



How To Plan Your
Perfect Wedding
(The Beginners Guide to
Getting Married)

By Liz & Nicola Clark

For The Girls!



How To Plan Your Perfect Wedding!

Congratulations, you are engaged!! Starting the journey to planning your wedding can be overwhelming. There are so many things to do, so many things to remember. So where do you start? Why doesn't somebody make it easy? Well we have!!

Since launching the Wedding Guide UK in January 2000, Liz Clark has become one of the best loved and most widely respected characters in the wedding industry today.

Along with her daughter Nicola, they have now produced this series of e-books which will become an invaluable part of your wedding planning.



This series of e-books cover all the aspects of planning your perfect wedding. Full of practical advice and lots of hints and tips, suddenly, it will not seem so daunting after all.

So, take a deep breath, dive in, and enjoy your wedding planning and remember, this will be the best day of your life so make sure you enjoy it!!

This e-book contains all you need to know about choosing your wedding dress, your bridesmaids and a whole lot more.





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Finding your perfect dress....

Your dress is probably one of the most important things you will buy for your wedding and it is probably the one thing you have dreamt of since you were a little girl!

On the day all eyes will be on you and your gown so make sure you take enough time to choose one that really suits you and gives you that perfect shape. You need to look and feel wonderful on your special day!



One of the key things to remember is your wedding day will involve lots of standing, walking and dancing throughout the day and evening so your dress not only needs to look fabulous but should stay feeling comfortable too.

With so many different styles and colours available the choices can seem overwhelming, but you need to remember that shopping for the dress of your dreams should be fun!



Have a price in mind....

Before you start visiting bridal boutiques, have a realistic budget in mind. Many brides often find themselves spending far more than they had originally intended to!

A good starting point to think about would be an amount that is around 10% of the overall wedding budget.





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Cut and paste....

Before you arrange an appointment to try dresses on, you need to start with the basics.

Cut out images of dresses you like the look of from bridal and fashion magazines. You can also mix and match tops and skirts from a variety of images at this stage to start building up a picture of what you can see yourself wearing for your wedding.

This collection of images will provide a great starting point for any consultations you arrange with your local suppliers.



Create a mood board....

Use the images you have selected so far as a starting point, and add in any pictures of cakes, flowers, accessories, table decorations and other finishing touches as this will really help define the overall theme for your day.

You will also need to consider your venue as this may also have a bearing on the dress you decide on.



What style will work for you?...

Are you a contemporary, glamorous, traditional or retro bride? When you understand what look works best for you, it is easier for bridal stylists to help find the perfect dress for you.

It is vitally important to choose a style that you are comfortable in, and also one that suits your figure. Have a look at our style guide to find the perfect style for your figure.

Trust your instincts, but do let the professionals guide you if necessary!



Many shades of white....

When it comes to choosing your wedding dress, you will find that the traditional white can come in many different shades!

Speak to the shop assistants as they will help you choose the perfect tone for your skin.

Pure white looks amazing on brides with an olive skin tone or choose an ivory shade to complement the classic English rose skin tones.



You might prefer to choose a dress with a subtle colour - blush wedding dresses are now one of the most popular colours to choose for your big day. A soft blush wedding dress is perfect to brighten up warm skin tones and they will make your cheeks look rosy and bright.



Choosing the right fabric....

Not all wedding dress fabrics are created equally. Some fabrics are better suited for structured designs, others are great for flowing, light looks, and others for larger-than-life ballgowns.



Satin....

Satin is technically not a fibre, but a finish. You can have satin that's made of pure silk, all polyester, or a blend.

The same is true for lace, tulle, taffeta - almost any fabric.

In general, fabrics made from natural fibres breathe better, but they can also be more expensive or wrinkle more easily, thus the rise of blends and synthetics.

Satin is one of the most common, most versatile, and most durable wedding dress fabrics.



It has a smooth finish with a lot of body, making it perfect for more structured gowns.

It's a supportive fabric that works with every body type and is a good choice for ruched, draped, and ball gown styles.

Most bridal satin tends to be 100 percent silk. Because satin tends to be a thicker fabric, it's also a good choice for cooler weather weddings.



Charmeuse....

Charmeuse is a light, rich fabric with a lovely drape and a glossy sheen. It is usually made of silk, but can also be made from synthetic fibres.

Charmeuse has a gorgeous liquid effect that's slinky, but it can be quite unforgiving. Most often cut on the bias (diagonally across the grain to encourage its drape) and used in column dresses, charmeuse is incredibly luxurious, but it does show every flaw.



Chiffon....

Incredibly sheer and lightweight, chiffon is a light woven fabric. Because it's so sheer, it's often used in layers or as an overlay for a more substantial fabric.

