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Everybody deserves a second chance!

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*Top tips for a successful,
stress-free wedding*

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So you've said "yes" to the love of your life!

Congratulations on your wedding. I am already so excited for you!



Maybe this is your second chance at love, you have had the big white wedding, and now you are looking for an updated version, a new, improved one!

Regardless of how many times you have been there, all weddings are special, and take some planning! All of a sudden you begin to realise just how much is involved. This wedding is an investment for you, and just like you would with any investment, you need an expert that guides you in the right direction.

Just to let you know a little bit about me -I am an accredited and fully trained Marriage Celebrant (have been since 2006) that loves ALL weddings. I have also been an event manager for over 30 years.

The fact that I also run a travel company specialising in romance travel means I am really in love with others being in love, being part of that day and all the fun that goes with that.

So why is this important? Having the overview combined with a lot of experience, means I can offer a holistic view of the whole wedding, not just the ceremony. I am connected and creative too!

Years of working in the wedding industry has allowed me to compile a lot of useful information and tips that I can impart, to help my couples create those memories and experiences have the best day of their lives, even second time around!

Choose your location:

The chances are good you've already got some idea of where you want to exchange your vows.

Often couples in Australia want to be married outside, maybe in a gorgeous garden, or on the beach with the sound of the waves crashing against the sand. That's a beautiful setting but it may not be right for everyone. Consider your guests as sand can be challenging for older guests or if you want to wear heels.

Look at the distance people may have to walk to reach the ceremony location.

You're also more vulnerable to the whims of the weather with an outdoor wedding during any season, so always, always, pick somewhere with a wet weather option.

Outdoor weddings may seem like the cheaper way to go, but they aren't always. In some cases, you will have to pay fees, especially to use private beaches or areas owned by hotels/resorts. Some parks and gardens require you to also book your spot in advance.

In Australia we also have to think of the sun – is there shade? Especially if your wedding is at 3pm in the summer – the last thing you want is fainting guests!

Consider also where your reception will be. Is it easy to get between the ceremony location and the reception? If they are not together, is there somewhere for guests to go before the reception starts while you are having your photos done?

Don't commit to the first location you like; shop around for quotes on several possible locations.

Set your budget:

This will be a big factor in your decision making, so it needs to be amongst the first couple of decisions you make. If you're paying for the wedding yourself, it's time to take a long look at your finances.

Be prepared for a reality check when it comes to actually budgeting for your wedding day as many couples don't realize the full scope of costs involved. Once you've got that magic number, stick to it!

Once you have your venue, you will have an idea of the costs for receptions etc. Make sure you check any restrictions such as minimum spend or guest count.

You may look at doing some DIY wedding elements which can help with the budget and can add some incredible personal touches to your wedding day.

But take it from me - don't go nuts! I ended up with so many things that I didn't end up using!

Also make sure you can handle doing this, so you don't end up with more work than you can cope with. For things like wedding day flowers or food, professional help is best.



Choose your vendors:

This is vitally important to get right, particularly with certain elements like photography, as after it is all finished, your photos will be all you have left (apart from a married partner that is!).

Don't choose on price alone, it is important that all your suppliers understand your vision. These suppliers are the nuts and bolts to ensuring your day is super perfect and memorable, and everything runs smoothly, so make sure they're people that have a good sense of your vision and you be feel that you can trust to execute it well.

Bear in mind that once you have chosen your suppliers, you need to book them in. There are only 52 Saturdays at 3pm in a year, so getting all the preferred vendors together and available on your chosen date might be difficult.

The 3 things you need to lock in are the venue, celebrant and photographer, as generally they should be "one-a-day" options, and once they are booked, they are not available for you.

The guest list:

Remember that once you have your location, you need to decide on your guest list, fitting in with both the size restrictions of the venue and your budget.

Decide between you what size wedding party works best for you—keeping in mind the expenses that come along with this special responsibility.

The people you choose to have there with you, are there for a reason. They are your support network and the people you want to witness this amazing day.

My suggestion is to have 2 lists – the “have-to’s” who are the absolute definites who would not miss it for the world, and then the “like-to’s” who you can add in once you have more definite numbers from the first list. It might sound clinical or heartless, but unless you have an unlimited budget and a huge venue, it has to be done!

