







which can take another month or so. Allow for the time when ordering your dress.

**Etiquette** In an era when anything goes, there are still some things you should never do. Do not put your registry information on your wedding invitation. This information should go on shower invitations or by word of mouth. If you don't want children at your wedding, simply address the invitation to the parents alone. Do not put the words "No Children" on the invitation. You should always send out "thank you" notes as soon as possible.

**Flowers** Not just for the bouquets anymore, flowers are a wonderful way to dress up the church or reception and could also be a favor to give to each guest. Check with your florist about what flowers are in season during your wedding. You can save a lot of money by choosing seasonal flowers. When talking with your florist, don't be afraid to ask for a sample of items such as the bouquet and table arrangements. This a good way to ensure you are getting what you want.

**Guest List** Start working on your guest list as soon as you decide to get married. You will need to have a good working number to determine location and how much you will need of everything. Always make sure that both parties double-check the list. The guest list should fit your budget.

**Honeymoon** Spend some time and research where and when you want to go. Remember, the Internet can be your friend, but always make sure to keep copies of everything, especially airline and hotel reservations. A good way to get upgrades is to put all your wedding purchases on credit cards that give points and use those points to get first class tickets, cabin upgrades, etc.

**Insurance** Since Sept. 11, there has been a surge in the number of people purchasing wedding insurance. With so much uncertainty, this is a good way to protect yourself. There are a number of reputable companies selling insurance at a low cost.

**Jewelry** This is a great gift to give your bridesmaids. Find jewelry that will complement their dresses but will also be something they can wear after the wedding. The ladies will appreciate a gift they can use again and

will always have something by which to remember your special day.

**Know Yourself** Know what you want ahead of time and don't be afraid to speak your mind, even if it doesn't follow tradition. Your wedding should reflect yours and your fiancé's personal tastes and values.

**License** In Texas, you have to get a marriage license. It is only good for 30 days and has a three-day waiting period. Look in the city directory for county clerks' offices. Both you and your fiancé must be present with a driver's license.

**Music** This is a wonderful way to personalize your wedding. Ceremony music doesn't always have to be the same ones you have heard over and over. Ask your musicians about options, and choose music that suits your personality. For the reception, always let your DJ or band know which songs you prefer to have played and which songs you don't.

**Notebook** It is always good to keep a notebook of your wedding contracts and other material. Three-ring binders with pockets are great for this. Cut out pictures of flowers, cakes, bridesmaids' dresses, etc., that you like and put them under the appropriate sections. Take these with you when visiting vendors and deciding on selections.

**Officiant** Spend time with your officiant to determine the exact format of your wedding. Since they usually perform a number of weddings, they are a good resource of ideas and suggestions on ways to personalize the ceremony.

**Photography** After booking the ceremony and reception, the next most important thing is to book your photographer. The good ones are worth their weight in gold and book quickly, especially during the popular months. Give them a detailed listing of the shots that you want. Know your style. Do you want more traditional color photos or more photojournalistic black and white photos? Photographers who can do both are worth the extra money.

**Quit** Stressing, that is. If you find the whole process of planning a wedding overwhelming, there are professional coordinators who will help. Different planners offer a variety of services, so you should have no problem finding one to suit your needs.

**Rehearsal Dinner** This is a great way for the groom's family to be included in the wedding and to bring the two families together. Remember to invite all members of the wedding party, family and out-of-towners. This is the time to have all the toasts and to maybe show a video with pictures of the two of you.

**Saving Money** There are so many different ways to save money. Changing the day to one other than a Saturday is the best one. Most venues and vendors will be less expensive on an off-peak day. Be creative and flexible.

**Timelines** Set up a timeline of events. If you are looking for help, most bridal magazines have detailed timelines. Give a schedule of events to all your vendors and wedding party.

**Unity Candle** (optional) Each family will light a candle, and, during the ceremony, the bride and groom will take the two tapered candles and light one candle together. This signifies the joining together of the two families.

**Videographer** In addition to the photographer, using a videographer is a great way to capture the wedding. Most equipment these days is streamlined, so they are not obtrusive. Watching your wedding video on your first anniversary and on those to follow will be a great reminder of your special day.

**Web site** Use the Internet to your advantage. It is a wonderful source of information and ideas. If you are computer savvy, set up your own Web site with all the details of the wedding. After the event, post photos for your guests to enjoy.

**X-tras** On your wedding day, have extra personal items in case of emergencies. Put a kit together of hose, lipstick, scissors, hair spray and other items you might need.

**Yourself** Don't forget to pamper yourself or your fiancé for that matter.

**Z-end** You are getting married. Have a blast and enjoy your special day. Don't get so bogged down in the details that you forget what this day is truly about. **ih**

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