them accordingly.

Table 6.6

Pros and Cons of Live versus Pre-recorded Music

Pre-recorded Music (DJ): Pros

- Cheaper than a live band
- If space is tight, a DJ takes up almost no room
- Immediate access to a wide variety of music
- Can play the latest, contemporary music that cover bands may not play
- Short breaks or none at all
- Because a DJ is just one person, there is less that can go wrong
- Can also act as emcee
- Can take the pulse of the room and adjust music selections to keep the party going
- Setup time and special equipment are minimal

Pre-recorded Music (DJ): Cons

- Pre-recorded music cannot be always be easily adjusted to fit the timing of a moment
- Personality may be abrasive or inappropriate
- Typically seen as less sophisticated than a live band

Live Music (Band): Pros

- There is great variety in bands in terms of size and style
- Live performances motivates guests to dance
- Can readily adjust tone and speed of music
- Lead singer can act as emcee
- Can establish a time period through dress, style, and equipment (e.g., Big Band)
- An excellent band is a memorable part of the wedding

Live Music (Band): Cons

- Usually more expensive than a DJ
- More complex contracts and personalities
- More mouths to feed
- More that can go wrong with equipment
- Their repertoire will be more restricted than that of a DJ
- Setup time and equipment may be extensive
- Will require breaks; movement to recorded music during breaks will change

Tone

A good way to remain up to date with all the latest music and artists is to follow who is on top of the charts. There are websites you can go to such as Billboard.com where listings are continually updated. These listings also include biographies of the talent and this will help you to learn more about them and be better able to know if the music/artists' work will be a good fit for your clients.

Other Reception Entertainment

Other entertainment for the reception is usually accompanied by music. Apart from music, the other most common form of entertainment is dance, and certain dances are anticipated at certain moments of weddings.

When thinking about these dances, keep in mind the comfort of the couple. As an example, Lababidi (2004) explains the love/hate relationship that belly dancing has at Egyptian weddings. Some Egyptians are deeply conflicted about the respectability of this art form...The fact that weddings are hardly complete without a belly-dancer is revealing, given the function of marriage as sanctifying the union between a man and a woman who is supposed to be a virgin. . . . The bride might worry: How can I possibly compete with this woman invulnerable to taboo? Having spent a lifetime shrewdly protecting her virtue and a small fortune on the appearance of her dress, she is being upstaged at her own wedding by a woman who seems to care for neither. The garter toss, common in American culture, can also push the limits of decorum, and many couples forego this tradition. Other dances are controversial for completely different reasons. Whether to have a money dance, for example, can be a source of significant conflict for a couple raised with different cultural traditions. One person might see it as an anticipated and fun way to dance with an abundance of guests in a short period of time, whereas the other may view it as greedy and tacky. Making decisions regarding whether to incorporate specific dances or other forms of entertainment should be done at least a month before the wedding, as differences in opinion regarding related traditions can cause the couple stress.

Tips for Entertainment Hire

It doesn't matter if your clients decide to hire a string quartet, a soloist, a DJ, a live band, or all of these, it is your communication with the entertainment that will be a major key to the success of the wedding day. You are responsible for ensuring the entertainment shows up, but this is only a small part of it. You must make sure your clients prepare a list of songs/music they want played, as well as any music/songs they don't want. This is very important for the reception especially. If the couple choose to have a 'Macarena' free reception, this has to be stipulated in writing and it must be presented to the entertainment's liaison in advance. The entertainment will also need a list of the wedding party members if they are to make any introductions. The contract should contain any other special instructions and you should highlight these special requests just before the wedding day. Some examples of this could be "no garter toss" or "announce the cake cutting at 9:00 PM." When you are looking to

hire the entertainment you'll find that prices can often be negotiated depending on the time of year or time of the week and even the time of day that their services will be required. Below is a list of 5 secrets to hiring entertainment at the best prices as explained by David Fletcher of Washington's Best Musicians (2006):

1. **Negotiate** – Often, it's better to state up front how much you can afford to pay instead of asking the entertainers how much they will charge. However, you must also appreciate that these people are artists, and try not to offend him/her/them with an offer deemed to be unreasonable.
2. **Consider the "proximity to the event" discount** - If clients are willing to wait until two or three weeks before their wedding day, they may be rewarded with paying less for the musical talent that is not yet booked. This is a tactic often used in the corporate planning world, however, it will likely be more difficult to convince a stressed-out couple that there are merits to waiting.
3. **Check who is already at the venue** - If the event will be held in the evening, check if there is a DJ or band already playing earlier in the day. You could save quite a lot by hiring them through the rest of the evening.
4. **Remove the liaison** - Speak directly to the person who will provide the service. An abundance of information is available online and you can find the immediate point of contact for a specific talent.
5. **Make personal contact**- You should make yourself familiar with the best bands and DJs in your area. Learn the names of the key personnel and make sure you remember them.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Music and Entertainment Options

- Understand that every stage of the wedding day will require music: the ceremony, the cocktail hour, and the reception.
- Remember that there are 5 main parts to a wedding ceremony: the prelude, the processional, the ceremony, the recessional, and the postlude.
- Ensure the music chosen is consistent with the overall tone of the wedding.
- The prelude music should last for around 30 to 45 minutes.
- For the processional, consider the length of the aisle and the number of members in the wedding party before deciding on music.
- Make sure there is a music change or a dramatic pause before the bride's entrance.
- During the ceremony, highlight any special moments with the use of interlude music or with vocal performances.
- In houses of worship get approval for any secular music choices.
- Discuss both the pros and the cons of live music versus pre-recorded with your clients.
- Become familiar with any restrictions the reception venue might have.
- Always come prepared with a boom box and a CD of ceremony and reception music in case the entertainment somehow becomes missing in action.