This delicate fabric has a floaty, weightless look, but it does fray and snag easily.



Organza....

Organza is a sheer, lightweight woven fabric traditionally made from silk. Organza, however, is much stiffer than chiffon.

Whereas chiffon drapes, organza is more structured, though still light and ethereal, making it perfect for warmer weather weddings.

It, too, is a very delicate fabric, so watch out for snags and pulls..



Tulle....

You know the light, net-like fabric that ballerina's tutus are made of? That's tulle.

Tulle is sheer with an open weave that looks like netting. The fabric can incorporate lace designs, as well. A ball gown style made of tulle will have a diaphanous, airy feeling, but ruching it will give it more structure.

Either way, it's an incredibly delicate fabric, easily snagged on jewellery.



Lace....

Lace is one of the wedding dress materials that adds so much grace to any gown. Most often used as an overlay or detail, lace comes in a startling variety of styles.

As with tulle, the open weave makes it susceptible to snags.



Lace is typically named for the city where it was originally produced. Some of the more popular varieties of lace are:

- Chantilly: a very detailed, open lace with a defined border
- Alençon: a lace featuring bold motifs on the net, and trimmed with cord
- Venice: a heavier and more textured lace that is often used in winter weddings





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The 'One'....

You will know when you have found the perfect dress to compliment the wedding of your dreams, and when you have found it, stop searching!

Perfection is impossible to beat!



Important questions to ask when buying your dress....

- Can the style I have chosen be made to measure?
- Can I make any alterations to the style if I want to change the length of the train or style of sleeves for example?
- What is included in the price? Will I have to pay extra for any alterations?
- How many fittings will I need to arrange?
- How far in advance do I need to order my chosen dress?
- How long will my dress take to arrive?



Style Guide....

Before you start shopping, think about what type of dress you are looking for. It is important that you know what type of gown will flatter your figure the best so look at your body shape and be honest with yourself.

Consider the features you want to show off, and those you want to hide and follow our guide to finding the perfect silhouette for your shape.



The Apple Shape....

More voluptuous than most, apple shapes have full breasts, a bit of a tummy and a rounder bum and hips.

Dress Do's:

An empire-line dress will de-emphasise your waist, giving you a leaner look. A ball gown will cover up all those body areas you're not so keen on or consider an A-line dress with a dropped waist that looks great on everyone.



Dress Don'ts:

Princess-line and basque dresses may draw too much attention to your middle, and a sheath will make you look heavier. Avoid spaghetti straps which can cut into your shoulders.



The Hourglass Shape....

An hourglass figure is one where your top and bottom halves are perfectly balanced, with a very defined waist.

Dress Do's:

Often seen as a body shape which can wear anything, it's still best to pick a dress that accentuates your waist, as this will show off your best asset. Two-piece gowns will enhance an hourglass figure.



Dress Do's cont'd:

Two-piece gowns will enhance an hourglass figure. If you are a bit more curvaceous then a trumpet style dress might be the one for you. A-line dresses with a dropped waist can really show off an hourglass bride's balanced figure, or you could always try a corset dress for maximum wow!

Dress Don'ts:

As your chest and hips are already balanced it's best not to add weight to either half. Avoid empire-line silhouettes and ball gowns



The Pear Shape....

Just like the fruit, you're smaller on top than the bottom, with hips wider than your shoulders.

Dress Do's:

Princess style dresses disguise fuller hips and put the focus on your better half, balancing your torso and bust. Strapless ball gowns work like princess dresses, emphasising all your best bits. Empire line dresses are also a great choice, as they highlight the smallest part of your body.

Dress Don'ts:

Avoid tiered, trumpet and mermaid style dresses which draw attention to your bottom. Sheaths are also unflattering.

The Slim Figure....

Short or tall, you have a ballerina's figure, with an undefined waist.

Dress Do's:

A sheath will flatter your slender shape and the slim figure is one of the few shapes can get away with a high neckline. A ball gown with a fitted bodice and full skirt will create the illusion of curves, as will delicate embroidery and beading in the right places.

Dress Don'ts:

Avoid portrait, off-the-shoulder or halter necklines if your collarbone is too bony.



The Triangular Shape....

If you are a triangle shape, you are wider on the top of your body, with hips narrower than your shoulders.

Dress Do's:

A V-neck dress works well to cover up wider shoulders, or you could make wide shoulders appear more narrow with the addition of thick straps. Sleeves are great for covering wider shoulders and are perfect for winter weddings.



Dress Do's cont'd:

Another alternative is to wear a dress with a bolero if you want to cover the tops of your arms. Add interesting details, such as embroidery and bows, around the middle and bottom of your dress, as this forces the eye downwards.

