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April 25, 2019



# Your wedding

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**Cortland Standard**

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# Class without cost

Provided by Kiara Love Photography

## A great, all-local wedding doesn't have to be expensive

By **CATHERINE WILDE**  
Senior Reporter

[cwilde@cortlandstandard.net](mailto:cwilde@cortlandstandard.net)

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue...

Something affordable and locally sourced? That may not have the same ring to it, but it's just what Alex Mikowski was looking for when she tied the knot with her now husband Paul Mikowski, last year.

"We wanted to do things as close to Cortland County as possible, so if there was an option locally we wanted to use it," said Mikowski, who bought everything, down to the shoes on her feet, locally.

The couple got married last June in an outdoor ceremony at Little York Lake, Alex Mikowski wore a gown purchased at Nancy's Bridal in Cortland, she had her ring resized at Sheridan's Jeweler's in Homer, friends photographed the event, their re-

ception was at the Elks Lodge in Cortland and their food was catered by M&D Deli in Cortland.

It kept the tax dollars local, the money spent within their budget, and the memories will still last a lifetime, said Alex Mikowski.

The Mikowskis aren't alone in this desire, say wedding experts — there are plenty of options for locally sourced and inexpensive weddings.

Ashley Paul, a wedding planner with Ashley C and E Event Planning in Greene, said she offers two packages, one that coordinates everything the month of the wedding, and another that basically "holds their hand" every step of the way.

The month-of package is more economical, said Paul, who also tries to guide her customers on ways to save money throughout their planning.

"During the consultation, I ask a couple

what are their priorities for their wedding day?" Paul said.

This tiers the various categories in order of importance, giving a better idea of what areas to spend the most — or least — money on.

If food is the top priority, then Paul goes above and beyond with the caterers to make sure the guests will be getting very flavorful food.

Mikowski splurged on floral arrangements because she loves fresh flowers.

And to really save money, suggests Nancy Elster of Nancy's Bridal on Main Street, Cortland, couples may want to hire their immediate family members as the wedding planner.

"If you just deal with your mom and new mom, they sometimes have the best ideas and can get things done when you can't," she said.

Elster and Jodi Terwilliger, owner of the Bridal Barn in Homer, both suggest a trendy

and more affordable alternative to the traditional wedding gown: an ivory or white bridesmaid dress. Add a sash for a little flair and you don't have to deal with a train and your pocketbook will have more money in it at the end, Terwilliger said.

Mikowski said she just got lucky. "She brought out dresses that were gorgeous and I happened to love the one that was the cheapest," she said. Keeping an open mind on what it is you actually want, is helpful.

Mikowski has many favorite memories of that night — like the look on her husband's face when he first saw her in her gown — that loved ones captured on camera.

But they are all special — regardless of the cost.

"At the end of the day they're still getting married and how they choose to celebrate their love is completely up to them," Paul said, of married couples.

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# TOP TRENDS

## Brides and grooms go their own way

By **LEANNE ITALIE**  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — When Ashley Yore and Derek Ultican were planning their wedding, the question of the garter and bouquet tosses didn't come up.

"It just wasn't something I ever wanted to do," said the 33-year-old Yore, who lives in Tampa, Florida. "Maybe because a lot of our friends are married already. We're just not a super-traditional couple. We wanted everyone to be part of the party and enjoy themselves."

They're not alone. According to The Knot's 2018 Real Wedding Study, many couples are going their own way when it comes to longstanding traditions. They're incorporating more personal touches, paying closer attention to their carbon footprints, and embracing fashion trends that have trickled from the runways to wedding halls.

Just 33% of more than 14,000 U.S. brides and grooms surveyed by the bridal site went the time-worn garter route, down from 41% in 2016. As for bouquets, 45% tossed, down from 53% in



Manu Fernandez/Associated Press

See TRENDS, page 5

A model wears a creation from Pronovias during Barcelona Bridal fashion week in Barcelona, Spain.

## Wedding wild card: unpredictable toasts

By **MELISSA RAYWORTH**  
Associated Press

Today's weddings are often planned down to the tiniest detail, sometimes at great expense, to create a truly "perfect" day. But for better or for worse, one random element remains: the speeches and toasts that honored guests stand up and give.

