

SPRING BRIDES



Wedding Day Emergency Kit

Unfortunately, the unexpected happens — and you'll want to be ready

Preparing early helps alleviate worries about common mishaps that add unneeded stress during your nuptials.

Don't let your big event become marred by makeup disasters, torn clothing, or even a sudden pang of hunger. Packing a wedding day emergency kit helps ensure that none of that gets in the way as you prepare to walk down the aisle.

TOUCHING UP

You'll be primed, prepared and dressed long before it's time to say your vows, meaning there will be plenty of time for something to potentially go wrong. So keep critical beauty supplies nearby for any needed touch ups with your makeup, hair and perfume. Outdoor settings are increasingly popular for weddings, and they provide a variety of challenges — not least of which are smudges and running mascara, lipstick and foundation. Double check before taking pictures, and before saying "I do." These critical extras from home may prove to be a lifesaver.

RE-STYLING ITEMS

Outdoor weddings are also a huge potential challenge to your carefully crafted hairstyle. Be prepared for a potentially windy situation by tucking away a brush, additional



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bobby pins and hairspray in your dressing area. Depending on the season, you may need to freshen up with perfume and deodorant, in particular after taking your pictures. Bring any additional needed toiletries.

SEWING KIT

Wardrobe malfunctions

happen, so pack an assortment of threads, needles, scissors and safety pins just in case. You'll either need to master the skill of emergency sewing, or ensure that a trusted bridesmaid, matron or family friend is on hand in case of accidental tears, stepped on hems or other mishaps. Just knowing all of these

things are available can significantly lower stress during what always promises to be a very busy schedule.

A LITTLE SNACK

With everything else that's going on, you may not make time to eat and hydrate enough along the way. Nourishing yourself is critical

to carrying everything off without a hitch. At the same time, however, you don't want to overindulge. So don't forget a few small, healthy snacks like nuts, granola or protein bars — and a few bottles of water, too. They'll help you be at your best when it's time to join together in matrimony before family and friends.

How to Get Registered

What's Most Needed? How Much? And From Where?

Settling on the answer for these basic questions isn't easy, but they'll guide you through the process.

Your completed wedding registry will then provide everything required to begin married life, while perhaps even adding a few personal indulgences.

If you're unsure how to get started, or want to double check that you haven't forgotten anything, check out this handy list of "do's and don'ts."

DO

Create the registry together. This should be a shared moment where you and your future spouse mesh your own personal styles. Discuss color and pattern preferences so that these foundational gifts build toward a look and feel that you both find comfortable and enjoyable. Many vendors have created programs which allow any registry items that are left unselected to be purchased at a discount after the wedding — and that's another opportunity to bond.

DO

Set up your registries early and check in on them regularly. If you haven't registered when you announce the date, or haven't completed your registry, eager friends and family may purchase something



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from somewhere else that may not fit into your shared vision. As gifts are purchased, consider adding other things into the registry so that there are always gifts representing a variety of price points for other guests who may log on later.

DON'T

Overlook needed everyday

items. You have your own space, and so does your future spouse. In some cases, you may already be living together. That can lull couples into thinking that they already have these common household purchases covered. But what about the pot with the bad handle, or those old bath towels that need upgrading? Now is the time to think about

small luxuries like the thread count on your bed sheets.

DO

Register at multiple outlets. This is important because some of your guests may have a personal preference for a specific retail store. They also may live nearer to one store location, and prefer not to shop online.

DON'T

Request cash. Instead opt for a cash registry website like Honeyfund or Zola. They have the same look and feel as a traditional online registry, but offer you an opportunity to raise needed funds.

DO

Write personal thank you notes as promptly as possible.

Green Weddings

Keep the Earth in mind by creating a sustainable event with less waste

With environmental and climate concerns on the rise, more couples are taking an eco-friendly approach.

That may mean using fewer disposable products, cutting down on fossil fuel or emissions associated with the big day or focusing on sustainable practices.

Taken together, these small changes can have a big impact on the world around you.

ECO-FRIENDLY VENDORS

Start by looking for wedding-day vendors that share your focus on protecting the planet and creating a healthier environment. Whether it's a reliance on sustainably created invitations or fun new creations like paper flower bouquets, they can do a lot for our environment simply by using materials that rely on recycled paper or alternative fibers. Other earth-focused companies pledge to plant a new tree with every order. Look for other environmentally sound practices on company websites and handout materials.

