How to Take the Hectic out of your Day

Weddings are among the most complex events many people will ever plan. Couples often try to go the extra mile in an effort to make the day memorable for themselves and their guests. That pressure can make a wedding day feel a little frenzied. Thankfully, there are various ways to ensure the vibe of the big day is happy and not hectic.

Hire a wedding planner/coordinator

Leaving the nitty gritty to a professional wedding planner takes a lot of pressure off of couples. The renowned wedding resource The Knot says wedding planners are clued into everything there is to know about a wedding and they can be tapped to take care of just about anything on couples’ to-do list.

Consider a package deal

All-inclusive resorts are popular vacation spots because variables like entertainment, lodging, food, drinks, and more is all taken care of, leaving vacationers with little to do other than show up and relax. Couples can apply that same approach on their wedding day. Host the ceremony and reception at the same site, which takes the potentially problematic issue of getting guests to and fro out of the equation. Some venues may even provide in-house vendors like photographers and florists. Such vendors’ familiarity with the venue reduces the risk of surprises that can derail wedding day schedules.

Pick your priorities

Avoid getting bogged down on a million details by making a list of your priorities when planning. Couples can revisit this list a couple of days before their wedding so they remember what’s most important to them on the big day. This refresher can ensure couples don’t get too concerned if minor issues arise during the day.

Sponsoring advertisers for this year’s Wedding Planner are ready to assist in making your special day the best it can be. Be sure to let them know that you saw them in The “Times.”

4 Tips for finding the right wedding venue

Wedding planning requires couples to make many decisions, including where the wedding will take place.

A couple’s wedding day is typically broken into two parts: the ceremony comes first, and the reception follows soon after. Depending on couples’ preferences and religious beliefs, ceremonies may take place at a house of worship or another location that is separate from the reception venue. In some instances, couples may choose one location for both the ceremony and the party to follow. Wedding venues are where the bulk of the day will unfold, and couples can consider these four tips to find a venue that suits their needs.

1. Consider your theme and wedding style. Most couples know which sentiments they want to convey during their weddings. The venue should match the theme so the entire wedding will feel connected to the space. A modern wedding, for example, will be at home in an art gallery or warehouse. A wedding with natural elements may work better on a ranch or in a botanical garden. zeroes in on the wedding style helps narrow down potential venue options.

2. Assess the budget. A couple may find what seems to be the perfect venue, only to realize that the cost of the space doesn’t fit their budget. Ampersand Travel says the venue accounts for the most significant wedding expense, at an average cost of $9,000. Finding a venue that will maximize dollars spent involves looking at what is included. Rentals for chairs, linens, lighting, a dance floor, and other
**Timeline Tips:**
Factors to consider when planning your wedding day timeline

The notion that “timing is everything” is applicable in many situations, perhaps none more so than on a couple’s wedding day. Many couples spend months, if not years, planning their weddings in the hopes that all that hard work will ultimately result in a day they will cherish forever.

The sheer volume of things to do on a wedding day can make couples feel overwhelmed. Those feelings can be overcome by emphasizing timing on the day of the wedding. Wedding day timelines will differ depending on variables that are unique to each couple’s wedding, but the following are some factors to consider as couples organize the big day.

--Venue(s):
The schedule couples adhere to on their wedding day will be greatly affected by their choice of venue. Does the venue have somewhere on premises for the couple and their party to get ready? Are the ceremony and reception being held at the same venue? Before creating a timeline, consider the location of the ceremony and reception venue(s) and the accommodations each provides. Getting to and from multiple facilities won’t be an issue if couples choose a multipurpose venue where they can get ready, tie the knot and dance the night away all in one place. Couples who will be moving from venue to venue throughout the day must build the time it takes them and their party to get about into their timelines.

--Wedding party:
The size of the wedding party also bears consideration when planning a wedding day timeline. Large parties will require more time to get ready, and that should be factored into couples’ timelines. Large parties also may be harder to corral and transport from place to place, so couples should build some extra time into their timelines to account for that. Small wedding parties can be easier to manage, so couples with small parties may be able to begin their timelines a little later in the day than those with large wedding parties.