Often they're sweetly, if awkwardly, memorable. A heartfelt toast might even be a highlight of the day. But how often do couples hold their breath wondering what the best man or grandpa or someone else might say with a microphone (and perhaps a drink) in their hand?

"Couples do worry about it," says Chicago-based wedding planner Regina Brooks, "whether it's 'my dad is long-winded and I don't want to bore

everyone' or 'my uncle's going to be drunk.'"

Brooks, owner of Regine Danielle Events, once had a groomsman approach her during a reception to say he'd be giving a surprise speech, but it would only take 10 minutes.

"He broke out A.V. equipment and played a game," she remembers. "It took 45 minutes."

In this era of the hyper-planned wedding, how do couples and wedding planners approach the unpredictable nature of moments like these?

### TALK IT THROUGH

Touch base in advance with those whom you've chosen to speak. Be honest about time limits and your concerns about private stories or po-

tentially sensitive subjects like politics or religion.

Focus on the positive: You're choosing to include this person and share the spotlight with them. If a couple presents the chance to speak as an honor, "then that person feels that they've gotten the trophy," says Jennifer Taylor, a New York-based wedding planner. "They're most likely not going to put too much angst into it."

When Brittany McElwee was planning her wedding three years ago, she had already been a maid-of-honor on three occasions. She'd heard long, awkward speeches at many weddings, and remembered her mother pointing out that "no one ever complained that a toast was too short."

See TOASTS, page 5



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# Invitations today reflect varying styles of celebrations

By **KATHERINE ROTH**  
Associated Press

Whether formal or casual, wedding invitations these days are meant to set the tone for the celebration, reflecting the themes of the weddings themselves.

Heavier, more expensive papers reflect fancy black-tie weddings. Simple textured invitations with interesting fonts reflect celebrations in a more contemporary style. And florals reveal more classically romantic events, experts say.

## DESTINATIONS

“One of the biggest trends we’ve been seeing are printed envelope liners, particularly for destination weddings. So if you’re getting married on a beach, there are liners printed with seashells, or maybe light blue with waves,” says Rachel Sylvester, lifestyle editor for Real Simple.

Patrick Priore, chief merchant officer at the Chicago-based, design-oriented Paper Source, which has 130 stores across the country, says, “Destination weddings are a huge trend now, and we’re responding with invitations that speak to various destinations, like beach scenes, or mountain vistas, or grapes and flowers for Napa Valley weddings.”

## COLORS

No matter what kind of celebration it is, couples are becoming more creative with color, experts say. “You often see a color-on-color approach to invi-

tations, with a lot of couples pairing blush pink with orchid, for example. In addition to invitations, there’s an attraction to a range of colors reflected in things like bridesmaids dresses, which are increasingly in any array of related colors instead of all the same color,” Sylvester says.

## FLORALS AND GREENERY

“Florals and greenery are really working right now. It’s really more about the execution. The trend started a few years ago with leaf motifs, and now we see it in lilacs, lavender and eucalyptus leaves,” Priore says.

## LUXE MATERIALS

“When couples come in to look at invitations, paper quality is the first thing they look at,” he says, adding that thicker papers and fancy envelopes and liners are hot items.

“If it’s a black-tie wedding, for example, it’s top-quality thick paper and envelopes with a bit of shimmer,” he adds.

## CRAFTY

You can design and print your own invitations, use a professional designer or stationer, or go with an in-between option, using online retailers like Shutterfly or Minted.

If you decide to make your own, Sylvester recommends aiming for interesting calligraphy, or hiring a calligrapher to handwrite names and addresses beautifully for you.

## WEBSITES

Websites are a must now, experts agree, and can be mentioned on whatever type of invitation you choose.

“Your website is a catch-all place for wedding information that is very detailed, and an important way of getting news about any last-minute event changes to your guests,” Sylvester says.

“It’s poor form to include anything about your registration in your invitation,” she adds. “A wedding website is a more appropriate place to include a link to a registry, if you go that route.”

It’s also a good place for links to maps and hotels, and a place to post photos after the event.

## ECO-FRIENDLY

“All of our paper is mostly recycled, and that’s something people really expect now,” says Priore.

