



UNIT-6

Planning for the Big Day

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Discuss importance of Site Layout
- ✓ Explore the Characteristics of Wedding Venue
- ✓ Identify the Venue Layout Requirements

Unit 6

Planning for the Big Day

Site Layout

The reception may be casual or formal or it may be elegant one, all depends upon the couple. Regardless of the setting for the reception venue, your aim should be to keep it in line with the overall formality, theme and style of the wedding.

Choosing the Venue

From elegant mansions to casual outdoor marquees, there are various options to choose from when it comes to planning the reception venue. Think about the style and formality that the couple desires and the overall mood that you wish to create when first considering the venue. Do they want a traditional sit-down dinner, or a casual cocktail affair? Whatever is desired, deciding on this is a good place to start.

Once you've decided upon the style for the reception, it's time to start searching for the ultimate venue. Take some time to browse through wedding magazines, your local phone books, the internet, and of course.

You should be aware that the things that you plan from this point forward may be influenced by the reception venue, its style and its location. As an example, your choice of a grand formal mansion as the reception venue may not necessarily tie in with a casual beach ceremony or vice versa.

Take some time to consider all of the options and paint a picture in your mind of a perfect wedding. This will help you to choose a venue that fits in with your ideas for the wedding.

Inspecting Reception Venues

Once you have found some potential venues, it's time to give them a call to arrange an appointment to personally inspect them. It's a good idea to choose 3-5, if possible. It is advisable that you do not book a venue without inspecting it first. Whilst the photos in the magazines may look impressive, looks can be deceiving.

Take your time when inspecting the venue, taking into account the size, layout, cleanliness, lighting, furnishings, gardens, special features and overall ambience of the venue. Ask plenty of questions and be sure that you write everything down.

Questions To Ask the Reception Venue

Before you head out to inspect your venues, take the time to make a list of questions to ask during your appointment. Ensure that you have an idea of the style of reception you would like to have (sit down dinner, buffet, cocktail etc), the number of guests, a rough wedding date, wedding budget, and any special requirements for the wedding reception.

You should feel free to ask as many questions as you wish during your inspection. The following list may be of assistance to you.

- How many guests will the venue accommodate?
- What style of reception does the venue cater for (sit down dinner, buffet, cocktail etc)?
- Will you have exclusive use of the venue, or will you be sharing it with others (either; before, during or after your reception)?
- Does the venue provide food and beverages, or do you require a caterer?
- Does the venue provide wait staff?
- Are all furnishings, cutlery and crockery etc. provided by the venue?
- What exactly is included in the venue's wedding packages?
- Are there any special offers available with the venue's wedding packages (reduced price for off-peak, winter or Sunday weddings etc)?
- Are you able to alter the packages to suit your needs?
- If alcohol is included in the packages, is it based on the number of guests or by the amount consumed? Are spirits included?
- Will the venue cut your cake and serve to your guests? Is this included in the package? Do you need to provide a cake stand, knife or cake bags?
- Does the venue allow for special dietary requirements for you or your guests (diabetic, gluten-free meals etc)?
- Will the venue provide a reduced-cost meal for your photographer, band members, children etc?
- Are there any additional expenses that you should be aware of?
- Are there any optional extras available (extra courses, extra time, upgrades for wines etc)?
- Is a Master of Ceremonies included?
- Does the venue provide any decorations (table settings, chair covers, candelabras etc)? If not, will they set them up if you are to provide them?
- Is there a dance floor?
- Is entertainment included in the package? Are there any restrictions or requirements if you are to arrange the entertainment (such as noise restrictions)?
- How long will the reception run for and are there any fees for running over time?
- What time does the venue close?
- Is there a bridal room that will be available to you and your bridal party throughout the reception?
- Is the venue heated and air-conditioned?
- Are there any cleaning costs/requirements associated with your reception?

- When are deposits, instalments and final payments due? How much will they be?
- Are there any cancellation fees?

Additional Considerations

In addition to these questions, you may wish to consider the following:

- Is the venue within your budget?
- Is it in keeping with the style and theme of the wedding?
- Is it available on the wedding date?
- Are there areas at the venue that will provide for photo opportunities?
- Is the venue close to your ceremony venue and photography locations?
- Is it accessible for the guests?
- Are the staff professional and experienced, and do you warm to them?
- Is the layout appropriate for your band/entertainment or other aspects of the reception?
- Is the reception venue appropriate for all types of weather?
- Are the facilities appropriate for the couple, the guests and others (such as caterers, a band/DJ etc)?

With all of these considerations in mind, you should be able to choose an appropriate setting for the reception.

Things to Consider

Once you have found a venue for the wedding ceremony and reception, you'll probably be wondering where to start in terms of decorations and equipment hire. There are a number of things that you should consider first. These include:

Ceremony Venue

When considering the ceremony site itself, you should take into account the following when planning for your decorations and equipment to hire. Firstly, if it is to be held outdoors, ensure that there is shelter nearby, or arrange an alternate setting or marquee in the case of inclement weather (rain, hail or shine). Also consider the time of day in which your ceremony is to be held, so that you can position your backs to the sun. You'll have much better photos if you're not squinting from the sun being in your eyes.

Consider what equipment you will require for the ceremony itself, taking into account:

- Your entrance/processional.
- You may wish to hire a red carpet, or similar runner to walk upon.
- The point where the couple will exchange the vows.

- Wedding arches and other decorative items are available to hire, and may add a romantic touch to the ceremony.
- Whether there will be any readings. If so, a lectern or stand may be required for the reader to position himself or herself.
- A location for the signing of the register.
- You may wish to hire a table and chair set by which to sit at to sign the register.
- How many seats (if any) you will need to hire for your guests, and where you wish to position them.
- Any other decorative items you may wish to have.

Venue Layout

The most important factor is the venue itself and its layout. If it is possible, ask the venue manager whether they have a copy of a floor plan or map that you may keep. If not, you may wish to sketch an approximate drawing yourself. In doing so, you will be able to work out what equipment you will require, where it should be positioned and the quantity and size that your venue will allow for. On the plan, take note of the areas in which you may wish to place a DJ/band, the caterers, bar (if required), dance floor, gift table, guest seating etc. It may also be handy to mark down the location of electrical points, so that you can plan for lighting, or any other services that require a power outlet. Lastly, take note of the location of the toilets (you obviously don't want to set up the caterers next to the toilet door)!

Outdoor considerations

Beyond weather, two significant considerations when planning outdoor weddings are bathrooms and bugs. In terms of bathrooms, if the wedding is in someone's backyard rather than at a rented space that already has restroom facilities, it is in the best interest of the homeowners to rent bathrooms. Even if the house is large, having hundreds of people traipsing through to use their facilities can put an enormous amount of pressure on the sewer system. Homeowners have had their plumbing systems literally wiped out by having a tent wedding on the property and not investing in washrooms. Bathroom rental from well-known companies can be as simple as a holding tank or as luxuriously equipped as their Executive Restroom Trailers which have lighting, music, carpeting, air conditioning, heating, flush, and running water with the sinks. Make sure to get at least one rental washroom for every 100 guests and carefully position them away from the main activities.

A second outdoor consideration is bugs, which in warm climates can move beyond a nuisance to extreme discomfort and leave-taking. Imagine an outdoor, Southern wedding in July: mosquitoes, flies, wasps, ticks, gnats, yellow jackets, and no-see-ums, just to name a few. They swarm around the food and bite the guests. They smell sugar and go crazy. They are drawn to the light for evening weddings. Citronella candles help but have a pungent smell, so they should be kept out of the immediate vicinity of the tent to avoid interfering with the meal. Machines that zap bugs can be rented, but they have an irritating sound. Tent entryways, on the other hand, are very helpful because they control the flow of people and other outside elements.

You could also spray the surrounding area, but you have to be careful because children will often run in grassy areas and the chemicals then present a safety issue. A final option is to have the wait staff walk around with trays of wipes or bottles of bug repellent. A supply should also be available in the restroom facilities.

Your site layout does not need to be a masterpiece that any architect would envy; instead, it is a straightforward drawing that offers a concise overview of placement and spacing. If there are no online site maps available of the venues, start with a blank page for both the ceremony and reception sites and fill in the applicable essentials covered in Table.

Site layout is straightforward when weddings are held in established venues that offer few options for variation. As the planning space becomes more open and the number of rentals increases, the site layout becomes more complex. For example, outdoor weddings and receptions held in tents require more attention to detail and increase the number of decisions that must be made

Site Layout Essentials for Weddings

Ceremony	Reception
• Parking • Room dimensions • Entrances and exits, with special marks for accessible paths and ramps and indications of controls (e.g., metal detector, security check) • Restroom facilities • Number of rows, with marks for reserved areas, and indications if the areas are separated for the bride’s guests versus the groom’s guests • Waiting area for bride, groom, and wedding party prior to ceremony • Indicators for the location for floral décor and other special ceremony elements • Space to be used for central focus (e.g., altar, arch, or other visually accessible area) • Fire lanes and other emergency information	• Parking • Room dimensions • Entrances and exits, with special marks for accessible paths and ramps and indications of controls (e.g., metal detector, security check) • Restroom facilities • Cocktail hour area, if separate from reception space • Number of guest tables with marks for reserved tables • Head table and/or sweetheart table • Service stations for wait staff • Tables and areas associated with seating stationery, gifts, the cake, and favours • Kitchen and/or food-related areas • Bar area • Music and dance area • Areas for the placement of specialized lighting • Indicators for the location for specialized floral décor and other special reception elements • Fire lanes and other emergency information

Table 6.1

As discussed earlier, tables come in different shapes and sizes, so you must understand the floor plan and the square footage of a room to determine how many tables will fit and how to space them. Be sure to leave at least 48 inches, and preferably 54, between tables so there is adequate space for movement,

allowing guests not to feel cramped and the wait staff to easily move around while carrying large trays. Understanding the spacing of the venues for each wedding you plan will help you maximize the safety and comfort level of the guests and staff.

Wedding Ceremony Equipment

As mentioned, there are so many options to choose from today, that planning your decorations and equipment for hire may seem an overwhelming task. The lists below may be of assistance for you.

To make the ceremony a truly unique and memorable one, you may wish to consider the following list of items to hire or purchase.

- Aisle runner/carpet
- Back drops
- Balloons
- Baskets (for ceremony booklets etc)
- Birds (to be released)
- Butterflies (to be released)
- Chair/Pew bows
- Chair covers
- Candelabras
- Candles
- Candle holders
- Columns/pillars
- Confetti/flower petals/bubbles
- Flooring
- Floral arrangements
- Flower pots/vases
- General decorations/banners
- Heating/cooling
- Lectern/stand (for readings or seating plans etc)
- Lighting
- Linen/fabric
- Marquee/shelter
- Piñatas
- Plants/pots/trees
- Rotunda/gazebo
- Special effects/fireworks etc
- Steamers/ribbons
- Tables/chairs
- Table decorations
- Trellis

- Umbrellas
- Wedding arch

Reception Venue Equipment

Once you have noted on the floor plan where everything is located, you may begin to plan for what you may wish to hire for the reception. If the reception is a sit down dinner, consider how many you wish to have seated at each table. From this number you can work out the amount of tables and chairs that may be required. Note that if your venue is short on space, round tables take up more room than rectangular tables.

You may also wish to discuss with your entertainers or DJ (if you're having any) what their requirements are in terms of equipment. In most cases, entertainers come prepared with all of their necessary equipment; however, it's always a good idea to double check.

Consider any other services in which you are employing for the wedding reception and be sure to contact them in regards to whether anything may be required on your part, in terms of equipment.

The following list will provide an idea of what items may be required for the wedding reception:

- Back drops
- Balloons
- Bar
- Cake stand
- Cake table
- Candelabras
- Candles
- Candle holders
- Catering equipment
- Chair covers
- Columns/pillars
- Crockery
- Cutlery
- Dance floor
- Easel/stand for seating plans
- Flooring
- Floral Arrangements
- Flower pots/vases
- General decorations/banners
- Glassware
- Heating/cooling

- Jukebox
- Lectern/stand (for speeches and the MC)
- Lighting
- Linen/fabric
- Marquee/shelter
- Microphone / P.A. system
- Napkins
- Napkin rings
- Piñatas
- Place card holders
- Plants/pots/trees
- Refrigeration and eskies
- Special effects/fireworks etc
- Steamers/ribbons
- Tablecloths (Bridal table, cake table, guest's tables, gift table)
- Tables/chairs
- Table centrepieces
- Table decorations
- Table runners
- Wishing well

Equipment Hire/ Rental

Rentals allow couples to set the stage for their wedding in a way that would not be cost effective if they had to purchase all of the items. Rentals such as tents, lighting, tables, chairs, linens, tableware, equipment, and other specialty items serve dual purposes. First, each rental will have a specific function. Second, rentals add to the theme and mood of the wedding, varying from traditional sophistication to funky modernity. This section offers the essentials that consultants need to know about wedding rentals and layout, including:

- tents
- tables, chairs, linens, and tableware
- lighting
- other outdoor considerations
- Bringing it together with the site layout

Tents

For outdoor ceremonies and receptions, tents are a common rental item because the weather is seldom perfect. Rain is not the only worry; cold, heat, humidity, wind, and bugs can also lead to uncomfortable

guests. This section will cover three aspects of tents: (1) styles and accessories; (2) size and setup; and (3) cost.

Tent Styles and Accessories

The two primary styles of tents are pole tents and frame tents, and many subcategories fall under these two broad groupings. Davis Richardson of Sugarplum Tent Company (2006) offers the following information that will allow you to distinguish between different styles of tents. He explains that pole tents are held up by exterior and interior poles and then anchored in the ground by staking. Modern pole tents are referred to as tension tents, since high-tension winches or ratchets are used to create the taut appearance. Pole tents are the classic choice for weddings, allowing for dramatic, high peaks and a sweeping, billowy look. However, the interior poles can be unattractive and obtrusive, so they are often wrapped with fabric or greenery and decorated with flowers.

Frame tents, in contrast, eliminate the need for interior poles because they are supported with aluminium piping that frames the top and sides of the structure. Frame tents become necessary when the installation is on concrete, asphalt, or any surface where poles cannot be anchored. While the frame tent is more self-supporting, it typically still must be staked down. Installation of frame tents is more time consuming; thus rentals are more expensive. Furthermore, the mass of aluminium supporting the top of the tent can be unattractive, so fabric liners are often used to make the interior aesthetically pleasing.

Picking the style of tent is the first of many decisions that must be made for tent rentals. Other considerations include flooring, sidewalls, entrance canopies, lighting, liners, electricity, heating or air conditioning units, and staging. If the ground is wet, uneven, and/or gravelly, flooring will keep guests from stumbling or getting covered with mud.

Flooring can be wood, plastic, carpeting, or an all-weather artificial turf. If your clients are planning on having dancing, they will want to minimally select a dance floor. Sidewalls and entrance canopies offer an elegant touch and extra protection from the elements. Sidewalls, canopies, and the ceiling can be clear, allowing for an open look that can be complemented with lighting and decorative liners. Electricity is essential for lighting as well as generators used to heat or cool the tent. Finally, staging and steps are often used for the head table and musicians. Taken together, it should become clear that selecting a tent is not done to save money on a ceremony or reception site, because the tent and additional rentals are often much more costly than renting a ballroom or other venue. Instead, tents offer a unique opportunity to truly tailor an event space.

Guidelines for Selecting the Correct Tent

	Tent Size If	Tent Size If
Number of Guests	Seated at Tables	Standing or Buffet
50	20x40	20 x30
100	30 x50	30 x30

150	40 x60	40 x40
200	40 x80	40 x60
250	60 x70	40 x80
300	60 x80	60 x 60

Tent Size and Setup

The Table above gives basic guidelines for selecting a tent size. Keep in mind that actual dimensions can vary, but in general tent sizes start at 10 feet x10 feet, with both length and width increasing in 10-foot increments. The guidelines in this table do not include the dance floor, which averages an additional 600 square feet. So, for example, if you were planning a wedding for 100 seated guests, this would suggest selecting a 30 x 50 tent, which gives you 1,500 square feet. However, if your client wants to include a dance floor, this would suggest a minimum of 2,100 square feet; thus you would consult with your tent vendor to determine the closest size available. Looking at the chart, you might be wise to select a 40 x60, giving you 2,400 square feet.

Bear in mind that it is better to have too much room than not enough, as you do not want guests to feel crowded. When discussing price with the tent vendor, make sure that the proposal includes tent rental cost as well as the amount of time needed to set it up and the number of workers who will be dedicated to the job. Advise your clients that it is also a sound investment to pay for a technician who will stay for the entirety of the event to manage the tent as needed. If the sidewalls need to be raised or the heat level needs to be adjusted, a technician can efficiently and professionally handle the task. Reputable tent companies may cost a bit more, but they are well worth it, for the last thing your clients want is a tent that is unsafe.

Tables, Chairs, Linens, and Tableware

When starting with a tent, your clients will also need to rent tables, chairs, linens, and tableware. At many indoor venues, some of these items need to be rented, or upgrades may be available for a price. Although some venues will require that you use their equipment, others will be flexible and allow rentals to be brought in for the wedding. It is important to know what they have available in advance so that you can gauge how the couple feels about the options and offer alternatives. For example, when visiting a reception venue, you may notice that the chairs all have mauve cushions, yet your clients' colours are navy and gold. Knowing this information, you can discuss the possibility of renting chair covers or alternative cushions with your clients.

Tables are the most straightforward choice and are available in a multitude of sizes. Common guest tables are 5-foot rounds, which seat 8 or 10, and 6-foot rounds, which seat 10 to 12, while an 8-foot oblong table can seat 8 to 10. Sweetheart tables have become more common for the bride and groom who want to be seated by themselves. Should they choose to sit with the wedding party, the trend is for couples to select a round head table rather than oblong. Square tables that seat two guests per side are another increasingly popular alternative. Tables of various sizes are also needed for items such as the

escort cards, gifts, favours, and the cake, as well as wait stations for the catering staff. For escort cards, gifts, and favours, 6-foot or 8-foot oblong tables are commonly chosen, while the cake can be placed on a 4-foot round. Chairs are also relatively finite in terms of variety, with folding chairs offering a budget-friendly option. These chairs come in a variety of colours, with material options of wood, metal, or plastic influencing the price, as well as the presence of padding. For upscale weddings, Chiavari chairs are a popular selection. Chiavari chairs are formal, elegant, and enhanced by accompanying cushions which can be covered in a wide array of fabrics to match the table linens. As a point of comparison, a padded wooden folding chair averages around £3 to rent, while a Chiavari chair with cushion will run about £9 per chair in rental fees.

When bringing tables and chairs into a venue, it is extremely important to know the regulations. Some historic buildings will not allow tables to be rolled on the flooring, and each table and chair leg must have rubber or felt-tipped bottoms. Policies such as these mean the room has to be laid with pads and each item must be carefully prepared and placed; accordingly, staffing costs will go up significantly.

Selecting linens and tableware can be a time-consuming endeavour, as seemingly endless options pertaining to colour, style, and material are available. Advise your clients to have their theme, colour scheme, and floral décor in mind when selecting items like china, glassware, flatware, and linens. Of these, linens are traditionally the most overlooked; couples often do not think past the traditional white tablecloth. On the contrary, linens offer one of the least expensive ways to make a huge impression, and most reception venues allow clients to bring in rented linens. Top rental companies offer hundreds of styles and cuts from which to choose, available in fabrics such as damask, lace, organza, satin, silk, taffeta, toile, twill, and velvet.

Linens are available in an endless array of colours and styles such as embroidered, floral, fringed, iridescent, pin-tucked, and striped. A current trend is layering linens to create a dramatic and memorable effect. If the linens are bold and patterned, it is a good idea to go with simple floral décor to create a balance so that the elements will not “fight.” Keep in mind that you will need linens for areas such as the cake table and escort table, which may also require table skirts. Longer linens that do not require skirts are a current trend. The linens should be long enough to cover the legs of all tables, which are often rough looking from use.