--Weather:
Weather is the most unpredictable variable couples need to plan for on their wedding days. As the wedding day approaches, couples can monitor the day’s forecast and then make any necessary changes to account for inclement weather. Getting around in a rainstorm will likely take longer than moving about on a sunny day, so some minor tweaks to the timeline may be necessary if storms or another type of inclement weather is in the forecast.

Couples can access wedding day timeline templates on various websites. But it’s important that couples remember that their weddings are unique, so online guidelines might not be realistic. A careful consideration of a handful of variables specific to couples’ weddings can help them craft timelines that make their big day go smoothly.
Celebrating family histories and traditions is a major component of weddings. During a wedding, two families come together and begin to merge their unique takes on life.

When couples tying the knot come from the same cultural or religious backgrounds, fitting the pieces together may be relatively easy. However, when a wedding must incorporate two different religions -- each with its specific traditions and requirements -- a couple may not know where to start. These tips may help the process along.

Communication
It is important to open a dialogue with all involved parties at the onset to be able to craft a ceremony and subsequent celebration that aligns with the faiths of the couple and their families. This dialogue shares what everyone expects. Ask everyone to rank the rituals they would like to see included by order of importance, and then use this as a guide when planning the ceremony.

Discuss options
Certain houses of worship may be strict in regard to what they allow during interfaith ceremonies. Conservative congregations may even frown upon marrying outside of one’s religion. More reformed places may be willing to incorporate key rites into the wedding.

But in instances when it may seem like there are too many obstacles to having faith-guided ceremonies for interfaith couples, there are creative solutions, including working with a secular officiant. Secular officiants can oversee the ceremony outside of a place of worship and still have the marriage recognized by the tenets of that faith.

Neutral ground
Interfaith couples may opt to have the ceremony at a neutral location so they do not appear to be paying favor to one faith over another. Determine if religious officiants can oversee the ceremony outside of a place of worship and still have the marriage recognized by the tenets of that faith.

Secular officiant
In instances when it may seem like there are too many obstacles to having faith-guided ceremonies for interfaith weddings, wedding planners may suggest some creative solutions, including working with a secular officiant. Traditions such as lighting a unity candle or blending two different sands together to signify the blending of two faiths and families can be part of the ceremony.

Give others tasks
Couples may be unfamiliar with each other’s religious traditions. Sharing faith-specific wedding planning tasks can help couples and their families become more familiar with these customs.

Interfaith weddings require extra planning and finesse, but millions of couples get married in such ceremonies every year. These tips can help couples incorporate cultural or religious elements into their weddings, as 46 percent indicated they wanted to get married in a ceremony that matched their heritage. It is important to open a dialogue with all involved parties at the onset to be able to craft a ceremony and subsequent celebration that aligns with the faiths of the couple and their families.

Modern weddings are increasingly multicultural affairs. According to The Knot 2019 Real Weddings Study, 52 percent of all couples tying the knot involve partners from a different race or ethnicity or from a different geographic area. Those couples are still incorporating their heritage into their weddings, as 46 percent indicated they wore something with special meaning to their families during their weddings.

In addition, the survey found that 38 percent of couples incorporate cultural/ethnic or religious elements into their ceremonies.

Wedding venue
Continued from 1-B
extrs can quickly add up. Couples should have a set limit they’re willing to spend on the venue and let that dictate the location.

Availability of the location
When a couple wants to get married may determine their venue options, especially if they’re planning on a budget. September and October are the most popular months to get married, so venues will book up quickly during that time of year. Those who have their hearts set on specific days will have to begin the search earlier than couples with no attachment to a particular date. Concessions may need to be made if a certain date is in a must.

Estimate the size of your guest list
Price, date and style will factor into wedding venues, but the number of guests also is a major consideration.

Tents, Tables & Chairs
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Let us help you prepare for your special day!
5 Great Reasons to take engagement photos

During their engagements, couples will make many decisions in regard to their weddings. Wedding planning can sometimes seem like a runaway train of appointments, schedules and deadlines. As a result, some couples do not take the time to enjoy being engaged, which is a special and unique time in their lives.

Engagement photoshoots can be a unique way for couples to commemorate and enjoy the months preceding their wedding. Engagement photoshoots memorialize the engagement and provide many additional benefits as well.