GET CREATIVE WITH REUSE

Borrow as many details as possible from the world around you. In this way, leaves can become placards. Vines and wildflowers are transformed into place set-



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tings at the reception. Upcycle glass jars, wine bottles or tin cans for creative decorative elements. Use chalkboards or acrylic pieces that can be customized with erasable markers, rather than printing hundreds of programs, menus and name cards. Look for second-hand wedding items at local thrift shops, online marketplaces or garage sales.

STAY LOCAL

Destination weddings have been a growing trend, but staying closer to home reduces pollution and greenhouse gases. It may feel like a small step, but consider how much more stress those long plane trips and taxi rides are putting on the world around us. A couple of hundred invited guests means 50 or more ride-share fares, each way — and

that's leaving aside the flight to your faraway exotic locale. Stay local, and encourage carpooling. Consider hiring a shuttle to bring large groups of people.

POST-WEDDING RECYCLING

Place someone in the wedding party in charge of recycling everything that can be used again after your big day.

Consider composting flowers so that these materials can fortify gardens or other beddings. Private companies can also be hired to take care of certain eco-friendly chores. They'll collect flowers, for instance, and repurpose them as gifts at area nursing homes, hospitals or shelters. In this way, the joy of your wedding spreads even further into the community.

Optimize Your Flower Budget

After your dress, nothing is more visible at the wedding

If the national average is any indication, they'll be a big part of your expenses, too.

Before you spend thousands on high-priced blossoms, however, carefully consider your options. The wrong choice can lead to unneeded expense, and there are lots of creative ways to get the most of your flower budget.

GO SEASONAL

We all have that special favorite flower. Oftentimes, however, this single decision can raise the costs substantially. You can save money by blending in seasonal foliage, which will be less expensive since it's readily available. Ask a florist or someone with the local extension service office more about area plants and when they're in bloom.

GO BIG (ONCE)

If your budget doesn't allow for multiple showy arrangements, focus your florist's attention on one show-stopper. Put it in a prominent place where it will receive the most notice, then down shift into less-expensive settings elsewhere. You can also pair flowers that have bigger blooms with a mix of structural items like branches that will fill out the arrangements without breaking the bank.



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MAKE A DEAL

Look for sales at local florists, or consider buying from a wholesaler. A word of caution: Buying in bulk means you can save a little, but you'll also need to find someone with a florist's expertise to arrange everything into something worthy of your big day.

GET PERSONAL

A great way to stretch your flower budget is to pair fewer blooms with more personal items. Take some time when still in the planning stages of your wedding to dig out beloved keepsakes or small pictures to give the space a more intimate, one-of-a-kind feel. Images from younger days are always a big

hit. Look for photographs of departed family members, since that's a great way to share the occasion with them.

GET CREATIVE

Many venues offer their own beauty, and that's something money can't buy. Be aware of the backdrop when setting up outside. Consider incorporating

elements found on the grounds into your arrangements, settings and even your hair. If you're getting married inside, open the windows or doors to showcase more of nature's wonder. Take advantage of lighting options, or bring your own lamps, candles or other illumination. They'll add just the right touch of ambiance, at no cost.

What to Look For In a Caterer

Several factors come into play when making this critical decision

It's easy to focus solely on the food, of course, but there are other considerations.

You'll want to start by looking at their history, including licensing and referrals. Then ask critical questions that will get to the bottom of the services they provide.

BACKGROUND CHECK

Look for licensed catering companies or restaurants. This will ensure that they meet or exceed certain industry standards, but it also may be essential to holding the ceremony. Depending on the venue, management may actually require that this credential is in place. Ask about the vendor's history of catering weddings. How many have they previously handled — and how many of these previous ceremonies matched your location and specific needs? You may not be comfortable with letting a novice take over such an important task. Ask friends and family for their input, and study online reviews and recommendations.

CONFIRM THE PRICE

If you have a special menu request or are hosting a themed wedding, share that upfront. Beyond the question of their experience in handling such things, it may change how much you'll be



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charged. Some companies publicize their pricing structures, but more often you will have to meet to discuss your personal plans. They should draw up a fee schedule based on this conversation, and provide a written quote. This eliminates the possibility of a post-wedding issue with payment.