When selecting linens, once your clients have narrowed down their options, you can work with the company specialist, who will often send you samples. You can then schedule an appointment with the reception venue to set three tables with three different sets of linens and decide which looks best. This is a good time to work with the floral designer so you have a sample of the centrepiece on hand. When placing the order, if the budget will allow, have your clients order a few extra napkins and an extra table cloth. Spills are common, so it is helpful to have spares just in case. When the linens are delivered, always double-check the order. Make sure you received the correct pattern and correct number, as your clients will be accountable for any missing pieces. This same advice applies to any rental item. Generally, the rental or catering staff will set the tables for you, because tableware shouldn't just be thrown on

randomly. The correct placement of plates, glasses, flatware, and the intricate folds that are common to napkins for formal weddings can be time-consuming endeavours.

At the end of the reception, you need to re-count the rentals. If a linen order was for 12 tablecloths and 100 napkins, you are responsible for getting those exact numbers back to the rental company. Invariably, someone throws a napkin away, and your client will be charged. If it costs £3 to rent a napkin, it will cost £6 or more to replace that linen. Specialty table linens are much more expensive, with rental fees averaging £30 and higher and replacement fees at least double that amount.

Lighting

Lighting is used to establish the mood of a setting, and innovative lighting can bring a ceremony or reception venue to life. Just as a coat of paint and new carpeting can transform a house, professional lighting can take a bland venue and make it look like a glamorous Hollywood movie set.

There are three areas of concern with lighting:

1. Centrepiece lighting;
2. Dance floor and wall lighting; and
3. Tent lighting.

Centrepiece Lighting

In a ballroom, where existing lights are in place, the first lighting consideration pertains to the centrepieces, which can include pin spotting or a wash of light. Pin spotting is a tightly focused beam of light directed on the table centrepieces, which allows the centrepieces to “pop,” as the light does not spill over onto the rest of the table. Pin spots can even be placed underneath a table to shoot up through a clear glass centrepiece for a unique effect. The wash of light came about as a response to the fact that centrepieces started getting larger and taller. For large arrangements, the pin spotting would allow for one hot spot on the arrangement but couldn’t capture the whole piece. A wash of light is a wider beam that will light up the whole table. This light is particularly effective when the linens are spectacular, as the wash will pick up any shimmer or play in the tablecloth. LED (light-emitting diode) lights are the latest trend because they offer an even wash of light with very little electrical usage. Regardless of the lighting style, white light should never be used because it does not look becoming on people. Lighting should make the room, the flowers, and the guests look great. In order to achieve this effect, lighting specialists choose from a range of pinks and ambers that are subtle and flattering.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Rentals and Site Layout

- Prior to meeting with a tent rental company, familiarize yourself with the different types of tents and accessories and prepare a draft of the desired site layout.
- Have too much room rather than not enough in a tent.
- Note that the cost of a tent and the necessary associated rentals is often significantly higher than renting a ballroom or other venue.
- Impress guests with creative linen selections.

- When placing the linen order, add a few extra napkins and an extra table cloth in case of spills.
- Count rentals upon delivery and before pickup to make sure there are no missing items.
- Use lighting to transform a space from bland to glamorous.
- Recognize that bathrooms and bugs are two significant considerations with outdoor weddings.
- Understand that site layout offers a concise overview of placement and spacing.

Wedding Attire

The Tradition of the Bridal Gown

The history of the white wedding gown dates back to the late 1400's, made popular by Anne of Brittany. The colour white was worn as sign of purity, and therefore symbolised the virginity of the bride. Before this time, the colour blue was worn (symbolising purity) by both the bride and groom by way of a band around the bottom of their wedding attire.

Queen Victoria also made popular the white wedding gown during her reign in the 1800's, however it was worn more as a social standing. In the Victorian era, any woman who was able to afford an expensive white gown was regarded very highly among social circles. White fabric was very costly and without modern day dry cleaners, was almost impossible to keep clean, therefore making it a rare item, created for one-off occasions.

As time went on, and modern technology evolved, white fabric became more popular and less expensive. The white wedding gown re-emerged once again symbolising the purity of the bride and has continued to be popular among modern day brides. Despite it's popularity today, coloured wedding gowns including pastel shades and bold colours are making their way into wedding ceremonies as a fashionable and stylish accessory for modern brides.

Wedding Attire and the Bridal Party

Soon after getting engaged, a bride-to-be will begin the process of shopping for her wedding gown. This is one of the most important decisions a bride will make, and the design of the gown can set the tone for the entire wedding. Will the gown be ultra formal with a cathedral-length train, or will it be more casual with a simple coloured sash? Will the gown be made of silk, organza, taffeta, lace, or satin? As for colour, will it be a classic choice such as white or ivory or will it contain a modern flash of pink, lime, or blue? These are just a few of the many considerations that go into this important decision.

Usually, the bride will purchase her gown without the advice of a wedding consultant; instead, she will visit bridal salons with her mother or a close friend. With that said, it is still important for consultants to be well versed in wedding attire styles and trends. Coordinating the overall look of the wedding will be an important task for the planner. Assisting the bride in matching her gown to other elements, giving advice regarding the selection of the tuxedos, offering options on the flower girl dresses, and perhaps

even guiding the mothers as they select their gowns will be areas in which you may be consulted. This unit will cover trends in bridal attire, menswear, the wedding party, and how to handle wardrobe malfunctions.

Choosing the Wedding Gown

The wedding gown will possibly be the most important aspect of the wedding. It therefore makes sense that it should be given great consideration when choosing its design, colour and overall style. Many brides discover the task of finding their perfect dress a daunting one, and this is understandably so.

There are many factors that should be considered when choosing the wedding gown in order to ensure that it is an appropriate choice in relation to both the bride wearing it, and their style of wedding. Although there are endless considerations when deciding upon the perfect gown, the most important elements that you should consider are:

- budget
- personal style
- body shape
- The style or theme of the wedding
- the colourings of the wedding
- The season in which the wedding is being taking placed
- Whether the ceremony location is indoors or outdoors
- Family traditions or expectations
- Religion

Wedding styles come and go, so it is important for a planner to stay on top of the trends through reading the latest trade magazines and visiting bridal fashion shows. You do not want to recommend a gown with long lacy sleeves to a client only to be told that it looks like her mother's gown from the 1970s. Fashion-forward brides look to the runways of Paris and New York for inspiration. Fashion statements made at celebrity events such as the Academy Awards are quickly copied, becoming knockoffs that mainstream retailers offer as bridal attire for the general public. Gowns adorned with lots of "bling" are turning heads on the runway, with beads, crystals, and pearls making statements. Up-to-the-moment gowns can have skirts with tiered tulle layers, voluminous bubble hems, or fabric trim designed by fashion icons.

Today's brides have a wealth of options when it comes to selecting the perfect wedding gown. There are many more fabric choices today than there were even 20 years ago. Materials such as polyester, nylon, rayon, and silk can be woven into a range of stunning fabrics such as brocade, charmeuse, chiffon, crepe back satin, duchesse satin, dupioni, georgette, lace, organza, shantung, taffeta, and velvet. Synthetic materials such as nylon and polyester are more versatile and affordable than pure silk fibers, giving designers more fabric selection than ever, translating into more choices for the bride.

Although there is a vast array of contemporary styles from which to select wedding attire, many brides look back to the fashion icons of yesterday for inspiration on their wedding gowns. Probably the most famous wedding gowns of the past half-century were those of Grace Kelly, Jacqueline Kennedy, Princess Diana, and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy. The Philadelphia Museum of Art (2006), current owner of Grace Kelly's wedding gown, notes that the carefully preserved gown is "one of the most popular and beloved objects in the Museum's collection as well as one of the most elegant and best-remembered bridal gowns of all time." To mark the fiftieth anniversary of Grace Kelly's April 19, 1956 marriage to Prince Rainer III of Monaco, the museum staged an enormously popular exhibit of her gown together with other elements from the wedding day including her headdress, veil, shoes, and the lace-and-pearl encrusted prayer book that the bride carried down the aisle (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006).

Whether a bride gets her inspiration from yesterday or today, she is not likely to consult with her wedding planner when making her dress selection. She may, however, ask for advice on the top designers or where to shop for the gown and accessories. In addition to Vera Wang, designers such as Reem Acra, Amsale, Carolina Herrera, Monique Lhuillier, and Angel Sanchez are known for bridal attire.

In any given city, there are many options for finding the perfect wedding gown, including stand-alone bridal shops, couture shops with exclusive designer labels, department stores, outlet malls, bridal chains such as David's Bridal, clothing specialists that have moved into wedding attire such as J. Crew, custom designers, and, increasingly, eBay. With more than 9,000 new and used wedding gowns listed for sale on eBay at any given time, the savvy bride can get the dress of her dreams at a reasonable price. This auction site is also an excellent resource for finding bridal accessories. Prices will vary by seller, but are usually a fraction of the retail cost. The age of the bride will also dictate the wedding dress style. What works for a 20-something may not be comfortable for a bride in her 40s. The term Camilla style emerged after the wedding of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles, based on the rave reviews the Duchess of Cornwall received for her choice of wedding outfits (BBC News, 2005). Many women have looked to the selections of famous older brides such as Camilla for tasteful and flattering guidance. With most brides spending £1,000 and up on the dress alone, this is probably the most expensive clothing purchase the bride has ever made. If your client seeks your advice on the dress purchase, you can offer the following three tips:

1. **Get moving.** If a wedding gown is selected less than six months prior to the wedding date, there may be a rush charge placed on the order. This charge can be as much as 25 percent of the cost of the gown.
2. **Alteration fees add up.** Most brides will pay £150 to £300 in alteration fees alone. Many brides do not account for this cost in the initial budget for attire.
3. **Size matters.** If the bride is a small size (0 to 2) or a plus size (16 or larger), there may be an extra charge of 10 to 20 percent for the gown depending on the designer. Be prepared to mention this if you know that your client falls into one of these size categories. Jennifer Johnston explains that time is of the essence. She states that the bride often has no sense of urgency because she may

not realize what is involved when starting the planning process. However, there is a rhyme and reason to creating the perfect look, and every step has to be well thought out.

After choosing a gown, a bride must then consider her bridesmaids' gowns. After deciding on her hairstyle, she must then decide on hair jewellery and her veil. The veil, in particular, cannot be chosen too carefully. Most favoured styles are chapel length with a blusher to cover the face and accented with lace. A lace veil can match a lace gown or complement a very simple, unadorned dress. Matching earrings, bracelet, or necklace should also be given consideration. Gloves and a wrap, either fur or matching fabric, should be considered for fall or winter weddings.

Before the fittings can begin, the bride must choose her shoes and necessary undergarments. The bridal shoes should be comfortable, first and foremost. Together, the bridal accessories complete the look. Bridal attire and accessories vary significantly by culture. Although the white wedding gown has caught on around the globe, many cultures are still known for distinctive bridal attire.

Most brides do not have specific cultural traditions that influence their wedding attire; however, many wish to incorporate four elements in keeping with the sentimental phrase, "Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue." Your clients will ask you for suggestions in each of these categories, so you can start with the ideas summarized in Table below :

TABLE 6.2 Sentimental "Something" Selections

Something old	Something new	Something borrowed	Something blue:
Items in this category usually originate from the bride's mother, grandmother, or mother of the groom. For example, the bride might wear a piece of antique jewellery that has been passed down through her family or the groom's family. Alternatively, the bride might wear a vintage dress that belonged to her mother or grandmother, or she might have lace from a vintage dress	This decision is the easiest, as the bride usually makes a number of attire purchases. However, many wish to select one of these that "counts" as filling the category. If the dress is new, this is typically the chosen representation. Otherwise, her veil, shoes, purse, lingerie, or a decorative hairpin can fit	A bride will often turn to a very dear friend such as the maid of honour or a close family member to borrow something for her wedding day. A bride might borrow the dress worn by a friend or use the purse that a cousin carried on her wedding day. Many brides do not have expensive jewellery, and often a close aunt or old family friend will insist that the bride wear her	For brides who plan to wear a garter, it is very common to have a piece of blue silk sewn in the garter, as this is a simple way to incorporate blue. If not wearing a garter, a linen handkerchief with blue embroidery is often chosen. While a handkerchief may seem like an old fashioned idea, it is actually quite practical. Many brides cry during their weddings, and it is nice to have something more attractive than a paper tissue close by. An embroidered handkerchief can also be a lovely keepsake. If blue is the colour scheme, a blue ribbon can be used for a hand-tied bouquet. Alternatively, the bride can wear a sapphire or

incorporated into her own dress, veil, or handkerchief	the bill for something new to be worn.	Tiffany necklace or bracelet.	blue topaz bracelet or hairpin.
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Theme and Style

The wedding gown should be in keeping with the overall theme and style of the wedding. By maintaining a simple theme that flows through each aspect of the ceremony and reception, the wedding is sure to be a visual delight for all. When choosing the overall style of wedding gown, remember that careful consideration and expert advice is required. Selecting the wrong style of gown may change the overall theme and style of the wedding, creating a look that you may not have initially desired. Generally; a traditional style wedding calls for a traditional style gown; including styles such as the ball gown or Cinderella gown, which are full and often heavily decorated. Modern wedding gowns, on the contrary, are most effective when kept simple and sleek. Consider your theme and the advice given by your couturier or dressmaker along with the ideas below.

Traditional

Traditional, formal gowns are full and usually contain embellishments, such as pearls or detailing of some description. Patterned fabrics are also popular in the traditional wedding gown. The ball gown and Cinderella gown are two good examples of traditional styled wedding gowns.

An A-Line gown may also be worn for a traditional wedding. If you're not so keen on the heavily beaded look, then the A-Line is a great choice, and may be dressed down a little (in comparison to the ball gown or Cinderella gown).

A cathedral length veil will usually suit a formal wedding, as well as gloves and tiaras. Just be careful not to overdo it!

Sophisticated and Elegant

A sophisticated themed wedding will call for a simple gown with elegant accessories. The sheath styled gown, princess gown, mermaid or fishtail gown and those that are cut on the bias are examples of sophisticated wedding gowns. These generally look fantastic when accompanied by accessories containing crystals or precious gemstones.

Romantic

When thinking romantic, think Cinderella! This is probably the most romantic styled wedding gown available. Its classic fairytale look is bound to be a winner.

Modern

Simplicity is generally the key to modern wedding gowns. Simple yet elegant styles such as the sheath gown, princess line, mermaid gown and those cut on the bias are popular choices for the modern bride. There are so many gorgeous and flattering choices available that will set your chosen gown apart from the rest when it comes to modern gowns. Be daring and opt for something truly unique, and then jazz it up with some simple, yet stunning accessories.

Menswear

What should the groom wear? Do the tuxes all have to match? Can the guys wear their own tuxes? Are khakis appropriate with a navy blue blazer? Can the men wear their own blazers? Should the men's ties match the bridesmaids' gowns? Should groomsmen rent the tux in their hometown or at the wedding destination? Should the men wear white shirts if the bride is wearing an off-white gown? These are just a few of the questions you may get when the couple begins to consider menswear. When it comes to wedding attire, the bride almost always has a clear idea of what she wants to wear, but, when it comes to the men, the wedding consultant will be leaned upon for advice. Educate yourself on men's formal attire by making an appointment to speak with the manager of your local tuxedo shop. Ask how the process works from measuring to ordering to picking up and what the store's policies are.

You should have a good working knowledge of the details so that you can guide your clients. Also, when you attend a bridal show, pay attention to the men's fashions so you can advise your grooms on whether a vest is currently in or out and whether or not a cummerbund is passé. Similar to bridal attire, another good place for discovering what is going on with men's formalwear is the Academy Awards telecast. Watching what the men wear on the red carpet can give you an excellent idea of what is fashionable. Rest assured, if the stars are wearing it today, your clients will be requesting it tomorrow. In some cases, it is the groom's attire that is easily recognizable based on specific cultural traditions.

The basic rule of thumb is that groomsmen and bridesmaids should look like they belong together. If bridesmaids are in summery Lilly Pulitzer shifts, the groomsmen should be in casual summer attire like khakis and navy blue blazers. If the groomsmen are in formal black tuxedos, the bridesmaids should be in formal attire as well. If the groomsmen are wearing ties, then by all means they should complement the bridesmaids' dresses. They need not match exactly, but they should work nicely together. Typically, the groom will look slightly different than his groomsmen; for example, the groom might wear a black vest, while the groomsmen have burgundy to match the bridesmaids' dresses.

The Wedding Party

In terms of bridesmaids' dresses, knee-length and below-knee styles are currently the most popular. Jennifer Johnston states that when designed with such fabrics as crepe back satin and chiffon, these shorter styles can be worn for both late afternoon and evening weddings. Bridesmaids' dresses generally match but need not be identical. A current trend involves selecting bridesmaids' dresses that are made of the same fabric but that come in a variety of styles to suit different body types.

The bride will usually select the attire for her bridesmaids, sometimes with their help and sometimes without any input at all. A planner is rarely consulted about this decision. However, you will probably be asked where to purchase accessories for the bridesmaids such as shoes, wraps, jewellery, hair accessories, purses, gloves, and undergarments. Be prepared with a list of stores that you know and trust. The groomsmen's tuxedos are usually acquired from the same location as the groom's. It is typical for the groom's tuxedo to be rented without charge if there are enough groomsmen (usually at least four) who are renting formalwear from the same store. Determine if your local tuxedo shop rents tuxedos for infants and toddlers, as parents of the youngest of the young may want to dress their children to the nines for a formal wedding. The ring bearer in particular will need to be outfitted in a tuxedo. Similarly, the bride may wish to have a small replica of her gown made for the flower girl. Knowing a designer who specializes in this area will come in handy. Pets are being incorporated more frequently into wedding celebrations. Just like the other members of the wedding party, they will need special attire for the wedding day. You should arm yourself with information on where to order special dog tuxes and other formalwear because sooner or later, you will be asked for a recommendation. If your local pet shop does not stock such items, there are terrific online resources such as trixieandpeanut.com that cater to chic dogs and cats alike. No detail is too small when considering wedding attire. The best wedding consultants can assist with finding appropriate wedding attire for the entire wedding party.

Wardrobe mal Functions

Probably even more important than knowing where to buy or rent wedding attire is the wedding consultant's ability to fix a wardrobe malfunction on the day of the wedding. Count on something becoming undone, unfastened, unsightly, or falling apart at some point during the wedding day. It will be up to you to work your magic with the tools in your well-stocked emergency kit. A needle and thread, a large safety pin, and baby wipes have come to the rescue at many weddings. When it comes to clothing, be prepared for a multitude of disasters from straps breaking to heels snapping off. With so many people involved in the wedding party, a wardrobe malfunction is guaranteed to happen.

In addition to fixing clothing problems, the most important clothing related skills for a wedding planner to master are:

- (1) how to bustle a bride's train; and
- (2) how to knot a tie or bow tie.

Bustling the bride's train is an important precaution to keep the gown from getting soiled and to keep the bride from tripping during the reception. Reviewing the bustling procedure with the bridal shop prior to the wedding day is an excellent idea because each gown is bustled slightly differently.

Many bustles, if not designed correctly, will come undone during the reception. Be prepared to remedy this situation with items from your emergency kit such as a needle and thread or oversized safety pins. Also, knowing how to knot a man's tie is a skill every wedding consultant must have. On the day of the wedding, the groom may be too nervous to knot his own bow tie, or it could be the first time many of the groomsmen have ever worn a bow tie. Make sure you can knot the tie quickly and fashionably. Similarly, the skill of being able to tie eight bridesmaids' sashes into perfect bows before they head down the aisle will carry you far in your career as a wedding consultant.

