

Bouquet & Bells

WEDDING PLANNING PACK

This document is packed full of our top tips for planning your wedding, as well as extra advice from professionals in the industry.

1. START EARLY

Don't hang around. Suppliers often get booked up extremely quickly, so don't prolong the booking process, especially if you're getting married in peak summer. *"Late planning will drastically reduce the options,"* says Vic Alexander, Visiting Tailor at J B Bespoke. *"This could result in 'second best, poorer service, and far from a dream wedding.'"*

2. HIT PINTEREST

Pinterest is quickly becoming the most popular search engine, especially for Brides. I like to call it the wedding Bible. If you're stuck for ideas, or have loads of ideas and are wondering how to turn them into a reality, simply type in your search and you'll be hit with instant inspiration.

3. BE BUDGET SAVVY

Start by actually writing down your budget, saying it out loud even helps. Then begin to think about what you'd LOVE to have at your wedding.

4. THINK BEFORE YOU START RESEARCHING VENUES

What kind of wedding do you want? And how many guests do you want to invite? Only once you know the answers to these questions should you start researching possible venues.

5. VISIT YOUR VENUE AGAIN, AGAIN & AGAIN

You'll find that you come across so many questions throughout the planning process, such as, "*how many tables can we fit in the space?*", and "*where can we put flowers where guests will notice?*". Visiting your venue during open days/evenings is a great way to discuss any queries with the staff (plus it's always nice for an excuse to see the venue again!).

6. THINK ABOUT THE LIGHTING

Lighting is something that is usually massively overlooked, yet it can make all the difference to your venue. Uplighters and candles are relatively low-cost effective ways of introducing lighting. Don't forget to think of outside lighting too – outdoor lanterns are really cheap and look amazing.

7. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DRESS

Your wedding dress is the most important item of clothing you'll ever wear. So it's good to get it right, right? We spoke to [Blue Lily Magnolia](#), a bespoke bridal shop based in Cheshire, and asked for their top five biggest tips when it comes to shopping for your wedding dress.

● **Pick your dress first**

In the majority of cases, your dress defines the whole look, so if you haven't got one yet, it's probably too early to pick your hair accessories or other accessories - however, it's never too early or too late to browse!

● **Be clear on your style**

Whether it is boho, vintage, modern, classic - if you know the style you are looking to achieve, it is easier to find a supplier that makes accessories in your chosen theme. And if your dress fits the style, don't stray - nothing is worse than bad mixing of different styles!

● **Pinterest is your friend**

And Google of course. For inspiration, keep a scrapbook of accessories that you like - or if you are an online person - pin the ideas you like on a board to come back to.

● **Unusual items are mostly online**

Most standard wedding stores have lovely bridal accessories, but they tend to be very similar from shop to shop. If you want something

unusual - steampunk, gothic, themed, handmade or anything that you fancy that is not standard, your best bet are online, including selling platforms such as Etsy, Folksy and Not on the High Street.

● **Don't be scared to ask for bespoke**

It is your day, and may be the only time you ever get married, so having something designed and made for you is totally justifiable! Don't be scared of starting the conversation with a designer - it costs nothing and could lead to your ideal piece.

Elizabeth Louise Bridal, a bridal shop based in the heart of Chester added, *"You can try on too many dresses, narrow down your choices of shops and go into your appointment with an open mind, you may surprise yourself!"* and *"choose carefully who you choose to take to your appointments"*, bringing too many people can cause a conflict in opinions.

8. CHOOSE A MENU YOU WILL ENJOY

Many future brides and grooms worry about the wedding breakfast menu, and get caught up in the details of others' preferences and dietary requirements. Trying to please everybody is an impossible task. It's YOUR day, so pick a menu you and your partner both love.

9. MAKE THE PLANNING FUN

"With so much to think of, planning a wedding can be really stressful. It's easy to forget to enjoy the journey," says Maria-Antonia Greenhill,

Wedding and Event Planner of White Door Events. She encourages her clients to make a celebration out of as many planning events as possible. *“For instance, if you’re having a dress fitting, meet with your entourage for afternoon tea or bubbly afterwards.”*

10. GET ORGANISED

Create a master document with supplier names, contact numbers, and other important details. Not only will you feel in complete control during the planning stages, you can print it and hand it to one of your trusted bridesmaids on the day!

11. TAKE NOTES

“It may feel a bit like being back in school, but take lots of notes when visiting venues or other suppliers. You’re bound to forget the detail by the time you get home. With venues specifically, I recommend giving marks out of ten on things like style, charm, and budget.” Maria-Antonia Greenhill, Wedding and Event Planner of White Door Events.

12. DON'T FORGET THE GROOM!

The bride must not forget her groom and the males in the bridal party, and leave them as an afterthought! Brides need to consider what the males will be wearing, how they will complement her and her bridesmaids, and the overall aesthetic.

13. TRY ON HIRED GARMENTS IN ADVANCE

Bit of an obvious one, right? But so many people wait until the day itself before they try their outfits on, when it's too late to rectify anything. For children this is particularly important, as their size might have changed from when they were originally measured.

14. AVOID CAKE COLLAPSE

We have heard some real horror stories about the cake collapsing just before or during a wedding. To avoid this, have your cake supplier oversee the set-up of the wedding cake. You will be incredibly thankful for this service. Then try not to move the cake after it's been arranged.

15. BE SMART WITH YOUR BUDGET

If budgets are tight, I would always advise clients to spend a little less on elements such as wedding cars or favours, but to get the reception looking right. That's where you and your guests will be spending most of your time.

