

## Your Wedding Budget: 40 Ways to Save

*PLAN AHEAD 1. Time Is Money - The most important money-saving issue is time. And the less time you have, the more likely you are to make rash decisions and thus compromise your finances. Give yourselves enough time to shop around for the best vendor prices.*

*GUEST LIST 2. Cut Your Guest List - It's the dreaded dirty deed, but it must be done: Your guest list is the first thing to trim. Never assume a certain percentage of invitees won't attend. Remember, cutting just 10 guests at \$100 a head saves you \$1,000. 3. No, Really Cut It! - Eliminating kids, colleagues, and dates of guests is a quick, across-the-board way to cut your guest list. Keep in mind, though, that serious partners and spouses should always be included.*

*INVITATIONS & STATIONERY 4. Engraving Savings - Instead of having invitations engraved, use thermography, a less-expensive process that produces similar results. 5. Minimize the Mailing - Skip the envelope for the reply card by using a reply postcard, or simply have guests reply on their own stationery. Better yet, ask guests to email their RSVPs. 6. Designing Invites - Invitation design fees can add up, so keep your concept simple to cut back on costs. Though it won't have that professional quality, you can have a friend do the design work and then have the invitations printed by a local printer. 7. Save on Save-the-Dates - Forgo professionally designed and printed save-the-date cards and buy a stack of beautiful note cards or postcards instead.*

*RECEPTION LOCALE 8. All-in-One - Hold the ceremony and reception at one site. You'll save on flowers, decorations, site fees, transportation, and more. 9. Cold-Weather Deals - Fewer people get married during the winter, so you'll generally find better deals on locales during these months. 10. Kitchen Commitment - Choose a location with a kitchen, as booking an inexpensive outdoor garden that requires tents and kitchen equipment rentals can be pricier in the long run.*

*FOOD & DRINK 11. Hold the Hard Liquor - Set up your bar to serve only house beer, wine, and soft drinks. Most guests won't notice what's not there. 12. Wine Is Fine - Instead of serving champagne, why not toast with a white wine? After all, guests are there to raise a glass to you, no matter what's inside. 13. Trim the Menu - Cut one item from the menu. Replace an oyster appetizer with a consomme, and you could save more than \$3 per person (times 200 guests equals \$600) 14. Recessed Reception - Consider a wedding brunch or late afternoon jazz reception. You'll not only save money on food and labor, but people also drink less early in the day. 15. Cut Down on Waitstaff - Replace passed hors d'oeuvres with tables of hearty treats. Crudites, cheese and crackers, olives, breads, and miniature tea sandwiches cost less than complicated creations -- and require fewer waitstaff.*

*WEDDING CAKE 16. Don't Serve Dessert - Many caterers include dessert on the menu; let yours know you want to serve only the wedding cake for dessert and you may get a discount. 17. Sweet Savings - Get a smaller version of your dream cake to cut during the reception, and supplement it with a sheet cake of the same flavor that's cut in the kitchen for guests. 18. Consume Cupcakes - Replace a traditional wedding cake with beautifully decorated cupcakes, which are significantly cheaper.*

*WEDDING-DAY ATTIRE 19. Attire at a Discount - Search out sales for discounted gowns and tuxes. But don't wait too long -- if you can't find your dream gown or suit within six months of your wedding date, consider other alternatives. 20. Borrow a Gown - Wear your mother's,*

sister's, or grandmother's wedding gown. You can have it altered, embellished, or nearly remade at a fraction of the cost of a new dress. Or maybe you can borrow a friend's. 21. *Bridesmaid White* - Instead of going for a traditional gown, consider buying a bridesmaid dress in white or ivory. There are plenty of beautiful dresses on the market that can do double-duty. 22. *Rent the Tux* - Unless there is a whirlwind of black-tie affairs in your future, the groom doesn't need to buy a tux - renting is definitely cheaper.

*FLOWERS & DECOR* 23. *Forgo the Big Bouquet!*- Consider carrying one single-stem flower down the aisle, and use that same type of flower in bud vases as simple but elegant centerpieces. 24. *Find Seasonal Flowers* - Lily of the valley, for example, may be easier to come by, and thus far less expensive, in May than in November. 25. *Plant for Rent* - Borrow or rent plants from your local florist instead of splurging on costly cut centerpiece bouquets. 26. *Keep it Simple* - Forgo the personalized accents; napkins and matchbooks alone can cost several hundred dollars. 27. *Mood Lighting* - Create centerpieces and light the room with candlelight, since candles are much cheaper than flowers. Buy votives from a restaurant supplier; buying these is usually cheaper than renting, and you can use them again. 28. *Dismiss the Details!* - Details count, but don't let them kill your passion for planning. Guests will notice thoughtful touches, but they won't miss ribbons tied around guest soaps in the bathroom.

*MUSIC!* 29. *Star Search* - Though you might not get the on-key assurance of hiring a professional, you can cut costs by asking a talented friend or relative to sing or play an instrument during the ceremony. They'll be touched (and so will you). 30. *One-Man Band* - Find a DJ who is willing to work alone, and leave the emcee duties to the best man. 31. *Minimize Musicians* - If you have your heart set on a band, ask if you can eliminate a player or two. For example, cutting a guitar player from a swing band can save over \$400. 32. *Dip into Your CDs* - Ask the band to play for the crucial parts of your reception, like the first dance and the party afterward, and use taped music for the cocktail and dinner hours.

*PHOTO & VIDEO!* 33. *Time for Photographer* - Talk to your photographer about limiting his or her time to help cut costs (do you really need the whole reception covered etc). 34. *Negotiate the Negatives* - Purchase the negatives and scrap-book your own album. 35. *No Frills Video!*- Ask if your videographer will do a scaled-back package for less money, and eliminate special effects or extra editing.

*GET HELP* 36. *Consultants Cut Costs* - Hire a wedding consultant. You will undoubtedly recoup his or her fee with the sound advice he or she can provide about getting more or better service for your money. 37. *Borrow the Basics* - When it comes to weddings, friends and relatives are thrilled to help. From shoes to linens to a backyard, don't dismiss any offers too quickly.

*TRANSPORTATION!* 38. *Limo Limit* - Don't get caught up in the idea that you need a wedding cavalcade to transport everyone to the reception. Limit the number of limos you use, or ask a friend with a vintage car to drive the two of you and book a mini bus or van to transport both the wedding party and your parents.

*THE HONEYMOON* 39. *Honeymoon at Home* - Instead of a three-week trek to Bali, go local and consider a four-day hiking trip in the mountains or a relaxing week on the beach. You'll feel refreshed -- sans the jet lag -- and you will save a bundle. Besides, you're not supposed to leave your room on your honeymoon anyway!

*ANOTHER IDEA* 40. *Elope* - Just kidding!