Stationery

The invitations to a wedding are usually issued by the bride and groom's parents, the couple themselves, or whoever is hosting the event. One family will usually get one invitation unless there has been a family divorce beforehand.

Wedding invitations are sent out around two to three months before the wedding. This gives guests enough time to RSVP and arrange transport or accommodation if required. This will also give you enough time to get other aspects of the wedding organized, ones which are governed by guest numbers. An example of this would be the cake size, the number of bomboniere, and numbers for the reception venue.

Stationery Elements and Etiquette

Stationery elements play an ongoing role throughout a wedding process. They also bookend weddings as they are usually the first things that guests will see i.e. save-the-date cards and/or invitations. The last thing will be thank-you cards sent out after the event.

You must remember that 'stationery' is spelt with an 'ery' not 'ary.' It is often misspelt. In this section we will look at the different purposes of stationery, including some common etiquette rules. The stationery takes only around 3% of the budget but the range of stationery is very broad and includes: save-the-date cards, invitations, calligraphy, ceremony programs, seating stationery, menus, any personalised paper products, wedding announcements, and the thank-you cards.

Save- the- Date Notices

These notices or cards will usually be sent out around 6-18 months before a wedding and have become quite popular over the past few years. They can be used for all weddings but are especially important for destination weddings or weddings which will occur over a holiday weekend. Refrigerator magnets are very popular. These notices or cards (or magnets) are a constant reminder of the event and the date, the location and, of course, the names of the couple. Most often the words "invitation to follow" will be on the notices so people can be certain that it is not the actual invitation. These save-the-date cards are fun and usually informal but they should still be chosen to fit in with the wedding theme.

Make sure your clients know that all potential guests should get a save-the-date card/notice. In some cases, to save a bit of money, the couple might decide to only send them to out-of-town guests, but they should remember that all guests will be busy and need the information. They must also remember that most of the time people within these groups know each other and if one doesn't receive an invitation and another guest does, he/she might think they aren't invited to the wedding. For these reasons it is a good idea to be consistent.

Invitations

Many decisions are involved when it comes to invitations. Clients must decide (with your assistance if need be) on the printing style, the paper, fonts, wording, ordering, and also delivery. Decisions made for invitations are usually carried over to many other stationery elements as well.

Parts of the Invitation

Invitations that are very formal include these things: an outer envelope, an inner envelope, an invitations card, a reception card, and a response card. Sometimes invitations also include more information, such as directions cards or cards with lodging options (if the wedding will be out of town). Lynne Sandler from the company Lettering by Lynne, explains that dual envelopes originally come from a time when the delivery of mail was done by horse and carriage. Muddy and unpaved roads would often make the outer envelopes stained and so upon arrival it would be discarded and another clean envelope would be inside with the invitation. Today, outer and inner envelopes are used for different wording purposes, and this will be discussed later in the wording section. Outer envelopes are gummed so they can be sealed but inner envelopes are never sealed.

An invitation card is used to give specifics of the event. Reception cards are mainly needed if the ceremony and reception will be held in different places. If they are both at the same venue/location then the words "Reception to follow" will usually be included on the actual invitation. A response card, which is also referred to as a reply card, was not traditionally included. Instead, recipients of invitations would write formal letters of acceptance to the wedding. Response cards came about as time-saving devices for our more rushed pace of life. Some response cards may include an entrée option listing so individual guests can choose their reception meals. Response cards should include addressed, stamped envelopes for return purposes.

In some cases, clients might ask you if it would be appropriate to include registry cards in the invitations. These cards offer details of the stores where the bride and groom have registered for gifts. This has become more commonplace, however, in terms of etiquette it is quite inappropriate for this to be included in wedding invitations. This is because these cards imply that guests are required to buy a gift. Not only that but these gifts must be bought from a certain place. Guests should not be made to feel they are limited to buying, especially from a predetermined listing. If some guests would like to choose something from the registry for the couple, they can easily request the store information either through e-mail or word-of-mouth.

Printing Style

There are four main printing styles used for wedding invitations. These are: engraved, letterpress, flat, and thermography. Engraving is the traditional printing style and is very formal as well as expensive. Many brides who request this printing style are advised to do so by their mothers/mothers-in-law, who remember this classic style. Engraved invitations have a certain sensory feel. If you run your hand over

the words you'll feel a slightly raised texture, and if you turn the invitation over there will be an impression. Metal plates with the exact wording the couple wants will be made specifically for each individual invitation. This is one of the reasons why it's more expensive.

