



Spring  
**BRIDES**

# Embrace the Season

**T**ruth: If you are a bride planning a spring wedding, you've spent some time agonizing over wedding day weather.

And, let's face it, while spring brings with it all the charms of colorful flowers and warmer days, it is also notorious for its unpredictable weather patterns. It could (and will) rain when you least expect it.

Instead of fretting over inclement weather, use these four tips to embrace the season.

## **TRUST YOUR VENDORS ...**

Wedding vendors are skilled professionals, and it is very likely that your wedding is not their first. This means they understand the unpredictability of the weather and have had to deal with the issues that arise because of it. They understand that this day is one you will remember forever, and they would rather be remembered as a venue or florist that took the stress out of your day rather than having added to it.

## **... BUT NOT TOO MUCH**

Just because they are skilled professionals doesn't mean you should trust that they will all offer the same level of service. Make sure you read the fine print in each vendor contract to understand their approach to handling inclement weather. If you are having an outdoor ceremony or recep-

tion, understand if a backup location is provided or if that responsibility falls on you. If you are planning on having live music, check with your band. Some musicians feel uncomfortable playing near rain because of what the dampness might do to their instruments and equipment.

## **ACCESSORIZE**

Planning for rain opens the door for colorful accessories. Purchase matching umbrellas for you and your spouse — or just one large one to share. Rain boots in a cheerful color will brighten any dreary day, even becoming conversation-starters or show-stealers during picture time.

## **USE THE RAIN**

The rain can be a great prop, and you have the chance to capture amazing photos you wouldn't have the opportunity to capture on a sunny day. Most wedding photographers have had to deal with rainy weddings before and are skilled at using the rain as a backdrop. Don't be afraid to get wet. The tuxes are rented. The dress will be laundered. Embracing your day for what it is will only add to its beauty.



# Go Bold

White may still be the charming and traditional choice for a wedding dress, but colors from blush to black are making their way down the aisle in quick and bold fashion. Let your personality shine through in full color. Here are a few pros and cons to the most popular white-alternatives.

## BLUSH

Blush is a term that has been used to describe many different colors, ranging from a golden champagne color to a deeper rose. Typically, blush-colored dresses are a pale pink — as if your white dress were “blushing.”

**Pro:** The color is subtle and soft. Wearing a blush dress can lend a romantic note to your celebration. While definitely not white, it also doesn't rock the boat of tradition too much.

**Con:** It may not look great on everyone. Like red lipstick, you have to find your shade. Pick the right shade for your skin tone and the result is classic and romantic. Pick the wrong shade and you could look washed out or naked. Bringing a friend or family member with you — people you can count on being honest and having your best interests at heart — is a great way to figure out what shades look better on you if you are unsure.



## BLACK

Once reserved for funerals and boardrooms, black has made its way into the wedding industry in the past few years, and the results are stunning.

**Pro:** It's bold, and it makes a clear statement. Brides have been wearing white since Queen Victoria brought it in vogue in 1840. Wearing white is a beautiful and classic choice,

and one that guests expect. Choosing white's antithesis is not only a completely vintage choice (before Queen Victoria, brides always wore color), but unexpected. If you are looking for a “wow” factor, black will certainly deliver.

**Con:** While fashion has brought us a long way, there are still some who consider black to be a color of mourn-

ing, and you might have invited such people to your wedding. The key to overcoming this obstacle is not caring. If you feel beautiful, then you will be stunning.

## BLUE

From pale silver to dark midnight, blue is a unique option that can both surprise and delight your guests.

**Pro:** Your “something blue” is covered. Blue also lends a certain fairytale quality to weddings. Cinderella anyone?

**Con:** There is the potential that it will look more like prom and less like your wedding day. The style of your dress is key. Consider implementing less sparkle on the dress and letting the beautiful color stand on its own. If you still crave a bit of

glitter, wear a jeweled headpiece or shoes.

Want to incorporate color in your attire in more subtle ways? Wear a sash around your waste in a bold color that matches your flowers and decor. Or wear colorful shoes and have your groom wear matching socks that you flash on the dance floor or whenever you sit down.

# Open Bar

Have fun planning your wedding reception by thinking outside the traditional sit-down dinner and wedding cake. Serving food at stations or “bar style” can be a fun option for offering up (un)traditional fare in a fresh way.

Whether you want to incorporate a food bar just for appetizers or dessert, or you are looking to forego a formal dinner, these tasty and innovative stations are one more way to show your guests who you are as a couple.

Here are a few reception bars that have nothing to do with cocktails:

## FONDUE STATION

Cheese or chocolate? Both are crowd-pleasers and both offer a variety of tasty dipping accoutrement that will delight guests. Fondue works great during cocktail hour, or in addition to or in lieu of wedding cake.