Dress Don'ts:

Puffed sleeves will draw attention to your shoulders, as will halter and off-the-shoulder necklines. If you want to avoid drawing attention to an ample bosom, steer clear of embroidery and lapels around the neckline.



The Petite Bride....

5'1" and under - you've got a tiny frame.

Dress Do's:

Simple is best.

Clean, unbroken contours without too much fabric will elongate your figure. A sheath is perfect. Narrow A-line dresses also work well for petite brides.

Dress Don'ts:

Most silhouettes will flatter your figure, but ballgowns and mermaid dresses can tend to overwhelm. A big, elaborate dress can look as if it's wearing you.



The Tall Bride....

The height of a catwalk model, you tower above your friends.

Dress Do's:

Tall brides can carry off almost any dress style. Just pick the best for you.

Dress Don'ts:

Stay away from empire line dresses, which risk looking almost tent-like on willowy frames.



Curvy Brides....

Curvy brides can often find looking for their dream dress a very daunting experience, but follow our top tips and you will soon find the dress of your dreams. Consider visiting a specialist shop as they will have a wide range of gowns in a range of sizes for you to try on.

You will also find that most of the gowns are cut specifically to compliment a curvy figure and often contain added details such as increased boning and structure for support to keep you feeling confident and looking your best.



Top tips for curvy brides....

Curvy brides should choose a wedding dress with simple lines that skim rather than hug the figure. Simple lines will create a more slimming effect.

A V-neckline can be used to enhance a fuller bust and details and embellishments on the bust and hem will add interest and draw the focus of attention.

Strapless gowns can be difficult for curvy brides to wear. Ensure the gown is not fitted too tightly at the neckline edge to avoid any bulging.

You could also consider a complimentary stole, jacket or bolero to provide coverage for your back and upper arms.



What exactly is Couture?...

Do you want to be stylish yet different on your wedding day? Then why not visit a Couture Bridal Dress Designer who will design a gown exclusively for you.

The possibilities are endless and whatever your fashion taste and personal style, a Couture wedding dress will enable you to choose a design that will match your taste and personality.

A Couture wedding dress will be made from the finest fabrics, sewn with great craftsmanship and with extreme attention to detail.



The first step in the Couture process will be to book an appointment for an initial consultation. This will allow you to share your dreams with the designer.

Bring to the consultation all your ideas - photographs, magazines, or simply a verbal description of what you envision. Together you will explore various options, including necklines, skirt shapes and fabrics.

The designer will then work their magic, translating your ideas into a rough sketch.



Once the sketch has been approved and your measurements taken, the proper work begins. The sketch becomes the pattern for the calico toile garment which is made out of a rough cotton fabric.

The toile can be cut and pinned allowing all the fitting problems to be ironed out and your personal blueprint emerges. The work done at this stage reaps many benefits later on, reducing the number of alterations done on the actual fabric.

Once work on the fabric begins you can expect a number of fittings as the garment evolves.



You will be asked at this point to wear your bridal lingerie to ensure the fit is just right. Beautiful linings make sure it feels as good as it looks. And all the little details which make it uniquely yours - embroidery or beading, are gradually added.

Remember, when you come to the hem fitting you will need to wear the shoes that you will be wearing on the day. It is also a good idea to take along your tiara and jewellery so you get to see the complete look.

Following your final fitting, your truly unique gown will be pressed for collection - this is the last step in the wonderful Couture process before you wow your guests, leaving everyone spellbound on your special day!



Chief Bridesmaid/Maid of Honour....

When considering who to choose to be your Chief Bridesmaid remember that you will need somebody you can rely on, who will be your rock and a shoulder to cry on in times of stress but also someone you trust to be completely honest and a good organiser (for hen night purposes!).

Whether you choose your sister or a close friend, their role will start long before the wedding day and some of the duties involve:.....



Helping the Bride choose her dress.

Organise the hen party.

Organise an Emergency Kit for on the day
(nail file, safety pins, needle & thread etc)

Attend the wedding rehearsal.

Help the Bride dress on the day and arrange
the veil and train before the Bride heads off
down the aisle.

Take the bouquet from the Bride during the
service.

Be available for anything the Bride might
need you for!



What about the Bridesmaids?...

Whether you have two or twenty bridesmaids, their look is an important part of the day and choosing the right dresses will help you all to feel fabulous and ooze confidence.

Know your style....

It may seem obvious, but you should always find your dress before you even start thinking about your bridesmaids. Once you know the style of your dress and the theme of your wedding, it is much easier to start getting ideas of how you want your bridesmaids to look and be confident that their look will fit in on the day.



Ask yourself this:

Are my bridesmaids similar to each other?
What would they be most comfortable in?
You must also consider size, age, shape, style and their colouring. You want to flatter your bridesmaids and keep them happy on the day.