Letterpress is another style which is more traditionally common. This involves a process which is the opposite of engraving, i.e. the letters are raised and then pressed into soft paper which will leave an indent. If you run your hand over it, you will feel the ridges. Letterpress is very classy and also very expensive, partly because very few companies still offer this style.

Flat printing is not very expensive and selected when a couple decides to include design elements which don't lend themselves to the raised style. Contemporary invitations which contain photos, large images, or graphic designs, are not really suited to raised printing. These invitations could include embossed images, which are raised images that don't include ink and used for thematic images or monograms like cultural symbols, shells, flowers snowflakes, or leaves. These images can also be printed by using the abovementioned styles.

Thermography is also not expensive and is the most popular printing style. It is similar to engraving as it is raised printing which you can feel. If the invitation is turned over there will be no impression. Regular printing presses are used for these invitations and because of this the printing process is very fast. When the ink is still wet, it's sprayed with a powder and then moved to another phase which has heat and this causes a chemical reaction between the ink and the powder.

Flat printing is also inexpensive and is chosen when the couple wants to include design elements that do not lend themselves to a raised style. Contemporary invitations with photographs, graphic designs, or large images are not well suited for raised printing. Invitations may also include an embossed image, which is a raised image that does not include ink and is used for monograms or thematic images such as cultural symbols, flowers, shells, stars, leaves, or snowflakes. These types of images may also be printed using the styles mentioned above.

Invitation Paper

The paper chosen will partly be determined by the printing style but it really is a matter of personal choice as well as budget. Invitation costs are determined by printing costs *and* paper quality. If the paper is linen rag or 100% cotton then it will be a lot more expensive than say, a synthetic paper blend. The bond weight of paper also shows its quality – 32 or 40 pound paper is good letter quality. Just as a point of comparison, computer paper is 20 pound. Significant costs will be incurred if the couple desire handmade paper or other features like gold leaf edging, ribbons, dried flowers, envelope liners, or vellum overlays.

Colour is something else to consider when choosing the paper. In the U.S. ecru is a very traditional choice. In Europe, white is the most popular choice. A full spectrum of colours is readily available for

contemporary invitations and this makes it easier for couples to match their invitations with their wedding tone.

Font

The font range has increased significantly. The font chosen, whether contemporary or classic, will depend on the style of the actual invitation.

Options to consider include:

1. printed style or cursive;
2. all uppercase letters or a mixture of uppercase and lower case letters;
3. include monograms or other large specialty fonts; and
4. the ink colour.

Traditionally, the font ink colour is black but different coloured inks have now become more common. As an example, an autumn wedding might include an olive green or rust coloured ink on the invitation and include a leaf motif.

Wording

The wording will start with the envelopes. The most formal is the outer envelope and includes titles and full names. The addresses should not include any abbreviations for the street or the state/borough. For example, use Street and not St. Outer envelopes must be addressed to the primary recipient(s) and the inner ones can include additional invitees and can use formal or informal names. For example, the outer envelope will be addressed to Mr. Gregory Aabas, and the inner envelope can have Greg and guest. Or, the outer envelope will write Doctor Linda Tigh, and the inner envelope will have Lynne, Rob, Cindy and Joey, which will include the name of the guests' children. If the invitations are very formal the full names and titles will be used on both the outer and inner envelopes.

Invitation wording can sometimes become complicated when considering changing family dynamics. Geller (1999) states that traditional wedding invitations, which mostly suggest a patriarchal society and uniformity, are challenged in today's world where egalitarianism and individualism are more widespread. Many people are divorced, many are in second marriages, many have blended families, and there are also many cross-cultural unions. For example, a bride might have two sets of parents (or maybe even three) so it will not be feasible to have all their names on the invitation. Generally speaking, there are 6 parts to the wording of invitations with associated lines: host, request, bride, groom, date and time, location, and any special instructions (Stewart, 1999).

The response card wording must mirror the formality of the invitation wording. There are three elements used in most response cards, and these are: space for guest name(s), indication of attendance, and the

date that a response is desired. If guests have the option of choosing their entrees or if any other decisions are to be made, then information with regards to their selection options must also be included.

There are three examples mentioned below of how invitations could be worded, as well as a response card that mirrors the tone of the invitation. The most formal and traditional will be those where the parents act as hosts. The R.S.V.P. in the request line indicates that guests should send a personal reply. In those cases no response card is necessary. Open response cards can also be used for weddings that are less formal. They allow the guests to write their own notes which the couple usually saves in a memory album.

The reception card wording is very straightforward. It will include the time and location of the reception. In the case of many out-of-town guests coming, a directions card should be included as well. If the ceremony or reception is child free then this information should be repeated on reception cards. Couples who really feel strongly about having child free weddings should indicate this information in a few different places. Make sure there is no ambiguity regarding the cut-off age. Some couples prefer no children under 5 years old; others prefer no children under 18. Many times email communication or word-of-mouth is used to clear up any questions or uncertainties.