The Groom's Attire in Scotland

In Scotland, it is the groom's attire that is particularly noteworthy, including the tartan kilt, the sporran, and the dirk. The tartan kilt is an easily recognized Celtic garment, with colours and plaid patterns that represent the wearer's clan. A groom in Highland attire also wears a fur pouch, known as a sporran, and a small dirk, which is a traditional Scottish knife. The bride may wear a clan tartan shawl with her contemporary dress. Traditional Scottish dress and the romantic mood that accompanies this culture's traditions are so appealing that many couples who are not of Scottish descent have Celtic-themed weddings in order to momentarily step into the past.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Wedding Attire

- Set the tone for the wedding with the wedding gown.
- Become familiar with wedding gown shops in your area.
- Make sure you are up-to-speed on current fashion trends.
- Educate yourself on menswear styles.
- See that groomsmen and bridesmaids look like they belong together.
- Make sure your client knows about rush charges, alteration fees, and additional charges for gowns that are smaller or larger than average.
- Give the bride plenty of options regarding where to purchase accessories.
- Don't be surprised if you are asked to order a tux for a dog or cat.
- Be prepared for wardrobe malfunctions.
- Know how to bustle a train and knot a bow tie.

Food and Beverage

Food and beverage are generally the most expensive wedding elements, taking up a significant portion of the amount allocated to the budget category of reception and rentals. Most couples are not accustomed to making detailed menu decisions or serving large numbers of people; accordingly, the

guidance and advice of a wedding consultant and caterer are sought. Wedding planners and caterers work as a team. While some vendors do not like working through a liaison, others often prefer working with knowledgeable consultants. This is particularly true for caterers, who often become the planner by default if a professional wedding consultant has not been hired. Many consultants have ongoing relationships with caterers, which saves both the couple and the caterer valuable time. This chapter offers an overview of essential considerations pertaining to food, beverage, and the wedding cake.

Finding and working with a caterer is a sales process from start to finish. When helping a couple select a caterer, typically a wedding consultant first suggests a number of caterers who vary in services, style, and price. Once the group is narrowed to three or four, initial meetings take place. During the initial meeting, the caterer provides information regarding service options and packages. Some caterers focus on food and nonalcoholic beverages, but most can also provide alcohol service. Other services can include the cake as well as staffing and rentals. During this meeting, logistics such as time of day, number of guests, and the site are provided, as well as information regarding other vendors that will influence catering, such as tent rental.

Dietary restrictions and other specialized needs should be introduced during this meeting because some caterers may not be able to accommodate specific requirements. For example, it is impossible for caterers who work from set menu selections to create a menu that follows strictly kosher Jewish dietary laws, also known as Glatt kosher. Three

of the many requirements for Glatt kosher are as follows:

- (1) shellfish, pork, and rabbit are forbidden;
- (2) dairy and meat cannot be eaten together; and
- (3) grape products, such as wine, must be produced by those who follow the Jewish faith.

Couples who wish to have a Glatt kosher meal must work with caterers who are kosher certified. Caterers may be able to address some unique dietary requests, such as specialized vegetarian meals, but will generally charge additional fees for specialized services. The wedding planner should be aware of menu restrictions in advance and can limit the initial listing of caterers to those who will be able to attend to the needs of the couple.

In some cases, the couple will have dietary requests that pertain to one or two guests, while in others; the couple may impose their preferences on all the guests. For instance, a bride who is allergic to nuts may request that no nuts or nut extracts be used in any part of the meal. A diabetic groom may have a separate sugar-free cake, or the entire wedding cake might be sugar-free. It is critical that the couple and the consultant clearly communicate special needs to the caterer in advance of the formal proposal. The consultant should determine if substitutions can be made for individuals with special dietary needs.

Importantly, the initial meeting is an opportunity for the caterer to get to know the couple and their food and beverage preferences. This information can be used to build a targeted proposal, the contents of which are well explained by Rachel Gittins, an event designer at Ridgewells, which caters events such as weddings, corporate meetings, and professional sports.

The catering proposal is presented shortly after the initial meeting and generally includes the food costs, staff costs, equipment costs, taxes, gratuity and delivery. You should also ask if there are setup costs and overtime charges. In the proposal, the caterer sells to the desires outlined in the initial meeting. This document should be organized, accurate, and thorough and contain no grammatical or spelling errors. The names of the bride and groom, their venues, and other details given during the meeting must be correct. Notes regarding any specialized needs that were mentioned should be included.

Rachel explains that the proposal stage is an opportunity for the caterer to “wow” the couple by including special touches that signal to the couple that the company can and will treat each wedding as a unique event. For example, if the caterer learned during the initial meeting that the groom proposed in Australia and the wedding is going to have an outback theme, the caterer can suggest a signature drink called the koala café to accompany the cake. If the couple loves to garden, the proposal can be presented on elegant paper with a floral design. An outstanding proposal proves to the couple that the caterer listened during the meeting and really understood the focus of the event. Upscale caterers particularly enjoy working with what they call foodie brides—those who both understand and appreciate fine cuisine. Even if the proposal is going to the wedding consultant instead of directly to the couple, the caterer should still include the special touches. The caterer and consultant can then coordinate and put together a global proposal that incorporates the catering elements. A consultant will be more eager to work with a caterer who was clearly listening during the meeting.

When meeting with potential caterers, it is critical that your clients taste the food they are considering, for they will not want to randomly select items that they may ultimately dislike. Top caterers host formal tastings two or three times a year, where they invite couples and consultants who have expressed an interest in their services to an event that showcases their food, presentation, and service. This savvy marketing technique exposes couples to specific hors d'oeuvres, entrées, pastries, and other items they may not have otherwise considered and also serves to highlight the caterer's newest linens and tableware in a festive atmosphere.

Food and Beverage Trends

Cutting-edge caterers are trendsetters. These trends are witnessed at weddings and other events. As suggested with the outback theme, signature drinks are particularly popular at the moment. This trend is fun and flexible, as beverages are versatile and a simple drink can have flair if given a clever name and presented in a fun glass with a unique straw or nontraditional garnish. Chocolate fountains, drinkable desserts, monogrammed tuxedo and wedding gown strawberries, and cookies with scanned, edible pictures are stylish ways to offer sweets as favors or prior to cutting the wedding cake. Edible place cards made out of white or dark chocolate are another fun and unexpected treat.

Trends are also evidenced in the style and presentation of entrées. Specialty entrées can be designed and named to fit the theme. A growing trend is to provide split entrées, which blends the diversity of the buffet with the elegance of a plated service. Sushi boats and bridges have resurfaced in popularity and allow for an Asian flair, with spectacular presentation opportunities.

Trends can also be evidenced in the equipment used by the caterer. Cutting-edge tableware can leave a lasting impression on the guests. For example, cocktail stations are a unique alternative to a traditional reception and present an opportunity to showcase unique and funky plates, bowls, and cutlery. For instance, while guests would not normally expect soup at a cocktail station, the use of stylish shot or cordial glasses readily creates this opportunity.

In general, the more upscale the caterer, the more likely that their managers can make things happen. Some caterers will have set menus with little flexibility, whereas high-end businesses will often operate a la carte. Furthermore, if a couple wants specialty equipment that the catering company does not own, the managers may buy it if they see it as cutting edge. They can then rent it to the couple and keep it as inventory for further use. High-end caterers are also more flexible in working with support caterers. For example, if the couple wants one specialty ethnic food item that the caterer does not carry, the primary caterer will work with the support caterer to obtain and showcase the food. By law, the primary caterer cannot pick something up from another restaurant and bring it to the reception; however, if that restaurant delivers the item to the site, the primary caterer will present it in a consistent manner. This flexibility allows the couple to know that the caterer will make the effort to ensure that their food and beverage are perfect.

Types of Service

The type of service used during the main meal is dictated by the food choices, the formality of the occasion, and the reception site. Three primary types of service presentation are buffet, plated, and French. The necessary wait staff skills vary significantly based on the type of service. Buffet service is less formal and is chosen by couples who value offering a variety of foods from which their guests can choose.

The servers are skilled in maintaining the cleanliness of the buffet and making sure that dishes coming close to empty are quickly changed. The caterer does not want guests to look at a chafing dish and be embarrassed to select what looks like the last one of any item or, if standing back a few spots, fear that a given dish will run out before they reach it. The goal for a well-presented buffet is for each guest to see it looking full and beautiful, as if it was in the original state. The buffet style is not convenient to all venues, however. For example, if the reception is held in an historic house that has numerous small rooms with tables situated throughout, negotiating the guests back and forth to a buffet line would cause considerable confusion. For venues such as this, plated service would be recommended. The majority of the work for plated service is done behind the scenes in the kitchen. Plated service allows for an elegant arrangement of food, where each plate is quickly but carefully prepared and then covered. At the moment the meal is ready to be served, the cover is removed, any sauce that is accompanying a dish is added, and the servers proceed with their plates. Using a technique called a sweep; two or three waiters may work each table to get all the plates out as quickly as possible. This type of service is common to formal weddings but may still be impractical for some venues. For instance, if a site layout is such that the kitchen is on a different level from the dining area and each staff member needs to carry four plates at a time, a considerable amount of movement back and forth would have to occur. If the site is not

conducive to plated service, and yet a formal atmosphere is still desired, then French service would be the suggested alternative.

French service is the least common of the three service styles and requires significant skill among the wait staff. With French service, the entire meal for everybody at one table is brought out and served from a single large dish or platter. Each server is white gloved and has to be able to operate a fork and spoon with considerable dexterity. The server must be able to maneuver the platter, utensils, and the food skillfully so that each element of the meal is presented in an attractive manner. This type of service is not very common in the United States because even when carefully done, it is difficult to get the presentation effects that are possible with plated service. However, French service allows each guest to receive individualized attention. When considering service, it is important to ask the caterer the staffing ratio. At premier venues, you can expect a 1 : 8 or 1 : 10 ratio, which means there will be one server for every 8 to 10 guests. At venues that are less customer-oriented, you are likely to have a 1 : 12 ratio or higher.

Buffet meals will require fewer servers than plated or French service. If there is a cocktail hour, often servers will be on hand to pass hors d'oeuvres. For this service, a 1 : 30 or even 1 : 35 ratio is acceptable. In some cultures, food service for weddings is an all-day affair. Countries such as Portugal are famous for their bountiful wedding feasts,

Food and Beverage Costs

The costs associated with food and beverage vary considerably based on the quality, quantity, and variety desired and, perhaps even more significantly, the geographic location of the wedding. Cost of living in the general vicinity will affect food and beverage pricing, and customs within a given locale can dictate expectations of reception fare. For example, in West Virginia the average expenditure is £4,300 for food and service and £1,200 for beverage and bartender, while in Massachusetts the cost is essentially double, with food and service averaging £8,400 and beverage and bartender £2,400. In general, per-person costs can range from £15 to £500 and up, so it is important to familiarize yourself with the range in your community. For couples on a budget, there are some ways to cut reception costs. Some caterers will allow the couple to purchase the alcohol and then will just charge to pour. You will need to verify this arrangement with the caterer before advising clients to consider this route. Alternatively, your clients may opt to limit the alcohol to beer and wine; however, the price of a good wine can be more expensive than liquor and has fewer servings per bottle. Some couples forego alcohol altogether or just have a champagne toast, which is common in some regions and time frames such as afternoon receptions. A cash bar, where the guests pay for drinks containing alcohol, is another way to save on costs, but this approach may offend the guests and should only be considered if it is a common practice in the region.

If the reception includes a cocktail hour, the couple can save by having the most expensive hors d'oeuvres passed rather than set out on a table. For example, if shrimp are presented on a table with an elegant ice boat, guests will flock to the table and devour this pricey item. On the other hand, if a server

is walking around with a tray of shrimp, most guests will not take more than one piece at a time. The less expensive items such as vegetables, cheese, and crackers can be set on a table for guests to graze, and considerable savings will result. Savings should also be realized when feeding children and vendors. When you are sitting down with the caterer, your clients need to be able to estimate how many children will be in attendance. If it is a plated meal, less expensive options should be available to children, who often will not appreciate or even enjoy the adult meal. Similarly, your clients should not feel compelled to feed their vendors the same £65 meal that their guests will receive. This is not to say that they can overlook the vendors, who expect and deserve to be fed. Usually, the caterer can put together a tray of sandwiches, chips, and cookies for the vendors. Keep in mind that all the vendors will want a meal, and whether the band has 2 people or 20 people, you have to include all of them in the budget.

Related to food and beverage are the associated rentals, which also must be considered in the reception budget. Rentals such as chairs, tableware, and linens may come from the caterer but could be significantly less expensive with an outside vendor. You will need to know the policies of both the caterer and the venue before enlisting outside vendors for these items. Beyond feasible ways to save, there are perceived cost-cutting measures that should be avoided. Having an unlicensed caterer or a family member acting as chef or bartender may seem like a way to save money, but ultimately this is compromising the safety of the guests. Having food stations instead of a full meal may appear to be cost effective but this is not necessarily the case. Individual hors d'oeuvres can be priced at \$5 per piece or more, which will quickly add up if a couple wants six different stations.

Style of Catering

First and foremost, the couple needs to decide upon the style of reception and catering that they wish to have. There are several options to choose from including:

- Afternoon Tea
- Buffet (sit down or standing)
- Cocktail Style
- Finger Food
- Luncheon
- Sit down formal dinner

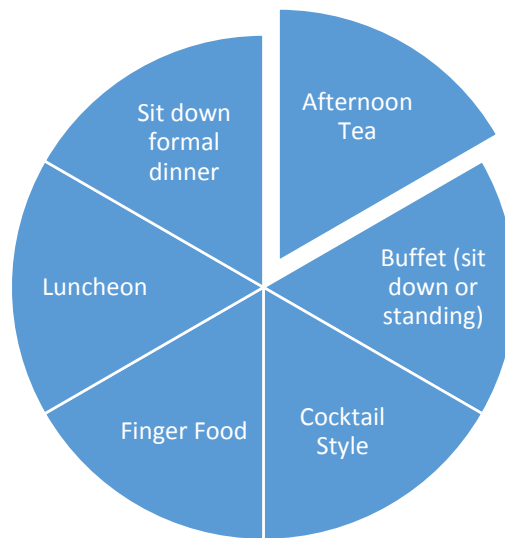


Fig. 6.1

Once the style has been decided upon for the reception, ensure that your caterer can accommodate for this. Some caterers specialise in only one particular style (such as buffet or finger food only), so ensure that you choose someone who is experienced in the type of catering you wish to have. In addition to this, some caterers specialise in catering for certain numbers (for example, less than 100 guests or more than 100 guests), so it's important that you have an idea of how many will be attending your reception.

Questions to Ask the Caterer

Regardless of the type of reception you are having, you should consider asking the following questions when meeting with your caterer.

- What style of catering do they provide (buffet, sit down dinner, finger food etc)?
- Is there a minimum or maximum number of guests that they will cater for?
- What are the meal or food options available?
- Do they cater for special dietary needs (vegetarian, diabetic, gluten free etc)?
- Are menu changes possible?
- Are wait staff provided and, if so, what will the ratio of staff to guests be?
- Do they provide cutlery, dinnerware, napkins, tablecloths and glassware?
- Do they provide drinks (if required)?
- Is there anything that they do not provide?
- Is there anything that they need in order to set up or operate?
- Do they clean up after the guests have eaten?
- Are they insured?
- What is the final cost and are there any added costs?

- What deposit is required and when is the final payment due?
- What is their cancellation / refund policy?
- Is there anything else that you should be made aware of?

Beverages

Once the food has been taken care of, it is time to consider the 'beverages'! There are several options and costs associated with serving beverages at a wedding and it is important to consider all of them, and the pros and cons associated with each.

Open Bar

An open bar gives the guests the opportunity to drink an unlimited quantity of beverages throughout the length of the reception. The bar staff keep track of the guests orders and then issue a bill at the end of the reception. From a guests point of view an open bar is the 'ultimate' when it comes to wedding receptions. Whilst this may be the case, at the end of the day, it is not the guest who will be paying the bill.

Tray Service

In order to minimise the cost the couple may wish to opt for a tray service. The advantages of this option are that it helps to keep the cost down, and it prevents over consumption of alcohol among the guests. The disadvantages are that if a guest misses the drinks tray they may have to wait until the next round, and secondly they may feel as though they'd like a few more drinks.

Placing Beverages on the Table

By placing bottles of beer and wine (along with soft drinks and juices) on the tables, guests are able to serve their own drinks when they wish.

Cash Bar

The cash bar option allows you to be free of any expenses associated with beverages. This option requires the guests to pay for their drinks, as they would at any other bar. Many couples use this option in combination with some of those already mentioned above.

Bar Tab

A bar tab gives you the option of setting a pre-determined amount of money (the 'bar tab') to cover drinks for your guests. Throughout the reception, bar staff keep note of the drinks being ordered by your guests. Guests are free to order whenever they wish throughout the reception and once the bar tab is reached, they must purchase their own.

Self-Catering Beverages

There may also be the case where your caterer or reception venue does not cater for or provide alcohol. In this case it may be possible for you to arrange to purchase the beverages and organise wait staff to serve it.

The History of the Wedding Cake

The tradition of the wedding cake is one of the oldest, dating back to over 3000 years to ancient Greek and Roman times. In its original form, the wedding cake was a mere offering of fruit, nuts and honey to the Gods. It was believed that, by partaking in such a practice, the Gods would bless the marriage and bestows good luck and happiness upon the bride and groom.

In ancient Rome, wheat was viewed as the food of fertility. The Romans baked loaves of wheat bread, which were presented to the couple to share. Any uneaten pieces were tossed over the bride's head as a blessing of fertility. Similarly, in ancient Greece, the tradition developed into the practice of showering the newly married couple (predominantly the bride) with small cakes. The wedding guests would then gather around the bride and eat any leftover crumbs as a sign of good luck, wealth and happiness. Julius Caesar introduced this custom to Britain, where it changed into a practice of sharing wedding cake among local villagers. The wedding cake was usually reserved for those from wealthy families.

As time went on, the wedding cake tradition began to slowly transform. In England and Scotland, guests began to bring small cakes or buns as gifts for the happy couple. The sweet delights were piled one by one on top of each other until they formed a grand, sweet and sticky structure. The bride and groom were then encouraged to kiss over the top of the piled cakes. If they managed to do so successfully, it was believed that the couple would be blessed with fertility, prosperity and life-long happiness.

Legend has it, that whilst witnessing the wedding cake ritual at an English wedding, a French chef came up with an ingenious way of serving a sweet tower of cakes. He viewed the cake-piling practice as tedious and unhygienic and decided to bake a unique, yet delicious tower of sweet tasting buns, held together with sweet and sticky toffee. And so, the first edible wedding cake, the croquembouche, entered the world!

From the croquembouche, came various adaptations and designs. Wedding cakes began to take on a more three-tiered appearance, which was not only based on the croquembouche shape, but also from that of the spire of St. Bride's church in London. Chefs and bakers gradually changed to fruit as a base of their sweet masterpieces, and moved away from the pastry base of the croquembouche. The cakes were iced with white (marzipan) icing as a symbol of the bride's purity. At the time, sugar was regarded as a valuable item, being extremely expensive. It was believed, that the whiter and sweeter the icing, the wealthier the family of the bride.

The three-tiered iced fruitcake has become the wedding cake as we know it today, and it's tradition lives on. In modern wedding receptions today, the bride and groom usually cut the cake towards the later

half of their reception. Traditionally, the cutting of the cake symbolised the bride's impending loss of virginity, however it is now seen as a gesture of the happy couple's commitment to their new life together. The cake is usually served as dessert or with coffee, or may be given to the guests at the end of the evening. Tradition also has it that, should any single guest place a piece of wedding cake under their pillow, they will dream of their future bride or groom.

