

Rule Six

Your DJ or band will make or break the wedding.

The DJ and photographer are two things you do not want to skimp on. The adage 'you get what you pay for' will certainly come true on these two points. You don't want to see one of your guests in their seat once the music starts unless they are desperate to catch their breath, so preview the music ahead of time. When it comes down to it no one is going to notice the flowers on the table, but they will remember how much fun they had because of your DJ or band. You won't remember much at all because it will be a giant blur, so you will need great photos.

Rule Seven

Meet with your photographer. Make sure you look at his/her portfolio, love his/her work and feel comfortable around the person.

Your photographer will be following you around from sun up to sundown and maybe even longer than that, so it is important that you like him/her! I was fortunate in the fact that my photographer, Catherine Ficht, is also a pageant photographer and has been taking pictures of me since I was 10! When it comes down to all the money you are spending on the wedding, the photos are what you will have to remember this special event for the rest of your life.

Rule Eight

Send deposits and signed contracts to your chosen vendors as soon as possible. The good ones always book quickly.

You are probably wondering why I haven't mentioned anything about bridesmaids. That is because you should not have picked them yet; after all we are only 3 to 4 months into your engagement!

Rule Nine

DO NOT, I repeat DO NOT pick your bridesmaids until 6-7 months before the wedding.

People talk about Bridezilla... let me tell you, Bridesmaidzilla is the sequel not to be missed. I was in a lot of weddings the year that I was planning my own, and I saw some horror stories that even Hollywood could not have produced. No matter how good or how long you have been friends with someone, just hold off. I had my list of friends picked, but I waited. Talk wedding with them, keep them in the loop on plans, invite them to do wedding related things with you. But don't ask them to be in your bridal party. Analyze their reactions to things. Are they excited, are they listening, are they participating? Some friends may be supportive or they may become distant and jealous and you want them to be totally there for you. You may even find you become closer with some friends than you had been before the engagement. Keep an open mind. It is a lot easier to just wait (even though you are bursting with excitement) than to have to fire someone or add a last minute bridesmaid.

Rule Ten

Don't let your bridesmaids talk you into changing your mind about the dresses or the colors.

Okay, it's time. Go ahead and pick your bridesmaids now. Once I asked my bridesmaid, I picked a date for all of us to go to the bridal store to pick out their dresses. I actually had a specific dress and color in mind. With the help of my matron of honor, we picked an elegant, conservative gown that would fit all their different frames. When we arrived at the store, the bridesmaids started picking out all sorts of different dresses and trying them on. Each bridesmaid liked a different dress of course, but I still liked the one I chose the best.

This is your wedding, they will have their chance to pick out bridesmaid dresses when they get married. Tell them what you want and move on. The bridesmaid dresses usually take about five to seven months to come in.



Rule Eleven

Shop around for your wedding invitations and do order professional printed invitations. It will save you the time and trouble of doing it yourself, and they will look so much nicer.

You can order your invitations three to four months before the wedding date and they are typically mailed out between six to eight weeks before the event. You can mail out the out of town guest invitations a little earlier if you want, but the guests usually wait a couple of weeks before they respond. A common misconception on invitations is that if you print them yourself on your computer, it will save you money. I found, however, that the quality of paper you get isn't as good. Plus you don't get the folded invitation; just a single layer and you also don't get the fancy inside envelope. If your printer jams, or you make a mistake, you might end up having to order more blank invitations, and now you have spent more money than you had intended.

Rule Twelve

Play around with your floral estimates to get the best price.

When you go to price out flowers, they will try to throw in everything from pew bows to extravagant centerpieces and even flowers for stairs at the reception site. Decide what is really important, and take off things that you think you can live without or get cheaper somewhere else or on your own like the flower girl basket, silk petals, unity candle, etc. If you are on a tight budget, I think flowers are the first thing that should be scaled down. Seriously, no one will remember them.

Remember that as far as flowers are concerned, bigger isn't always better. Don't opt for the giant size bouquet unless you really think it will look nice in front of your tiny waist. The more flowers you are holding in front of you, the less people will see of you and your gorgeous gown. If you notice, almost every bridal magazine shows the bride with a smaller bouquet. Coincidence? I think not! Also keep in mind that a big giant centerpiece on the tables at your reception will cut down on conversation as it will block the view of the people across the table. I personally like seeing who is seated across from me, so I went with small centerpieces.