Ordering Invitations

It's a good idea to advise clients to begin working with their stationery specialists around four to six months before their wedding. Stationery companies are able to work within a shorter time frame, but more creative options will need more time so don't leave it until closer to the wedding date. Proofing will also need to be done and some invitations will need multiple proofs before the desired look is achieved. Make sure you let clients know that once they have approved the proof they take full responsibility for all the spelling, information, print style, punctuation, font, layout and colour for the invitations.

Couples should count invitation numbers based on households and not individuals. A common error is ordering invitations based on guest numbers, but if there will be 100 people invited it is unlikely 100 invitations will be needed. The likely number would be between 50 to 75 and this depends on how many singles, couples, and also children are being invited. Make sure clients do not underestimate the number of invitations needed because it will cost them much more to reorder invitations than it is to have a few extra ones printed. When a stationery company gets the original order off the press, that order is done. If it returns it will be considered a completely new job. Tell clients that the first 25 stationery items are the most expensive and the prices decrease after that. Many high-end companies do not accept orders of less than 50. An example to show this would be if a couple order some high quality invitations, the cost will probably be around £10 each but will drop to £8 each when they order 100 of the same design. Less expensive invitations will be the same and their price will also drop from around £5 to £3 for orders of 100 or more.

Delivery

Advise clients to weigh the invitations for postage purposes. In many cases the invitations will weigh more than an ounce when all the inserts are included. You do not want an invitation to arrive with postage due. Even in cases where the invitations weight less than one ounce, it will be necessary to add additional postage costs for bulky envelopes or oddly shaped ones. Square invitations, for example, will require additional postage. Another thing to tell clients is to have their invitations hand cancelled because many inserts can cause bulkiness and could be mangled when they go through postage metres. Hand cancellation gives invitations a more elegant look. It's always a good idea to get clients to mail invitations to themselves first as a test run before mailing all of them. This will give your clients an idea of how long it will take to arrive and also to see what kind of shapes it arrives in when it is delivered.

Specific stamps can also be found at post offices, some which are floral and others referred to as 'Love' stamps. These choices tend to be quite popular for wedding invitations. Couples might choose to order custom designed stamps through websites like PhotoStamps.com. The stamps could be a couple's engagement photo or another image which will tie in with the wedding theme. If a couple is planning a beach themed wedding then the stamp might be a photo of sea shells, palm trees, or a sea shore.

Another thing to consider is who the response cards will be sent back to. Traditionally this would be the bride's parents but today it will be whoever the couple decides upon – usually the bride herself. Guests today could also respond through 1800 numbers which are managed by companies that track RSVPs, or through specific website addresses. Sometimes couples decide to mail out "A" list wedding guests 10 weeks prior to the wedding and then "B" list guests based on rejections from the "A" list. Be aware however, that tiered guest lists will likely have some significant implications etiquette wise. This is because peer groups usually talk and people usually find out rather quickly whether they are in the top group or not. This can and does lead to hurt feelings or even some conflict.

Calligraphy

A great way to create personal and elegant stationery elements is through calligraphers' hand printing. In some cases, guests have been known to remember invitations they received which were lettered by calligraphers, for years. The most common job calligraphers are asked to do is to address envelopes, but they can also be hired to letter any stationery elements. If a calligrapher is hired to letter invitations, the menus, or any other items used for the guests, he/she will hand design a template which will be typeset and then printed.

Envelopes are unique to every guest and the time investment and the cost is quite significant. Charges for every set of outer and inner envelopes range from £5 to £7. This lovely touch is often reserved for weddings with higher budgets.

Sometimes, due to the cost, couples will explore other options for addressing their envelopes. A more personal way to do this is by handwriting them. Some couples will hold gatherings with family or friends who have elegant handwriting and ask them to help with addressing the invitations. As per etiquette, black ink must be used when envelopes are addressed by hand. Make sure your clients order enough extra envelopes if they hand address their envelopes because of course, there will be errors. Hand addressing invitations takes a lot of time and today many couples use the computer. Stationery vendors can help with this, and there are now calligraphy fonts almost as beautiful as the hand crafted ones. Avoid using labels. Make sure the addresses are printed directly onto envelopes.

Ceremony Programs

Most couples will use programs to help guide their guests through the ceremony. These programs are designed and printed by couples themselves in order to save, and will come in many different shapes and sizes. Programs introduce guests to the wedding party as well as the setting forth of the ceremony organisation. Ceremonies held in houses of worship will sometimes have some restrictions when it comes to the program wording. All wedding party members are usually listed and so is information regarding the readings, responses, prayers, music and the vows. If there are any special elements in the ceremony, these can also be written into the program. If a couple will jump the broom, an African American tradition, for example, the couple might choose to include a brief note of this tradition's history. Messages of thanks or dedications are also included. Keep all programs and any descriptions short. Guests do not want to be reading a dissertation on the day and too much reading will take guests' attention away from the actual ceremony. For cross-cultural weddings and weddings where guests speak different languages, having the program side by side in both languages is a nice touch. For weddings that are more casual, wedding party members' personalities can be shared on the program.