## ANTIPASTO

Think crostini station, the intersection at which crusty breads meets your choice of tomato bruschettas, olive tapenades, spicy salamis and all a variety of cheeses.

## CANDY BAR

No cake? No problem. Satisfy your guests’ sweet teeth by showcasing your favorite candies in clear glass jars, like you’d see in a vintage drugstore.

You can even offer small paper bags or boxes so that guests can fill them and take them home, doubling your dessert as guest favors.



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## POPCORN BAR

What is a better late night snack than popcorn? If you plan on dancing the night away with your guests, a popcorn bar could be a fantastic addition to your reception. You can offer various flavors, such

as movie style, cheese or kettle corn. Encourage guests to spice it up with different salts or spices, such as cinnamon or paprika.

The best part about reception bars? Your imagination is the limit. Virtually any food

can be turned into a chic, self-serve station. They are totally customizable to your taste, personality, and even geography.

Hosting a Southern fete? Offer a biscuit bar with various spreads and toppings. Or a

sweet tea bar with assorted syrups guests can add, such as peach or raspberry. Never been a fan of the traditional “chicken or beef” option? Create a taco station. Any one of these is sure to be something your guests remember forever.

# #Married

Our parents put disposable cameras on every reception table; we have Instagram. Creating a personalized hashtag is the hottest new trend to hit weddings and can be a great way to gather photos from your special day — especially moments that you may have missed because you were busy taking family portraits, or just staring at your spouse thinking, “I can’t believe we’re married.”

Best of all, hashtags, by their very nature, collect all of the photos attached to it in one place. No idea where to begin? Just keep in mind that the ultimate goal is usability: You want people to use it so you can see the aggregate of fantastic photos.

There are several wedding hashtag generators out there if you’re feeling creatively crippled. (Weddinghashtagwall.com and weddingwire.com are two such sites). But remember wedding hashtags are personal, so don’t overthink it. Here are a few tips to get you started:

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

Start with some combination of your names: First, last, nicknames, initials. Your hashtag should not only be a reflection of the two of you but also be easy to remember. Capitalizing the beginning of each word in your hashtag keeps the message clear and helps people distinguish what you are saying (for example, #MeagenandCarter). Bonus: It doesn’t matter if your guests capitalize every word. It will work either way.

## HAVE FUN WITH IT

Play with turns of phrase, idioms and alliteration! Think: #ForeverYoung, #Weber Wedding, #HappilyEverAllard.



After you think you have a few you really like, check and see if others have used them. Chances are you won’t be the first couple to use #MeantToBe. Hashtags are public, and depending on how popular your favorite one is, you might not want to have to wade

through hundreds of photos of other people’s weddings to find yours.

Numbers are a great way to set your hashtag apart from the rest. Think wedding date or year, or another number that holds special meaning to you.

## ADVERTISE IT

Once you’ve successfully chosen your hashtag, spread the word. Make sure it is prominently displayed on your wedding website and save the dates.

It should also appear in multiple locations at your

reception.

Couples have chosen to display their hashtag everywhere from welcome signs to cocktail napkins. Make sure your guests don’t have to search too hard, and your wedding hashtag will be a social media hit.

# Budget Basics

For many couples, a wedding is the first major event they have ever had to plan and execute. It also might be the first time they have prepared and followed a budget, which is no small feat.

The equation for creating a wedding budget is seemingly simple: Think about what type of wedding you want, think about what type of wedding you can afford, and hope that those two images align as much as possible.

The cost of the average American wedding is on the rise at roughly \$32,000, according to a survey conducted by wedding planning giant The Knot. However, a wedding does not need to be a costly affair.

While it is easy to witness other couples' weddings or view endless stylized photos on Pinterest and feel like there is a standard to which you must adhere, most couples that go over budget do so not because they are trying to keep up with the Joneses. They spend beyond their budget because of assumptions they made and hidden costs, which add up quickly when you don't stay as informed as possible.

## SET PRIORITIES

The entire day is important to you. It's your wedding day. But if you had to pick three things that you would rather not compromise on, what would they be? Write them down.

Now let the stress of everything else go. Knowing what your priorities are and being on the same page as your spouse will help keep you both accountable. Also when planning your budget, keep in mind the things that are important to you — not just in the wedding, but afterward. This will help guide you toward financially smart choices. You don't want buyer's

remorse over the money you could have put toward a new car or apartment.

## HAVE THE TALK

As uncomfortable as it is to talk about money, especially with loved ones, it is necessary for creating and maintaining a successful budget. Talk with your spouse. Talk with each of your parents and anyone else who might be contributing to your celebration.

