

Naked

A GUIDE TO
LOVE, SEX AND
RELATIONSHIPS

Plan it all on your PC

WeddingPlanner by Summitsoft is the software tool that helps you plan every little detail of your big day. It's your personal assistant, providing helpful tips and traditions to make your wedding your own. Special reminders let you know when a task is coming up, a deposit is due, an appointment is scheduled and more. Your information can be stored for free on a secure server, allowing you to grant access to anyone helping plan the wedding, wherever they are. It retails for \$39.99.

Go to www.planweddingday.com for more information.

CONGRATULATIONS! You're getting married. So how much are you going to spend on living happily ever after? According to the "American Weddings" survey, the average cost of a wedding in 2006 was almost \$27,000 — about the same amount as a 2006 Ford Escape Hybrid or a down payment on a home.



Weddings on a dime

How to plan the perfect day without going broke

BY FATTI MARTIN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SHAWN WESTON

The fact is, weddings can be an expensive proposition. But they don't have to be. Inexpensive weddings can be just as unique, just as special, as their more elaborate counterparts. It just takes a little time, effort and creativity. "There's no question that you can do a wonderful, beautiful wedding for not a lot of money," says Kathleen Murray, senior editor at TheKnot.com.

Naked



an all-things-wedding Web site. "The key is being realistic."

Which means setting a budget immediately — \$5,000, \$10,000, whatever.

"You have to know up front how much you're willing and able to spend," Murray says. "Then you work from there."

After your budget is set, it's time to prioritize.

What are the things you have to have? What are the things you can cut back on or do without? Is it the wedding gown, the photographer, the band, a videographer? Once you have your priorities straight, you can start planning.

One of the easiest places to cut costs, wedding planners say, is the guest list. Do you really need 300 people? And who the heck is Aunt Beate?

"It really is one of the fastest and most effective ways to cut costs," says Kathi Evans, of All the Best Weddings and Celebrations in Dover Township. "If you figure \$100 a person, cutting 10 people will cut \$1,000 off your costs. And who do you want to spend that special day with — people that are important to you or people you don't really know?"

Opting for weddings in nonprime (read: not in the summer) months is another easy way to cut costs, as is a reception on a Friday night or Sunday afternoon, Evans says.

Weddings in February, March and October are going to cost significantly less than weddings in June, July or even September. Those are prime "I do" months, and you'll pay dearly to be a June bride. It doesn't hurt to ask reception halls if they're willing to give you a discount for booking a date in an "off" month.

You'll also pay more if you want a Saturday wedding. Opting for a Friday-night affair or even a Sunday-afternoon event will cut costs.

And receptions don't have to be five-course affairs with open bars, either. Guests won't care if it's a three-course meal or a cocktail reception with hors d'oeuvres.

When it comes to drinks, Murray recommends limiting choices to beer or wine, or offering signature cocktails.

"When it comes to the bar, you pay for every bottle that is opened," Murray says. "That means if one person wants one glass of whis-

Budget breakdown

How much should you spend on certain items? Here's a guide:

- Reception:** 40 percent to 50 percent
- Ceremony fee:** 2 percent to 3 percent
- Attire (wedding dress, groom's tux):** 8 percent to 10 percent
- Flowers:** 8 percent to 10 percent
- Entertainment/music:** 8 percent to 10 percent
- Photography/videography:** 10 percent to 12 percent
- Stationery (invitations, save-the-date cards):** 2 percent to 3 percent
- Wedding rings:** 2 percent to 3 percent
- Parking/transportation:** 2 percent to 3 percent
- Gifts (for parents, attendants):** 2 percent to 3 percent
- Miscellaneous:** 8 percent

Dress smart

You don't need to pay designer prices to get a designer-look gown. [TheKnot.com](#) offers these tips:

Swap the fabric. Buy your dream dress in a different fabric and save from 15 percent to 35 percent. For example, a dress of poly satin can cost hundreds less than the same dress in silk satin.

Less the trimmings. Choosing a classic gown without embellishments may lower the price tag significantly (about up to 25 percent).

Avoid custom alterations. Making special changes to couture gowns — such as changing the shape of the neckline or altering a sleeve — can cost up to \$300 per adjustment.

Go simple. Keep your budget balanced by choosing a simple silhouette. The more fabric it takes to make a gown, the more it costs.

Shop sample sales. December and May are two times a year when you can luck out and get great savings at a bridal-shop sample sale. You'll need to factor in dry cleaning and alteration costs, though, since these gowns (used as try-on models) are usually sold "as is."



ASK JETTY

How to cage your inner wedding wrecker

QUESTION: I'm getting married. How should I prepare myself mentally so I don't turn into Bridezilla (or Frankengroom)?

ANSWER: First off, remember that while your wedding day is an important date, it is only one day in your life. Worrying too much about what can go wrong will prevent you from having a fun, memorable day. If you're not having fun, neither will anyone else. People will forget the dress you wore, the food that was served and what the flowers looked like, but they will remember how much fun they had and how much in love the two of you looked. And while it seems that you need to micromanage every moment of your big day — don't. That's why you have bridesmaids, family members, mothers and even wedding consultants. They want to help — let them. Delegate tasks. Let those nearest and dearest to you take over some of the smaller tasks — checking off responses, going over your song list with the band or DJ, confirming the limousine. It's also important to take a little time away from being a bride (or groom). Go out to lunch with friends and don't talk about the wedding. Take a long walk with your fiancé and talk about everything but the wedding. Relax and unwind, even if it's for a few days... or a few hours. Remember, it's hard for a spouse-to-be to look at things objectively when all they have in mind is the perfect wedding. There's no such thing as perfection. You can get close as humanly possible, but that's as good as it's going to get. And if you and your fiancé are having a great time at the wedding, then you and your guests are having the perfect wedding.

Source: Kathleen Murray, senior editor, [TheKnot.com](#); Kathi Evans, All the Best Weddings and Celebrations, [Toms River](#)