Designing the program is usually done later in the planning process because ceremonies are finalised just a few weeks ahead of a wedding. If clients choose to create their programs themselves, it would be best to ensure they do not wait until the last minute and be tying ribbons or raffia on the programs on the eve of the wedding. Stationery is also required for other specialised elements of the ceremony. Pew cards, for example, could be used for reserving special seats for any honoured guests, or in the case of a large immediate family that will require more than the first two rows. Often, stationery people can design personalised Ketuvah, Jewish marriage contracts. Most couples who decide to write their vows choose to have them printed and framed. Lastly, guest books are usually specially designed. They are used for both the ceremony and the reception, or one of the two.

Seating Stationery

Seating stationery is good to use if couples decide to designate where their guests will be seated at their reception. An example would be where the cocktail hour ends at 6:45 PM and the dinner is to be served at 7:00 PM. This only leaves 15 minutes to move (often) large numbers of people into a dining area. This is where seating stationery can be particularly helpful. It could include a seating chart, escort cards and place cards, and also table markers. The seating chart will show a guest list in alphabetical order. Each name will have the table number where the guest will be seated. A seating chart is quite large and

usually mounted in a rented frame or on a foam board. It could cause congestion in the case of a wedding with more than one hundred guests.

Another seating option is using photograph escort cards. They also list the guests' names and their table numbers but on individual cards. A table marker on each table will allow guests to know when they're at the right table. If number options are chosen they can be in the form of *Table 1* or *#1*. Advise clients to avoid Roman numerals because in a large ballroom the numbers can look similar and cause confusion for the guests and the staff. Table markers should be kept simple and the fonts large and in bold to make them easier to see. These table markers are usually put in frames or stands rented from stationery vendors, catering companies, or even the floral designer if you choose to have them incorporated into centrepieces.

Place cards should be used if guests also have a designated seat as well as a designated table. With this amount of detail it will be necessary to allow enough time for the site layout work. Seating stationery also allows for design touches which tie in to the wedding theme. As an example, a wedding with a winter theme could have a snowflake embossed on the escort cards, or a Parisian wedding theme could use a famous Parisian landmark to designate tables. Couples who like hiking, as another example, might use the names of different mountains, rivers, and lakes on each individual table.

Menus

For weddings with formal receptions, menu cards are usually included to display the names of dishes which will be served. They might also indicate the primary ingredients. A menu will heighten the guests' expectations, create a sense of culinary expectation, or promote some cultural understanding.

With regards to the design of the menus, they usually include a monogram of the couple and also might include some creative terminology. Instead of using the words 'First Course' for example, the first meal stage could be referred to as 'Romance' or some other term connected to the couple's theme. A good caterer can work with the couple to create specialty entrees with some clever names, similar to creating a signature drink. The menu cards could be printed on fine parchment paper which is rolled and tied up, or on cardstock, then tucked into the napkins, leaned against water glasses, or perhaps placed on a charger plate.

Wedding themes can be developed further with the use of such things as personalised napkins, matches, or boxes. Napkins are most commonly chosen for this and come in a large variety of styles and colours, usually with the couple's names or a monogram. They will usually be placed in the bar area or on the cake table.

Personalised boxes and bags can be purchased to use with favours. They will usually be filled with chocolates, mints, or other types of treats. Matches used to be quite popular in the past but have lost their popularity nowadays, mostly because reception halls have banned smoking. If the favour is a candle, however, then personalised matches add a lovely touch.

Wedding Announcements

Small weddings are chosen by couples for personal reasons, because of budget constraints, or perhaps because they have chosen a destination wedding and many guests cannot attend. In these cases, wedding announcements are courtesy notices sent to people not invited to let them know that the wedding has taken place. These announcements will state the bride and groom's names, the wedding date, and also the location where it was held. These announcements are not sent to people who were present at the wedding as this would be redundant. They should be mailed within a week after the wedding has taken place, and certainly never before the wedding.

Thank-You Notes

Thank-you cards are like a social type of stationery and often referred to as informals. They can match the invitations or they could be more generic which would also allow them to be utilised for other purposes. As has already been mentioned, smaller stationery orders will cost more than larger ones. Informals will often include the couple's monogram. If the bride isn't taking her husband's name then her full name or initials will be on the left followed by a big ampersand and the groom's full name or initial. Sometimes couples choose to include a photo of themselves in the thank-you cards. The cards can be the same for every guest or they could be more personalised.

It is best not to have reprinted or generic thank-you cards. Each one should be specific to the gift and the guest. For larger weddings, the consultants often help with documenting gifts and writing the thank-you cards to ensure all the information is correct and the cards are sent out in a timely fashion.

