

FALL

WEDDINGS



Eye-Popping Statistics

How much are you projecting to spend overall on your wedding? Will you use social media to celebrate your special day? Are you curious to find out how other brides are answering questions like these?

BRIDES — the number-one bridal brand in the world — found answers to the most pressing wedding questions in its 2014 American Wedding Study. The survey looked to analyze the spending and behaviors around wedding planning to help brides make their decisions and have a baseline against which to compare.

Fall is the perfect season to delve into these findings, both for couples planning on tying the knot this year and ones planning a spring celebration.

While May (15 percent of weddings) has taken the top spot over June as the most popular month to get married, September and October (each at 13 percent) aren't far behind.

Below are some of the most interesting statistics uncovered by the American Wedding Study:

- Thirty-seven percent of marrying couples choose to write their own vows;
- Fifty-four percent of brides use Pinterest to communicate their wedding-day vision to planners and vendors
- Fifty-nine percent of brides posted a picture of their engagement ring;
- Forty-six percent of brides say most of their friends learned of their engagement through social media;
- The average wedding cost is \$28,202, an increase of slightly more than \$1,213 since 2012;
- The reception accounts for 43 percent of wedding costs, with an average price tag of \$12,343;
- Besides the reception, the most expensive parts of the wedding are engagement rings (\$5,002), photography and video (\$3,378), music (\$1,297), and wedding rings (\$1,727);
- The average wedding cake costs \$461; and
- The average cost of an engagement ring is down from 2012's average cost of \$5,229.



Pet Accessories

Animal-lovers have a hard time doing anything without their pets — even getting married. The wedding industry is ripe with dog and cat accessories that will help your pet fit right in to your wedding party.

Don't have a ring bearer? Use your dog. Need an adorable pet addition to your wedding photos? Include your cat.

From pet tuxedos to dog ring pillows, there are specialty shops online and in your own backyard that will be more than happy to prove the perfect pet accessory for your special day.

PRACTICE MAKES PURRFECT

You know pets — creatures of habit. And if yours isn't used to wearing little pet clothing, you may consider letting them get used to it weeks ahead of your wedding day.

Your dog may need time to adjust to wearing a ring pillow tied around its neck or a skirt tied around its back. Letting your pet do so ahead of time will help teach it not to eat or rip apart these items.

The same goes for your favorite feline. Let the cat get used to a new custom cat collar, T-shirt or bow. The more comfortable the pet is in its new attire, the smoother your ceremony and reception will go.

CONSIDERATIONS

Before adding Fido or Garfield to your wedding pro-



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gram, consider a few questions:

- Does your pet behave around large groups?
- You'll be a bit busy, so will your pet follow instructions from someone other than you?

• Does your venue allow pets to be present?

- If yes, is there an extra fee associated?

If you feel confident after answering these questions,

proceed with the miniature tuxedo order.

If not, there are other ways you can incorporate your pet into your special day. Add the pet to your invitation photos or

include pictures on table settings.

If you have enough time to coordinate, ask your photographer to include your pet in your engagement photos.

The Unity Candle

A symbol that represents the joining of two people, the unity candle is used by many couples on their wedding day.

Until you started looking for candles for your ceremony, you may not have realized just how many options are on the market. With a range of colors, styles, shapes and designs, there is truly a unity candle to match every personal taste.

WHY THE UNITY CANDLE?

The unity candle traces back hundreds of years. Lighting it offers a reflective moment during the wedding ceremony. It can be accompanied by music or with none at all.

Some couples may ask the mothers of the wedding party to light the taper candles first. This symbolizes the joining of two families, as well.

Remember to ask the management or officials at your venue if candle burning is allowed. If so, choosing drip-less or smokeless candles is a common courtesy.



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PERSONALIZED CANDLES

When shopping for unity candles, you'll find that the majority of them can be fully personalized. Manufacturers can wrap your candle in a monogrammed fabric or even

print directly onto your candle. You also can find options tied in lace or ribbons.

The personalized part of the candle is up to you. You can include bride and groom names, initials, the wedding date or even your favorite reli-

gious scripture for that special touch.

FLOATING UNITY CANDLES

A floating unity candle

offers a unique way to celebrate a wedding union. It can be an especially fitting tribute if you're getting married on the beach or if one of your professions have to do with the water.

The glass cylinder that

holds the water and the floating candle can be personalized, making for a special keepsake for you. You also could consider a floating memorial candle to honor loved ones who have passed away.

Choosing the Right DJ

Even though their methods for running your music and lights may be pretty similar, every DJ is not the same when it comes to handling your wedding.

There are numerous factors that come into play, ranging from song options, additional services and total cost.

Before deciding on your final choice for DJ, make sure to ask the below questions — along with any others specific to your wedding — to make sure you find the one most aligned with your nuptial needs.

How many weddings have you performed at? Weddings are a special event, and you want to make sure your DJ has experience with the various aspects, including things such as directing the crowd, handling music for the first dance and taking requests from your guests.

What is your price range, and can I get a quote on paper? Making sure you have an on-paper quote will help resolve any confusion come payment time.

Have you performed at the venue where I am getting married? It would be great if your DJ already had an established relationship with the venue management and knows things such as where to park and unload his equipment.

Are you specialized in a certain music style? This is crucial if you're looking for a specific type of music for your reception, such as clas-



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sical or country.

How many songs do you have available in your catalogue? Ask to see options, as well, to make sure your

guests will have a great variety from which to choose.

