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Music

A deejay is generally the cheaper music choice. The bottom line: Brides and grooms must remember that guests of all ages want one thing from a party, and that is to get down. "If the music is bad or the deejay does not have the ability to get people on the dance floor,

you're in trouble," says Goldberg, shuddering. Having a variety of music is also of major importance.

Cost: \$500-\$3,500 (Contingent on choice of deejay or band)

Flowers

Flowers are beautiful. But floral arrangements face the toughest scrutiny from female guests. Maybe that's the reason the final tally on bouquets and centerpieces for an affair can run as high as \$20,000 if you're not careful. Goldberg highly suggests a slight "splurge" in terms of accessorizing the bridal party. "A professional florist should at least handle the bride's bouquet in addition to hand-tied [corsages] for bridesmaids and rose bouts for groomsmen."

The reception can be a showplace of your own personal flair, and doing it yourself can have surprisingly dramatic results. "Try to rent vases and fill them with long-stemmed calla lilies and river rocks," adds Golberg. "But don't make the mistake of wasting money on filler flowers. You don't need them."

Even if flowers of any variety are beyond your means, you can still enrapture loved ones as they enter the reception hall. "Place candles of varying heights on a mirror with a few open roses to complement the setting. It's inexpensive, yet romantic and simple."

Cost: \$600-\$6,000



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Invites

Invites are the first glimpse that guests will have of your big day, so it's important that the announcements be personal and set the tone of the event. But don't get too caught up.

Goldberg suggests "heading to a craft- or scrapbook store that has great paper as well as add-on[s]. For example, a 100-piece set will only run \$25-\$150. If you are not tech savvy, find someone who is handy on the computer to set the format and text of the invite. You can even address outer and inner envelopes with calligraphy on that same computer." (Having professional calligraphy done can run you \$1.25-\$4 per envelope. Doing it on your own saves up to \$500.)

Goldberg also advises that many invite companies have included a budgeted option. Some offer invites at 75 cents-\$1.50 each — just ask.

Cost: \$300-\$750



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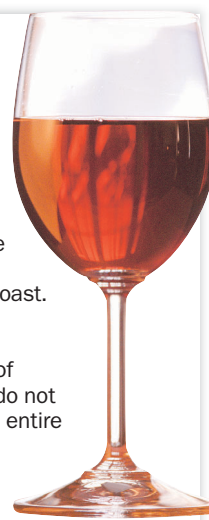
Alcohol

Many people are afraid to forgo the open bar at the risk of being regarded as "cheap." Goldberg offers an excellent suggestion for couples looking to avoid labeling: "Try an elegant wine-tasting during the cocktail hour with imported cheeses. Wine is a classy way to introduce the evening. Consider incorporating this into dinner and have only wine and soft drinks available."

She also recommends skipping the Champagne toast. "Most people can just toast you with what they are drinking at the table."

For those who remain leery about the absence of Champagne, consider the following: Many people do not care for Champagne, and most don't consume the entire glass during said-toast.

Cost: \$400 wine only; **\$1,500** mixed drinks, including all mixers, juices and fruit.



SUPER STOCK

Clergy/Chapel/Temple

(plus parishioner or rental fees for off-site clergy)

It's nearly guaranteed that a church or temple will ask for some kind of contribution for its services, and there's not much one can do to get around this fee. However, when it comes to decorating the church, you do have some power.

"You don't want to spend all this money on flowers for the church that you are only going to donate later," Goldberg explains, "so simply ask if another ceremony is being performed on your wedding day. Perhaps you may be able to split the costs of altar arrangements and pew bows."

If you want to have your own touch, consider skipping the pews and decorate only the altar or huppah. "Purchase a simple assembled vase from your local florist for the altar. Most will sell such arrangements for as little as \$9.99."

Cost: \$250-\$450

Photographer and Video

No matter how much we all protest, one's wedding day should be captured on film. "A way to save is to ask a professional photographer to shoot your event, but skip the additional services [like album-making]," says Goldberg. With access to the Internet, couples can easily purchase the same albums the professionals do. Buy your negatives, make copies of the photos and just slip them in! Many companies will even personalize your album by engraving your names on the cover."

How do you avoid the lofty expense of video? Easy. "Locate a professional videographer, but ask he/she to shoot straight footage. Save the editing for when you can afford it."

Cost: \$2,500-5,500

Reception Site

This is one of the first elements brides and grooms should reserve in advance because many will have weddings booked up to 2½ years in advance. The key in this step is to use common sense.

For example, Goldberg suggests holding nuptials away from peak months (May, June, September or October). "You can save anywhere from 20%-40% for a Saturday evening wedding" in the off-season, says Goldberg, who has been in the event-planning biz for over 14 years. "The Glenmere Mansion in Chester, N.Y.; Grand Plaza and Harbor Manor in Staten Island, and Giando on the Water in Brooklyn are all reasonably priced."

What if the venue you fall in love with refuses to knock down the price regardless of the season?

"I would inquire as to whether or not a reduced rate could be applied to a Friday evening and either an afternoon on Saturday or Sunday."

Some restaurants have no rental fee at all, although the per person fee may be slightly higher as a result. Another tip: Don't be afraid to venture outside and enjoy the fresh air. Many times, outdoor locales are cheaper in price without lacking appeal.

Cost: \$0-\$10,000