

# Weddings



# Live Tweet Your Ceremony

**H**ow much is being the star of social media – if only for a night – worth to you? W Hotels is hoping your answer is \$3,000. The brand has launched a social media service for its New York branches, meaning wedding parties can be the toast of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram as they celebrate their big days.

If you don't have that much to spend, you can duplicate some of the ideas on your own or with the help of friends and family. Here is what W Hotels includes in its innovative, yet expensive, social media service:

- Live-Tweeting of the ceremony and reception.
- Curating unique wedding hashtag (a searchable identifier that you can use to find certain topics or events on Twitter).
- Encouraging guests to utilize your hashtag and handles as they post to social media.
- Set up and maintenance of wedding blog both before and after the ceremony.
- Curating registry list and dream honeymoon ideas on Pinterest boards.
- Wedding social media recap for the couple with a Shutterfly book, complete with best photos and Tweets sent during the wedding.

## DIY SOCIAL MEDIA

Take a close look at the above list. Is there anything on it that you or one of your social media-savvy friends couldn't pull off – for free? You

will likely be too busy to worry about promoting the idea during the actual ceremony and reception, but you can do so on the front end by including your hashtag on wedding invitations.

Ask a friend to handle the rest, including encouraging guests to post frequently and coming up with a post-ceremony social media recap. If someone is running a wedding slideshow during your reception, ask them to include your hashtag on a few slides. Your DJ could also promote it throughout the night in between songs.

## THE DRAWBACKS

There is definitely potential for a few negatives associated with a social media concierge service. For starters, you may not actually know everyone at your own wedding. A friend may bring along a “plus one” you haven't had the chance to meet, for example. Without knowing their personality, do you really want them “live-Tweeting” their thoughts on your wedding?

The other drawback is the cost. W Hotels isn't the only venue charging a pretty

penny. If you don't have anyone who can help you pull off the full social media

experience, approach your wedding planner about pricing of the service. You may be

able to work it into your contract at a reasonable price.



# Wedding Project Planning

**W**ith all that is going on with getting ready for your big day, it can be overwhelming to take on the planning responsibilities, as well. But some of us don't have a choice.

We're on a budget and a strict time deadline, or we know exactly what we want and how we want it done.

Enlisting the help of your friends and family members will help take off some of the stress, especially if you're planning on coordinating the vendors, food and venue by yourself. It also helps to be prepared. Staying organized can save you money and valuable time when it comes to pulling off your dream wedding.