Etiquette dictates that informals must be sent out within a month of the wedding day. Late thank-you cards are better than none, however. Shower and wedding gifts from the same person (or people) should be acknowledged with the use of different thank-you cards/notes. Be aware that monogrammed informals with a changed surname should never be sent until after a wedding.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Stationery Elements

- Remember the spelling - stationery ends with "ery."
- The printing style and the paper quality will dictate the stationery cost.
- Stationery elements' wording is etiquette driven, but clients are still able to select wording that fits their personalities.
- Remind couples who do not want children at their ceremonies or receptions to make this very clear on their invitations and the response cards.
- When ordering the invitations, base the number on households instead of the number of individuals invited.
- Order enough invitations to make sure there will be no need for a reorder.
- When mailing invitations, remember there will be increased postage for bulky or square-shaped envelopes.

Transport and Wedding Cars

Arriving in style is really the only way for the modern day bride to arrive on her wedding day.

The atmosphere created when the bride arrives for the ceremony is unique and the highlight of most weddings. There is anticipation and all the people there eagerly await the first glimpse as the bride steps out of the wedding car (or other transportation).

Choosing the Wedding Vehicles

Wedding vehicles are sometimes not viewed as a top priority when compared to other elements of a wedding. This is true in one way, however, it is necessary to consider the options to make sure disappointment is avoided later on. Transport companies can sometimes be booked out 12 months ahead of time. Make sure you leave enough time to look around at wedding transport and to make a booking.

There can be many options to choose from with regards to wedding transportation. Some of them include classic vintage cars, horse-drawn carriages, stretch limousines, and wedding 'trikes.'

When choosing the type of transportation, consider the overall wedding formality and style. For more traditional or formal weddings, horse-drawn carriages or classic vintage cars are a good choice. For more contemporary styled weddings, stylish limos or sporty convertibles would be the go.

Vehicle Inspection

When you have narrowed down your search to a few potential companies, it will be time to phone them and arrange an appointment to inspect their vehicles and also to meet the staff. Choose about 3 or 4 companies if possible and then make your final choice. Do not book anything unless you have personally inspected the vehicles first. Photographs in magazines or the internet might look impressive but looks can sometimes be deceiving. Don't rush through the inspection of a vehicle; take your time. Consider the vehicle size, its cleanliness, the inside and outside condition, interior comforts, repair and maintenance of the vehicle, and whether there are scratches, any rust or damage. Also check that vehicles are heated and air-conditioned.

Another thing to inspect is the staff attire or uniforms that may be worn on the wedding day. If your clients want a horse-drawn carriage, make sure you check the horses as well to ensure they are healthy and quiet in nature.

While at your meeting to inspect the vehicles, ask if the company has any videos or albums of their vehicles and staff in action. Ask a lot of questions and then decide which company best appeals to the client's transport needs and personal styles. Check that the company is licensed.

Questions to Ask

Here are some questions that you can ask each company before meeting with them.

- Do you have recent examples of weddings you have attended? This will usually be in the form of videos or display albums.
- Are the vehicles that we will actually inspect and the staff we'll meet with (at our appointment) the ones that will be there on the wedding day?
- How many people do the vehicles seat?
- How many staff / chauffeurs are provided with the vehicle?
- Do the chauffeurs carry umbrellas and assist the bride in and out of the vehicle?
- Are the vehicles used for other weddings on the same day, or only for one wedding?
- Are any food and beverages provided in the vehicle?
- Is your company licensed to operate as a wedding car hire company?
- What wedding packages do you provide and what do they include?
- Are there any special offers available with the venue's wedding packages (reduced price for off-peak, winter or Sunday weddings etc.)?
- For how long is the vehicle hire?
- Are the vehicles air-conditioned and heated?
- What happens in the event of a vehicle breaking down? Are 'back up' vehicles always available?
- Are there any extra costs associated with the hire of the vehicle?
- When are deposits, instalments and final payments due? How much will they be?
- Are there any cancellation fees?

Other Considerations

In addition to the above questions, you might like to consider the following:

- Are the car hire company's costs within your client's budget?
- Are the vehicles in keeping with theme and the style of the wedding?
- Are the vehicles available on the date of the wedding?
- Are their chauffeurs familiar with the locations of the ceremony and reception areas?
- Do the chauffeurs carry mobile phones, in the event of an emergency? This really is a must.
- If a contract has been signed, ensure you have a copy, that you've read it and understand what you are signing.
- Quality over price is usually the best way to go.

You may feel that co-ordinating transportation logistics is like being a glorified dispatcher, but ensuring everyone turns up on time and the guests get home in a timely fashion, is actually one of the most important details. Guests might not remember perfect transportation, but they are sure to recall a wedding where they had to wait in the freezing cold because transportation was not well organised.

Arranging transportation for a client's wedding involves five main things:

1. getting started;
2. transportation to the ceremony venue;
3. transportation from the ceremony venue to the reception (if in a different location);
4. transportation from the reception to the final destination; and
5. transportation costs and any final details.

Getting Started

When discussing clients' transportation needs, the first thing to do is work out with them how many people will need transport at different times throughout the wedding festivities. A clear understanding is needed of all transport requirements ranging from picking up guests at an airport to organising a vintage Rolls-Royce for the trip home after the couple's honeymoon.