“Plantable wedding invitations embedded with seeds are a great sustainable option, as is vegetable-based ink. And for those who want to go beyond paper, there are even rustic-looking invitations made of thin, laser-cut wood,” says Sylvester, of Real Simple.

“E-cards are certainly less expensive and more environmentally friendly, but paper is by far more popular,” she says. “At the end of the day, aside from the photos, you have your dress and your invitation suite (invitations, R.S.V.P. cards and thank you notes) that encapsulate who you are and what the wedding was like, and will remain a memento for years to come.”

Paper Source via AP

Whether formal or casual, wedding invitations these days are meant to set the tone for the celebration and reflect its themes.

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# TRENDS

continued from page 3

2016.

"I do think there's an element of women feeling empowered and saying, you know what, this bouquet toss for whoever's going to get married next is a little cliché, or the garter feels a little unnecessary," said Lauren Kay, deputy editor of The Knot. "Couples are just more focused on the guest experience."

## FUNCTIONAL IS FINE

Yore and Ultican, who is also 33, married oceanside March 2 in St. Pete Beach, Florida, with a reception at the pink, castle-like Don CeSar hotel. Their chuppah, the traditional Jewish canopy used during marriage ceremonies, was made of bamboo trees that were planted in their backyard a few days later.

"This really important piece of our wedding can now flourish in our home," Yore said. "That was really special."

Her mom made their party favors, little mason jars filled with mixed nuts flavored with cinnamon sugar. Each one had a photo label of the couple with the message: "We're nuts about you." They were special not only because they came from mom, but because Ultican loves the snack.

Such functional favors are hot on the handmade site Etsy. This year, couples are sending guests away with gifts they actually might want, rather than generic items of yore. According to Etsy, searches so far this year for such things as "wine favors," "soap favors" and "honey favors" were on the rise.

The 35-year-old Ivory Davis (formerly Weems) married 34-year-old information technology specialist Jonathan Davis in Cancun, Mexico, on Oct. 20. They combined their escort cards with their party favors — shot glasses emblazoned with "We Came. We Conquered. We Cancuned," and "Viva Las Davis," which was the hashtag they encouraged guests to use when post-

ing on Instagram and other social media during their celebration.

The best part: The shot glasses were filled with a tequila from Cancun and served throughout the reception at the tequila bar they set up.

"We wanted (guests) to take a shot to start the celebration of our union," said Ivory Davis, a flight attendant based in Los Angeles.

## ECO-FRIENDLY

Etsy trend expert Dayna Isom Johnson noted a rise in sustainable wedding touches, with searches on the site for eco-friendly bridal items numbering more than 107,000 in the past four months alone, including for reusable straws, biodegradable confetti and vintage decor.

Bethany Pickard owns a boutique wedding and event planning company, Modern Kicks, in New York's Hudson Valley. She has seen a rise in couples looking to serve locally sourced food and cut down on paper products.

"They're doing chalkboard menus instead of one on paper for every guest," Pickard said. "And they're choosing vendors that can repurpose dishes and plates and things rather than trucking that stuff across the state."

A Brooklyn catering company, Purslane, guarantees carbon neutrality through reusable and compostable wares, the purchase of carbon credits and consumables sourced from nearby sustainable vendors.

"We do not send anything to landfills," said a partner, Amanda Braddock.

## FASHION TRENDS

Isom Johnson said alternatives to veils are on trend, from huge show-stopping hats and tulle turbans to smaller accessories, such as ornate hair clips.

"I'm talking about statement hats to a simple velvet bow that they're tying in their hair," she said. "They don't want that traditional, cathedral-length veil."

Wedding dresses with sleeves have been making a comeback for several years, but Isom Johnson said it's all about statement sleeves these days. It's a way to bring a bit more glamour, romance and drama to a couple's big Instagram-worthy moment, she said.

"It's the '70s bell sleeve, the split sleeve and over-the-top lace. There are sleeves that are chiffrony and whimsical," Isom Johnson said.

Capes and capelets have also taken off, she said.

## MEANINGFUL SECRETS

Many couples are also looking to honor each other in private ways, perhaps following the cues of Meghan Markle and, later, her pal Priyanka Chopra when Chopra wed Nick Jonas.