This means sending out the invitations as early as possible to get an idea of numbers.

Which brings us to the invitations.....



Invitations:

There is an expectation that you need to send the beautiful (and often expensive) invitations to everyone on your list, even if you know some that can't or won't be attending.

It may be a better suggestion to send out a "save the date" invitation that has only the basic details, such as date and location, and requesting an "expressions of interest" by 6 months out.

Once you have collated your actual guest list, then you can concentrate on sending those people the pretty and full of information invitation. I would also create a Facebook page where you can add details as they become available, such as local accommodation options etc for those travelling a long distance.

You need to choose and purchase your wedding stationery as early as you can, particularly the save the date cards. Those need to be mailed to potential guests 6 to 8 months before the wedding.

Follow-up full invitations can be sent 3-4 months in advance.

A soft-focus background image showing a bride and bridesmaids holding large bouquets of pink and white roses. The bride is in the center, wearing a white dress, and the bridesmaids are on either side, wearing light-colored dresses. The bouquets are large and full of roses.

Your bridal party:

The bridal party is also a huge decision. All too often I hear of people being chosen out of duty, who are not there to support and help you in the planning process, so think carefully about who you really want standing next to you and if they are capable of performing the duties needed

Also, you want to decide on and talk to your wedding party members, so they have plenty of time to prepare too.

Depending on who you choose, and your budget, don't get too hung up on every one of your bridesmaids having the exact same shade of nail polish or hair style. Some may have shorter hair than others, some may have different shapes and heights to the others. Unless you are prepared to pay for every aspect of their "look", you need to have a little flexibility here.

A great option can be the multi-way dresses- same colour and material but can be work 50 different ways to suit each person. I have also seen some stunning weddings where the bridesmaids wore dresses in the same colour but in a style they chose, or even similar dresses in different shades of the same colour.

There is no rule that says they all have to be identical!

I often see in Facebook groups stressed brides asking if it will be OK if something is a little different. It is your day, have it your way! But if your way is inflexible then be prepared to pay for that!



Flowers:

Before you sign any contracts with a florist for your wedding flowers, you need to make sure you have all of your bases covered. Because this is an exciting time and because there are so many details to coordinate, many couples make the mistake of arranging a deal without knowing all of the details.

You do not want to be paying more than you bargained for or not getting everything you wanted. That's why it's important to ask the right questions when you talk to your potential wedding florists.

Get a price list so you can add up the prices for each of your individual pieces to make sure the package price you are being offered is truly a good deal. Plus, if you're on a budget then you may be able to pick and choose items from the price list instead of opting for the package.

Think also about the arrangements, colors, and styles that you want. Take their advice regarding types of flowers, particularly in the Australian heat. Some flowers such as white calla lilies do not last long out of water or in the heat and start to brown around the edges very quickly. The flower you want may not be in season at that time etc.

If it is something that you really want, consider either getting fake flowers (which can look amazing), or even getting a few of them and asking the florist to weave them in with the fresh ones.

Photographers and videographers:

As mentioned above, it is really important to pick someone whose style you like, as you will be looking at them for a long time on your wall! If the photographer you really want is out of your budget, shop around as there are often other ones with similar styles that may be cheaper.

Videography is often the first thing to be discounted when looking at budgets. I can tell you from first-hand personal experience that it can be a vital part of your day.

In my case, we had parents and guests there who have now passed away. My dad (still alive!) came from the UK which was really special, and I can still hear his speech, my daughter made an amazing speech which still makes me cry to this day. You can't get that from a photo.

You can also take still photos from a video, but not the other way around. You will forget quickly what colour place cards you had, or what napkins, but you will always have the memories with both photo and video. It was hands-down the best decision we made, and I would have gone without certain other elements to have it included.

Your ceremony:

So naturally I am biased here, but it is really important to find a celebrant who listens to your wishes, gives you plenty of help and valuable advice, and who will tailor your ceremony so it is about you two, and not a cut and paste (insert name here) type of ceremony.