Do you only DJ one event per day? You want to make sure you have the full atten-

tion of the organization and its staff during your wedding.

Are you easy to get in touch with if I have questions throughout the plan-

ning process? Every DJ will surely answer “yes.” A good follow-up question is for a list of references to conduct a little follow-up research.

Best Fall Destinations

One benefit of the fall season — especially when it comes to planning a honeymoon — is the overall variety in climate across the globe.

Northerners get a head start on the cool, crisp air, while cities on the West Coast and in the South hold on to the warmer temperatures for a bit longer.

This means no matter your weather preference, you'll be able to find a place to celebrate your newfound love. Choosing where your honeymoon will take place can be a challenge. The key is to make it fun.

If you're not sure of where to spend your post-wedding experience, consult with a wedding planner or travel guide. They will have many options across different locations and price points.

GO WEST

The West Coast of the United States is the place to find milder temperatures during the often chilly fall months. California's Napa Valley, in particular, is the perfect choice for a honeymoon if you're looking for plenty of events and fun activities.

The end of summer marks the beginning of grape harvest in this neck of the woods. That means wineries host celebratory parties with great wine, live bands and native foods. If you decide to head to Napa Valley, add hot-air balloon rides and farmers markets to your to-do list.

STAY CLOSER TO HOME

Maybe you already live in a spot that is home to a tourist attraction such as Napa Valley. Maybe you reside in Canada or Alaska, which offer stunning scenery during the fall season.

Many brides and grooms are ditch-



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ing the idea of international travel for an old-fashioned road trip or more of a “staycation” in their own backyards. This helps save money and time spent traveling throughout the experience.

GO GLOBAL

On the other hand, the Caribbean

islands make for an unforgettable honeymoon.

Do some research to find isles located out of the hurricane belt.

Options such as Aruba or Bonaire fit this bill and feature 80-degree temperatures during this time of year. From casinos and restaurants to sailing and water festivals, the Caribbean

is loaded with opportunities for exciting honeymoon fun.

Choosing a global location for your honeymoon is all about your personal preferences — and safety. Look into what kind of documentation is required, and check with credible sources on the safety and security of the area you're planning to visit.

Bridal Nail Care

Once you say “I do” and the reception is under way, you’ll be asked numerous times to show off your new wedding ring. Will your fingers and nails be up to the test?

One of the most important gifts you can give yourself on your wedding day is the bridal manicure. Even if you choose not to use a professional, there are certain care and application tips to follow when trying to create the perfect nail look.

The key to applying the right product and finding the best color is trying them out weeks or months ahead of your wedding day. Be patient if you’re forced to try many different options and products. Your hard work and persistence will be rewarded with perfect nails on your special day.

NO BITING

Do not bite fingernails or remove the cuticle. Doing so can damage the nail, and according to the Mayo Clinic, damage the skin around the nail and increase the risk of colds by spreading germs from your fingers to mouth — something you definitely don’t need on your wedding day.

Treat your nails well during the months and weeks leading up to your event. Keep them shaped with an emery board and don’t forget to scrub your nails often with warm water and soap.

DIY NAILS

If you choose to paint your own nails for your wedding day, consider spending a little extra money on a high-quality, professional polish. You’ll notice a difference in the thickness and shine of the lacquer, especially if you start with a layer of base coat.

Once you’ve added a couple coats of color, don’t forget the sealer to help protect your nails with a durable, high-shine finish.

DESIGN DECISIONS

The French tip is the most popular option for wedding nails. You can’t go wrong if this is what you decide to sport, as the style will give you a look that is both elegant and modern.

But what about some glam? Glitter and tiny gems have become trendy options for brides looking for something a bit different.

You can either give every fingernail the glitter treatment or choose to highlight only your ring finger for emphasis. The decision is yours.



The Flower Girl

Your wedding day will be all about the big venue, big crowd and big kiss. Don't forget about the littlest wedding guests along the way.

The flower girl is arguably the only person in the wedding party who may draw as much attention as the bride. Is there anything cuter than a little lady all dressed up and tossing flowers down the aisle?

HOW TO CHOOSE ONE

If your family is full of young nieces or cousins, choosing the flower girl for your wedding can be a difficult task. You don't want to hurt anyone's feelings by choosing only one, but you probably don't need more than one.

Your choice may come down to age. Choosing a flower girl who is too young, say 2 or 3 years old, may not work well for your wedding. Younger children are more likely to be scared by larger crowds compared to those who are a bit more mature.

THE PERFECT DRESS

Make sure your flower girl is ready to steal the show with the perfect dress. Consider the designer, color and obviously the price if you're the one footing the bill for the flower girl gown.

Many times the flower girl dress will mimic the bride's ensemble. If you have trouble finding one to match what you'll be wearing, try finding a colored dress that matches the overall theme of your wedding.

The key is to make sure your flower girl is comfortable wearing her dress and can comfortably walk in her matching shoes.

PREPARING YOUR FLOWER GIRL

If your flower girl is nervous about the big day, reassure her that her feelings are normal. You can take away some of these nerves by working with her well in advance of the wedding.

Practice walking in a straight line with her while you're playing outside at the park or even shopping for new clothes. There are plenty of books about being a flower girl. Purchase one and gift it to her in a way that makes her feel special about her new role.

By the time your wedding day rolls around, she'll be ready to shine in her once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