Markle revealed last September that her May wedding dress included a small piece of a blue dress she wore on her first date with Prince Harry. When Chopra married Jonas in December, donning two wedding dresses for separate ceremonies, she included a secret of her own: a piece of the dress Jonas' mother, Denise, wore at her own wedding sewn into one of Chopra's gowns. The gown was embroidered with messages, including Chopra and Jonas' wedding date (Dec. 1), her parents' first names (Madhu and Ashok) and her hubby's full name: Nicholas Jerry Jonas.

The custom Purple Label black tuxedo Jonas wore also had a secret message inside the lapel: a small piece of lace from one of Chopra's looks, embroidered with the Urdu "My Jaan," for shared life.

Isom Johnson said brides can keep little secrets simpler through a tie bar, for example, with words of love on the back, or a private sentiment sewn into a seam of a dress.

"Today's weddings," she said, "are about letting the couple tell their personalized and unique love stories."

# TOASTS

continued from page 3

McElwee worried that some guests would want to hold forth on religion, while others would be bothered by the subject. So she and her groom opted to let only the maid-of-honor and best man speak. If more people spoke, "there was more potential for things to go wrong," McElwee says. "I just felt like we should minimize it to those two people, give it a few minutes, give the opportunity to put your glass in the air, and move on to the next thing."

Taylor agrees, especially for couples who worry about what might be said: "You don't want to have nine speeches at a wedding. Always try to limit it to two, possibly four if the parents are going to speak."

Timing? Five minutes or less per speech, Taylor says. Suggest that someone work with the speaker, to hear the speech out loud and time it.

"You don't want to pause the night," Taylor says. "You don't want to lose the momentum."

## LET THE EXPERTS HELP

If you're working with a wedding planner, or if the venue has supplied someone to help manage the day, Brooks and Taylor both say you can ask that person to help manage the flow of speeches.

"I will be the bad guy," Brooks says.

The DJ or bandleader can also help. Angelique Noto is getting married next month in the New York area,

See TOASTS, page 6



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# TOASTS

continued from page 5

and she's already spoken to her DJ about the toasts. If a speech goes on too long or gets inappropriate, she says, "that's when I'll turn to Burton and have him cut the mic."

Brides have asked Taylor to proofread and edit

speeches in advance. Respectfully offering that kind of help (without micro-managing) can be a relief to many family members.

Still, couples may find that some guests will ignore their plans and preferences.

"Some people just love the mic. It doesn't matter

where they are," Brooks says. "I had a wedding that was out of the country and the bride and groom were very adamant that they only wanted three or four particular people to speak. I ended up with a line of people that wanted to talk and it didn't matter what I said."

## USE THE REHEARSAL DINNER

If you'll be gathering with a smaller group the night before the wedding for a walk-through of the ceremony and a dinner to celebrate, Brooks suggests asking friends and relatives to speak then. It's still a special occasion, yet less stressful and more intimate.

Lelia Vogel, who is get-

ting married in the Pittsburgh area next month, worries that the best man may choose to tell embarrassing stories about wild nights with the groom. "I have really bad control problems," she laughs, so the idea of that happening in front of elderly relatives at the wedding is stressful.

Moving potentially wilder stories to rehearsal-dinner toasts limits who might

hear them.

## EMBRACE THE RANDOMNESS

In the end, perhaps it's a good thing that one piece of the wedding day can't be entirely predicted.

"It's nice when you're the bride or groom to be listening to people toasting you," Taylor says, even if you are a bit nervous about what they might say.



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# Long live the '90s

## Decades-old styles are remade anew

By **MOLLY SPRAYREGEN**  
Associated Press

From butterfly clips to polka dots, 1990s trends have been making a fashion comeback. Now, as '90s babies increasingly reach average marrying age, these trends are popping up all over the wedding industry as well.

An Etsy 2019 wedding trends report declared '90s nostalgia a top trend of the year, with over 300,000 searches for both rhinestones and polka dots on the site in the three months before the report's release in February. Etsy has also seen a 14 percent increase in butterfly clip searches since last year.

Etsy trend expert Dayna Isom Johnson says a '90s resurgence doesn't mean we'll suddenly be seeing huge puffy sleeves and oversize hair. Rather, popular '90s trends are being modernized and updated.