You don't want to be in a position where you thought your parents were going to contribute a certain amount toward your wedding, only to find out halfway through that they are contributing much less, or not at all. It is not anyone else's responsibility to pay for your wedding, but if someone does wish to contribute, you need to know how much.

## CONSTANTLY REEVALUATE

It is also important to realize that the categories you create in your budget exist to help guide you but are not set in stone numbers. Through your planning process, you might come to find that you allocated much less for photography than your local industry demands.

You might not need as much money for music as you originally thought because your cousin's up-and-coming band offered to play at a family discount. Regularly evaluating and reevaluating your budget keeps you on top of what things are actually costing you and allows you to reallocate funds as necessary.



# Are Your Registered?

Registering for your wedding can be a great way to stock up on everything you need to begin your married life, as well as help guide your guests to items you would most enjoy receiving.

However, a registration list can also be stressful to create. What do you need the most? How much do you need? Where do you register? Here are some of the most important things to remember as you navigate through the process:

**DO** set up your registries early and check them often. As soon as you announce your nuptials, you will have guests who want to know where you are registered. To avoid receiving unwanted items, register as soon as possible. You will also want to check your registries often to make sure that as guests purchase items, there are still gifts at a variety of price points from which others can choose.

**DO** register at more than one place. This is important for several reasons. First, guests may prefer one retailer to another. Perhaps they don't like to shop online and certain shops are easier for them to visit.

Registering at multiple locations also allows you and your significant other to pick out a variety of items. Choose retailers that you and your spouse enjoy shopping at frequently. Many vendors have registry programs that allow couples to purchase items left on their registries at a discounted price



after their wedding date has passed.

**DON'T** overlook the everyday items. Even if you already have a house or apartment, or you and your spouse are living together and you think you have everything you need.

There are items that you will never stop needing, or not want multiples of. Already have a toaster, pots and pans, and flatware? Use this opportunity to upgrade your bath

towels, or register for another set of bed sheets in a fun print and high thread count.

**DON'T** request cash. It is always going to be tacky to outright request a dollar amount from your guests. If you and your spouse are trying to save for a big-ticket item, such as a house or your honeymoon, set up a registry account.

This allows guests to feel like they are contributing to your

future, instead of handing over an impersonal check or gift card. Also expect that some guests will want to give you a tangible gift no matter what.

**DO** it together. Creating a wedding registry is not only a time for you and your spouse to bond but to mesh your styles into one. Discussing patterns and color preferences now will make putting it all away and using it more enjoyable later.

**DO** write prompt and personalized thank you notes. There is no exception. You must thank every person who gives you a gift. Customize each thank you card by mentioning the gift and how you plan to enjoy it. "Thank you so much for the salad bowl, Aunt Wilma. I can't wait to use it at our first dinner party!"

This will show that you were thinking of that guest, and her thank you card isn't a carbon copy of another.

# Au Naturale

Every bride wants to look her very best on her wedding day. While some elements of appearance are more controllable than others — such as hair and nails — achieving a clear and bright complexion is a much more formidable task.

Some of the best tools at your disposal exist not in your bathroom or high-end beauty counters but in your kitchen. Mother Nature, lovely as she is, has given us plenty to create a pre-wedding beauty regimen.

**Concern:** Dry and dull hair

**Try:** Olive oil

Use olive oil in place of your conditioner after using your usual shampoo. It is simple as that. Olive oil is packed with great fatty acids that nourish and moisturize your locks. Looking for a deep conditioning treatment? Instead of rinsing out right away, apply and wrap your hair in a towel for 15 minutes, then rinse.

**Concern:** Uneven skin tone

**Try:** Coconut oil

The great thing about this treatment is that it triple-tasks as makeup remover, cleanser and moisturizer. Best done at night, rub roughly a tablespoon of coconut oil all over your face, massaging the skin for several minutes. Remove with a warm, damp washcloth first by holding the cloth to your face and allowing the steam to open your pores, and then slowly massaging the oil off. Rinse the cloth as needed.

**Concern:** Puffy eyes

**Try:** Tea bags

Soak two tea bags in warm

water before chilling in the refrigerator for about 10 minutes. Place each tea bag over one eye and let rest for five minutes. The caffeine in the tea will reduce most swelling

for a dramatic, immediate difference.

**Concern:** Weak and slow-growing nails

**Try:** Milk and lemon juice

Soaking your nails in this mixture for 10 or so minutes will help promote strong and healthy nails. You should start to notice a difference after a couple of treatments. Really

want to pamper your hands? Follow up by massaging a natural oil, such as olive or coconut, into your nail beds to soften cuticles and the surrounding skin.



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