1. Engagement photoshoots give couples a chance to connect with their photographers. Booking an engagement photoshoot provides helpful information to both the couple and the photographer. The photographer gets to see how the couple interacts in front of the lens and can determine any insecurities or strengths and weaknesses couples may have. These lessons can be filed away and help make wedding-day photos look better. Similarly, spending time with the photographer gives the couple an opportunity to develop a rapport with their photographer. If couples and their photographer don’t click, scheduling an engagement shoot will in advance of the wedding gives couples a chance to find someone else to take their photos.

2. An engagement photo shoot gives couples time to spend together. An engagement photo shoot is an ideal time to spend an afternoon in a special location focusing on each other without wedding planning taking up your time.

3. Photoshoots provide a chance to get comfortable in front of the camera. Professional photographers taken before the wedding enables couples to view how they will appear in pictures. Seeing these photos might help couples grow more comfortable in front of the camera. This practice can help couples temper their anxieties prior to the wedding. An engagement shoot also can be a great time for couples to speak with their photographers about angles or styles they prefer or dislike.

4. The bride and groom have save-the-date or social media photos. Engagement photographs can be used for save-the-date cards or social media postings (check with the photographer for licensing agreements). This can be a great way to spread excitement about the upcoming nuptials.

5. Photo shoots provide a chance to experiment with vivid backdrops. Engagement photography gives couples plenty of opportunities to experiment with different locales, which may not be possible on the wedding day.

Engagement photography can be a worthwhile inclusion in pre-wedding celebrations.

Capture perfect pictures for your wedding day

Few things document weddings more effectively than photographs. Carefully curated wedding albums and portraits hung on walls serve as daily reminders of a couple’s special day. Photography is often left in the very qualified hands of professional photographers. However, couples can pitch in to make their photos really pop. These picture pointers from industry insiders can help couples put their best smile forward.

Leave ample time

A carefully orchestrated timeline can ensure photos are the best they can be. Why? Because a couple who is relaxed and not overwhelmed will notice that attitude translates to their photographs. When planning wedding timelines, couples should leave ample opportunities for getting dressed, chatting with the wedding party and going through various photography settings to grab great photos, advise the experts at Marilyn Stewart.

Put together a short list

The photographer will have his or her ideas of which shots to cover, but a couple with specific goals in mind should relay that information to their photographer. For example, if a grandparent is getting up in years, request some solo photos of that person so you can look back on happy times together. Certain couples want to be snapped posing with a beloved pet. Putting that on the list helps it will happen.

Enlist a family photo coordinator

If the photographer does not have his or her own assistant, recruit someone who is assertive to help wrangle everyone for the family shots. Attempt to get family photos when the family members are relaxed but not too far removed by dancing or having a good time.

Play your style safe

A wedding day is not a time for the bride or groom to try a dramatic new style, according to photographer Amanda Lamb. Resist the urge for a daring cut or color. It’s also likely not the place to try out new facial hair or heavy makeup. A couple unaccustomed to the way they look may be shy in front of the camera.

Delve into the details

Prepare wedding details, like gowns, shoes, accessories, etc., in advance to save time once the photographer arrives, suggests Desi Mendoza, a pro from Dez and Tam Photography. Invest in a beautiful hanger for the wedding gown as well, because you may want to photograph that on its own.

Learn to pose

Correct posingpractice in front of mirrors to get a feel for body positions that put them in their best light. A photographer’s advice in regard to posture is invaluable as well. Create space between arms and the body and learn how to angle the body so you look your best.

Photos will capture wedding day memories forever. Couples can put themselves in the best positions for success by following some photography guidelines.

Questions to ask prospective wedding officiants

Couples make many decisions when planning their weddings. Everything from the design of the save-the-date cards to the color of the napkins at the reception tables requires couples’ input. Choice of officiant is another decision that’s worthy of significant consideration. Many couples may have an officiant in mind before they begin planning their wedding. In such instances, couples may choose an officiant who’s affiliated with their place of worship or family member who’s been ordained or certified to officiate weddings. Couples with no such option can ask the following questions as they look to hire an officiant for their wedding.

Can you legally officiate our wedding?