"They give some nod to those styles but they are so much more sophisticated," Johnson says, adding that today's butterfly clips, for example, look more whimsical and romantic than they did in the '90s.



The Knot via Associated Press

**Custom bride and bridesmaid jean jackets.**

And although wedding-dress sleeves may not be as puffy as they were 25 years

ago, statement sleeves are big again. Dresses are breaking from the modern tradition of a sweetheart neckline silhouette, giving

brides the opportunity to better express their personal style.

Lauren Kay, deputy editor at The Knot, says she has seen an increase in holographic and iridescent decor, chokers, disposable cameras on tables, and '90s music. Jeffra Trumppower, creative director at WeddingWire, cites the return of '90s styles like neon signs, macrame, and custom jean jackets with monograms or calligraphy on the back.

Los Angeles wedding planner Beth Helmstetter of Beth Helmstetter Events has noticed a return to bridesmaids wearing color block dresses — combining two or more large blocks of bold, typically clashing

See '90s, page 8

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'90s

*continued from page 7*

colors. And Chicago wedding planner Nicole Hensley of Storybook Weddings and Events notes more couples incorporating their favorite '90s snacks into their special days.

"As most of our couples are now in their 30s," Hensley says, "they lived through childhood eating dunkaroos, pop tarts, ice pops and so many other nostalgic treats. It's been so fun sourcing these items for late-night snack stations or having our caterers put a fun twist to pop tarts... or creating an "adult" alcoholic version of the ice pops!"

Perhaps the most surprising '90s trend that is resurgent both in weddings and beyond is the fanny pack.

A 2018 report by the NPD Group found that

fanny packs account for almost 25 percent of overall growth in the fashion accessories industry. Etsy reported a whopping 62 percent increase in searches related to "bridal fanny packs" in the three months before its trends report was released.

At bachelorette parties, a bride and her crew might wear bedazzled or glittery fanny packs that say "Bride" and "Squad." Couples also are incorporating more chic, fashionable versions of fanny packs into the wedding itself. These classier versions may be referred to as hip or belt bags. Brides and grooms aren't necessarily wearing them down the aisle, but they are using them at the reception or other wedding events to carry phones and other items.

Johnson sees fanny packs as part of a broader trend toward functionality and reusability. Not only are they handy during the celebration, but fanny packs can be used long after the wedding is over.

Experts agree that couples who want to invoke a little '90s nostalgia into their weddings should do so tastefully and sparingly. Many suggested thinking about no more than one or two motifs from the '90s and putting a more modern spin on them.

"If it's neon fanny packs for example," says Hensley, "take that idea and go a step above! Reinvent the idea. Give fanny packs out as favors filled with a hang-over kit for surviving the next morning. Fill it with a mini water bottle, some pain reliever, eye drops and maybe a little "hair of the dog!"

In essence, a full-on '90s-themed wedding might be overkill, but including flashes of the decade here and there can make for a beautiful and nostalgia-filled event.



*Dreamers and Lovers/Etsy via Associated Press*

**A model wears a Bell Sleeve Lace Bohemian Wedding Dress. From butterfly clips to polka dots, '90s trends have been making a fashion comeback.**

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# A doggone good wedding

By LINDA LOMBARDI  
Associated Press

When Kelly Curry was planning her wedding, she knew her dogs Charlie, Zoey and Izzy were going to be in it, and that her friends would expect no less.

"They'd be surprised if they weren't there," says Curry.

The question was how to make it work. She happened to see a social-media post about a pet wedding service, Pawfect for You ("Wedding Day Pet Care and Chauffeur"), which offered to do it all: pick the dogs up, wrangle them during the event, and bring them home again safely, letting the bridal couple enjoy their perfect day with no worries.

"I thought it was a joke," said Curry, who was married in October 2017 in Haddam, Connecticut. It wasn't, and she got in touch with Pawfect for You's owner, Veronica Silva.

"We had them there for everything except for the reception — for the pictures, and they walked down with bridesmaids and groomsmen," Curry says.