Choosing the Wedding Cake

Today, in more modern times, many couples have moved away from the traditional three-tiered fruitcake, to more personal and unique designs. Trends in cake flavour, style and decoration are continually changing and modern cake artists are able to create almost anything that one's heart desires. From a traditional iced fruitcake, to chocolate mud, vanilla crème or strawberry mousse. From a three-tiered masterpiece, to a 3D replica of the wedding cars. The possibilities are unlimited when it comes to choosing the sweet sensation that is the wedding cake.

When deciding upon the wedding cake, consider choosing something that reflects couples' personal style and taste. You may also wish to tie the cake in with the colour, style or theme of the wedding.

Style and Shape

As mentioned, whilst the traditional tiered style cake remains a popular choice by modern brides, many are moving towards more personal and individual styles when it comes to choosing their wedding cake. Circular, square and oval shaped cakes, either on their own, or staked one on top of another remain the most popular choice for modern wedding cakes. Over the past few years, it has also been popular among some brides to choose tiers of different shapes. They may for example have a square tier for the base, an oval for tier in the middle and a circular tier on top. This can create a lovely effect.

Another trend that is in style amongst brides of today is to choose a wedding cake in line with the theme or colour of their wedding. As an example, if you are having a wedding on the beach, you could have a cake in the shape of a starfish, or another similarly shaped 'beachy' design. Alternatively you could match a pattern on your cake to that of the fabric of your wedding dress. For example, an intricate lace design featured on the bodice of your gown could be replicated as the detail on the icing of your cake, or draped down the side. You may wish to use your imagination and come up with something truly unique for your wedding day.

In recent times the 'present' cake has been yet another popular design. This cake is a creation of approximately three tiers all in the shape and style of gift-wrapped presents, stacked on top of one another. The presents can be created in any style, shape or colour, with matching edible bows for you and your guests to devour. This style of cake is really quite lovely, and is a great alternative to the traditional three-tiered wedding cake.

As you can see, the style of your cake really is only limited by your imagination. Anything is possible. So be creative with your design, and have fun.

Flavours of Wedding Cakes

As with the style of your cake being limited only by your imagination, so too is the flavour! Traditionally speaking, the fruitcake is by far the most popular base of all wedding cakes. It is known for its rich flavour, excellent keeping qualities and its symbolic representation of fidelity and longevity. The fruit cake is also strong and sturdy, making it especially suitable for heavily decorated or large cakes and is also an excellent choice if your wedding is to be held in the hotter months, as it is less likely to melt!

So, when choosing the flavour and base of your cake, don't completely wipe out the fruitcake as an option. It is also one of the only cakes that may be kept and stored for future use (as in the event of your first wedding anniversary or the Christening of your first child).

In recent years, cake artists have become more adventurous with wedding cake flavours and textures and so too have modern brides. Many have opted against the traditional fruitcake and are choosing from a variety of flavours for their cakes. The chocolate mud cake possibly comes equal first with the fruitcake in terms of its popularity amongst modern day brides. Not only does it taste fantastic, but it too also makes a very versatile and strong base for a wedding cake. The mud cake may also be kept frozen for a few months (usually two to three) after your big day, so you can still enjoy it when you return from your honeymoon. In saying that, if you want to keep it for your first anniversary or child's Christening, then you should settle for fruitcake (unless, of course, bubs is already on his/her way)!

Mud cake can be decorated and covered in virtually any type of icing including, fondant, ganache, traditional 'heavy' icings, chocolate, confectionery and fruit, to name but a few. It is also another great option for weddings being held during the hotter months (provided that you choose an appropriate topping/icing)!

Now, if you think that neither fruitcake nor mud cake are quite what you're after, then how about looking over the following list of flavours on offer by various cake artists around town. This list is sure to satisfy even the sweetest of sweet-tooths. And if your flavour's not on the list, just ask!

- A wedding cake made of crepes
- Banana
- Black forest
- Butter cake
- Caramel mud
- Carrot cake
- Cheesecake
- Chocolate mousse
- Crème brûlée

- Croquembouche
- Cupcakes (made into a tower)
- Ice cream
- Marble mud
- Meringue
- Mocha
- Nougatine
- Orange/Madeira
- Sponge
- Strawberry Mousse
- Vanilla Crème
- White chocolate

The list goes on...

Keep in mind that it is also possible to have multiple flavours for your wedding cake. As an example, your bottom layer could be dark chocolate mud, followed by a white chocolate mud middle layer and a caramel top layer.

In addition to selecting the flavour of your wedding cake, you may also wish to consider whether you would like a filling within your cake. Popular choices for cake fillings include, white, milk or dark chocolate, mocha, coconut, strawberry crème, mousse (chocolate, strawberry, orange), hazelnut, caramel and a selection of jams and preserve fillings.

It's a good idea to meet with your cake artist and sample a few of their culinary delights before you commit to a particular flavour. If you have a favourite cake or dessert that's not on their list, don't be afraid to ask. More often than not, they'll be able to create something that suits both your individual needs and tastes.

Choosing Size of the Cake

The number of guests attending your wedding will generally determine the overall size of your wedding cake. There are however a few tricks of the trade that cake artists and bakers can use to make your cake 'look' bigger or smaller if that's what you're after.

If it's the big 'showstopper' that you'd like, however only have a small guest list then it is possible to achieve this. One way of doing so, is to have false tiers or sections of cake that are decorated with icing to give the illusion of a 'real' tier. When the cake is cut, the false section is merely removed and the remaining edible layers may be served to your guests. By choosing a reputable cake artist, you and your guests will be unable to spot the difference between the two.

If it's a small design that you'd prefer, however you have a large guest list, you may wish to have a separate cutting cake made. By choosing to do so, yourself and your groom can choose a small design in which you can cut during your reception and then have a spare cutting cake (left in the kitchen) cut and served to your guests. These above two options, allow both yourself and your groom to choose the cake of your dreams no matter what the size of your guest list.

When deciding upon the size of your cake, you should also consider whether you would like to have the cake served to your guests for dessert, with coffee, or to take home with them. Generally speaking, allow a 5cm square slice of cake for dessert, and a 2.5cm slice for coffee or take home servings. Your cake artist or baker will be able to work this out with you, and ensure that your cake is large enough so that neither you nor your guests are left hungry.

You may also like to allow for a few extra slices for parents or special guests who may have helped out in some way with your wedding.

Choosing the Decorations

When you have decided upon the style, flavour and size of your cake, it's time to consider the decoration. Whilst fruitcakes and mud cakes will allow for pretty well any decoration, others may limit you. This is especially the case with cheesecakes, mousse cakes, or sponges, where they will only be able to accommodate lighter weight icings and decorations. Traditional 'heavy' style icings will simply crush your cake under their weight. Popular types of cake icings or toppings that are available to choose from include:

- Traditional soft white icing (which may be coloured to match that of your wedding theme)
- Chocolate
- Rolled fondant icing (especially for a smooth and elegant look)
- Ganache
- Cream
- Confectionery
- Fruit
- Cream cheese (especially for carrot or banana cakes)
- Marzipan

When choosing your icing you may wish to tie the colour in with that of your bridesmaids' dresses or other wedding colour schemes. With the icing out of the way, you can consider your final finishing touches with more specific decorations.

Modern cake decorations are becoming more unique and personalised in order to reflect the personalities of both the bride and groom. Old-fashioned cake toppers such as the plastic bride and groom are on the way out and many brides of today are choosing to decorate their cake with something that is 'different' and like no other. Plastic cake toppers have been replaced with more sentimental

items such as hand made replicas of the bride and groom or intricate crystal designs that may be kept as a memento for years to come.

Many wedding cakes continue to be decorated with flowers made of either edible icing or silk. Fresh flowers are also very popular and may be ordered by your cake artist. It is also possible in many cases for your florist and cake artist to work together to ensure that the flowers on your cake match those of your wedding bouquet, or other floral arrangements.

Fresh flowers provide a lovely touch to any style of wedding cake and can be made into various formations from a cascading bouquet to a small arrangement. You can discuss this further with your cake artist to decide upon the most suitable flowers and arrangement for your cake design.

Other popular decorations include ribbons, lace, tulle which may also be chosen to compliment your wedding colour scheme. Ornaments representing the bride and groom's interests (such as a surf board or snow ski) are also a popular choices amongst couples today. Obviously, it's up to you how you wish your wedding cake to be finally presented on your big day. The important thing to remember is that when it comes to wedding cakes, you have so much choice that it is, in fact, possible to have your cake and eat it too!

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Food, Beverage, and the Wedding Cake

- Make sure that the caterer and pastry chef are licensed and insured; permits may also be necessary when using an off-premises caterer.
- Bring up any dietary or menu restrictions in the first meeting with any caterer to determine if they can accommodate specialized needs.
- Schedule tastings with the caterer and the pastry chef.
- Consider a signature drink to match the wedding theme.
- Ask caterers to indicate the staffing ratio.
- Make sure that taxes, staffing, equipment, delivery, gratuity, and other fees are included in the caterer's proposal estimates.
- Determine how long the caterer will need for setup and teardown.
- Consider both the formality of the reception and the restrictions of the venue when selecting a service style.
- Have the most expensive hors d'oeuvres passed rather than set out on a table.
- Consider downsizing the ceremonial cake and supplementing with a sheet cake for cost cutting.
- Avoid butter cream icing during warm months due to its tendency

Photography

All the guests have returned home, the cake is eaten, the flowers have died, and the dress has aged to yellow. What remains are the memories, many of which have been captured digitally or on film. Photography comprises 10 percent of the average wedding budget. However, its enduring results justify why many couples invest 15 percent or more. Consultants typically advise clients to get the best photographer they can afford because their photographs can continually bring them back to their wedding day.

Changes in technology have revolutionized wedding photography. This section will highlight (1) the movement from film to digital photography; (2) the two primary styles of photography; and (3) album design and trends in photography.

The Movement from Film to Digital Photography

While some wedding photographers still use film, the vast majority have moved to digital because of the benefits it offers their clients. First, digital improvements over the past several years allow color, saturation, and sharpness to be superior to what film can achieve. Second, digital allows for online proofing, which means that the couple and their friends and family can look through the proofs regardless of where they reside. Third, digital allows for almost instantaneous feedback.

Finally, digital images can be safely stored in multiple locations so there is no fear of losing original work. Digital media is mistakenly thought to be less expensive to execute than film. Top photographers run five or more high-end computers with enormous amounts of storage in each to handle the flow of processing. They also constantly update their cameras to have access to the latest technology. Rodney explains that digital processing takes three times the effort of film processing, owing to the number of images captured as well as the creativity that goes into modern album design. When helping your clients compare prices, ensure that the photographer's packages include photo shoot time, production time, album design, reprint costs, and options regarding access to digital negatives.

Selecting the Right Photographer

Although it may seem to be a somewhat daunting task, choosing a wedding photographer is a very important part of planning a wedding. By following a few simple steps, you can be rest assured that all should go well on the wedding day.

Not all couples will prefer the photojournalistic style, and many photographers remain partial to the traditional style. As a wedding consultant, you should introduce both styles to your clients and allow them to select the one that speaks to them. The number of images that a photographer will take at a wedding can vary significantly based on personal style and approach, so this is an important consideration when comparing photographers. Recommend to your clients that they meet with a minimum of two photographers to take a look at sample albums and get to know them in person. The

personality of the photographer can be as important as the skill set, and each couple should feel that they can get along with the photographer. Furthermore, each couple has a sense of what they want their wedding album to look like, and there is no single correct interpretation. It is also important that the wedding consultant and the photographer get along well, in particular for a traditional photo shoot. The consultant will be the main point of contact with the photographer and can indicate what pictures are requested as well as gather those who will be featured in the images. This allows the couple to enjoy their day without worrying about herding the bridal party, family members, and others for key photos. The photographer should also understand the cultural needs of your clients. When, where, and how wedding photographs are taken can vary significantly by culture, as illustrated in

Considering Client's Photographic Needs

Once you've made a few appointments to meet with some photographers, consider what it is that your client actually requires from them and what your expectations are, both in terms of their personal style and their work.

Questions To Ask from the Photographer

Ensure that you prepare some questions to ask your photographer before you meet with them. The list below may be of assistance to you.

- Do they have recent examples of their work? This will usually be in the form of display albums. Ensure that the albums that you view are examples of the actual photographer's individual work; rather than that of someone else's who works for the same company/studio.
- Is the photographer that you actually meet with (at your appointment) the one who will be taking the photos on the day? Many studios have more than one photographer, and the one that you meet with may not necessarily be the one who is booked for the ceremony.
- How long has the photographer been working in the industry, and what are their qualifications? Experience is something that may make a considerable difference when it comes to wedding photography.
- Is the photographer (or studio) accredited with any professional associations?
- Does the photographer use film or digital cameras (or both)?
- Does the photographer have back up equipment? If you are familiar with photography equipment, you may wish to ask about the type of cameras used, type of lenses etc.
- How much does the photographer charge? This is a tricky one. Ensure that you know exactly what you are getting and how much it will cost. See the section below for more information on costs involved with wedding photography.
- Does the photographer sign a contract with you, what does it involve and does he/she guarantee their work? Ensure that if you are to sign a contract with your photographer that you have read it in its entirety and understand it. It may be a good idea to compare contracts from one photographer to the next to ensure that you are getting the 'best deal'. Always obtain a copy of the original for your record.

- How long does the photographer take to prepare and deliver the album after the wedding?
- Will you be able to keep the negatives (if your photos are taken with film) or a copy of the photos on disc (if a digital format has been used)? If so, are there any extra costs for this service?
- Are there any optional extras available that you should know about? Many photographers offer an array of extras when it comes to wedding photography. These may include options such as parent's albums, enlargements, pre-wedding portraits, extra pages for the wedding albums and photo frames.

Viewing the Photographers Portfolio

When meeting with the photographer, you will be given the opportunity to browse through a portfolio of their work. These are often in the form of display albums, however it will vary from one photographer to the next.

When given this opportunity, you should know what to look for in order to choose photos that are of good quality and clarity.

Here are some things to consider when browsing through the photos:

- Firstly think about your first impressions. Do you like what you see? Do the photos catch your eye?
- What emotion do you feel when viewing the photos? Do you sigh in awe or disappointment from the photos?
- Are the photos the type that you dream of, or dread for your wedding album?
- Do the photos look natural or 'set up/posed'?
- Do the people in the photos look content and happy?
- Are the colours bright and crisp, and of a good clarity?
- Are the photos in focus?
- Is the technical aspect good?
- Are the photos printed on a good quality paper and have they been well presented?
- Are the layouts and designs of the albums appealing to you?
- Are the wedding albums of a style that suit your tastes and budget? Are there several to choose from?
- Are the albums well constructed and do they protect the photos from dust and light?
- Are the pages used in the wedding albums acid free?
- Can additional pages be added to the albums?

Do not be afraid to be critical when browsing through display albums and portfolios. You will no doubt be paying good money for your wedding photos, and you only get one chance at having them taken!

Wedding Photography Costs

The cost of wedding photography will vary from one photographer to the next. You should however find a very 'general' consensus amongst them in terms of the different fees that they may charge and optional extras.

As a general idea, the costs that you may come across in relation to your wedding photos may include the following:

- A set price package deal, including wedding ceremony, reception, album, photos etc. You will need to read through the inclusions thoroughly to ensure that you are aware of what is included.
- Location fees. Some photographers may charge a fee if they are required to travel over a certain distance for your wedding. These may also apply if you wish to have photos taken at various locations throughout the day.
- Fees to stay throughout the entire reception (after the wedding ceremony).
- Fees for extra pages in the album.
- Fees for extra photos to be taken (the photographer may have a limit on the amount that they will take on the day).
- Fees for different styles of photography. For example the photographer may only provide digital images and you may request digital and film.
- Fees for hand colouring on black and white prints.
- Fees for an assistant.
- Fees for a copy of the negatives or images on disc.
- Fees for extra albums, such as parent's albums etc.
- Fees for enlargements.
- Fees for thank you cards and envelopes.
- Fees to have the photos placed on the internet.
- Fees for framing.
- Fees for other custom designed options.

Styles of Photography

Two primary styles of photography are traditional and photojournalistic. Consider your parents' or grandparents' wedding album. You probably see a fair amount of black and white, but more significantly, all the pictures are carefully posed. Using the traditional style, photographers will even stop the reception to stage a moment. For example, the bride and groom might pretend to cut the cake to get a good pose. Then they move on to the next staged moment. Wedding albums used to include nothing but groups lined up and the couple.

Comparing Two Wedding Photography Styles	
Traditional Style	Photojournalistic Style
Posed	Candid
Staged	Natural
Directed	Spontaneous
Front and Center	All Angles
Hands-on	Hands-Off
Significant Communication	Little Communication
Traditional mount album	Flush mount Album

Table 6.3

Only within the last decade has the photojournalistic style evolved within the context of weddings. This style means that the photographer is documenting real moments, almost like telling a story. It is very candid, fluid, spontaneous, and versatile. Photos are taken from a variety of directions, with pictures from angled positions more likely than those taken front and center. When hiring a photojournalist for their wedding, most couples will still request a few staged photographs, but the vast majority of the images will be real moments that are captured.

Most photographers, regardless of style, will work with at least one assistant and generally have more than one if there are more than 500 guests at the wedding. With an assistant, one photographer can capture images of the bride as she is getting ready while the other can be with the groom. Furthermore, at many ceremony sites, one can be on the floor, while the other can get the overhead perspective from the balcony. Importantly, some ceremony sites do not allow photography, and even those that do generally have strict policies regarding photographer location and flash. Experienced wedding photographers will use available light rather than flash and remain unobtrusive by using a telephoto lens and gathering images from the back of the ceremony site.

Album Design and Trends in Photography

The albums that result from the two styles of photography are also vastly different. With a traditional album, the photographs are bound and bordered. Clients can split the page apart and pull the photograph out of the page. The onset of digital photography and the photojournalistic style allowed for the origination of the flush mount album. Flush mount albums allow a picture or a group of pictures to be the page, just like photographs in a book or magazine. Top-quality flush mount album companies offer up to a 200-year guarantee and coat the pages to protect the photographic paper from liquid spills, fingerprints, fading, and peeling.

Keep in mind that with any album, your clients will definitely get what they pay for, with the album leaders offering noticeably superior quality. For example, only the highest quality flush mount album companies have patented binding systems that allow the center seam to be flat, offering a beautiful panoramic spread without a bulky midpoint.

The flush mounted album has also increased the options for album size. Traditionally, couples would have one album made and then get a handful of individual photos reprinted for family and friends. Now, the couple's entire album can be readily duplicated in a smaller size.

Most couples will want a mixture of color and black and white photos in their albums. The flush mounted style allows for a seamless integration of color and black and white. Black and white or sepia photos, which include brown and gray tones, are classic, elegant, and timeless. The lack of bright colors allows the viewer to focus on specific details; for example, rather than noticing the pinks and yellows in a bouquet, the eye is drawn to the shape of the petals and the curve of a ribbon. Also, black and white is forgiving in that inconsistent makeup or an inadvertent wine stain on a white tuxedo is less likely to stand out. From an historical perspective, black and white allow for consistent documentation.

Counsel your clients to inquire about the average processing time for wedding albums. The time needed between the wedding and delivery of the final album is influenced by factors such as (1) the photographer's style and post-wedding process for creating and designing an album; (2) the client's turnaround time, which includes the review of proofs, final image selection and/or feedback regarding album layout; and (3) the album company's production time.



Fig. 6.2

A lack of bright colours allows the viewer to focus on specific details.