Once again, if this isn't your first wedding, you also need someone that has lived their own versions of that, who will understand that you may not want all the "standard" trimmings!

To get married in Australia you do not NEED a photographer, you do not need a cake, you do not need a dress, you do not need a pair of shoes. You don't need clothes at all for that matter, you can get married in the nude if you so desire.

You don't need a venue, you don't need flowers and you don't need a reception. You don't need the sun to shine, you don't need a limo. You don't need a videographer, you don't need a pen with a feather on the end.

You don't need French champagne, perfume with a floral bouquet or lingerie from Honey Birdette. You don't need a Hens night, a kitchen tea or a Fire truck full of hunky blokes. You don't need a hair trial and you don't need a half a day in the salon perfecting your golden tan.

The ONLY thing you need, I mean actually need to get married under the Southern sky, is a celebrant.

Your celebrant marries you to each other. Your celebrant takes legal responsibility for this actually happening.

All that other stuff makes for a wedding. But if you want to get married, you NEED a celebrant. Otherwise it is just a big expensive party!

A soft-focus background image of a bride and groom. The bride, on the left, has blonde hair in a braid and is wearing a white dress. The groom, on the right, is wearing a white shirt and a white turban. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery.

Get help!

To avoid extra stress, try and do it all yourself, get help from people, particularly on the day.

Being the control freak I am, I thought I could do it all myself with the venue coordinator (who ended up being pretty useless), and so much didn't happen the way I wanted it to (like the mechanic with the bad car!).

If you can afford it, consider getting professional help, someone to oversee the preparations, work with the venue coordinator and talk to other vendors and make sure it all happens smoothly.

Make sure you also enlist the help of your friends and relatives that may not have other jobs, to make sure certain aspects are as you want them.

Relax!

My final nugget of wisdom is to relax and enjoy the day. It is so true what people say that it goes by so fast. Months and months of preparation and worry and it goes by in a flash.

Stop and enjoy the preparation, the excitement and the anticipation. Once the ceremony is over, take a couple of minutes to be together and savour this new start together.

Make sure you get around to talk to everyone as well, and make sure to have fun on the dancefloor!

Some useful information:

It's easy to take for granted the various components that comprise the overall wedding experience, but we wanted to take a step back to consider how things became the way they are. In this post, we walk through ten common wedding traditions you'll likely encounter and explain the history of how they became enmeshed in wedding culture.

Thanks to <https://www.beau-coup.com/blog/wedding-traditions-explained>

The Bouquet

The bouquet, certainly an important part of the bride's photos, actually has a pretty interesting origin story. Prior to modern bathing practices and deodorant, a bouquet loaded up with fragrant herbs and spices was able to mask any unpleasant smells that might put a damper on the special occasion. Such a bouquet was also believed by the ancient Greeks to serve as a safeguard against evil spirits.

"Tying the Knot"

This phrase is commonly used today to mean "getting married," but you may be wondering how exactly a knot comes into play. In fact, this phrase comes from the ancient Celtic practice of handfasting, in which couples' hands would be tied together as a symbol of their tight bond. Fortunately, today's "knots" are just metaphorical!

Bridal Shower

With weddings being viewed for much of history more like business transactions than sacred acts of love, some relationships were not likely to be approved of by the parents of those who were in love. When a bride's parents were unwilling to pay a dowry, the bride's friends could "shower" her with gifts to provide her with the dowry she'd need for marriage.

The Bridal Veil

Today's veils are more of a classic accessory that many brides choose to wear, but in the past, they were believed to serve more practical purposes. In addition to defending the bride from evil spirits or an individual's "evil eye," the veil also doubled as a way of keeping the groom from backing out of an arranged marriage if he felt the bride's face wasn't up to his standards.

The White Wedding Dress

Many of us, when asked to conjure the image of a wedding dress, immediately think of the colour white. The tradition of the white wedding dress actually has a specific origin that we can track. In 1840, the United Kingdom's Queen Victoria donned a beautiful white wedding dress that became such a sensation that many women decided they too should wear white.

Prior to this, a bride would simply select the nicest dress she had, regardless of colour.