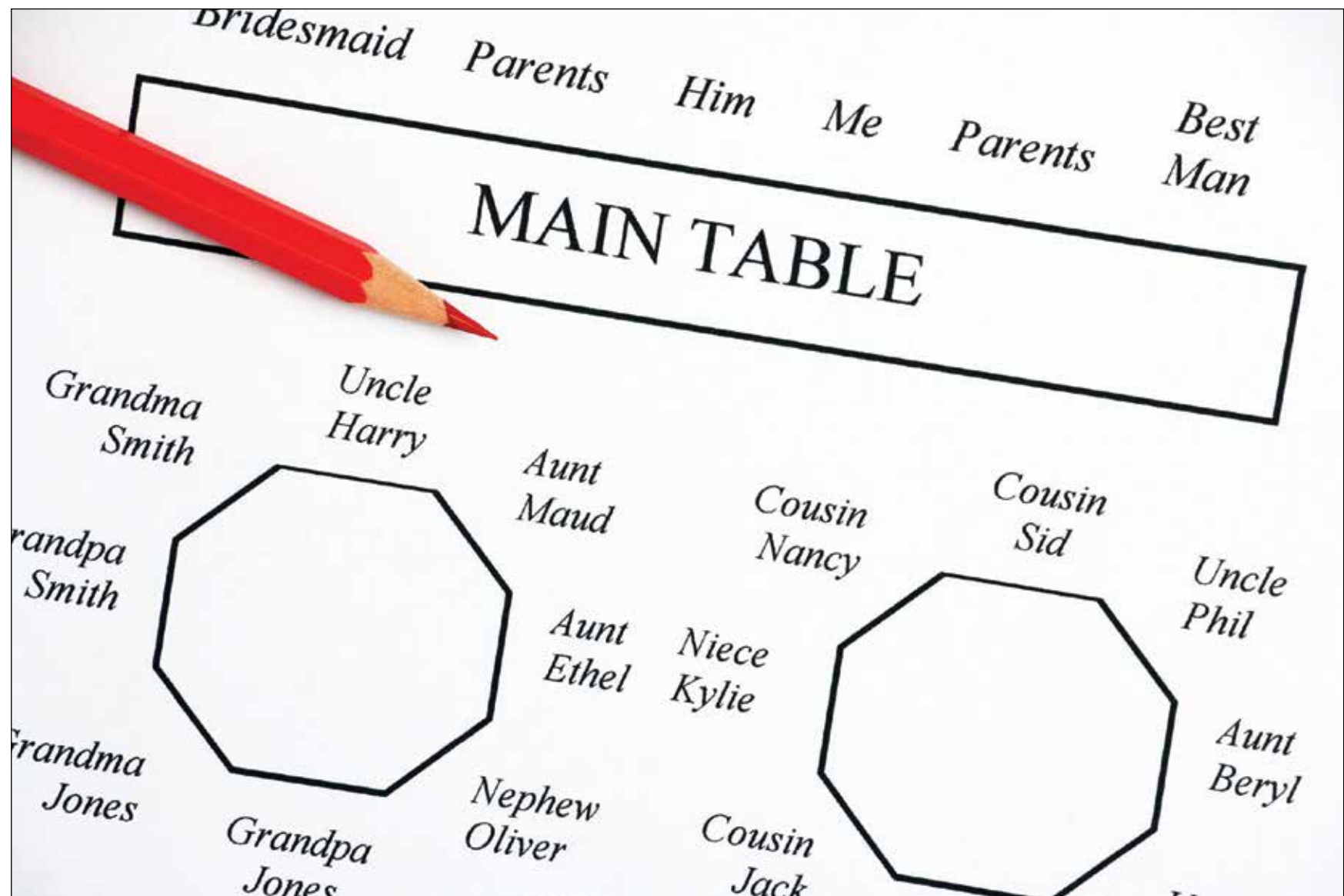
## MAKE A LIST

Even if you're only handling a few DIY items – invitations, for example – it helps to have a list. Write out all of the projects you would like to complete for your wedding, along with a starting date and deadline for each task. The amount of time you have before your wedding day will determine how much you will actually be able to accomplish.

The ultra-organized bride-to-be can take her list to the next level by creating a detailed timeline with graphics, sketches and reminder notes. You can also create a working list within one of the many wedding planning apps available for your smartphone or tablet.

## FIND INSTRUCTIONS

Unless you have already completed a similar project for a past event, you may need to find instructions for each DIY project. The Internet is a terrific source for this, as many brides and



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wedding planners post such information to their blogs or social media accounts.

Learn the techniques required for each project, and remember that practice makes perfect. It may take you a couple of tries to hammer out that perfect DIY save-the-date card or unique table centerpiece, but you'll be an expert by the time the finished

product rolls out of your DIY workshop.

## HELP!

Cost, time and labor are all real needs you will need to weigh for each DIY project. If you're short on any of those three resources, you may consider calling in the troops. Asking your

family and friends for assistance is not a sign of weakness.

Approach your fiancé, bridesmaids, groomsmen, siblings or parents for a helping hand. Even if you don't necessarily need support with the project execution, they can give you feedback on your project, come up with space for storage or throw out their own DIY ideas.

# Destination Weddings: Where and Who?



**W**ith families spread throughout the country and the allure of a fairytale wedding, destination weddings are becoming a must-have experience for couples.

More than 350,000 destination weddings occur every year, according to the XO Group, which pulled together statistics from its two leading websites, TheKnot.com and Wedding Channel.com for its recent wedding destination study.

The group captured detailed data from more than 3,000 United States couples who planned and executed destination weddings over the past few years. Check out the findings below to help spark your interest and increase your knowledge of one of the fastest growing trends of the wedding industry.

- Destination weddings make up 24 percent of all weddings.
- The average destination bride is 30 years old.
- Destination weddings have an average of 86 guests.
- Seventy percent of destination weddings take place in the continental U.S.
- Florida, California and Nevada are the top three destination wedding locations in the continental U.S.
- The Caribbean, Mexico and Hawaii are the most popular wedding locations outside the continental U.S.
- Fifty-one percent of destination wedding couples use a wedding planner.
- Sixty-nine percent of destination weddings take place outdoors.
- Eighty-six percent of couples still plan to take a honeymoon after their destination wedding.

# Finding the Right Dress

If you've been dreaming about your wedding since your childhood, you probably have sketched out the perfect dress a million times if you're female.

The first step toward turning the dream dress into reality is meeting with a bridal consultant at your local dress shop. Depending on your comfort level, you may want to schedule your initial consultation on your own, without the company of friends and family.

That first meeting can be the lengthiest as you work through design ideas and all of the different elements of the dress. You can bring your bridal party back on your second trip to try on a few options once you feel more comfortable with the process.

Remember that the experience is supposed to be a fun one, so follow our tips below to make sure your first trip to the bridal shop is as productive as it is fun.

## BRING IDEAS

Magazine cutouts, sketches and notes – whatever details you can bring on paper will help your bridal expert gain a clear vision of your dress wants and needs. Organize your documents into a bridal folder beforehand so you can explain your goals in a concise, organized way.