Each state has its own requirements regarding who can sign the paperwork necessary for couples to be considered legally married. An officiant should meet those requirements.

What services do you provide?

Some officiants will do more than officiate the wedding. Some will help couples obtain their marriage license and even submit the documentation after the wedding. Those services can be important, but many couples are more concerned with what officiants will do before and during the ceremony. Ask if the officiant will write his or her own remarks to be delivered during the ceremony. Some couples may want to write remarks for the officiant, while others may need help crafting the message they want to convey.

How flexible are you?

Ask how officiants handle feedback and how willing they are to deliver remarks they did not necessarily write themselves. Some officiants may have a template they customarily follow, but that doesn’t necessarily mean the officiant will deliver the ceremony based on couples’ wishes. Couples should ask such officiants how far they’re willing to stray from their routine if necessary.

Do you have a portfolio?

Written testimonials from past clients can be invaluable, but couples can get a true feel for an officiant’s style by watching videos of ceremonies they’ve officiated in the past. Ask prospective officiants if they can share video of weddings they’ve presided over. It’s not a red flag if officiants have no such videos, which couples may have forgotten to share. But video can help couples get an accurate idea of how officiants may preside over their ceremony.

Will we work together prior to the ceremony?

Many officiants will ask to meet with a couple at least once before the wedding so they can get to know them as well as possible. Ask each officiant if this is their policy. Some officiating meetings may be scheduled via Zoom. When discussing meeting before the wedding, ask the officiant if he or she will attend the wedding rehearsal. It’s not customary for officiants to do so, though some might be willing to attend the rehearsal, especially if the ceremony will feature any elaborate components that require their involvement.

Miscellaneous considerations

Couples may also want to broach some additional topics when questioning prospective officiants. Such topics may include:

- Officiant’s attire
- Backups if the officiant falls ill prior to the ceremony
- Officiant fees, and if extra services like attending the rehearsal incur additional charges
- Officiant’s experience

Couples can ask prospective officiants various questions in an effort to find the right person to officiate their wedding.
Great time with family and friends. Done their best to stay on schedule and relax and have a great time. Buy all the small accessories and items, finalizing any song selections with the DJ or band. Undergo a second gown fitting and work with the bridal train to get organized and work with vendors. With that in mind, here’s a 12-month timeline for couples getting ready to say “I do.”

12 months out

At the start of the planning process, establish your budget, hire a wedding planner (optional), choose the wedding party, pick a date, and start to assemble a core list of vendors. This also is a great time to begin touring venues to get a feel for potential ceremony and reception locations.

11 months out

Now is the time to get that firm handle on the theme and scope of the wedding. Start picking wedding colors and overall designs. Also, interview and hire vendors, such as photographers, band and videographers. These vendors tend to book up quickly as wedding season draws near, so make sure to book them.

10 months out

This is a great time to start shopping for a wedding gown because it might take some trial and error to find the perfect dress. You can start shopping for wedding party attire at this time. Check with formalswear vendors to see how long it will take for the gown to come in. If you haven’t already done so, be sure to book the wedding venue.

8 months out

Reception halls may have their own schedules, but you should think about setting your menu at this time, including deciding if you will host a seated dinner, buffet or something else.

6 months out

Meet with potential florists and other vendors, like transportation companies and hotels, to secure these arrangements. Your place of worship also may require certain classes or preparatory meetings, so be sure to inquire about these.

3 months out

Grooms traditionally arrange the honeymoon, so it’s a good time to get those travel plans in order. If you haven’t already done so, the bride should have an initial gown fitting, and wedding planners should be ordered at this time.

2 months out

Secure your wedding license and buy wedding party gifts. Address and mail the wedding invitations. Undergo a second gown fitting and work with the seamstress for the final fitting date just before the wedding. Finally any song selections with the DJ or band.

Timeline for Planning Your Wedding

12 months out

11 months out

10 months out

8 months out

6 months out

3 months out

2 months out

The Wedding

February 9, 2022

The rise of the microweddings

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have far-reaching. People from all walks of life have had to confront the pandemic and the changes it wrought, and many of those changes could have some staying power.

