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SETTING A BUDGET

Figure Out Who's Contributing

Perhaps it's just you and your fiancé. Or maybe your parents or other family members want to chip in. Whatever the case may be, finding out who's eager to contribute to your wedding is a good first step in calculating your overall budget. Once you have an idea of how much financial assistance you'll receive, focus on your own contribution.

- How much can you and your fiancé realistically—and comfortably—afford to spend given all the real-life expenses you have to cover?
- Based on your monthly income, how much can you both reasonably save between now and the wedding?
- How much, if any, can you responsibly pull from an existing savings account?

Estimate your personal wedding budget based on your answers to the questions above. Then add any other financial contributions that you're confident are coming your way. And there you have it: A ballpark wedding budget.

Estimate your guest count

The cost of a wedding is pretty much based on guest count. (Read that sentence again and let it soak in.) The number of guests in attendance will determine not only the size of your venue, but also how much food and alcohol you'll have to provide (which, by the way, just happen to be two of the biggest wedding expenses).

Choose Your Non-Negotiables

Once you decide your top priorities, you can allot a bigger percentage of your budget to them—which will also solidify how much you'll have left for the other wedding items that aren't so super important to you.

Do Your Research

There are a lot of costs, both obvious and hidden, that you'll have to consider before nailing down where your wedding budget will ultimately land. For example, you often can't just buy the wedding cake; you're required to pay a cutting fee. And you don't pay just the venue rental fee; there may also be setup and breakdown charges. And, there's a whole slew of vendors you'll be expected to tip. Do you see where we're going with this?

Do The Math

After completing all 4 steps above, it's time to do a final reality check: Does your budget breakdown match the actual cost of your ideal wedding? PSA: Please Don't Go Into Debt To Say "I Do"



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BRIDE'S TIPS FOR A CALM WEDDING



Tip #1: Plan your Hair and Beauty Timeline Wisely. Time your hair and makeup trials when you do them, so you know how long they'll take on the morning of. Double check how your hair and skin should be prepped before the hairstylist and makeup artists arrive, you may need to have hair washed the night before. Confirm the timeline with your hair and makeup artists, and brief your bridal party so there's no confusion about who goes first. Make sure you've tested any new beauty products before the big day to ensure there are no last-minute reactions!



Tip #2: Hit play on some sweet sounds. Prepare a playlist of your favorite songs to listen to. For the morning of my wedding, I created a Spotify playlist with sweet love songs that had meaning to our relationship. Don't forget to pack a set of portable speakers in your overnight bag if not getting ready at home.

Tip #3: Get the celebration started. Pop some bubbly and have a toast with your bridal party! But remember, avoid having too much, you have a long day ahead and you don't want all that excitement going to your head!



Tip #4: Don't forget to eat. Although many brides say they feel too anxious or excited to eat in the morning, it really is important to have a hearty, healthy breakfast to get you through the day. A layered breakfast bowl with fresh fruit, natural yogurt and granola and a calming herbal tea will set you up nicely for the day. Try to avoid greasy and stodgy foods, as these can make you feel a little queasy and bloated if nerves are heightened. If you're staying at the venue or a hotel, make sure to order your brekkie for room service delivery the night before.



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