Beyond changes in technique and album design, three additional trends in photography are engagement photo shoots, photo guest books, and photo-video hybrids. Top photographers will schedule engagement photo shoots two or three times a year. Spring and fall are common, and the photographer will often select a beautiful outdoor location and can meet with a dozen or so clients over a period of a few hours rather than making individual appointments with each couple. Engagement photos can be used for newspaper announcements, save-the-date notices, and holiday greeting cards.

A more recent trend is to flush mount engagement photos to create a personalized guest book. Therefore, instead of having a generic guest book, clients can have their photos go across the top of each page and then lines for signatures are provided underneath. A final trend is the photo-video hybrid. Videography offers the ability to capture audio, which is particularly important for couples who would like to have specific moments such as the exchange of vows or the voice of a soloist captured. Digital photography and related software products allow for the creative placement of images in a slide show that is set to music. As the video capabilities of digital cameras continue to evolve, more couples may opt to hire a photo-video hybrid specialist.

Plan for the Day

Once you have decided upon a wedding photographer, it's a good idea to meet with them in advance to plan for the photos. This should allow both you and the photographer to gain an understanding of how the day should proceed and also ensure that your clients' photographic needs are met.

Discuss locations for photo shoots and take into consideration the time it will take to travel to each, the weather (have some back up locations in case of inclement weather), sunset times, traffic, and ceremony and reception start and finish times.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Photography

- Introduce your clients to both traditional and photojournalistic styles of photography; including sample albums, to determine which best suits their personalities.
- Be aware of the dates available for engagement photographs for photographers who schedule them two or three times a year.
- Help your clients make a list of the "must have" photos that they wish to be taken.
- Be familiar with the rules for photography at area places of worship.
- Ensure that the photographer will have an assistant for the wedding day.
- Ask the photographer to tell you the average number of images s/he takes at weddings.
- Determine if the photographer will be shooting all color or if a percentage of black and white is available.
- When comparing packages, ensure that the photographer's options include photo shoot time, design and production time, album options, reprint costs, and the option to purchase the digital negatives.

Floral Décor

Flowers and related decorative elements underscore the mood and tone of a wedding. They also represent a significant expense, generally taking up 7 percent or more of the budget.

The tradition of the bridal bouquet dates back to ancient times whereby the bride and groom each wore a garland around their neck. The garlands predominantly consisted of strong smelling herbs and spices that were believed to have mystical powers in warding off any evil spirits. In addition to this, the circular shape of the garlands also symbolised new life, hope and fertility for the bride and groom.

Customarily, the bride would gather few of the blooms and some foliage from each garland, creating a small posy to carry down the aisle. The bridal posy, consisting of flowers, later replaced this tradition.

Over time, many variations have been made to the bridal bouquet. From a small posy, to the arm sheaf and long style bouquet in the early 1900's, and later to the princess and teardrop bouquets in the 1980's, flowers have become an important accessory for any bride. Brides of today have kept the floral tradition alive, ensuring that flowers play an important role in modern weddings, including floral displays in various aspects of their wedding.

From bouquets to boutonnieres, posies to pew decorations, corsages to centrepieces, when planning floral decoration for your wedding, you may only be limited by your imagination.

Flowers play an important role in any wedding, and a great deal of time and consideration should be given when choosing floral decorations for your special day. Flowers should leave a lasting impression and compliment the theme, colour and style of your wedding. In saying this, these are the three prominent features that should guide you when choosing your wedding flowers.

The bridal bouquet is an excellent place to start when selecting flowers, for it is the most photographed floral element and often informs the choices for the wedding party and other floral décor. When selecting flowers for a wedding, five things to keep in mind are the season, colour, scent, shape, and size.

First, the season will dictate what floral elements are available. Couples on a budget who have creative flair can purchase the majority of their floral décor at a local farmers market. These outdoor bazaars are seasonal but will have the best of what is blooming in the local area at that time of year. Floral designers will use local materials as well, but also work closely with international distributors from locations such as Colombia, Ecuador, Holland, and Thailand to ensure that they have a broad range of flowers available throughout the calendar year.

Some flowers that are popular for weddings have an extremely short season, with the classic example being lily of the valley, which has a three- to four-week season that falls in May. The small stems are priced as high as £15 each, with even very small bouquets starting at £400.

Lily of the valley stems are so expensive that many florists will not even carry them. Obtaining flowers with a short season or during their off-season can be cost prohibitive, so you will want to work closely with florists in your area to gain a sense of seasonality. In cases where a desired flower is simply not available, many florists will offer silk accents or arrangements.

A second consideration when selecting flowers for a wedding is colour. In terms of bridal bouquets, approximately 70 percent of brides select all white, which is a fresh, elegant look. As important as the flowers are, traditionalists argue that guests should look at the bride first, not her flowers, and dark flowers against a white gown will dominate the view. For the 30 percent of brides who mix colour into the bouquet, the complementary colours tend to stay on the light side such as pink, pale yellow, peach, and lilac. Bold and dark bouquets, which are becoming more popular, can make a very dramatic statement. Randy Christian suggests that elaborate, beaded gowns, such as those worn by many brides from India, should be balanced by simple floral designs, while a simple gown can be complemented by a more dramatic floral statement. He suggests, however, that a tailored gown works best with a tailored bouquet.

With bridesmaids' bouquets, mixing in bright colours is more common. A trend for bridesmaids is that in lieu of a bouquet, they will carry a purse, fan, or muff accented with real or silk flowers. Generally, the chosen ornament will be a gift from the bride, which the bridesmaids carry during the wedding and then have for later use. The scent of the floral décor is a third consideration. This is most relevant when selecting centrepieces, as a heavy floral scent can interfere with the reception meal. Magnolia blossoms, gardenias, and stargazer lilies are three examples of beautiful varieties that should be kept out of the immediate vicinity of food. Gardenias also brown and bruise easily and so are better used in wreaths than in centrepieces where they will be regularly breathed upon or touched.

A fourth consideration is shape. For bridal bouquets, the three primary shapes are hand-tied, round, and cascade. The hand-tied bouquet is natural looking, as if the flowers were just picked from a garden. Handtied bouquets can either be tailored, such as a grouping of six calla lilies with an elegant ribbon, or a mixed arrangement, such as peonies, dendrobium orchids, and freesia stems. Some hand-tied bouquets are held with a single ribbon, while others have the stems wired or taped and then tied to finish the look. A nosegay is a small hand-tied bouquet that is popular for flower girls, junior bridesmaids, mothers, and others receiving smaller sprays. Tussie-Mussie is a Victorian-inspired nosegay that is small, compact, and often in a cone-shaped holder.

Round and cascade bouquets have a more arranged appearance and are generally mounted on a bouquet holder with a handle. A classic round bouquet, whose popularity was revived after Jessica Simpson carried it in her wedding, is made up of hundreds of delicate stephanotis blossoms with each stem hand wrapped and tied. Often a pearl pin is placed in the centre of each flower for a touch of elegance and then the arrangement is brought together in what looks like a large, round ball. Roses are also commonly used to make beautiful round bouquets. Both hand-tied and round bouquets can be collared, which means that the arrangement literally has a collar of greenery creating a border. A cascade bouquet, also referred to as a teardrop or waterfall shape, tends to be the largest and heaviest, incorporating long stems that give the bouquet length and drape.

A final concern when selecting floral décor is size. In terms of bridal bouquets, the adage used to be the bigger, the better. However, a large bouquet can overwhelm the bride, making her look like she is all flowers, and simultaneously is too heavy to carry for extended periods. Now the tendency is to have more compact bouquets. In terms of boutonnieres, the consensus is that smaller is better. Most floral

designers will encourage clients to match the boutonnieres with some aspect of the bridal bouquet. Single roses and mini calla lilies are popular options that can be easily coordinated.

The wedding flowers should be in keeping with the overall theme and style of the wedding, and should compliment (not overpower) bride's gown and to those worn by the bridal party.

Generally, a traditional style wedding calls for traditional arrangements, such as those containing masses of beautiful roses; modern wedding arrangements, on the contrary, are most effective with single blooms such as lilies, accompanied by lush greenery. Consider your theme and the advice given by your floral designer along with the ideas below.

Traditional

Traditional, formal arrangements usually consist of masses of one type of flower. Examples include roses or tulips. Roses, to this day remain the most popular choice among brides of today. Just keep in mind that large bouquets may be very heavy to carry.

Sophisticated and Elegant

A sophisticated themed wedding will call for a small posy of elegant blooms that compliment the bride's wedding gown and perhaps incorporate the colours of the bridesmaid's gowns. A wired posy of orchids or frangipanis, finished with ribbon-wrapped stems and perhaps a string of crystals or pearls to harmonise with the bride's gown is sure to look stunning. Oriental lilies surrounded by tropical leaves and foliage is another example of an elegant way to accessorise with flowers.

Romantic

When thinking romantic, think 'fresh from the garden'. Bouquets of perfumed flowers such as freesias, lavender, roses, or hyacinths, finished with sweet smelling strawberry or geranium leaves are sure to create a sense of romantic ambience. Soft pastels are the colour of choice when keeping a romantic theme alive.

Bright and Fun

Although bright blooms are usually seen in summer ceremonies, they create an equally warming effect on a winter wedding. Hot pink lilies, pink and yellow frangipanis, gerberas and tuber roses all provide a bright and dramatic impact. These colourful blooms are perfect for beach or garden weddings and provide a sense of fun and happiness. Exotic blooms and foliage, and the use of berries, seed pods and vines also compliment bright and fun arrangements. Be creative and let your floral designer experiment with lots of colour and daring displays to really leave a lasting impression with the guests.

Modern

Simplicity is generally the key to modern floral arrangements. Single blooms such as lilies or orchids, accompanied by lush greenery, are popular choices for the modern bouquet. Foliage and berries are also fashionable for the modern bride of today. Rose hips, pepper berries (*Schinus molle*), hypericum and cranberry viburnums are common examples being used in modern arrangements. There are so many gorgeous and exotic choices and variations that will set your flowers apart from the rest when it comes to modern choices.

As essential as it is that the wedding blooms follow the overall theme of the wedding, equal importance should be given to their colour. By choosing the right colour combinations, you will ensure that the flowers do not look out of place against the fabrics of the bridal gown (or that of your bridal party), accessories, or other wedding decorations. The flowers should complement, rather than overshadow the overall wedding colour scheme.

When meeting with your floral designer, it is a good idea to take along a swatch of fabric from both the bridal gown and that of your bridesmaid's gown. Discuss with them any ideas that you may have in terms of the colour of your blooms and how they will tie in with the colours of the wedding. It is also an idea to discuss the colour of the bride's jewellery and accessories, as precious metals and gems may also influence the colour of the bouquet.

Flowers for All Seasons

Another factor to consider when deciding upon your wedding flowers, is whether your choice of bloom is in season, and readily available. Although you may desperately desire a beautiful bouquet of tulips for the summer wedding, or sunflowers to add some warmth to your winter bouquet, chances are that such choices may not be practical. Certain factors such as where you live, the climate and the time of year will possibly have a major impact on the availability of certain blooms.

Whilst the most popular choices in wedding flowers, such as roses and lilies, are practically available all year round, other varieties may not be, and will be subject to seasonality. In many cases, this is not necessarily the end of the world. A good florist may be able to source your desired flowers from other areas such as interstate, or even overseas! Just be mindful however, that although this may be possible, it may not be the best option. As an example, should you desire tulips in the middle of summer, despite the fact that you may be able to have them shipped from a cooler climate, they may not last the day due to the heat. In circumstances such as these, it may be best to stick with the seasonal varieties – no one wants a wilted and bruised bridal bouquet!

Below is a list of some of the most popular wedding flower varieties and the season in which they're at their best.

Summer

Agapanthus, Christmas bells, Christmas bush, Dahlia, Frangipani, Ginger, Hibiscus, Hydrangea, Lilac, Lily-of-the-valley, Marigold, Misty, Poinsettia, Queen Anne's lace, Tuberose, Violet (Jan), Zinnia.

Autumn

Cattleya orchid, Chrysanthemum, Daffodil, Dahlia, Hyacinth, Hydrangea, Misty, Nerine, Tulip, Zinnia

Winter

Apple blossom, Azalea, Blushing bride, Cyclamen, Hyacinth, Jonquil, Love in the mist, Poppy, Rhododendron, Sweet William, Tulip, Violet

Spring

Azalea, Boronia, Cyclamen, Daffodil, Dahlia (late spring), Hyacinth, Jonquil (early spring), Lilac, Peony rose, Phalaenopsis orchid, Poppy, Queen Anne's lace, Ranunculus, Rhododendron, Sweet William, Tulip, Tuberose, Yellow bells, Zinnia.

All Year Round

African violet, Alstromeria, Asiatic lily, Aster, Baby's breath, Begonia, Bird of Paradise (Feb-Oct), Camellia, Carnation, Cornflower, Daisy, Delphinium, Exotic leaves, Forget-Me-Not, Freesia, Gerbera, Gladiolus, Eucalyptus, Iris, Ivy, Jasmine, Lavender, Lisianthus, Maidenhair fern, November Lily, Orchids, Oriental lily, Paper daisy, Peace lily, Peony, Rose, Snapdragons, Sunflower, Sweet Pea.

Because flowers are such a prominent feature of the ceremony and reception, thoughtful care should be taken when making decisions. Four considerations when selecting floral décor include:

- (1) the recipients and locations that require flowers;
- (2) selecting flowers;
- (3) centrepieces and other decorative elements; and
- (4) installation and removal.

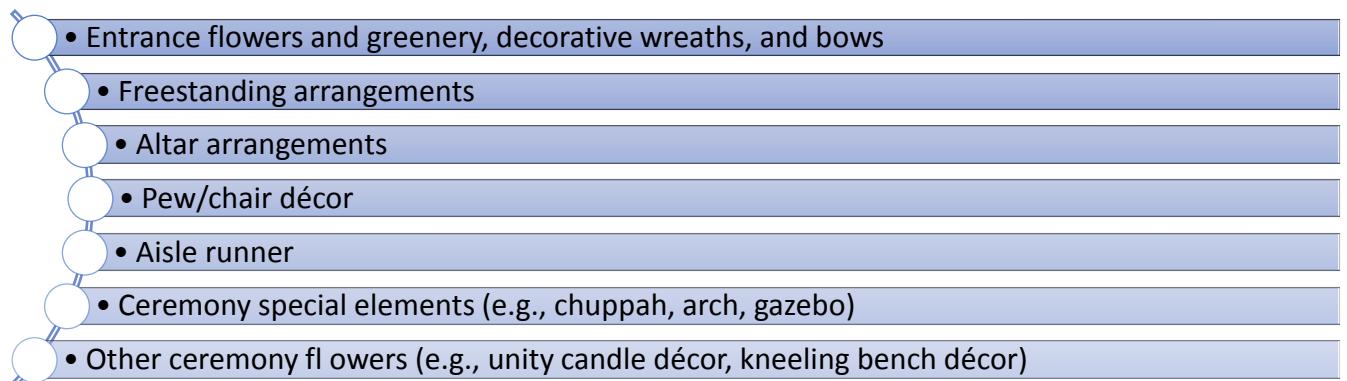
Recipients and Locations

- Bridal bouquet
- Toss bouquet
- Other bridal flowers (e.g., hair, dress)
- Number of bridesmaids, including maid of honor
- Number of flower girls (petals/basket)
- Number of mothers (corsages/nosegays)
- Number of grandmothers (corsages/nosegays)
- Other women needing personal flowers
- Groom's boutonniere
- Number of groomsmen, including best man
- Number of ushers
- Ring bearer (boutonniere and pillow)
- Number of fathers

- Number of grandfathers
- Other men needing personal flowers

When considering the “other” category, this may include the officiant, readers, soloists, guestbook attendant, and, in some cases, all of the guests if flowers are used for favours. For example, the company Speaking Roses (2006) custom embosses flowers with personalized messages or photographs, offering a unique type of monogrammed favour.

Ceremony



Reception

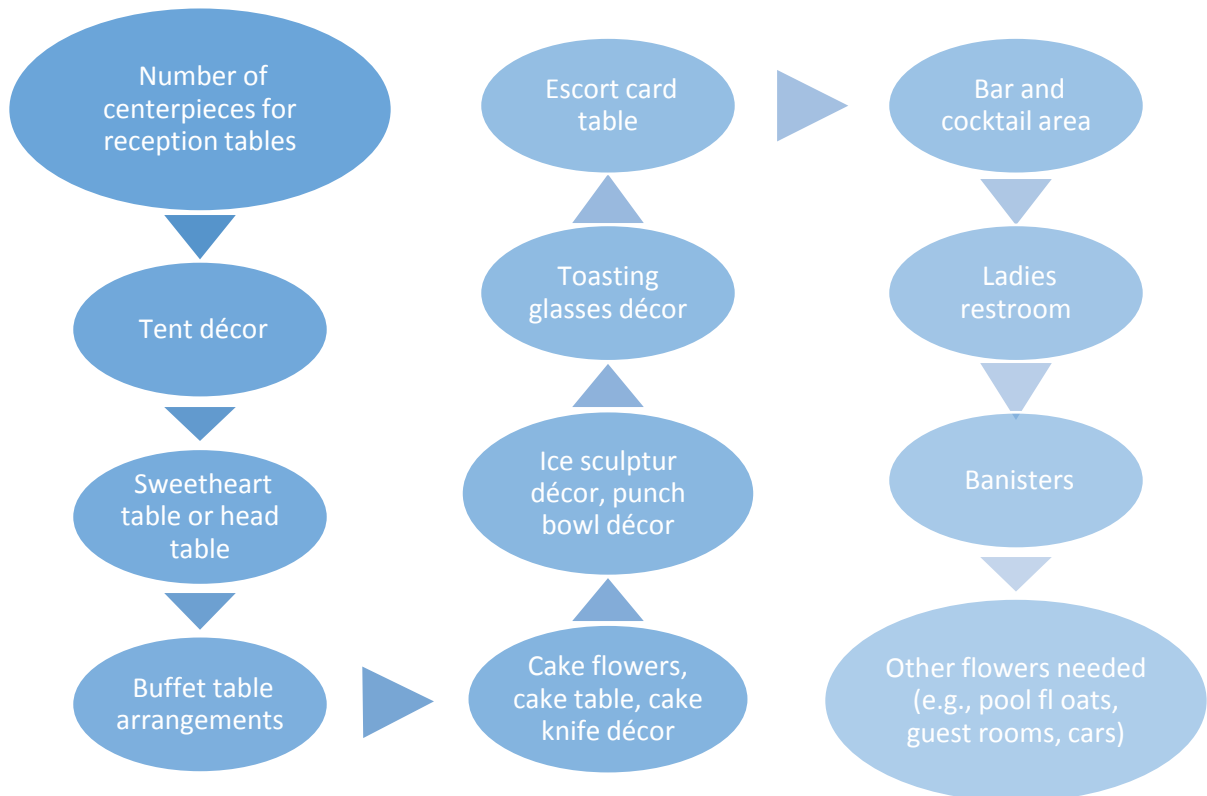


Fig. 6.3

The entrance to the ceremony site is the first chance to make an impression and tie in the theme of the wedding. Prior to this point, most guests have only seen stationery elements such as save-the date cards and the invitation, so the entrance sets the stage for the rest of the day. When considering the placement of flowers and greenery at the entrance location, it is important to keep in mind that garlands can gently and gracefully welcome guests without enormous expense. Doorway treatments with a hint of colour, such as swags, wreaths or garlands made of leaves, berries, pine, herbs, or artfully arranged twigs and ribbons can have a big impact with minimal investment. Similarly, topiaries are ornamental trees trimmed in unique shapes that are fresh and have an ethereal feel with the addition of tulle or bows.