## BRING HONESTY

If you have certain styles or budgets that you just won't consider, be up front with your consultant. Maybe you're intimidated and nervous about the experience as a whole. The more information and feelings you can share early in the process, the better help your consultant can be.

## BRING AN OPEN MIND

Trust your bridal expert. This is likely not the consultant's first time guiding a bride-to-be through the dress decision. Be open to various recommendations as you work through the process. You just may end up going with a style you hadn't previously envisioned.

## BRING SHOES

If you plan to try on a few dresses in your initial visit, bring a pair of high heels that are similar in height to what you'll wear on your wedding day. This will help your consultant with measurements, especially for the train aspect of your dress.



# Become a Wedding Planner

**A**lready married with a passion for helping others on their big day? The bridal industry is big business and has a continual need for innovative, people-focused professionals. Many universities are offering certificate and degree programs in the art.

But what exactly does it take to become a successful wedding planner? Can you earn a sustainable income, or is it more of a job suited for extra cash over the weekends?

## THE GIG

Thorough research of various job openings found these roles to be standard for a wedding planner:

- Interact closely with brides and grooms to identify and translate needs into effective plans.
- Coordinate activities with external vendors spanning catering, music and venues.
- Perform ongoing research of wedding trends to offer leading-edge guidance.
- Show initiative and calmness under pressure.

## THE HOURS

Wedding planners often work evenings and weekends to meet with clients and pull off perfect execution of the special day. Most U.S. weddings occur on Saturday, according to the Bridal Association of America,

so if you like having your weekends free, wedding planning may not be the optimum career choice for you.



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On the other hand, you will likely be able to make up for busy weekends by taking off a couple of days during the week. You can find great flexibility in your schedule, depending on if you're a freelance wedding planner

or one working for an events center.

## THE PERKS

Like any other service-focused career, wedding planning comes with it a feeling of

personal satisfaction connected to client delight. In other words, if the bride is happy, the wedding planner is happy.

Planners build positive, long-lasting relationships with brides and grooms,

another perk of the job. You will meet many people who are basking in the glow of their recent engagements and who are excited to make their wedding day one of the most special experiences of their lives.

# Expensive Celebrity Weddings

The average cost of a wedding in the United States was just shy of \$30,000 in 2013, according to a CNNMoney report. That price tag may seem a bit hefty to some, and maybe not so much to others.

In the case of the following five couples, \$30,000 might have been enough to cover invitations. The numbers, compiled by romancestruck.com and Forbes, have been adjusted for inflation.

## NO. 1.

Prince Charles and Lady Diana: \$110 million

The actual cost of the memorable 1981 royal wedding came in at \$48 million and was broadcast to a global TV audience of 750 million viewers.

## NO. 2.

Vanisha Mittal and Amit Bhatia: \$66 million

Invitations mailed in silver boxes and five days of festivities helped drive wedding's price tag to \$60 million in 2005.

## NO. 3.

Prince William and Kate Middleton: \$34 million

Forbes reports that this wedding featured \$800,000 in flowers and an \$80,000 wedding cake to rack up a monumental total bill. Security also was an expensive priority for the royal wedding.

## NO. 4.

Wayne Rooney and Coleen McLoughlin: \$8 million

The British hits keep coming with this wedding, featuring a chartered flight for 65 guests to the masked ball on a \$120 million yacht for the Manchester United soccer star and his bride.

## NO. 5.

Chelsea Clinton and Marc Mezvinsky: \$5 million

The childhood friends married in the attendance of Oprah Winfrey and 500 other guests who enjoyed the \$600,000 air-conditioned tents and got a slice of the \$11,000 cake.



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# Bridal Party Checklist

Choosing four or five friends to fill out your bridesmaid and groomsmen positions is difficult enough. But what if you have other family members and friends you would like to involve without expanding the bridal party to an awkwardly large number?

The art of choosing a bridal party is one that requires skill and grace as you fill out your roster while trying not to hurt feelings of those who may be left on the sideline.

See our checklist below to get ideas for wedding roles that may help you incorporate more people into your bridal party.

- Maid-of-honor (unmarried) or matron-of-honor (married).
- Bridesmaids.

- Junior Bridesmaid.
- Flower Girl (age 3 to 7 years old).
- Best man.
- Groomsmen.
- Ushers (Chupa holders at Jewish weddings).
- Ring bearer (age 3 to 7 years old).
- Readers.
- Candle lighters.
- Gift Bearers.
- Program attendants.

- Guest book attendants.
- Reception site liaison.
- Singers/soloist.
- Musicians.
- Ceremony greeter.
- Someone to say Grace before the meal at your reception.
- Someone in charge of out-of-town guests.
- Train bearers.