One potential complication was the elderly Charlie, who'd always been a



Amber Rishavy/Pixel Dust Photography/Lara Leinen via AP  
**Lara Leinen of Doggy Social MN LLC prepares Shelby for the wedding of her owners Kelley and Shawn Ballanger.**

bit of a handful and had recently gone blind. "I explained to her that he had issues," Curry says, "and she gladly accepted to take

him, and she did a great job with him."

It's hard for brides and grooms to find a friend who can handle their pup

all day on the wedding day, says Silva.

"How do you coordinate this when everyone you know is at your wedding and anyone close to you is in your wedding party? How can they go home, pick up the dog, bring the dog over for pictures, coordinate how the dog walks down the aisle?" says Silva. "And then you're stuck with, everyone's sitting down for dinner, how can I get the dog back home without imposing on someone?"

Having a dog in a wedding is about more than the dog. For one thing, it's about timing.

"Dogwalkers commit to a window, not a specific time, which is normally fine, but weddings are different," says Silva. "Some of the timelines I've seen from professional wedding planners are down to the minute, and we have to be cognizant of that."

Lara Leinen, whose company, Doggy Social MN, services the Twin Cities area and Wisconsin, had a previous career as a wedding planner, so she knows what goes into it.

See DOGGONE, page 10

# How to say no to being a bridesmaid

By BRIANNA MCGURRAN  
NerdWallet

**Q:** A friend asked me to be a bridesmaid in her wedding, but I'm afraid I won't be able to afford it. How do I say no and keep our friendship intact?

**A:** You don't need to go into debt to celebrate a friend. This might sound blasphemous when your social media feeds are drenched in destination bachelor parties and designer bridesmaid dresses. But the truth is that many 20- and 30-somethings are just getting by, and bridesmaids in particular are asked to drop a lot of cash.

The average bridesmaid spends \$1,200 per wedding, including attire, travel to the event, accessories and gifts, according to a May 2017 study from wedding-planning website WeddingWire. But that average climbs to over \$1,800 when accounting for bachelorette parties and bridal showers. You'll want to know precisely what you're signing up for as a bridesmaid.

A true friend will understand if your finances keep you from participating, and that declining her request isn't reflective of the friendship. Here's how to make sure nothing gets lost in translation.

## BE REALISTIC ABOUT YOUR BUDGET

First, know what you truly can and can't afford.

Consider:

- ◆ Do you have more weddings coming up?
- ◆ Will any of them require significant travel?
- ◆ Are there financial goals you're prioritizing, like paying off credit card debt?

## TELL THE TRUTH

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See BRIDESMAID, page 10

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Lara Leinen of Doggy Social MN LLC poses with Lindsay and Kyle Hofer, and their dog, Carter, at their wedding in Minneapolis. It's no longer unusual for brides and grooms to include pets in their wedding photos.

## DOGGONE

continued from page 9

"I'm working on the back end with all the vendors to make sure the couple's day is perfect," for them and the dog, she says. "I want it to be stress-free for everyone involved. I reach out and let them know who I am and what I'm doing and that if timelines get off, let me know and we'll roll with the punches."

She makes sure the pet is getting potty breaks, water, etc. "I'm constantly paying attention to the energy of the animals and making sure that they're happy," Leinen says.

The handler also helps ensure that pets play their roles comfortably and efficiently.

"We walk around with chicken, cheese, turkey, prosciutto in our pockets," says Silva. That helps with the photos in particular, especially with those tight timelines: "We need to

make sure we're not taking a hundred shots trying to get the dog to look at the camera."

Not so long ago, the idea of having your pet in your wedding might have sounded eccentric, but not anymore. Leinen feels that her clients make good choices based on knowing their pets. If they're not up to crowds, the plan is made accordingly.

"One couple, their dog had a severe case of anxiety," she says. "So we decided we'd only be there for the first look and the pictures for 20 minutes — just the couple and their dogs, no bridal party or anyone else."

Such sensible choices mean the "pet" in a wedding is almost always a dog. Silva has had some inquiries about cats but no one's gone through with it. Leinen has her first feline wedding client scheduled for May, with a cat who's comfortable riding in a

backpack carrier.

"And if at any point in time we feel it's too much for the animal, we have the OK from the couple to back out — we're going to change course and do something different," she says. After all, "they're busy getting married."