Wedding industry experts note that one of the more noticeable and potentially long-lasting effects of the pandemic has been the rise in microweddings. The 2020 Real Weddings Study (COVID-19 Edition) found that 50 percent of couples who planned to get married in 2020 ended up reducing their guest list by a significant percentage. The average reduction was 41 percent, and some suspect small ceremonies may be the new normal in the years ahead.

Microweddings

Microweddings are not necessarily a new trend, as couples have always had the option of getting married with only a small number of family and friends in attendance. However, microweddings could be an emerging trend, and cost may have a lot to do with that. The Wedding Planner Institute notes that microweddings cost anywhere from $1,000 to $10,000. Though the group notes that over 80 percent of engaged couples confronting the well-documented pandemic reduction in cost of living, including an unprecedented rise in housing costs, could see expensive weddings as luxuries they simply can’t afford. Microweddings could be viewed as a cost-effective way to combat the rising cost of living that still allows couples to share their big day with their closest friends and family members.

The WPI has urged wedding planners to offer microwedding packages in an effort to capitalize on this emerging trend. Data from The Wedding Report indicated that the total number of weddings would rise to 2.77 million in 2021, an increase of roughly 650,000 over the previous year. Even if only a fraction of couples who tie the knot in 2022 opt for a microwedding, a provision microwedding package can help wedding planners secure their business. Couples who opt for microweddings may do so to save money, but also to avoid the effort and save the time required to plan more lavish affairs. Such couples may be especially excited to work with wedding planners who can plan their weddings regardless of how small the affair may be.

What goes into a microwedding

Nothing should be off the table when planning a microwedding. The fewer the people who will be there, the more freedom planners and couples may have. The WPI notes that microweddings offered flexibility and freedom planners and couples may have. The WPI notes that microweddings offered freedom planners and couples may have. The WPI notes that microweddings occurred when the pandemic was just starting to take hold. If you haven’t already done so, be sure to book the wedding venue.

Creative Ways to Use Social Media for celebrating Your Wedding

Young couples tying the knot today grow up with social media, so it’s no great surprise that so many want to utilize various platforms when planning their weddings.

The following are some fun and creative ways to embrace that trend:

–Create a social media photo booth. Guests may take more pictures at modern weddings than the traditional wedding. Social media boards are digital screens that display social media walls. Live event social media boards collect and curate content from social media channels and display it on a single digital screen. Users in this case a couple’s guests, simply use a predetermined hashtag when posting photos and the images are then displayed on digital screens in real time. This can be a fun way to engage guests during the reception.

–Live stream the wedding. Live streaming became very popular during the pandemic, when couples getting married had to pare down their guest lists in order to adhere to social distancing guidelines. But live streaming can continue to be a key part of the wedding, as there will always be guests who can’t make it to the wedding. Facebook Live was a go-to social media platform for live-streaming weddings during the pandemic, and it can be utilized to involve loved ones in the festivities even if they can’t be there in person. Live streaming via social media may be especially useful for weddings that fall somewhere in the middle of that range. A 2020 survey of couples who planned to get married in 2020 ended up reducing their guest list by a significant percentage. The average reduction was 41 percent, and some suspect small ceremonies may be the new normal in the years ahead.

–Hashtag the wedding. A couple-specific hashtag can serve as something akin to a wedding album, only it’s one everyone can easily access via the couple’s chosen social media platform.

–Encourage guests to hashtag their own photos from the wedding so everyone can have a good time looking back on the ceremony and once the day has come and gone.

–Plan with your party. Social media can be a fun, inclusive and useful tool when planning the wedding as it can during the wedding itself. Brides and grooms can create their own private Pinterest boards and share them with the wedding party. Everyone can then use the private board to bounce ideas off each other. Couples can use social media to share the progress of the wedding by encouraging their groomsmen and bridesmaids to pin fashion, decor or wedding gown ideas or submit sing-along song requests to be played during the reception.

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Unique Locations to Host a Wedding

Find a wedding style that fits you as a couple

Every wedding is different, even if many share some common components.

As couples plan their weddings, learning about some popular wedding styles can help them create a ceremony that suits them.