Pre-Ceremony Superstition

Though not all couples take this seriously, some feel that it's bad luck for the couple to see one another prior to the ceremony.

This too stems from the custom of arranged marriages, when it was preferred for grooms to not see their bride for the first time until it was too late to back out of the marriage. Fortunately, today's version of this idea is more romantic, allowing for a precious photo-worthy moment when the couple gets to see each other at the altar.

Groomsmen

Though the typical image of today's groomsmen might involve them cutting loose at the bachelor party or standing at the altar as their friend says, "I do," their role hasn't always been so cheery. In the past, Groomsmen were expected to prevent any disruptive attacks from the bride's disapproving relatives and to prevent the bride from fleeing if she didn't want to marry the groom. The "best man" was the one who was deemed to be best equipped for this job.

Wedding Rings

Today, most brides wear their wedding ring on their aptly named ring finger. The reason behind this actually derives from the belief of the ancient Greeks and Romans that the fourth finger had a vein with a direct path to the heart. This is now known to be false, but the practice has endured. The notion of exchanging wedding rings dates back a few thousand years and has evolved significantly over the centuries from the earliest rings, which were made of hemp or reeds.

Something Old, New, Borrowed, and Blue

This famous phrase dates back to the 19th century and was believed to offer advice to a bride. By wearing something old, she could honour her family, while wearing something new would reflect her looking forward to married life. Something borrowed (from someone who was in a happy marriage) was said to bring good luck, while something blue represented faithfulness.

Even some of today's brides still follow the advice, as Kate Middleton did when she married Prince William in 2011.

Wedding Cake

For many, the cake is a favorite part of the wedding day. Whether it's to marvel at the tiers of gorgeously iced cake, savour each delicious piece, or watch the couple cut their first slice as newlyweds, there's a lot to love. However, things always haven't been this way. Over the centuries, breads, pies, and various other pastries, sometimes sweet, sometimes not, have served a similar role as today's wedding cakes. When sugar became more readily available but was still pricey, bright white frosting was most coveted, and the ideal of white wedding cake remains with us today. Another interesting tidbit: in the past it was traditional for some couples to save the top of their cake to be enjoyed within a year or so of their wedding, when they'd often welcome their first child into the world.

And just to balance that out - some unusual wedding traditions from around the world – thanks to <https://www.hellomagazine.com/brides/2014011416517/unusual-wedding-traditions-around-the-world/>

Scotland: blackening of the bride

Scottish brides-to-be are taken by surprise by their friends ahead of the big day, and pelted with all sorts of rubbish such as curdled milk, dead fish, spoiled food, tar and feathers. She is then tied to a tree and after taken for a night of drinking. The belief is that if she can withstand this kind of treatment, she can handle anything that comes her way in her marriage.

China: crying for the groom

Brides of the Tujia people in China are required to cry for an hour a day, every day, for the month preceding their wedding. Ten days into this ritual her mother begins to join her, then her grandmother. This is thought to be an expression of joy as the women cry in different tones.

Korea: beating the groom's feet

Korean tradition dictates that the groom has his feet beaten with fish or a cane before his first night as a married man – to test his true strength and character.

India: marrying a tree

In parts of India women born as Mangliks (an astrological combination when Mars and Saturn are both under the 7th house), are apparently "cursed" and thought to be likely to cause their husband an early death. In order to counter this, they must first be married to a tree and the tree cut down to break the curse.

France: drinking from the toilet

Newlyweds in France were forced to drink leftovers from their wedding out of a toilet bowl. Nowadays, chocolate and champagne are used as a substitute, but still served out of a toilet. The idea was to give the bride and groom strength before their wedding night.

Ireland: feet on the ground

In Ireland, the bride's feet must stay on the floor at all times when she and the groom are dancing. This is due to the belief that if they don't, evil fairies will come and sweep her away.

Germany: smashing plates

Guests to traditional German weddings bring the happy couple any type of porcelain except glass, and then smash them in the belief that this will ward off evil spirits. The couple are then expected to clean up the mess together, learning that married life will not be easy, but by working together, they can overcome any challenge.



o chat with Mandi about your wedding, or drinking champagne instead of out of a toilet bowl (!), contact her on:

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