

Basic do's and don'ts:

- DO set a budget – and stick to it.
- DO think through what you really want – and what you've been made to *think* you need.
- DO ask round friends and family for ideas and suggestions.
- DO talk to your parish priest about the options available: he or she will have lots of experience.
- DO find out what skills and talents friends and family have and can share with you.

- DON'T get carried away by glossy magazines. They exist to sell you products you didn't know you wanted. That's why they're full of adverts.
- DON'T model yourselves on influencers/celebrities – they're probably paid to part you from your cash.
- DON'T think 'more expensive is better' – simplicity is often very much nicer and more memorable.
- DON'T try and compete with what others have done – you're unique already, and your wedding isn't a style competition.

Some useful websites:

www.yourchurchwedding.org

This is the Church of England's website about all things to do with weddings. It includes useful information on managing costs, as well as answering lots of day-to-day questions about arranging a service.

www.oxfam.org.uk

This is the gateway to Oxfam's site, which includes a dedicated wedding department. It has many ideas about getting your wedding essentials together without going over your budget.

There are other charities with similar departments, including Barnado's and the Red Cross – consult the internet.

www.northlincs.gov.uk

You might not immediately think of the local authority website, but under the heading 'Community' you will find all sorts of useful information about the legal and practical background to arranging a marriage, including how to go about getting permission to marry.

www.bartonstmary.org.uk

The parish website contains contact details and basic information about the nuts and bolts of arranging a service.

Tying the Knot without Breaking the Bank. A guide to arranging a wedding.

The average cost of a UK wedding day is now said to be around £20,000.

For most of us this is a frightening amount. Some couples will go into heavy debt for their 'dream wedding' (plus honeymoon). Others will postpone it, or abandon the idea altogether.

The Church service is a drop in the ocean as part of this total cost so we can't make very much difference to the bill. But we *can* suggest ways of having a memorable wedding without breaking the bank.

Venue

A first thing to think about is where you want to get married. (2023 figures.)

The least expensive is to marry at the **Scunthorpe register office** or the **20-21 Visual Arts Centre**. The cost will be in the range of about £150-£350 (NB that both availability and capacity are limited).

A Church wedding will cost about £600 (organ music or bells will be extra).

A wedding at an approved venue (like a hotel) requires the attendance of a registrar. The fee is between about £330 and £470 (depending on what time/day of the week you choose): check if a venue quote includes this.

Reception.

One way of keeping costs under control is to have your wedding in the late afternoon. This way you can go straight into an evening reception/party rather than having to provide two meals. It also means you've more time to get ready on the morning. (In law a wedding can take place between 8am and 6pm.)

Think 'outside the catering box' – in Lancashire the tradition is to have an evening pie and pea supper. Go Italian (or Indian, or...) and make the evening memorably unusual.

Consider using (for example) a village hall within walking distance – this could also save on cars. A parish Church may be able to do you a 'package deal' for their church hall. Outside caterers can do the food, friends decorate the room, and your wine comes without restaurant mark-up prices. Or ask a local pub about providing a pay bar.

Dress.

Wedding dresses tend to get used once, then left in a wardrobe. Why not be different, and wear something you can use afterwards?

Some charity shops have specialist wedding departments – you sometimes even pick up designer labels. There's one in York OXFAM.

Thirty years ago most weddings didn't feature men in morning dress. Unless you long to wear one, you might prefer a suit (note: gentlemen *never* wear hats indoors). And if you're a goth or a biker, why not go with it?

Many chain stores do dresses which would make good bridesmaids' outfits. Adding a few matching extras makes them special.

Flowers.

A simple spray of roses might be all that's needed. Or flowers from a family garden (which could have sentimental value.)

Don't spend a fortune on decorating the Church or the reception with expensive and elaborate arrangements – you'll barely notice them, and most churches will have flowers in them already during the wedding season.

Photographs.

Most wedding photographs live at the back of a cupboard. Talk to your photographer and only buy what you really want. Or rely on family photographs, or ask a friend to take some for you. Put single-use cameras out at the reception for informal photographs.

Cake.

Can a family member make one? Or M&S come to the rescue? You don't need 3 tiers.

Rings.

'Designer rings' are expensive. You could have High Street jewellers' rings engraved, or you're looking for something really special, try a local craft gallery (or have a day out in Birmingham's Jewellery quarter).

Is there family jewellery around which you might find meaningful to use for yourselves? Old rings in antique shops, or Hemswell, or specialist jewellers can be reasonably priced.

Your rings will be blessed as part of a church service, so they will be 'yours' even if they once belonged to someone else.

Honeymoon.

Book a last minute deal (makes you harder to track down) or delay it a few weeks till you have the energy. Go for a week or ten days.

Things to avoid.

- **Fancy wedding favours.**
A few sugared almonds, say, wrapped tastefully and placed on the table do the job without costing a fortune.
- **Toastmasters.**
You almost certainly have a friend who'd be delighted to take care of the announcing of speeches and the rest.
- **Personalised balloons/napkins/etc.**
They'll be thrown away and all-but-forgotten by the end of the evening.
- **Free bars.**
Not only are they expensive, there might be one or two folk who take advantage of them and wind up embarrassingly the worse for wear.