16. TOP CAKE TIPS

Your wedding cake is a major feature of your reception and it's something guests really look forward to trying! We asked [NV Cakes](#), based in Wrexham, for their top wedding cake tips.

● Don't forget the evening guests

When asking for a quote, always include your evening guests in

the number of portions required - your cake is generally cut and served in the evening (unless you specify otherwise), so you'll want to make sure you have enough to go round.

- **More, more, more**

Cupcakes are not as popular as they have been in previous years, but if you do opt for cupcakes, always order more than you need as you will find that some people will take more than one. Also, it's worth having just one flavour as the more choice you give, the more people will take...

- **Size matters**

Ask your cake maker for a rough idea on the height of your finished cake. This is especially important if you have a large venue - you'll want your cake to hold its own against tall ceilings or ornately decorated rooms, rather than shying away in a corner where they can't be seen because it's too small. (Taller cakes always look much better on the 'Cutting of the Cake' photographs).

- **What do they think?**

Ask your cake maker for their advice - you may think that you need a 3 tier cake, whereas a 4 tier will look more elegant for your particular design - it's better to have tall and elegant than short and dumpy! In terms of price, very often (in my case), there will be little difference in the price of a larger 3 tiered cake compared to a smaller 4 tier cake.

● **Keep an open mind**

Show your cake maker pictures of cakes that you like, but keep an open mind as each cake maker will have their own ideas for what will make YOUR perfect cake.

17. BE PRACTICAL

It's tempting to just think about all the fun details of the wedding but do ensure you consider the practicalities of the day! From a wet weather plan, to guests with babies, to travel plans and dietary requirements – these are all the things that need to be considered for a smooth running event and to ensure that you and your guests are well looked after.

18. DON'T SKIMP ON THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Photographs are one of the few things you have to look back on your wedding day. It's not worth risking the quality of them for the sake of saving a few hundred pounds.

We asked Daniel, from [Tall Man Photography](#) for more on this. He said, *“Try not to set a budget for your photographer. We are expensive but when it comes to capturing the memories of your special day we are good at what we do.”*

19. TAKE A MOMENT TO BREATHE

Take a few moments to step away and look at what you've created. It's so easy to get caught up in the moment and before you know it the day will be over. Tall Man Photography backed this up, *"Take 20 minutes to disappear with your photographer so you can get some more natural and personal shots with your new husband... Weddings can be stressful and that little time alone can let it all sink in."*

20. RELAX BEFORE THE BIG DAY

It's easy to get swept up in stress surrounding a wedding. The solution? Treat yourself to a little luxury. If you're in a hotel with a spa, I recommend going for a leisurely swim the night before. It will leave you feeling refreshed and will help you get a good night's sleep.

21. CREATE A TASK SHEET

Write down every task that needs to be done and set a date when you will have completed it by. Most couples give themselves between 9–12 months to plan a wedding and you often find that you spend the first couple of weeks making the big decisions and then you lose momentum and end up having a long list of tasks to complete with just a few weeks to go! Spread it out so that you complete a few tasks each month.

22. DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Remember why you're actually getting married. Don't get worked up about the loose ends or minor disaster on the day. Chances are your guests won't even notice.

23. DON'T CARE WHAT THEY THINK

Don't get caught up on what you think your guests and bridal party thinks. Yes, you want your guests to enjoy themselves and feel comfortable, but if you try too hard to think about what will please everyone else you will drive yourself crazy! It is your day – don't lose sight of that.

24. CHECK THE SMALL PRINT

"Carefully check the T&Cs of your venue before signing. Don't find out too late that you can't have fireworks, wear stiletto heels (yes really), or that the music has to be off at 11.30pm!" Andrea Swift, Fabulous Day.

25. CHOOSE WISELY

"Take your time and choose suppliers that compliments your personal style. Shop around before contacting them. Everything is easier when you work with suppliers that you trust 100%." Cameron & Mindy Braun of Braunphotography.

26. MAKE YOUR CEREMONY SPECIAL

Susan, a Celebrant from [Simply Ceremonies](#) says, *“Brides-to-be are discovering the joy of a bespoke celebrant ceremony for their special day – vows written about you, with you and for you.”* She added, *“My role as an independent celebrant is to take care of your words: to create a personal and meaningful ceremony that is perfectly suited to you, your family and your friends. The ceremony can be part-religious, or without religious content; it's your choice. It can take place anywhere you like - your are limited only by your imagination!”*

27. OPT FOR ALTERNATIVE SEATING

There are no restrictions at weddings today when it comes to thinking outside the box. And many Brides are opting for hay bales instead of traditional seating. [Partybales](#), a company that supply hay bales to weddings all over England and Wales, say, *“Think about how you would like to incorporate hay or straw bales into your big day - would you want to use bales for ceremony seating, reception seating, as a bar, as lawn games or for decoration and signage? Bales can be used in many different ways during your big day, they are so versatile, you really can be creative and innovative with how you use them.”* Most venues welcome bales, but it’s always worth checking that yours allows them.

28. PUT YOURSELVES FIRST

Tracy from Cherish Bridal, a multi award winning business in the Northwest that have been in the bridal industry for 18 years, says, *“Before you go mad on Pinterest , buy bridal magazines or bookmark blogs, take your time to think about the type of celebration you and the groom want. Do you envision a black tie evening theme, or a more casual relaxed daytime party? List your priorities, what is most important to you? Are you a foodie or is music your thing? This kind of pre-planning will make both selecting a venue and setting a budget much easier. Make sure you don't forget to put yourself and the groom first in any choices you make, after all ,its your special day!”*