

Wedding Attire

Unit

7

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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 7 .1 Sentimental "Something" Selections

Something old: 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 incorporated into her own dress, veil, or handkerchief.

Something new: 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 the bill for something new to be worn.

Something borrowed: 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 Tiffany necklace or bracelet.

Something blue: 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 blue topaz bracelet or hairpin.

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.