SERVICE QUESTIONS

Discuss whether they will provide additional needed items like linens, silverware and chairs. That will impact cost and, if not provided, will lead to the complication of arranging all of this with a separate vendor. Some companies also handle wedding cakes, which could streamline that

process, as well. Look for vendors who will only be catering your event on the scheduled day. If the wedding ends up as nothing more than a layover on their way to another job, you might not get the service you expected. Make sure you have multiple contact points, so that discussions can continue as the ceremony draws closer.

MONEY-SAVING OPTIONS

To save money, limit bar service to only wine and beer. Morning and early afternoon weddings feature less-expensive menu items. You can also focus on stationary appetizers, rather than passed hors d'oeuvres. Limit the entree choices as much as possible.

What Next For Your Dress?

There are many options to consider on the day after your wedding

You shopped for the gown, been fitted and refitted, then gotten married in it. But there's still one big decision to make.

Some brides choose to carefully store their gown in order to preserve it as something to hand down to future generations, or even simply as a heartfelt memento. Others choose to resell or donate the dress so that someone else can enjoy it on their own big day.

Which is right for you? Consider these crucial questions.

LONG-TERM STORAGE

Storage is an option for those with an intent to one day pass along the dress to a daughter or other family member. You may also be the sentimental type who'd like to have it as a keepsake. If so, you can't simply tuck the gown away in the back of the closet, much less in your damp and musty attic or a basement. You'll need to first get a garment professional to properly clean and store the dress for future use. They also recommend special storage bags or compartments. This will extend the life of the gown, while making sure it doesn't become faded, infested or frayed — mishaps that can happen even during a short amount of time in storage.

MAKE A DONATION

Those without a concrete plan to hand down a dress may consider donating it. Local charitable organizations and some consignment shops can connect you with those in need. There are also larger national efforts like Brides

Against Breast Cancer, which collects and sells donated dresses for the Nationwide Tour of Gowns. Proceeds help fund programs for patients and their families.

SELLING YOUR DRESS

If you'd like to recoup some

of the cost of your dress, there are a variety of options available for those who'd like to sell. This is particularly attractive if the dress is valuable because of its designer or its one-of-a-kind features. Some companies have buy-back programs that make this process

a breeze. A quick search will reveal a number of online options, as well as local in-person marketplaces. There are also companies devoted to buying and selling pre-owned gowns like yours, but they don't typically pay as much as individual buyers.



Thank You Cards

This post-wedding responsibility doesn't have to be so overwhelming

The challenge is getting started, in particular with a large number of gifts.

It's best to approach it all in a step-by-step manner, so that the task feels like something more easily achieved. If needed, create a schedule with appointed times to work on your stack of thank you notes, so that it becomes part of your every-day routine.

If they received an invite, that means your guest was already a big part of your life. Here's how to thank them for being part of your next adventure.

WHO TO THANK

Everyone. Simple, right? Anyone who gave you a gift should receive a special note of thanks. But thank you notes are also recommended for the team of folks who helped make sure your special event ran like clockwork. That includes planners, organizers, decorators, and even those who simply handled an unexpected errand for you somewhere along the way. Your wedding might not have happened if it wasn't for all of these sometimes unseen helpers.

SENDING THE NOTES

Some presents begin arriving before your nuptials, in particular from those who may not be able to attend for whatever reason. The clock starts



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when received, with a note generally due within a couple of weeks. Tradition allows for a longer timeline for gifts given on the wedding day, when you're assumed to have a few months in order to respond. It's important not to wait until you get too close to this dead-

line, since that will make the task feel more and more insurmountable. Begin sending them out as soon as possible, ideally within weeks of your wedding date.

WHAT TO WRITE

These replies are meant to

be a personal gesture, but that doesn't mean they can't be formatted at all. If you have a long list of thank you notes, consider tucking a bit of the unique into a simple formula to help ease things along. Start with the traditional greeting, then express gratitude for the

specific item. Next add details about how you plan to display or use this particular gift. Finally, add a personal note such as how much they mean to you, or when you hope to see them again. Sign it with kindest regards from both you and your spouse.