**Classic wedding**

Classic weddings are the storytbook traditional weddings that many people dream about for years. Key elements include a tuxedo for the groom and a white gown for the bride. Formal attire is expected for the ceremony, and guests are often dressed up.

**Modern wedding**

Modern weddings offer a variety of options for the ceremony and reception. Guests may expect the party to be more laid-back, and the event may be more casual and less formal than traditional weddings.

**Bohemian wedding**

Bohemian weddings offer a free-spirited, laid-back atmosphere. Guests may wear casual attire, and the wedding may take place outdoors. Bohemian weddings are often held at unique venues like vineyards or wineries.

**Beach wedding**

Beach weddings are a popular choice for those who want a relaxed and intimate atmosphere. The ceremony may take place on the beach, and guests may be able to enjoy the ocean view.

**Destination wedding**

Destination weddings are a popular choice for couples who want to experience a unique location for their wedding. The wedding may take place in a tropical island or mountain retreat.

**Sports wedding**

Couples who first bonded over their love of a particular sport can incorporate that into their nuptials by getting married at a stadium. Professional and collegiate teams typically offer wedding reception packages, and guests may appreciate the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to hang out on the field where their favorite athletes play.

**Blur booking**

Some outside-the-box options can impress guests and make for memorable ceremonies and receptions.

A VINEYARD can provide an idyllic backdrop for a wedding.

Find a wedding style that fits you as a couple

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Why a Wedding Planner can be a Couple’s Best Asset

The average cost of a wedding today is enough to make a sizable down payment on a home. According to The Knot’s 2019 Real Weddings Study, the average wedding in the United States cost $33,900 in 2019, though the price tag can vary widely from state to state. Canadians spend similarly, with Canadian Buzz stating a modest wedding will cost between $25,500 and $30,000 CAD, but more likely around $42,400 CAD.

Though love may not cost a thing, weddings certainly do. One of the best ways to maximize wedding budgets and ensure that all that money is well spent is to enlist the services of a wedding planner. Wedding planners wear many hats, which underscores how valuable they can be.

Sounding board
An experienced wedding planner can help couples keep their worries at bay. Countless decisions must be made when planning a wedding, and some couples may feel as if they need to micromanage their nuptials. A wedding planner can take tasks off of couples’ plates and serve as a sounding board as couples try to make the best decisions.

Financial guru
A wedding planner may help couples score insider deals and will know when a vendor’s price is on target or inflated. That savvy saves couples money in the long run. Wedding planners also can advise on ways to save money and allocate funds so couples’ biggest priorities get the financial attention they deserve.

Problem solver
Wedding planners step in to save the day when hiccups threaten to derail plans. A planner will know what to do should a gown become torn or if a vendor fails to respond to calls on the day of the wedding. Removing some stressors allows couples to relax and more fully immerse themselves in their weddings.

Idea generator
Pulling together ideas from every corner requires a creative eye. Couples can rely on a professional wedding planner to help with brainstorming and putting different elements together. He or she likely has seen a vast array of celebrations and can make suggestions based on what’s worked before.

Time saver
Wedding planners already have a busy work of industry contacts and can pull together wedding details in much less turn-around time than couples with no wedding planning experience.

Conclusion
Wedding planners are invaluable resources who wear many hats as they help couples plan the wedding of their dreams.

After you marry
Look for Insurance Savings

If you’re getting married, we can’t help find a caterer or band. But this insurance checklist could help you save money:

- Renters insurance: The average Texas renters policy costs about $21 a month. That’s an affordable way to protect your wedding gifts. The coverage will pay to replace items damaged by a burst pipe, fire, or other cause. It also will cover personal items stolen from your home or car.
- Auto policies: Combining your auto policies may save you money. Most insurance companies offer a discount if you cover more than one vehicle. Also, rates are usually lower if you’re married.
- Health coverage: You have options. If both of you have coverage through work, compare policies. One may offer better benefits, a lower deductible, or a lower cost to add a dependent. Check if there’s a deadline to add a spouse.
- Life insurance: Life insurance helps your spouse and family maintain their standard of living after you die. Consider how much income would need to be replaced to help with childcare, your mortgage, and other debts.

Have a question about insurance? Call the Texas Department of Insurance at 800-252-3439 or visit www.tdi.texas.gov.