Trees and large potted plants can be rented for weddings, offering another cost-effective means to make a statement. Floral wreaths can beautifully mark the entrance as well but can be cost prohibitive as a single wreath can include hundreds of flowers. However, the portability of a wreath allows it to be used at the ceremony, reception, and brunch the day after the wedding, and then it can be dried and kept as a beautiful memento that can be used for years. If investing in floral wreaths, keep in mind that they do not have to be round, as square, heart-shaped, and vertical wreaths offer distinctive options. With an outdoor wedding, flowers can create a focal point for the ceremony if one is not apparent. Outside weddings need fewer flowers beyond the focal point and should not be fussy or overly arranged as you will want them to complement the natural outdoor elements.

Outdoor ceremonies also allow for floral décor along an aisle runner and for real petals to be dropped by the flower girl. For indoor ceremonies, these items are generally prohibited because of their ability to stain carpeted or wood floors. Even for outdoor ceremonies, it is best to select pale petals for the flower girl, as dark petals can stain the bride's dress. Dark silk petals are equally problematic because the dyes used can leave marks.

Both indoor and outdoor weddings may have a canopy, arch, or other structure that the couple stands under during the ceremony. As you learned earlier, in Jewish weddings this is known as a chuppah, and for Indian weddings it is called a mandap. Structures such as these are often beautifully accented with flowers. In addition, arrangements are placed close to the couple as they add elegance to the ceremony photographs. Floral accents such as pomanders, which are small balls of flowers, are frequently used to mark the rows or pews.

Centrepieces and other Decorative Elements

Most couples are fairly traditional in their choice of bouquets, boutonnieres and ceremony decor. However, centrepieces and other decorative elements used for the reception allow contemporary statements to be made. When entering the reception site, one of the first things that guests will see is the escort card table. This table is a key focal point that can set the tone for the rest of the reception and is often lavishly decorated. A beach theme wedding, for example, can include an escort table where the cards are set in sand and surrounded by exotic flowers and conch shells.

Centrepieces are limited only by a couple's budget and their floral designer's creative capacity. Some couples still select classic designs such as candelabras entwined with flowers, while others employ the imagination of the designer to tie elaborate floral décor into their theme. While there can be a distinction in the formality of the floral décor for the ceremony and reception, the difference should not be so radical that an imbalance results.

A current trend in centrepieces is to use large, clear glass vases in modern shapes. On the top of the design, flowers are placed in a removable plastic riser. Beneath this tray, the sky is the limit, and options such as bright fruits, vegetables or berries, coloured glass or lights, buckeyes, live grasses growing in a soil base, pinecones, and live fish represent just a few design ideas.

Centrepiece size should be dictated by table size and should not be so large that the centrepiece inhibits conversation. Marianne Raub explains that once a centrepiece design is selected, most florists will schedule an appointment for a sample showing so that clients can see their selections come together and make changes as necessary. Very large arrangements, such as those using bamboo or rented palm trees for a tropical theme should be prominently displayed, as should expensive arrangements, so that the couple feels they are worth the investment. Some flowers, such as carnations and alstroemeria, are often avoided for weddings because they are perceived as being "grocery store flowers." However, these less expensive varieties can lead to spectacular wreaths and arrangements that otherwise would not be affordable. Furthermore, the use of greenery, unique twigs, and bold ribbon can inexpensively finish the statement.

Prior to meeting with the floral designer, it is a good idea to inform your clients of charges for packing, delivery, installation, and removal. Depending on the size of the order, the complexity of the designs, and the distance travelled, these fees can be significant. Basic installation charges will vary by area, but anticipate a minimum charge of £150. Installation charges are based primarily on time, and many large arrangements cannot be transported and must be built on site. A floral chuppah, for example, is raised and decorated at the venue, which usually takes a minimum of an hour. Decorated tents, where each pole is intertwined with greenery and flowers, can take several hours to install. Furthermore, if the ceremony and the reception are at the same site, the floral designer will have to wait through the ceremony to do the changeover, which could increase the charge. However, this charge will probably be no different than the travel charge that will apply if the ceremony and reception are in separate locations.

At most venues, nails and tape will be prohibited, so hanging designs must be installed with ribbons, clips, decorative ropes, and ties. When the designer has finished the install, you should walk through to make sure that all the areas are clean and neat and that no trash or extra materials were inadvertently left behind. It is your job to make sure that the "curb appeal" is maintained.

The floral designer will also handle removal, and it is common for ceremony arrangements to be transported to the reception site. When bringing floral décor into a house of worship, it is important to know the policies, as some facilities require the arrangements to stay as a donation, others insist that they be removed, and others do not allow floral décor at all. If the flowers are required to stay, many

couples will make more modest selections as they will only get to enjoy these arrangements during the ceremony. Because venue policies vary considerably, it is important to familiarize yourself with the regulations before your clients make their floral décor selections.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Floral Décor

Assist your clients by asking them to make a list of all individuals who will be receiving personal flowers prior to meeting with the floral designer. Be aware that seasonality dictates availability and price of floral décor.

Remember that local farmers markets can be an excellent avenue for flowers when working with clients on a budget. Recognize that flowers set the stage and create a focal point for the ceremony.

Keep in mind that dark petals, both live and silk, can stain wood floors, carpets, and clothing. Make sure that your client's budget in packing, delivery, installation, and removal as part of floral décor costs.

Know the floral décor rules of the ceremony and reception venues in terms of permission, installation, and removal.

Music

A wedding, like life's other special moments, is enhanced by special music interspersed throughout the celebration. From the seating of the first guest to the newlyweds' getaway, music fills the day. As a wedding planner, clients will rely on your expertise to guide them in selecting the soundtrack to their wedding day. Music should always enhance and never overshadow the point of the wedding—the commitment of the couple. When selecting music and other entertainment, each stage of the wedding day should be considered: the ceremony, the cocktail hour, and the reception.

Ceremony Music

Unless the bride and groom are music aficionados, they will often turn to their wedding consultant for recommendations of music to be played during the ceremony. It is your job to assist the couple in selecting music to punctuate significant moments during the ceremony, from the bride's entrance to the recessional. The music that you choose for the wedding will set the overall tone and atmosphere for the wedding. It is therefore essential that you take the time to consider the style of music that you wish to have played at your wedding. Most couples tend to choose softer and subtle music to be played prior to, and during, the ceremony and leave the upbeat tunes for the reception dance floor!

You will need to firstly decide upon whether you wish to have live or recorded music and in what form. There are a number of different choices ranging from string quartets, and soloists through to live bands, DJs and simple CD recordings or MP3 players. You may wish to select one, or a variety of these, however at the end of the day choose the music that best suits your clients' personal style and budget.

The following guide may be of assistance:

Dramatic

- Bagpipes
- Choir
- String quartets.

Formal

- Classical singers
- Harpists
- Organists
- Pianists
- String quartets
- Trumpeters
- Violinists

Fun

- Bands
- DJs
- Guitarists
- Jazz Ensembles
- Jukebox
- Pianists
- Pop ensembles
- Saxophone quartets
- Singers
- Vocal ensembles

Romantic

- Classical guitarists
- Flautists
- Harpists
- Pianists
- Singers
- String quartets
- Violinists

Questions To Ask from the Entertainer

It's a good idea to prepare some questions to ask your entertainer before you meet with them. The list below may be of assistance to you.

- Do they have a demo CD of recent work? Demo CD's are a great way to get an idea of the band / DJs / entertainer's style and repertoire. There is one down side and that is that demo CDs often contain only brief examples of the entertainer's work – you may not get the 'whole' picture.
- Can you view the band / DJ / entertainer live? This is the best way to choose an entertainer for the wedding. Generally, what you see is what you get. If you're happy with them when you see their live performance, then it should be a reasonably accurate interpretation of what they will offer you for the wedding.
- Is the band /DJ / Entertainer registered as a business and are they insured? It is important that the band/DJ is recognised as a wedding business and that they are fully insured, including public liability insurance.
- How long has the band been together or DJ / entertainer been performing for? Are they experienced in weddings? It is important that the entertainers are experienced in performing together and are familiar with weddings.
- Are they able to deliver the music / entertainment that you wish to have for your wedding? Discuss your needs in full to ensure that you are on the same page in terms of the wedding requirements.
- Do they have a copy of their song list? Ensure that the list include a list of songs or music that you wish to hear on the wedding day.
- Is the entertainer willing to add songs or compilations to their song list upon your request? If there is a particular song that you cannot see on the list, ask whether it is possible for this to be added. In the case of a DJ, this should be fairly simple. For bands or soloists, they may have to learn the lyrics and practise with their musicians. Bear in mind that this may incur additional costs.
- Do they have back-up singers or staff should someone be unable to attend the performance? It is vital that the wedding day not be spoiled in the event that an entertainer is unable to attend the wedding on the day.
- How much do they charge? Ensure that you know exactly what you are getting and how much it will cost.
- Does the entertainer sign a contract with you, what does it involve and does he / she guarantee their work? Ensure that if you are to sign a contract with your entertainer that you have read it in it's entirety and understand it. It may be a good idea to compare contracts from one entertainer to the next to ensure that you are getting the 'best deal'. Always obtain a copy of the original for your records.

Ensure that you book an entertainer at least 9-12 months prior to the wedding in order to avoid missing out. Popular entertainers are often booked for weddings up to 12-18 months ahead, so ensure that you allow yourself enough time to look around.

When you have made your booking/s you will need to consider the music that you wish to have played throughout all aspects of the wedding day. The following information will give you some idea of when you may wish to have music played, along with popular choices of music amongst modern brides.

Most wedding ceremonies can be divided into five main parts: prelude, processional, the ceremony itself, recessional, and postlude.

Prelude

Just as the prelude of a book foreshadows events to come in a novel, the musical prelude for a wedding ceremony sets the mood for the service to follow. The type of music selected should reflect the personalities of the bride and groom, the formality of the wedding ceremony, and the setting. On one hand, if a wedding is to be held on the beach in Maui, the prelude music might include ukuleles, steel drums, or slack key guitars. On the other hand, if the wedding ceremony is held at a venue such as St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, which is the largest gothic-style Catholic cathedral in the United States and seats 2,200 (St. Patrick's Cathedral, 2006), a classical string quartet and trumpet player would be appropriate. You should plan for 30 to 45 minutes of prelude music before moving into the processional music.

Options for Live Music During the Prelude
• Chamber music ensemble (a small orchestra with strings, wind instruments, and percussion)
• Children's choir
• Classical guitar
• Church choir
• Church organ
• Flute and keyboard
• Guitar, cello, and flute
• Gospel choir
• Harp
• Harp and flute
• Piano
• Solo violin
• String quartet (two violins, viola, and cello)
• String trio (violin, viola, and cello)
• Vocalist
• Wind trio or quartet (assorted wind instruments such as clarinet, oboe, flute, trumpet, French horn, or bassoon)

Table 6.4

Processional

For the wedding processional, which is when the wedding party walks down the aisle, it is wise to consider the length of the aisle and the number of members in the wedding party before selecting the music. You might also time the trip down the aisle if you are working at an unfamiliar venue. Sometimes the processional is simply one song; most often, it is two or more songs played to differentiate between the arrival of the wedding party members and the arrival of the bride. The processional music, if done well, will build anticipation as the wedding party enters and continue to build suspense until the bride's dramatic appearance.

Wagner's Bridal Chorus from *Lohengrin* (better known as *Here Comes the Bride*) is the most traditional choice for the processional. However, because of Wagner's anti-Semitic writings, he remains a controversial figure and his music is seldom chosen for Jewish ceremonies (Eylon, 2006). Other popular options are Stanley's "Trumpet Voluntary," Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," and Pachelbel's "Canon in D." In addition to the classics, some couples prefer a nontraditional twist on their processional music and incorporate Broadway show tunes, classic jazz, or contemporary pop songs into their wedding day. The decision rests with the bride and groom, and anything goes. However, if the wedding is to take place in a house of worship, be sure to clear any secular music choices with the officiant well in advance of the wedding day, as nonreligious works may be prohibited.

Ceremony

During the ceremony itself, there may be musical interludes for such moments as group prayers and responses, lighting the unity candle, taking communion, or making special offerings. These moments are made for incorporating a special hymn or other piece of music. The ceremony also commonly includes a performance by a soloist or even a full choir. If your clients will be utilizing musical interludes, be sure that the music is chosen well in advance and coordinated with the needs of the officiant. Many couples choose a close friend who is musically talented to act as their soloist. It is important that this person be given an opportunity to practice during the rehearsal to become familiar with the acoustics of the facility and the style of the accompanist.

Recessional

Once the couple has been pronounced husband and wife, the music should turn festive and celebratory. The recessional music occurs as the wedding party exits the ceremony venue, setting the mood for the party to follow. Popular recessional music includes Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," Handel's "Water Music," and Mendelssohn's "Wedding March." Contemporary song choices might include selections from diverse artists such as Garth Brooks, Destiny's Child, Billy Joel, Shania Twain, U2, and Stevie Wonder. Most importantly, the music your bride and groom select should be joyful and meaningful to them.

For the recessional, consider a creative sound to enhance the exit from the ceremony site. Perhaps your clients want to hire a bagpiper or bell choir to play at the door of the church. If the venue is a hotel, maybe they will hire a blue grass band to set the tone, or perhaps a marching band will play the fight song from the groom’s alma mater. The options are vast when it comes to recessional music. The main point is to keep it celebratory, uplifting, and highly personalized.

Postlude

As they say, it ain’t over ‘til it’s over, and the ceremony is not over until the guests exit. This is why planning for a postlude, which is continuous music that plays as guests exit the ceremony space, is important, in particular if there is a large guest list. You should allow for about 10 minutes worth of postlude music, which allows guests to exit quickly and smartly to the sound of upbeat music rather than the shuffling of feet. Keep in mind that for many weddings, the ceremony and the reception are in the same venue, such as a hotel, museum, or resort. For weddings where there is not an obvious change of scenery, the postlude music becomes particularly important as a means to transition between the ceremony and reception. Music will also help encourage movement. For example, in a resort setting the ceremony may be located in a ballroom area, and then the cocktail hour is held on a patio while the ballroom is quickly turned for the reception.

Examples of Cocktail Hour Music

- Louis Armstrong
- The Beatles
- Jim Brickman
- Michael Buble
- Mariah Carey
- Ray Charles
- Patsy Cline
- Harry Connick, Jr.
- Vince Gill
- Norah Jones
- Yo-Yo Ma
- Michael McDonald
- Tim McGraw
- Sarah McLachlan
- Van Morrison
- Rod Stewart
- Vivaldi
- George Winston

Table 6.5

Cocktail Hour Music and Entertainment

With the wedding ceremony behind them, the music for a couple's cocktail hour should be light and breezy so as not to interfere with the guests' conversation. As there are limited opportunities for guests to converse during the wedding ceremony, the cocktail hour becomes the perfect setting for them to meet and mingle. Nat King Cole, Billie Holiday, and Frank Sinatra are just a few icons whose pleasing sounds are represented in compiled albums such as *The Original Great American Songbook*. Whether your client's music is live or prerecorded, playing the classics, light jazz, or big band during cocktails will start the reception on the right note. A sample of artists whose music works especially well during cocktails can be found in Table 6.5.

If there is a piano available at the reception venue, put it to good use and hire a pianist to play during cocktails. Make sure the piano is tuned and in good working order prior to the wedding day. Other live music for the cocktail hour might include a jazz trio, a violin and a flute, or even a banjo and a guitar. When hiring musical talent, be sure to check with the local music schools for up-and-coming talent at discounted prices. Also, managers of reception venues are excellent sources for finding a specific type of musician or specialty music such as a German polka band or a salsa band. When advising your client on musical options for cocktails and the reception, keep the space limitations in mind. You don't want a single acoustic guitar to be lost in a large space; conversely, you don't want to overwhelm your guests with too many musicians playing in tight quarters. In addition, be certain to familiarize yourself with any noise restrictions imposed by the venue. Amplified music may be forbidden if your venue is in a residential area. There may also be a limit on the number of musicians allowed or the duration of the music. If the venue is located in a quiet neighborhood, the last dance may have to conclude by 11:00 P.M. or earlier. Check with the venue for specifications and discuss them with your client. Make sure these restrictions are noted in the music contract.

Reception Music and Entertainment

Once cocktails have ended and the guests are invited to sit down for the reception, the music and entertainment take on a new direction. For the dinner itself, the music will be similar to the cocktail hour so as to encourage conversation. Once dinner is complete, there are specific moments that need to be highlighted through the music and the dancing. These special moments include the couple's first dance; the father/bride dance and the mother/groom dance; the cake cutting ceremony; music for the bouquet and garter toss, if included; music for the leave-taking of the couple, if prior to the end of the reception; and the last dance of the night. Beyond these specific breaks, the rest of the reception is often devoted to the pleasure of dancing.

Some couples will have a strong opinion regarding whether they want their music to be performed live. If they are uncertain, they will ask your advice on hiring a DJ versus hiring a wedding band. As a wedding consultant, you should be able to objectively present both sides for them to consider. The pros and cons

of this important decision are listed in Table 6.6. Also, it is important that you stay up on the latest artists. If your clients say that they want a band that has a sound

Pros and Cons of Live versus Prerecorded Music

Prerecorded Music (DJ): Pros

- Less expensive than a band
- Immediate access to a wide variety of music
- Short or no breaks
- Can act as emcee
- If space is tight, a DJ takes up almost no room
- Can take the pulse of the room and adjust music selections to keep the party going
- Can play the latest, contemporary music that cover bands may not play
- Because a DJ is just one person, there is less that can go wrong
- Setup time and special equipment are minimal

Prerecorded Music (DJ): Cons

- Personality may be abrasive or inappropriate
- May try to take over the organization of the reception
- Pre-recorded music cannot be easily adjusted to fit the timing of a moment
- Typically seen as less sophisticated and innovative than a live band

Live Music (Band): Pros

- There is great variety in bands in terms of size and style
- Live performance motivates guests to dance
- Lead singer can act as emcee
- Can readily adjust tone and speed of music
- An excellent band is a memorable part of the wedding
- Can establish a time period through dress, style, and equipment (e.g., Big Band)

Live Music (Band): Cons

- Usually more expensive than a DJ
- More complex contracts and personalities
- Lots of mouths to feed
- More that can go wrong with equipment
- Their repertoire will be more restricted than that of a DJ
- Setup time and equipment may be extensive
- Will require breaks; movement to recorded music during breaks will change

Table 6.6

Tone

Similar to Kelly Clarkson, Green Day, Toby Keith, Beyonce Knowles, Rihanna, or Shakira and you have no idea who these artists are, it will be hard to help them find the right talent. One way to stay up to date is by following artists who are on top of the charts. Web sites such as Billboard.com constantly update their listings and include biographies that will help you learn about the newest and hottest talent.

Other Reception Entertainment

Other reception entertainment is generally accompanied by music. The most common form of entertainment aside from the music itself is dance, and specific dances are anticipated moments of many weddings.

When considering these dances, the comfort of the couple should be kept in mind. Lababidi (2004) explains the love-hate relationship that persists with the Egyptian belly-dancing tradition at weddings

Egyptians are deeply conflicted about the respectability of the art form. . . . The fact that weddings are hardly complete without a belly-dancer is revealing, given the function of marriage as sanctifying the union between a man and a woman who is supposed to be a virgin. . . . The bride must fret: How can I possibly compete with this woman invulnerable to taboo? Having spent a lifetime shrewdly protecting her virtue and a small fortune on the appearance of her dress, she is being upstaged at her own wedding by a woman who seems to care for neither. The garter toss, common in American culture, can also push the limits of decorum, and many couples forego this tradition. Other dances are controversial for completely different reasons. Whether to have a money dance, for example, can be a source of significant conflict for a couple raised with different cultural traditions. One person might see it as an anticipated and fun way to dance with an abundance of guests in a short period of time, whereas the other may view it as greedy and tacky. Making decisions regarding whether to incorporate specific dances or other forms of entertainment should be done at least a month before the wedding, as differences in opinion regarding related traditions can cause the couple stress.