Make sure you have a prepared list of questions for your clients so you can get a clear understanding of their transport needs. Remember, each couple and wedding will be different so listen carefully. The questions you should ask will be about who, what, where, and when.

- Ask what style (or styles) of vehicles the couple wants for their special day. Do they have an interest in a stretch limo, and if so, what colour? Do they prefer a Hummer, SUV, a vintage car, or a Lincoln town car? Keep in mind the couple's budget when discussing their transportation needs.
- Ask who needs to be transported. Make sure the clients write out exactly who needs to be moved from A to B point. Get clients to prepare a list of the wedding party names and any guests who will need transportation and from which location to they need to be moved. Make sure you ask about people's needs, such as a grandmother who is in a wheelchair, as this will influence the transport type that should be sent to pick her up.
- Find out exactly when people will need to be transported. When dealing with a destination wedding, transportation needs can be extensive and could get out of control unless they are very well co-ordinated. Double and triple check flight schedules (and again a few hours before flights are due to land) to determine the arrivals and the departures. This way you can minimise the trips to the airport. It's a good idea to have a separate timeline specifically for transportation.

Transportation to the Ceremony

Once you have determined exactly how many people will need transportation, work out how to transport the bride and bridesmaids to the ceremony site. Brides need transportation from the location they are dressing to the ceremony site. The bride will take this final ride as a single woman, usually accompanied by her mother, father, or bridesmaids. As it's usually a bride's father who will escort her down the aisle, make sure to keep them together prior to the ceremony.

If it will just be the bride and her father, the car used to transport them could be a horse and carriage, a classic car, or another intimate type vehicle. If, for example, the wedding will take place on a family farm, the transport choice could be a hot air balloon, or perhaps an old truck (upgraded). The main thing is to match the vehicles to the wedding theme.

Sometimes, a bride will choose to meet her father (or whoever is giving her away) at the ceremony site and ride only with her attendants. A comfortable vehicle will be needed to transport all the women. Note that a stretch limo can hold from 10-12 people and a regular limo 6 to 10 people comfortably. If considering a town car, note that it can hold 2-4 passengers. Make sure you do a head count and then decide what type of vehicle will suit the wedding party size.

Once you have planned the bride's transport, work out how to get the groom to the ceremony. Perhaps another limo can pick him and his family up from their home or hotel (wherever they are staying). Perhaps the groom decides to ride with the groomsmen in a stretch Hummer to get to the ceremony. Whatever the groom plans, ensure you are well aware of all arrangements and you have contact phone numbers. You will need to be aware of the exact location of the groom throughout the wedding day.

The next step will be working out the bridal party, family, and special guest transportation. Stay with the theme of the wedding again. Make sure transportation for the big day is secured well ahead of the day, especially if the wedding date falls on or close to a graduation season or other big holiday. It might be an idea (if budget permits) to hire a bus or shuttle to transport guests to the wedding location and back to their lodgings at the end of the day. This will ensure two things: guests' safety and cutting down on late arrivals. A coach can seat up to 50 people and executive coaches can take 20 passengers. The couple might like to hire a fleet of vehicles for the day. If there is quite a lot of time that guests will spend in the vehicles, you can arrange for a tour guide or a local expert to entertain guests with stories along the way.

If your clients will provide guest transportation then this must be communicated to people well in advance so they can take advantage of it. They could send out a mailing with their invitations or one only to confirmed guests. Information should include information such as where guests can find the transportation vehicles and when they will be departing for the ceremony. We suggest you pad the actual time by about 15 minutes to accommodate any stragglers.

Transportation from the Ceremony to the Reception

Once the couple has been officially married, there will likely be excited guests anxious to move to the reception. In order to facilitate this movement it makes sense to transport people en masse, in particular when the reception venue is within a major city. The most economical option is to use the same transport that brought the guests to the ceremony site. If most of the guests are likely to drive their own cars to the reception then a good idea is to ensure a valet service is hired to assist with parking. Most valets will charge around £15 to £25 per attendant per hour, plus gratuity. A valet service will save guests the time, aggravation and expense of searching for parking in a busy downtown area.

You should figure about 5 or 6 attendants per 100 guests. Consider also the end of the evening when more staff will be needed to ensure all guests get their cars quickly. Guests should not be left waiting for more than 5 or 10 minutes.

Another nice touch would be if your clients could prepay parking fees if there will be a charge at the ceremony/reception venue. You could negotiate the fee and have it built into the venue contract. If the clients estimate 200 guests, for example, then you could probably count on around 100 cars. If the reception is at a hotel and it charges a flat fee of £15 per car then the clients will pay £1,500 so that their

guests can park free of charge. Make sure if this is the case that it is communicated to the guests to ensure they do not accidentally pay for their parking.