It is important to not give them free reign but to let them know that they do have some input into what they will be wearing.

If you have young bridesmaids make sure that they will be comfortable in what you have chosen for them as a wedding can be a tiring day for the little ones.



Fabulous fabric....

Another important aspect of the bridesmaids' dresses is choosing the right sort of fabric for the time of year.

If you are having a summer wedding, try and opt for dresses made from lighter fabrics such as silk georgette or crepe.

If your wedding is taking place in the winter, bridesmaids can experiment with layering and fabrics such as satin, organza and taffeta.



Accessorise!

Don't leave the accessories as an afterthought, as these will either make or break the look. Make sure you have enough time to get the right style of headdress, shoes, earrings, necklaces etc to suit each bridesmaid.

Top tip

On the day give yourself priority and make sure you are ready before your bridesmaids. This means that if time is running out, you won't be the one rushing to get ready.



Dry Cleaning & Heirlooming....

Having selected the wedding dress of your dreams, you will want to ensure that it looks its best on your big day and store it, as your most treasured memento, for years to come.

To achieve these aims, consult a professional dry cleaner, skilled in the treatment of wedding gowns - choose carefully - not all are bridalwear specialists.

If you have had alterations made to your dress, you may want to consider having it cleaned, pressed and padded in advance, so that it is absolutely fresh for the day. However, remember to schedule your gown cleaning at least two weeks before your wedding so that it will be ready when you need it.



When the wedding is over, it is essential to have your gown cleaned and heirloomed.

The heirloomed process will preserve the delicate laces, beading and fabric of your wedding ensemble and your gown will then be packed securely in a dust-proof box suitable for storage.

If you follow this advice, years from now, your gown may be worn by a beautiful bride in future generations.



Mother of the Bride....

As the mother of the bride and mother of the bridegroom, you have a long and exciting day ahead of you and it is a wonderful excuse to wear a really special outfit.

However, in this day and age, where casual dressing is the norm, we should take special care to select an appropriate outfit for this special occasion.

This is where it is important to visit the specialist shops who have the expertise to advise on colour, shape and accessorising.



It is worth taking time beforehand to discuss with the bride suitable colour schemes for both parents but do be flexible when looking around the shops.

This purchase is meant to be enjoyable not a chore! The choice of style is very varied - everything from smart tailored suits to soft floaty styles.

It is better to wear the style that suits you rather than what you think others expect you to wear!

You may wish to wear a hat but it can make or break an outfit. The right advice again is vital. Some shops have hats made to match the outfits or can trim hats with matching material.



Mothers will spend a large part of the day on their feet, so comfortable shoes are important.

Shoes and handbag should blend with the outfit - they are not the things you want to see in the photographs first. No shoulder bags nor those that carry the kitchen sink on this day please!

It is possible to have shoes and handbag dyed to match your outfit, but do remember, if they are fabric, to spray them with a waterproof spray.



Jewellery to complement the outfit is important - do not be tempted to wear "grandmother's pearls" if they really do not go.

Last, but not least, gloves are optional nowadays but are usually worn with the more tailored suits and, of course, for Autumn and Winter weddings.

The most important thing is to relax, feel comfortable and ENJOY THE DAY.



Is This Your Second Time as a Bride?....

If this is your second time as a bride, it may present you with the perfect opportunity to break away from traditional wedding customs.

There is often a very real sense of freedom for a bride and groom to be as creative as they want in their planning in order to celebrate their wedding in a unique and personal way.



Your Wedding Outfit....

There are a number of different possibilities to choose from when it comes to deciding on your outfit for your second wedding.

It may be the opportunity to wear the fabulous fairytale wedding dress that you just couldn't afford first time around, or you might decide to opt for a stunning white dinner suit. You could wear almost anything you like, but make sure you are comfortable in your final choice as you will be wearing it for a long time!

There are a number of specialist shops which could offer you a range of spectacular outfits, or take advantage of the personal shoppers offered by a number of designer and department stores.



Your Wedding Ceremony....

If you are divorced from your previous husband and would like a Church of England wedding service, you need to contact your local parish.

In some circumstances a divorced person may not be allowed to remarry in a church so you may decide to choose to have your wedding in a licensed venue instead.



Your Ceremony and Reception Venue....

There are all sorts of unusual venues where you may decide to hold your wedding, including taking advantage of the opportunity to get married on the London Eye!

You might decide to use your favourite restaurant to host your reception, or there might be a different place which holds a special meaning for you which you would like to share with your guests.

Very often, with a second wedding, anything goes! Remember to take the time to unleash your creative side and let your imagination run wild!





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With our very best wishes to you both for a long and happy marriage.

Remember, get angry slowly, there's plenty of time!





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