Tips for Hiring Entertainment

Whether your clients ultimately hire a soloist, a pianist, a string trio, a band, a DJ, or all of the above, your communication with the entertainment will be a key to the success of the wedding day. Beyond making sure the entertainment actually shows, be certain to have your clients prepare a list of songs they wish to hear and, just as important, a list of songs they do not wish to hear. This is particularly important for the reception. If your bride and groom want a “Macarena”- free reception, it must be stipulated in writing and presented to the entertainment liaison in advance. Also, the entertainment will need to receive a list of the wedding party for introductions, including the names and the correct pronunciations. Any additional special instructions should be spelled out in the contract and highlighted again prior to the wedding. Examples of this would be stipulations such as “No garter toss” or “No

father-daughter dance” or “Announce the cutting of the cake at 10:00 P.M.” With entertainment, like the other wedding elements, nothing should be left to chance. When hiring entertainment, prices are often negotiable based on the time of year, day of the week, and time of day. David Fletcher of Washington’s Best Musicians (2006) explains that there are five secrets to hiring entertainment at the best prices.

1. **Negotiate.** It is often better to state how much you can afford to pay rather than asking the entertainer how much he or she will charge. However, appreciate the fact that the person is an artist, and don’t offend an entertainer with an unreasonable offer.
2. **Consider the “proximity to the event” discount.** In other words, if your clients are willing to wait until two to three weeks prior to their wedding, they might be rewarded with paying less for musical talent that is not yet booked. While this tactic is implemented frequently in the corporate planning world, it may be more difficult to convince a stressed-out couple that there are merits to waiting.
3. **See who is already at the venue.** If your event is in the evening, see if there is a band or DJ already playing earlier in the day. You can save a significant amount by hiring them through the rest of the evening.
4. **Eliminate the liaison.** Talk directly to the person who provides the service. Online searches will provide an abundance of information when trying to find the immediate point of contact for a specific talent.
5. **Establish personal contact.** Become familiar with the best DJs and bands in your area. Learn the names of key personnel and remember them.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Music and Entertainment Options

- Recognize that each stage of the wedding day will require music: ceremony, cocktail hour, and reception.
- Be aware that there are five main parts of the wedding ceremony: prelude, processional, the ceremony, recessional, and postlude.
- Make sure the music selections are consistent with the overall tone of the wedding.
- Plan for 30 to 45 minutes of prelude music.
- For the processional, consider the length of the aisle and the number of members in the wedding party before deciding on music.
- Provide for a music change or dramatic pause before the bride makes her entrance.
- During the ceremony, highlight special moments through interlude music or vocal performances.
- Get approval on all secular music choices if the ceremony is at a house of worship.
- Be prepared to discuss the pros and cons of prerecorded versus live music with your clients.
- Familiarize yourself with all restrictions for the reception venue.
- Be prepared with a boom box and a CD of ceremony music and reception music just in case the entertainment is missing in action.

Stationery

Wedding invitations are usually issued by the parents of the bride or groom, or by the bride and groom themselves (or whoever is hosting the event). Generally, one invitation is sent to each family unless there has been a divorce in the family.

The wedding invitations are usually sent about 8-12 weeks prior to the wedding. This allows the guests ample time to RSVP, and to arrange accommodation and transport, if required. It will also allow you time to organise other aspects of the wedding that will be governed by guest numbers, for example, the size of your cake, how many bomboniere to order, and reception venue numbers.

Stationery Elements and Etiquette

Stationery elements are present throughout the wedding process and play ongoing roles in setting and carrying out the theme of a wedding. Stationery elements also bookend a wedding, in that they are generally the first thing the guests see, with save-the-date cards and invitations, as well as the last, with thank-you cards.

As a consultant, it is important to remember the spelling of stationery, which ends with an “ery” and not an “ary,” as it is often mistakenly spelled. This section provides an overview of the different components and purposes of stationery, including common rules of etiquette. While only taking up 3 percent of an average wedding budget, the wardrobe of stationery elements is quite broad including: save-the-date notices, invitations, calligraphy, ceremony programs, seating stationery, menus, personalized paper products, wedding announcements, and thank-you notes.

Save- the- Date Notices

Save-the-date notices, which are usually sent out 6 to 18 months before the wedding, have become an increasingly popular trend in the past five years. As discussed earlier, they are particularly important for destination weddings or those taking place over a holiday weekend. The use of refrigerator magnets is quite popular, since they can act as a constant reminder but cards or postcards are also commonly selected. Save-the-date notices generally indicate the name of the bride and groom, the date, and the location. The time of day may be included, as well as the wedding Web site should the couple have one. Often the phrase, “Invitation to follow,” is included so that the recipient knows that this is not the actual invitation. Save-the-date notices are usually informal and fun, but should still tie into the overall theme of the wedding.

Advise your clients that all potential guests should receive save-the date notices. Some clients may want to save by just sending them to out-of-town guests, but the schedules of local friends and relatives are just as busy. Furthermore, people know each other in these groups. If one friend comments on how clever the notice was, another might think, “I didn’t get it. I must not be invited to the wedding.” So it is important to be consistent.

Invitations

Invitations involve a significant number of decisions. This section covers the parts of the invitation, printing style, paper, font, wording, ordering, and delivery. The decisions that are made for the invitations are commonly carried over to other stationery elements.

Parts of the Invitation

The most formal invitations include the following: outer envelope, inner envelope, invitation card, reception card, and response card. Invitations may also include additional information such as a directions card or a card with lodging options. Lynne Sandler from *Lettering by Lynne*, featured in *Vendor Spotlight*, Case 18.1, explains that the dual envelopes originated from the time when mail was delivered by horse and carriage. Unpaved, muddy roads and the open elements would cause the outer envelope to become stained. The outer envelope was discarded upon arrival, and the invitation was then presented to the homeowner with the clean inner envelope. Now outer and inner envelopes are used for different wording purposes, which will be discussed in the wording section of this chapter. The outer envelope is gummed so that it can be sealed. The inner envelope is never sealed.

The invitation card gives the specifics of the event, which will be discussed thoroughly in the wording section of this chapter. A reception card is needed primarily when the ceremony and reception are held at different venues; if they are at the same location, the words “Reception to follow” are often included on the invitation itself. The response card, also called the reply card, has an interesting background in that traditionally this was never included; instead, the recipient of the invitation would write a formal letter of acceptance to the event. The response card emerged as a time-saving device in light of a more hurried pace of life. Furthermore, some response cards will include a listing of entrée options so that each guest can select his or her reception meal. The response card must include an addressed, stamped envelope for return purposes.

Some clients will ask you if it is appropriate to include a registry card in the invitation. This card offers the details regarding the stores where the couple has registered for gifts. While becoming more commonplace, etiquette suggests that it is highly inappropriate for couples to include this information in a wedding invitation, as it implies to the invited guests that they are required to purchase a gift and, moreover, that the gift must come from a certain place. Guests who wish to honor the couple with a gift should not feel constrained to a predetermined listing. For those who prefer to select something from the couple’s registry, this store information can be readily requested and obtained through word-of-mouth or e-mail.

Printing Style

For wedding invitations, four primary printing styles are used: engraving, letterpress, thermography, and flat. Engraving is a traditional printing style that is very formal and expensive. Typically, brides that request engraved invitations are encouraged to do so by their mothers, who recall this classic style. With

an engraved invitation, when you run your hand over the wording, you will feel a texture that is slightly raised and when you turn the invitation over, there is an impression. A metal plate with the wording etched in is made specifically for the invitation.

The paper, which is usually all cotton and watermarked, is pressed into the inked plate, and the impression is made. A second style, which was also historically common, is letterpress. Letterpress is a process that is essentially the opposite of engraving, where the letters are raised and then pressed into a soft paper, leaving an indent on the front of the invitation. When you run your hand over it, you can feel the ridges. Letterpress is a classy and very expensive style of printing, in part because few companies now offer this technique.

Thermography, in contrast to the first two styles, is inexpensive and accordingly is also the most commonly chosen printing style. Similar to engraving, thermography is raised printing that can be felt, but if you turn the invitation over there is no impression. The invitation is printed through a regular printing press, allowing for a very fast process. While the ink is still wet, it is sprayed with a powder, and then it moves to another phase that has heat. The heat allows the powder and ink to chemically react, which results in the raised ink. Some companies do not thoroughly brush off the remaining powder, and a gritty residue may remain. Flat printing is also inexpensive and is chosen when the couple wants to include design elements that do not lend themselves to a raised style. Contemporary invitations with photographs, graphic designs, or large images are not well suited for raised printing. Invitations may also include an embossed image, which is a raised image that does not include ink and is used for monograms or thematic images such as cultural symbols, flowers, shells, stars, leaves, or snowflakes. These types of images may also be printed using the styles mentioned above.

Invitation Paper

The paper selected is determined in part by the printing style but is largely a matter of personal choice and budget. The cost of invitations is determined not only by the printing style, but also by the quality of the paper. Paper that is 100 percent cotton or linen rag will be significantly more expensive than a synthetic blend of paper. Bond weight of paper is another indication of quality, and 32 or 40 pound paper is a good letter quality (Stewart, 1999). As a point of comparison, typical computer paper is 20 pound. Handmade paper and/or features such as ribbons, gold leaf edging, vellum overlays, dried flowers, and envelope liners add significantly to the cost. When selecting paper, color is another

consideration. In the United States, ecru-colored stock, which is a soft ivory shade, is the traditional choice, while in Europe white is more frequently chosen. For contemporary invitations, a full spectrum of colors is available, and a couple can readily find invitations to match the theme and tone of their wedding.

Font

The range of fonts has grown significantly, and whether a classic or contemporary font is chosen will be based on the style of the invitation itself.

Options to consider include:

1. cursive or printed style;
2. all uppercase letters versus a mixture of uppercase and lower case;
3. the inclusion of monograms or other large specialty fonts; and
4. ink color.

The traditional ink color for the font is black, but colored inks have become very common. For example, a fall wedding might include a rust or olive green ink on an invitation with a leaf motif.

Wording

Wording begins with the envelopes. The outer envelope is the most formal, with full names and titles used. For the addresses, there should be no street or state abbreviations. For example, use Road rather than Rd. and Colorado rather than CO. The outer envelope should be addressed to the primary recipient or recipients, while the inner envelope can include additional invitees using formal or informal names. For instance, the outer envelope might be addressed to Mr. Gregory Aabas, while the inner envelope states Greg and Guest. Similarly, an outer envelope might state Commander Robert Ariza and Doctor Linda Tighe-Ariza, while the inner states Rob, Lynne, Cindy and Joey, which includes the names of the guests' children. However, the most formal invitations would use the full titles on both the inner and outer envelopes. The wording of the invitation itself can get quite complicated when considering changing family dynamics. Geller (1999) explains that the decorum of the traditional wedding invitations, which suggest uniformity and a patriarchal society, is challenged in an age where individualism and egalitarianism are widespread; when stable, nuclear families are giving way to divorce; when second marriages and blended families are commonplace; and when cross-cultural unions are prevalent. For example, some brides have two sets of parents or even three, so it is not feasible to list all of their names on the invitation. In general, there are six parts to the invitation wording with associated lines: host; request; bride and groom; date and time; location; and special instructions (Stewart, 1999).

The wording of the response card should mimic the formality of the invitation wording. Three elements found in most response cards include a space for guest name(s); an indication of attendance; and the date by which a response is desired. If the guests are able to choose an entrée or if other decisions are to be made, information regarding their selection options is also included.

Following are three examples of how the invitation might be worded, each accompanied by a response card that reflects the invitation's tone. The most traditional and formal, with the parents of the bride acting as hosts. Furthermore, the R.S.V.P. in the request line means that the guests are to send a

personal reply; therefore, no response card will be included. The open response card can also be used for less formal weddings, as it allows guests to write creative notes that are often saved by the couple in a memory album.

The wording of the reception card is the most straightforward and includes the location and time of the reception. If there are going to be a significant number of out-of-town guests, it is also advisable to include a directions card. Also, if it is an adult ceremony and/or reception, this is generally repeated on the reception card. Couples who feel very strongly about not having children at their wedding should indicate this in two or three different places. Ambiguity may arise as to what age represents the cutoff: some couples do not want young children, such as those under the age of 5, whereas others do not want guests under the age of 18. Often word of mouth and e-mail communication are used to clarify any questions that arise.

Ordering Invitations

Suggest to your clients that they start working with a stationery specialist four to six months before their wedding. As pointed out by Lynne Sandler, stationery companies can work within a shorter time frame, but the creative options become limited the closer couples get to their wedding date. It is also important to allow plenty of time to go through the proofing process. Some invitations take multiple proofs before the desired look is achieved. Remind your clients that once they have approved the proof, they accept full responsibility for the information, spelling, print style, font, punctuation, layout, and color separation.

When ordering invitations, the couple should count the number needed based on households rather than individual people. A common mistake is to order the number of invitations based on the number of guests, but if they are inviting 100 people, they typically will not need 100 invitations. They probably need between 50 and 75 depending on how many singles, couples, and children will be invited. At the same time, encourage your clients to make sure they do not under order, for it is much more expensive to reorder invitations than it is to have 10 or so extra invitations printed. Once a company has the initial order off the press, the order is done, and if it comes back, it is a brand-new job. Remind your clients that the first 25 of any stationery item will be the most expensive and the price drops significantly after that. Furthermore, most high-end companies will not accept invitation orders of less than 50. For example, 50 high-quality invitations will cost \$12 or more each but when ordering 100 of the same design, the price can drop to \$10 apiece. Less expensive invitations follow the same pattern and can drop from \$6 each for orders of 25 to \$2 each for orders of 100.

Delivery

Encourage your clients to have the invitations weighed for postage purposes. Many invitations weigh more than one ounce with all of the inserts, and the last thing a couple wants is for their invitations to arrive with postage due. Even if the mailing weighs less than one ounce, additional postage will still be necessary if the envelope is bulky or the invitation is oddly shaped; for example, square invitations

require additional postage. You should also advise your clients to have the invitations hand canceled, again because the number of inserts can cause bulk and can be mangled going through the postage meter. For etiquette purposes, the hand cancellation is also a more elegant look. Suggest to your clients that, before sending out the full mailing, they mail one invitation to themselves as a test run. They should include all parts of the invitation. This test will allow them to see how long the invitation takes to reach them and determine if it arrives in good shape.

The post office carries an array of floral and “Love” stamps that are popular for mailing invitations. In addition, your clients can order custom-designed postage stamps through Web sites such as Photo-Stamps.com. The stamp might be the couple’s engagement photo or an image that ties into the theme of the wedding. For example, if the couple is having a beach theme, the stamp might include a photo of an ocean, shells, or palm trees.

Couples should also consider to whom they want the response card to be returned. Traditionally it was returned to the parents of the bride, but today it is just as likely to be returned to the bride. Two recent trends do not involve a surface mail return, as guests can respond through 1–800 numbers managed by companies that track RSVPs or through Web site addresses. Invitations should be mailed anywhere from 6 to 10 weeks before the wedding. Some couples will mail to their “A” list 10 weeks out, then their “B” list, and sometimes even a “C” list, based on rejections from the earlier groups. A tiered guest list has significant etiquette implications, as peer groups talk and people can quickly become aware that they are not in the top group, which can cause hurt feelings.

Calligraphy

A calligrapher’s hand printing is a very elegant and personal way to create stationery elements. Guests have been known to talk for years about invitations they received that were hand lettered by a calligrapher. A calligrapher can be hired to letter any stationery element but is most commonly brought on to address the envelopes. If a calligraphy specialist is hired for the invitation, menu, or other item that can be used for all guests, this person will hand design a template that will then be typeset and printed. Because envelopes are unique to each guest, the time investment and cost are significant, with the charge for each set of inner and outer envelopes ranging from \$5 to \$7. This beautiful touch is therefore usually reserved for weddings with above average budgets.

Because hiring a calligrapher can be cost prohibitive, couples generally explore other options for addressing their envelopes. Handwriting is considered to be more personal, and some couples even have gatherings where friends or family members with elegant handwriting will help them with this task. Etiquette dictates that black ink should be used when addressing envelopes by hand. Be certain to have your clients order plenty of extra envelopes if they plan to use hand addressing, as this process is subject to error. Because of the wasted envelopes and time associated with handwriting, couples are increasingly turning to computerized addressing. Most stationery vendors can assist with this task, and calligraphy fonts now exist that are nearly as beautiful as hand calligraphy. The address should be printed directly on the envelope and labels should be avoided.

Ceremony Programs

Approximately 70 percent of couples use programs to guide guests through their ceremony. Programs come in all different shapes and sizes and are often designed and printed by the couple to save on costs. The purpose of the program is to introduce the guests to the wedding party and set forth the organization of the ceremony. If held in a house of worship, it is important to determine if there are any restrictions regarding program wording. Generally, all members of the wedding party will be listed, and information regarding readings, prayers, responses, music, and vows will be included. Some programs will give details regarding special ceremony elements. For example, if the couple will be jumping the broom, an African American tradition, a paragraph regarding the history of this tradition might be included. Many couples will also include a dedication or message of thanks in their program. For the most part, guests do not want to read War and Peace during the wedding ceremony, so advise your clients that they do not have to go overboard. Too much reading will draw guests' attention away from the ceremony itself. If the couple is cross-cultural and there are guests present who speak different languages, it is a very welcoming touch to have the program printed in both languages, side by side. For more casual weddings, the program is also a place where the personality of various members of the wedding party can be shared.

Program design is frequently initiated late in the planning process, as the ceremony is often finalized only a few weeks before the wedding. However, if your clients are creating their own programs, advise them not to wait until the last minute as they do not want to be tying raffia or ribbons on programs the night before the wedding. Beyond the program, other specialized ceremony elements require stationery. For example, pew cards can be used when reserving special seats for honored guests or if the immediate family needs more than the first two rows. Many stationery professionals also can design a personalized ketubah, which is the Jewish marriage contract. Furthermore, couples who write their own vows often like to have them printed and framed. Finally, guest books are often specially designed and can be used for the ceremony and/or the reception.

Seating Stationery

If a couple wishes to designate where guests will sit at the wedding reception, seating stationery should be used. For example, if cocktails are over at 6:45 P.M. and dinner is going to be served at 7:00 P.M., then that leaves only 15 minutes to navigate what might be several hundred people into the dining area. Seating stationery can include a seating chart, escort cards, place cards, and table markers. A seating chart gives an alphabetized listing of guests. Next to each name, the table where each is seated is indicated. Seating charts are large and can be mounted on foam board or placed in a rented frame, but can cause congestion if the number of guests is more than 100.

Photograph by Escort cards are a different seating option, and list the person's name and table number on an individual card. Table markers tell guests when they have reached the right place. If using numbers, options such as #1, ONE, or Table 1 can be selected. Advise your clients to avoid using Roman numerals because in a muted ballroom, numbers such as XI, XII, and XIII look too similar and cause confusion for both guests and staff. Keep table markers simple and make the font big and bold for easy

location. Table markers are often placed in stands or frames that can be rented from your stationery specialist, catering company, or floral designer if incorporated in the centerpiece.

A place card will also be used if the guests have not only a specific table, but also a designated seat. When reaching that level of detail, remind your clients that they will need to allow plenty of time to work on the site layout. Seating stationery allows for design touches that tie into the theme of the wedding. For example, a winter theme might have escort cards embossed with a snowflake, while a Parisian theme might use tourist sites such as the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre to designate tables. A couple that loves to hike may use the names of rivers, mountains, or trees to differentiate the tables.

Menus

Formal receptions often include menu cards, which are used to indicate the names of the dishes to be served and may also designate the primary ingredients. Menus heighten guests' expectations, create a sense of culinary anticipation, and can promote understanding of cultural traditions.