And while many couples, like Curry, have their dogs walk down the aisle, there are also many who just have them there briefly for photos, and then the handler takes them home. That may be a more limited sort of involvement, but it might be the most important.

"For most couples, one of those images with their dog in it — that is going to be their favorite photo," says Leinen. "Maybe not their favorite moment — maybe later when they're dancing alone with their significant other on their wedding night will be the most significant moment to them. But picture-wise, it's the dog picture."

## BRIDESMAID

continued from page 9

half-baked excuses for why you can't participate. That could "leave an ocean of room" for the bride to misinterpret and worry you don't value her, says Mariana Bockarova, a researcher in psychology at

the University of Toronto.

Break the news in person, or over Skype or FaceTime if that's not possible. "Seeing each other's facial expression is really, really important in terms of eliciting empathy," Bockarova says.

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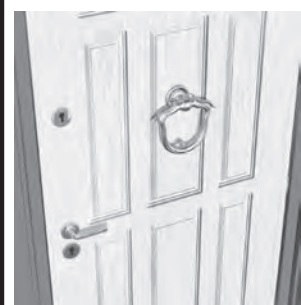
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## Your wedding checklist

Wedding planning can get overwhelming. In many cases, there are tasks that should be completed up to a year ahead of the event. This handy checklist will help you stay on top of all of the important details right up to the big day.

### NINE TO TWELVE MONTHS BEFORE

- Decide on a wedding budget and track all your expenses accordingly.
- Set a date.
- Make a guest list.
- Research venues for your ceremony and reception and book the one(s) that you like.
- Decide if you want a bridal party and choose who you want to be part of your day.
- Start collecting your guest's addresses.

### EIGHT MONTHS BEFORE

- Shop for and purchase a wedding gown.
- Book your vendors for the day: photographer, DJ or musician, florist, cake maker and caterer (if food isn't included with your venue).
- Register for gifts.
- Build a wedding website that your guests can visit for extra information concerning your wedding.

### SIX MONTHS BEFORE

- Choose an officiant.
- Shop for and purchase bridesmaid's dresses.
- Order the invitations.
- Buy your wedding bands.

### FOUR MONTHS BEFORE

- Reserve transportation to and from the ceremony and reception venues, if necessary.
- Have a cake tasting and finalize the cake design.
- Schedule hair and makeup appointments and don't forget to book trial runs for both.
- Make a plan for decorating your ceremony and reception spaces.

### THREE MONTHS BEFORE

- Choose and order the groom's outfit.
- Start thinking about the music and choose songs for the ceremony and the first dance. You may want to make a separate list for party music.
- Have a tasting with your caterer

- to set the menu.
- Start planning the rehearsal dinner.
- Select wedding favours and order them.

### TWO MONTHS BEFORE

- Send out the invitations.
- Make sure the bridesmaids and groomsmen have their outfits.
- Have the first wedding dress fitting.
- Shop for and buy gifts for your bridal party.

### ONE MONTH BEFORE

- Meet with your officiant to go through the ceremony.
- Make sure you have your marriage licence.
- Start making a list of people who've confirmed that they'll be attending.
- If another dress fitting is required, do it now.

### TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- Book an appointment to have a manicure and pedicure the day before.
- Have the final dress fitting and bring it home.
- Book the groom's suit or tuxedo fitting.
- Track down people who haven't responded yet.
- Confirm number of guests with your venue and caterer and don't forget to order meals to feed your DJ and photographer.

### THE WEEK BEFORE

- Make a seating chart.
- Delegate any day-of tasks to your wedding party and family.
- Supply your photographer with a list of pictures you want and your DJ with a detailed playlist.
- Write out cheques to pay your vendors.

### THE DAY BEFORE

- Relax while you get your nails done.
- Give the payment cheques to someone you trust in order to pay your vendors.
- At the rehearsal dinner, give gifts to your bridal party.

### YOUR WEDDING DAY

- Have the flowers delivered to the wedding venue.
- Make sure the venue is decorated according to your vision.
- Keep calm and enjoy.



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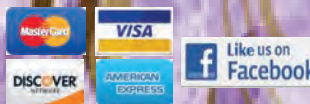


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