Once the couple are married, it is certain they will want to leave the reception area in style. The vehicle chosen will also be determined by the distance of the reception venue from the ceremony venue. If it is only a few blocks away, perhaps a horse and carriage would add the right touch. If the reception is further away then it's better for the couple to be as cozy and comfortable as possible, so a vintage car might be the best option. No matter what type of transportation the couple chooses, ensure all the details are in writing, including arrival time which should be padded by 15 minutes, reception departure time, the addresses of all the locations, and the model, colour and size of the vehicle. If the clients ask that the driver takes the scenic route, this information should also be included. Make sure you are very specific and make sure you become familiar with each vehicle and its limitations. For example, if the wedding is held in a city which usually gets a lot of rain and your clients decide upon a horse-drawn carriage, make sure it is a covered one.

When the reception is winding down and the last dance has finished, the couple, their wedding party and guests will need to leave the reception area and all head off to their own destinations. It is important to discuss exactly how the couple want to make their exit. Do they want to make a run through an arch with sparklers and into a waiting limousine, or do they prefer to steal away? In the Table below is a list of creative transportation modes that couples can use to make a memorable exit or for any other point in the big day.

For the wedding party and guests, you must ferry them back to where they started earlier in the day so they can pick up their own cars or get back safely to their hotels. Do not leave guests without a ride. It is very inconsiderate. You, as the wedding consultant, must encourage your clients to consider their obligations as the hosts.

Creative Modes of Transportation

• Antique fire engine	• Ice cream truck
• All terrain vehicles	• Mini Cooper
• Bicycle built for two	• Monster truck
• Canoe	• Moped
• Camel	• Motorcycle with sidecar
• Chinese rickshaw	• Sailboat
• Cross country skis	• Sleigh
• Dog sled	• Snowboard
• Duck boat	• Snowmobile
• Golf cart	• Subway
• Horseback	• Vintage VW Beetle

Vehicle Table

Sample Fee Structure for Common Forms of Wedding Transportation

Vechile Type	Hourly Rate	Minimum Rental Time	Total Cost
Sedan: 4 passengers	£68/hour	3 HR	£204
SUV: 5 passengers	£78/hour	3 HR	£234
Limo: 6 passengers	£90/hour	3 HR	£270
Limo: 8 passengers	£105/hour	3 HR	£315
Limo: 10 passengers	£125/hour	3 HR	£375
Limo Van: 6 passengers	£75/hour	3 HR	£225
Limo Bus: 18 passengers	£140/hour	3 HR	£560
Van: 14 passengers	£60/hour	3 HR	£240
Van Terra: 12 passengers	£80/hour	3 HR	£320
Mini Bus: 20 passengers	£85/hour	3 HR	£340
Mini Bus: 25 passengers	£90/hour	3 HR	£360
Mini Bus: 30 passengers	£95/hour	3 HR	£380
Mini Bus: 35 passengers	£100/hour	3 HR	£400
Coach: 55 passengers	£120/hour	4 HR	£600
Tour Guide	£55/hour	4 HR	£220
Greeter on-site	£35/hour	4 HR	£140

Taking care of guests cannot be underestimated. Small considerations will most likely be remembered for years. Whether your clients provide a van, a line of yellow taxis, or a bus, the important thing is to ensure the guests get home safely, especially those who have been drinking. Transport costs vary from region to region, but it is helpful if you can compare costs. Companies usually require 3 to 4 hour minimum services so keep this in mind when you are doing a cost comparison. Ask the transport vendors if their fees include fuel charges and also gratuity. Some high-maintenance vehicle hire will include garage time fees for any servicing after their use. This usually applies to larger vehicles where riders will be drinking and eating. The Vehicle Table includes sample fee structures provided by Kristina Bowery of Reston Limo (2006). The costs will vary depending on the region but the above table offers general guidelines.

A well-prepared wedding consultant has a keen eye for detail and is always on the lookout for trouble. Many months before a wedding, it is your job to check with local authorities on any street closures, in particular if the wedding will be held during a holiday weekend or in larger cities where special events can clog traffic for many hours. Determine any potential transportation difficulties and leave enough time for you and your clients to discuss options. Check with local law enforcement and government to ensure there is nothing on that might interfere with the wedding.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Hiring Transportation

- Know your couple's transportation preferences, determine exactly who needs transport, and create a transportation timeline.
- Know exactly how the couple, the bridal party, and the guests will be transported to the ceremony site, from the ceremony site to the reception, and then on to their final destinations.
- Prepare a timeline that is specific to the transportation.
- Make sure leave-taking from the ceremony and reception is done efficiently.
- Be aware of any restrictions or limitations each vehicle type has.
- Determine if the transport company's fees include a fuel charge, gratuity, and also garage time.
- Confirm directions to each place a driver will be stopping with the transportation company.
- Get day-of phone numbers for the transportation company and the drivers.
- Check with police and city government offices on street closures, parades, demonstrations, and other special events.
- Encourage your clients to pay for the venue parking fees for their guests.
- Secure transportation early if the wedding is during prom or graduation seasons.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *The Wedding Fairy's Big Day Breakdown: Planning for an Unforgettable Celebration, (2013), By The Wedding Fairy George Watts*
- ✓ *Wedding Planning For Dummies, (2012), By Marcy Blum*
- ✓ *The Wedding Planner's Big Day, By Cara Colte*