In terms of design, menus often include the monogram of the newlywed couple and can also include creative terminology. For example, instead of using the expression "First Course" this meal stage can be called "Romance" or another term related to the couple's theme. Similar to signature drinks, caterers will work with couples to create specialty entrées with clever, enticing names. Menu cards can be printed on cardstock or, alternatively, a fine parchment paper that is rolled and then tied. They are often tucked inside each guest's napkin, placed on a charger plate, or leaned up against the water glass.

Personalized paper products such as napkins, boxes, bags, or matches can further develop a wedding theme. Napkins are the most commonly chosen and come in a multitude of colors and styles. They are generally placed on the cake table and in the bar area. Often the napkins just include a monogram or the newlyweds' names and the wedding date, but they can also include a touch of humor. For example, one couple had the phrase, "Eat, drink and remarry" printed on the napkins, as it was the second marriage for both bride and groom.

Personalized boxes and bags are often purchased for use with favors and are typically filled with mints, chocolates, or some other treat. Matches have become less common, in particular because most reception venues now prohibit smoking; however, when the favor is a candle, personalized match books can add a nice touch.

Wedding Announcements

Many couples elect to have small weddings for personal reasons, based on budget constraints or because they held a destination wedding where many friends and family member were not invited or could not attend. In cases such as these, a wedding announcement is a courtesy notice sent to those not invited, informing them that the wedding took place. The announcement simply states the names of the bride and groom, the date of the wedding, and the location where it was held.

Announcements are only sent to those who were not in attendance at the wedding because it would be redundant to send these notices to those who were present. They are usually mailed within a week after the wedding. Announcements should never go out until after the wedding, on the off chance that it does not take place.

Thank-You Notes

Thank-you notes are a type of social stationery and are also known as informals. Informals can match the invitation or they can be generic, which allows them to be used for other purposes. As stated earlier, small stationery orders cost significantly more than larger orders. For instance, 50 informals might cost \$100, while 100 are priced at \$130. Informals commonly include the monogram of the couple. If the bride is taking the last name of the groom, her first initial is on the left, the initial of the shared last name is in a larger font in the middle, and the groom's first initial is on the right. If she is not taking his name, it is common to have her initials or full name printed on the left followed by a large ampersand and then the groom's initials or full name. Some couples will include a wedding photograph in their thank-you notes. Every guest might receive the same picture, or the photos can be personalized, which is common with weddings where an instant camera is left at each reception table. This allows the couple to share moments that were documented by their guests.

Thank-you messages should never be preprinted or generic; each note should be specific to both the guest and the gift. For large weddings, consultants often assist with gift documentation and thank-you note writing so that the information is correct and the notes go out in a timely fashion.

In terms of etiquette, informals should be sent out within one month after the wedding. However, a late thank-you note is better than no thank-you note, so inform your clients that they should not use tardiness as an excuse for bypassing this important task. Separate shower and wedding gifts from the same person should be acknowledged in different notes; furthermore, monogrammed informals indicating a changed last name should never be sent out until after the wedding.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Stationery Elements

- Remember that stationery ends with “ery.”
- Note that printing style and paper quality will dictate the cost of stationery.
- While the wording of stationery elements is etiquette driven, reassure your clients that they should select wording that fits their personalities.
- Remind the couple that does not wish to have children at their ceremony or reception to make this clear in their invitations and response cards.
- When ordering invitations, base it on the number of households rather than the number of individuals.
- Order enough invitations to prevent the need for a reorder.

When mailing invitations, be aware of increased postage for bulky or square-shaped envelopes

Transport and Wedding Cars

Arriving in style on your wedding day is the only way to go in the eyes of many modern day brides.

There is something truly unique about the ambience that is created as a bride arrives at her wedding day ceremony venue. The air is full of anticipation as everyone eagerly waits his or her first glimpse of the bride as she steps out of her wedding car (or whatever mode of transport she has utilised).

Transportation

So you think you have coordinated the perfect wedding? Your client selected gorgeous flowers designed by the best florist in town and gourmet food from an elite caterer. The reception looked like something straight out of the pages of Grace Ormonde Wedding Style magazine. You begin to congratulate yourself on a job well done when you discover there is a backup at the door, and it is taking guests 45 minutes to retrieve their cars from valet parking.

Choosing the Wedding Vehicles

In the bigger scheme of things, the wedding vehicles may not seem a top priority in comparison to other elements such as the dress, cake, or reception venue. And whilst in one way this may seem true, you do however; need to consider your options early in order to avoid disappointment.

It is not uncommon for wedding transport companies to book out up to 12 months in advance. Ensure that you allow yourself enough time to explore and book the wedding transport.

From horse-drawn carriages and vintage classics to modern stretch limousines and even wedding 'trikes', there are various options to choose from when it comes to planning the wedding vehicles.

Consider the overall style and formality of the wedding and choose vehicles that complement this style. If the wedding is a formal or traditional affair, classic and vintage cars, along with horse-drawn or princess carriages are a perfect choice. On the other hand a more modern wedding may call for a sporty convertible or stylish limo.

Inspecting the Vehicles

Once you have found some potential companies, it's time to give them a call to arrange an appointment to personally inspect the vehicles and meet the staff. It's a good idea to choose 3-4, if possible.

It is advisable that you do not book vehicles without inspecting them first. Whilst the photos in the magazines may look impressive, looks can be deceiving. Take your time when inspecting the vehicle, taking into account the size of the vehicle, cleanliness, it's condition both inside and out, interior comforts, maintenance and repair of the vehicle, whether there are any scratches, rust or damage,

whether the vehicle has any odour, whether the vehicle is heated and air-conditioned and the overall appearance of the vehicle.

It is also advisable to view uniforms or attire that the staff may wear on the wedding day. Should you be having a horse-drawn vehicle, be sure to view the horses to ensure that they are in good health and of a quiet nature.

Ask the company whether they have any display albums or videos of their staff and vehicles 'in action'. Ask plenty of questions and decide which company appeals to your client's style and transportation needs. Make sure that you also enquire as to whether the company is licensed. Car hire companies may be fined if they are operating without a license and police have the right to stop a vehicle from travelling any further if they are pulled over.

Question To Ask

Ensure that you prepare some questions to ask each company before you meet with them. The list below may be of assistance to you.

- Do they have recent examples of weddings that they have attended? This will usually be in the form of display albums or videos.
- Are the vehicles that you actually inspect and the staff that you meet with (at your appointment) the ones that will be used for the wedding day?
- How many people do the vehicles seat?
- Are the vehicles used for other weddings on the same day, or only one wedding?
- Are any food and beverages provided in the vehicle?
- Is the company licensed to operate as a wedding car hire company?
- How many staff / chauffeurs are provided with the vehicle?
- What wedding packages are available and what do they include?
- Are there any special offers available with the venue's wedding packages (reduced price for off-peak, winter or Sunday weddings etc)?
- Do the chauffeurs carry umbrellas and assist the bride in and out of the vehicle?
- How long is the vehicle hire for?
- Are the vehicles heated and air-conditioned?
- What happens in the event of a vehicle breaking down?
- Are 'back up' vehicles always available?
- Are there any extra costs associated with the hire of the vehicle?
- When are deposits, instalments and final payments due? How much will they be?
- Are there any cancellation fees?

Other Consideration

In addition to these questions, you may wish to consider the following:

- Are the car hire company's costs within your client's budget?
- Are the vehicles in keeping with the style and theme of the wedding?
- Are the vehicles available on the date of the wedding?
- Are their chauffeurs familiar with the locations of the ceremony and reception areas?
- Do the chauffeurs carry mobile phones, in the event of an emergency? This really is a must.
- If you have signed a contract, ensure that you have a copy, have read it and understand what you are signing.
- Quality over price is usually the best way to go.

Coordinating transportation logistics may make you feel like a glorified dispatcher, but, at the end of the wedding, getting the guests home in a timely fashion becomes one of the most important details. While they may not remember seamless transportation, they are sure to recall the wedding where they had a seemingly endless wait in the cold because the transportation was disorganized. Arranging transportation for your client's wedding involves five main areas:

1. getting started;
2. transportation to the ceremony venue;
3. transportation from the ceremony to the reception;
4. transportation from the reception to the final destination; and
5. transportation costs and final details.

Getting Started

When you meet with your clients to discuss their transportation needs, a good place to start is to have them consider the number of people who will need transportation at various times throughout the wedding festivities. You will need to have a clear understanding of all transportation requirements from picking up guests at the airport to arranging a vintage Rolls-Royce to bring the newlyweds home after their honeymoon has ended.

Prepare a list of questions to ask your clients so that you can begin to understand their unique transportation needs. These questions will pertain to what, who, and when. First, what style or styles of vehicles will they want for their wedding day? Are they interested in a

white stretch limo, Hummer, SUV, Lincoln town car, or vintage automobile? The number of choices is limited only by your client's imagination and their transportation budget.

Second, who needs to be transported? Have your clients spell out exactly who will need to be moved from point A to point B on the wedding day. It is important for you to know the exact number of people who require transportation so that you can recommend the appropriate vehicles. Have your clients prepare a list of the names of the wedding party and the guests needing transportation so that you will know exactly who needs to be picked up and from where. If the bride's grandmother is confined to a wheelchair, this will influence the type of transportation you send to pick her up. All of this information is useful in shaping your vehicle recommendations.

Third, when will individuals need to be transported? For destination weddings, the transportation needs can get out of control if not coordinated. Cross-check flight schedules to determine the various arrivals and departures so that the number of trips to the airport can be minimized. As introduced in Chapter 8, having a separate timeline specific to transportation can help make the wedding run smoothly.

Transportation to the Ceremony

After determining the number of people requiring transportation, the next step involves deciding how to transport the bride and her attendants to the ceremony. The bride will need wedding day transportation from the location where she is dressing to the wedding ceremony location. The bride takes this last ride as a single woman accompanied by her father, mother, or her bridesmaids. Since it is typically the father who escorts the bride down the aisle, it is wise to keep them together prior to the wedding ceremony.

For just the two of them, the transportation can be a classic car, a horse and buggy, or another intimate type of vehicle. If the wedding takes place on the family farm, the vehicle of choice might be an antique Ford truck or a hot air balloon. As long as you can match the vehicle style to the theme of the wedding, you will be well on your way to successfully conveying your bride and her father to one of the most important events of their lives. If, however, the bride wishes to meet her father at the ceremony venue and ride with her attendants, you will need to find a comfortable vehicle to hold all of the women. A stretch limo holds 10 to 12 passengers, while a regular limo can accommodate 6 to 10 passengers comfortably. A town car can hold two to four passengers. Take a head count and then see which type of vehicle will best suit the size of the wedding party.

After planning the bride's transportation, you should discuss the arrangements for getting the groom to the ceremony. Perhaps you will hire another limo to pick up the groom and his family at their home or hotel. Maybe the groom wants to ride with his groomsmen to the ceremony in a stretch Hummer. Whatever the plan is for the groom, make sure that you are aware of all the arrangements and that you have a contact phone number even if the groom

is simply riding with his brother in the family minivan. You will want to be aware of the groom's exact location throughout the wedding day.

You will next want to assist the rest of the bridal party, the families, and the guests with transportation. Again, the mode of transportation selected will be dictated by the style of the wedding and the number of people requiring assistance. Secure the transportation well in advance if your client's wedding is during prom or graduation season, when most limos and other luxury cars will be in high demand. It is a thoughtful gesture on the part of the bride and groom to arrange for buses to shuttle guests to the wedding and bring them back to their lodging at the end of the reception. This will ensure the guests' safety and will cut down on late arrivals. Motor coaches can seat around 50 people, while executive coaches can accommodate up to 20 passengers (Rodriguez, 2004). Hiring a fleet of vehicles is another option. In addition to the standard types of vehicles, you can suggest a trolley, a double-decker bus, or a boat to make the trip more interesting and enjoyable for all passengers. If the time spent during

transport is going to be substantial, advise your clients to hire a tour guide or local expert to entertain the guests with stories and anecdotes along the way.

If your client is planning to provide transportation for the guests, this information needs to be communicated well in advance so that the guests can take full advantage of the arrangement. Sending out a mailing with the invitations or to confirmed guests is an excellent way to coordinate this information. The information can also be posted on the couple's Web site. Tell the guests exactly where to find the transportation and when the vehicle will depart for the ceremony. You may want to pad this time by 10 to 15 minutes to accommodate stragglers

Transportation from the Ceremony to the Reception

After your clients are pronounced husband and wife, there will be an excited press of guests anxious to proceed to the reception. To facilitate this movement of people, it again makes sense to transport guests en masse, especially if the reception venue is located in a major city. Using the same transportation that brought them to the ceremony to drive them to the reception is the most economical option. If you think, however, that the majority of the guests will drive their personal vehicles to the reception, then it might be more sensible to hire a valet service to assist with parking and retrieving the cars. Most valet services charge \$20 to \$25 per attendant per hour, plus gratuity. If the reception is in a crowded downtown district, then having a valet service will save the guests the time and aggravation of looking for an open parking space or the expense of putting the car in a pay lot.

Figure on five to six valets per 100 guests. Give special consideration to the end of the evening when you will need additional staff to make sure all the guests get their cars quickly. You don't want to keep guests waiting for more than 5 to 10 minutes. Guests who drive their own cars should be provided with clear directions to the reception with the starting point as the ceremony venue. Special attendants can hand out directions after the

ceremony has ended. If directions are mailed far in advance, chances are the guests will forget them, so it is best to hand them out or, minimally, have extra copies available on the day of the wedding.

Another way your clients can take care of their guests is to prepay the parking fee if there is a charge at the venue. Have this fee built into the contract with the venue. If you are estimating 200 guests, then count on about 100 cars. If the hotel charges a flat fee of £15 per car, your client will pay £1,500 to the hotel to ensure their guests park at no charge. This is a gracious gesture that should be communicated to all guests so they don't end up accidentally paying for parking.

Once your clients are married, they will certainly want to depart for the reception in style. Their ride will be determined by how far the reception venue is from the ceremony. If it is just a few steps away, then perhaps they will walk hand in hand to the accompaniment of a string trio. If the reception site is a few blocks away, then perhaps a horse-drawn carriage will add just the right touch. However, if the reception is a good distance away, then the couple will want to be as comfortable and cozy as possible and perhaps a vintage car is the way to go. Whatever type of transportation your clients select, make sure that you get all the details in writing, including arrival time (which you should pad by 15 minutes or so to be sure

the transportation is on time), reception departure time, addresses of all locations, the size, color, and model of the car the client is renting, the name of the driver, cost, gratuity, special requests, and the duration of time that you have contracted the vehicle. If you want the driver to take the scenic route on the way to the reception, make sure this information is included as well. Be as specific as possible and familiarize yourself with the limitations of each vehicle type. For example, if the couple yearns for a horse-drawn carriage, but the wedding is held in Seattle, it will be best to ensure that it is a covered carriage because Seattle is notorious for rain.

As the reception winds down and the last dance has ended, the bride and groom, as well as their wedding party and guests, will be anxious to leave the reception and head off to their final destinations. For the newlyweds' exit, it is important that you ascertain from them exactly how they want to make their departure. Do they want to quietly steal away? Do they want to dash through an arch of sparklers into a waiting limo? Perhaps they want a Vespa scooter at the ready to whisk them to their hotel. Before you book the exit vehicle, you must understand their wishes and translate them into reality. Table 19.1 includes a list of creative modes of transportation that can be used for a memorable exit or at any other point during the wedding day.

For the guests and wedding party, it is important to ferry them back to where they started the day so that they can pick up their cars or fall into bed at their hotels. Leaving guests without a ride is very inconsiderate. As a wedding planner, you should encourage your clients to think about their obligations as hosts for the evening and

Creative Modes of Transportation

• All terrain vehicles	• Ice cream truck
• Antique fire engine	• Mini Cooper
• Bicycle built for two	• Monster truck
• Camel	• Moped
• Canoe	• Motorcycle with sidecar
• Chinese rickshaw	• Sailboat
• Cross country skis	• Sleigh
• Dog sled	• Snowboard
• Duck boat	• Snowmobile
• Elephant	• Subway
• Golf cart	• Surfboard
• Horseback	• Vintage VW Beetle

Table. 6.7

Sample Fee Structure for Common Forms of Wedding Transportation

Vehicle Type		Hourly Rate	Minimum Rental Time	Total Cost
Sedan:	4 passengers	£68/hour	3 HR	£204
SUV:	5 passengers	£78/hour	3 HR	£234
Limo:	6 passengers	£90/hour	3 HR	£270
Limo:	8 passengers	£105/hour	3 HR	£315
Limo:	10 passengers	£125/hour	3 HR	£375
Limo Van:	6 passengers	£75/hour	3 HR	£225
Limo Bus:	18 passengers	£140/hour	3 HR	£560
Van:	14 passengers	£60/hour	3 HR	£240
Van Terra:	12 passengers	£80/hour	3 HR	£320
Mini Bus:	20 passengers	£85/hour	3 HR	£340
Mini Bus:	25 passengers	£90/hour	3 HR	£360
Mini Bus:	30 passengers	£95/hour	3 HR	£380
Mini Bus:	35 passengers	£100/hour	3 HR	£400
Coach:	55 passengers	£120/hour	4 HR	£600
Tour Guide		£55/hour	4 HR	£220
Greeter on-site		£35/hour	4 HR	£140

Table. 6.8

The importance of taking care of their guests. These small considerations will be remembered for years to come. So whether you provide a bus, a van, or a line of yellow taxis, it is very important to get the guests safely home, especially those who have been drinking. While transportation costs will vary from region to region, it is helpful to have a cost comparison. Most companies will require a 3- or 4-hour minimum for any form of transportation, so bear that in mind when comparing costs. Check with your transportation vendor to determine if the fee structure includes the fuel charge and gratuity. Furthermore, some high-maintenance vehicles will include a garage time (GT) fee for servicing after use. This fee usually pertains to large vehicles in which riders are eating and drinking. Table 6.8 includes a sample fee structure provided by Kristina Bowery of Reston Limo (2006). While these costs will vary based on the region where you reside, this table offers general guidelines.

The well-prepared wedding consultant has an eye for detail and an ear for trouble. Months prior to a wedding, you should check with local authorities on street closings, especially if your event is during a holiday weekend or in a large city where special events can snarl traffic for hours. For example, if your client's wedding reception will be held at a private club close to the United Nations headquarters in New York, call the city and speak to the department that issues permits to see if there will be a high-security event taking place. You should determine potential transportation difficulties with enough time to discuss options with your clients. In a post-September 11 world, street closings and heightened security have become a way of life. When you are planning for your client's transportation, remember to check with the city government or local law enforcement to make sure there is nothing that will interfere with the wedding.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Hiring Transportation

- Know the couple's transportation preferences, determine who needs transport, and create a transportation timeline.
- Be aware of how the couple, bridal party, and guests will be transported to the ceremony site, from the ceremony to the reception, and to their final destination.
- Prepare a timeline that is specific to transportation.
- Make sure leave-taking from the ceremony and reception is efficient.
- Be aware of the restrictions and limitations of each vehicle type being considered.
- Determine if the transportation company's pricing structure includes the fuel charge, gratuity, and garage time.
- Confirm with transportation vendors and supply directions to each place a driver will be stopping.
- Get day-of phone numbers for the Transportation Company and drivers.
- Check with police and city government offices on street closings, parades demonstrations, and other special events.
- Encourage your clients to pay for the venue parking fees for their guests.
- Secure transportation early if the wedding is during prom or graduation season.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *The Wedding Fairy's Big Day Breakdown: Planning for an Unforgettable Celebration, (2013), By The Wedding Fairy George Watts*
- ✓ *Wedding Planning For Dummies, (2012), By Marcy Blum*
- ✓ *The Wedding Planner's Big Day, (By Cara Colte*