

Bowdabra

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Honey Bride They'll Never Know: Tips to Saving Money When Planning Your Wedding

They'll Never Know: Tips to Saving Money When Planning Your Wedding

* They'll Never Know: Tips to Saving Money When Planning Your Wedding by Elizabeth Philpott

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At least once a year, Internet headlines and the front page of your local paper's "Life" section declare the new "average" cost for weddings. Most recently, it's been in the ballpark of \$30,000, which is about what it cost for me to go to college.

When I began to plan my wedding four years ago, I bought the phonebook-sized bridal magazines like every girl does. I spent time online gazing at gowns and table settings, but I went into the planning stages believing I could create almost everything the magazines insisted I have at my wedding – from invitations to centerpieces. And I was right. I could create them, and so can you.

Oh, and I also had a little extra inspiration: my fiance and I were paying for most of our own wedding. This certainly helped the creative juices flow as I searched for ways to cut costs without looking like I had cut corners. It's easier than you may think.

First, some advice on where to start: think of the one thing most important to you on your wedding day and splurge there. If you've always dreamed of a particular dress designer, location, wedding cake designer, caterer or want spring flowers for your November nuptials, spend your money there.

Once you decide on your most important aspect of the wedding, make a list of the things you must have (like invitations) and things you'd like to have (like menu cards or guest favors). From here, you can identify the things you're actually capable of making yourself (with help, of course). Here are some ideas:

Invitations: Yes, you can buy a package of pre-designed "print at home" invitations at your local craft store, but that is not your only option when it comes to designing and printing your own invitations. Take advantage of the Internet! First, use the invitation catalogs you'll undoubtedly receive in the mail to pick out a design/color you like.

Then, find a paper company (such as California Paper Goods www.papergoods.com) and purchase blank cardstock in the colors you want. If you know someone with a gift for design or have an idea of your own, play around in your word processing program with a couple options. When it comes time to print, you could send the job out to a local printer (still cheaper than buying invitations), or you can print at home. If you're doing the job in-house, make sure your printer is clean and its print settings are all on "high-quality," not high-speed. Do a few practice print outs. When you print the actual invitations, do them in small batches, not

200 at a time. This gives your printer a chance to clean itself and cool down.

Centerpieces: Depending on where you choose to hold your reception, centerpieces may be included in the cost to rent the space. Even so, you may have something else in mind. Use those thick bridal magazines for ideas and simply copy them. A centerpiece featured in full color in one of these bridal guides could easily cost into the hundreds. But an elegant knock off is well within reach. One of the decor items that add up quickly is votive candles. Glass holders that start at \$1.00 each may seem inexpensive at first, but if you're planning to use 15 on each of 20 tables, you're looking at \$300 for glass candle holders alone. A great substitute is plastic disposable votives, available through most church suppliers. I spent about \$65 for 200 disposable red votives that burned for 10 hours. They were the most talked about decor item of the wedding and cost about the least!

Chair covers: Nothing dampens the elegance of a wedding like hard, upholstered chairs that don't match the wedding decor. It's hard to pull off burgundy seats when your color is pink. Many reception halls offer seat covers for a few dollars a piece. They are usually a plain white but can be jazzed up with some silk flowers or ribbon. If seat covers are not on the menu, find some very wide ribbon at a local craft or fabric retailer and create giant bows to tie around the backs of each chair. Not so great at tying bows? Use a bow-tying tool, like the **Bowdabra** (www.bowdabra.com). These "extra hands" are available online and at most craft retailers.

I actually had a chance to talk with Sandy Sandler, who created the **Bowdabra**, and asked her about some of the ways people have used the bow-maker for weddings.

"I have received some of the most incredible letters from people who have used the **Bowdabra** to create everything from pew bows to beautiful swags as centerpieces," said Sandler. Sandler features some wedding creations on her Web site.

Speaking of Bows...: You are most likely also responsible for decorating the church or actual wedding location. Of course you could hire someone or have your florist do this, but if you're looking to save a few dollars, pew bows are a very traditional adornment that are simple to make (especially if you have a bow-making tool!).

The cake: If your wedding cake isn't that "one thing" you decide to splurge on, you can implement the oldest cost-cutter in the book. Purchase a beautiful wedding cake at a price you can afford and buy sheet cakes of the same cake flavor, which will hide out in the kitchen until the "show cake" is cut. Your guests will never know the piece they take home wrapped in a napkin didn't come from the cake they saw in front.

Your shoes: Don't get talked into buying a pair of \$50 "dyeable" wedding shoes when you buy your dress. Be creative and look for a pair of shoes you'll actually wear after the big day. I bought a pair of sparkly blue slides that were cute, comfortable, and served as my "something blue."

Consider an all-inclusive reception hall: If you're thinking of renting a location that requires you to bring in the tent, chairs, caterer, baker, music and alcohol, compare the cost to a reception hall where everything is included. You'll have fewer loose ends to worry about as you approach the wire and you're likely spend a lot less. This is of course, if "location," isn't your splurge item.

One of the most important things to keep in mind when planning your wedding is this: It's your wedding – there are no rules! If you don't want to wear your hair up, don't wear it up. If you don't want to wear a veil, don't wear one! If you'd rather not sit at a head table and eat before an audience, reserve a table on the main floor for yourselves and the wedding party.

Taking family tradition into consideration is one thing, but when it's society at large pressuring you to conform, you have the power to say "no!" You don't have to spend \$30,000 on your wedding (save it for your honeymoon or your first home!).

Discuss It!

About the Author

Elizabeth Philpott is a freelance writer. She kept her 100–guest wedding under \$6,500 (including her dress) and is confident anyone can plan a fantastic celebration of any type without spending a fortune. Contact her at philpott_elizabeth@yahoo.com

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