

101 TIPS TO HAVE YOUR DREAM WEDDING ON A BUDGET

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Introduction

Did you know that the average price of a wedding in the US is now approximately \$25,000?

If that figure makes you gasp, then you've come to the right place.

Luckily, it is possible to create the wedding of your dreams without spending more than most people spend on their car. In fact many couples have done amazing things with only a few thousand dollars.

Keep reading for some great tips, tricks and techniques to have a sensational wedding on a sensible budget!

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Budgeting

1. **Create a wedding journal.** When planning your wedding, the best place to start is by creating a wedding journal. This can be in a three ring binder, a spiral notebook or even a file folder. The key is to use it as one location where you will keep all of the information about your upcoming wedding. From a budgeting standpoint, this can be an invaluable tool if you use it properly. It will help you keep track of all your receipts and be a place to make note of upcoming sales or coupons. It will also remind you of everything you need to do so nothing is left to the last minute. Last minute purchases are usually expensive purchases!
2. **Start by budgeting the must have items.** Every couple has different priorities. Maybe your heart is set on a one of a kind silk dress or a 5-tier wedding cake. Whatever is most important to you should be budgeted for first. After all, it's your day and you should have the things that make it special for you. Once you have an accurate idea of how much these "must haves" will cost, determine what else you will need. A general list includes:
 - i. A venue for both the ceremony and the reception.
 - ii. Attire for the bride and the groom (including accessories).
 - iii. A cake.
 - iv. Food and/or drinks.
 - v. The wedding officiant.
 - vi. A marriage license.
 - vii. Rings.
 - viii. Gifts for the attendants.
3. **Keep track of ALL expenses.** Since the average engagement is around 12 months long, that's a lot of time to be buying items "as you see them". A big mistake budget conscious couples make is to not keep track of exactly how much they've spent. Every time you purchase something write it down in your wedding journal. Otherwise you run the risk of eating up your entire budget on fun accessories long before you even get to the big day.
4. **Educate yourself on what things cost.** Before you purchase anything, shop around to see what the going rate is. Unless you know what several different places are charging, you have no way of knowing if what you plan on spending is reasonable. Doing this can also give you bargaining power.

General Money Saving Tips

5. **Use untraditional items.** Vendors know that when it comes to weddings, most brides will spend whatever they are asking. Avoid overpaying by coming up with ideas that don't involve traditional wedding items. This will allow you to shop at discount stores rather than bridal boutiques.

6. **Choose smaller vendors for a smaller price tag.** If you use a large company you can expect to pay a premium for services such as photography, videography, floral arranging and catering. Instead, look for vendors who run smaller businesses on the side or out of their home. They have less overhead so their fees are often substantially less. It may take a little more investigative work to find them but usually asking anyone and everyone for referrals will uncover some hidden gems.
7. **Read all contracts.** Make sure to read all contracts you sign with vendors and service providers to ensure you know exactly what you're getting. Some things you'll want to look for are whether the gratuity is included, what the overage charges are and whether there are hidden fees you may not be aware of. This will help you avoid unpleasant surprises on your big day.
8. **Don't get caught up in the fantasy.** Of course you would love to be able to afford your fantasy wedding. Whether that's inviting 200 guests for a lavish feast or escaping to Venice, the reality is that the vast majority of people cannot afford their dream wedding. And even if they can, is it really a good financial decision to spend your entire life savings on one day? One of the first steps to planning a fabulous wedding on a budget is to let go of those dreams and start being realistic about what a cheap wedding will look like. It doesn't have to be tacky, in fact many of the best weddings are done on a tight budget because they force the bride and groom to be creative and as a result they inject a lot of their personalities into the day.
9. **Keep the guest list small.** Bigger is not always better. One of the most difficult tasks you'll face while planning your wedding is deciding who to invite. You'll undoubtedly start with a list of hundreds of people – the average number of guests at a wedding is 189 - but a wedding on a budget cannot accommodate inviting your mother's best friend from high school just because "they used to be so close". At \$30 - \$200 per head for a wedding dinner, you have to be realistic. Some couples find it works to determine how many guests you can afford to invite, then divide that number into quarters. 1/4 for the brides parents, 1/4 for the grooms parents, 1/4 for her friends, and 1/4 for his friends. Other couples set rules such as not inviting anyone that the BOTH the bride and groom haven't met. Another option is to invite single friends and family members without a guest. If there will be lots of singles they won't need a date anyway – they're sure to meet someone at the event!
10. **Appoint a friend or family member as your coordinator.** There is no doubt that a wedding planner can make your big day run much more smoothly. After all, when problems occur on the big day most people naturally run to the woman in the big white dress! But it's an expense you can do without. Instead ask a trusted friend or family member to help you by being your honorary coordinator. Give her an itinerary, checklists and phone numbers for all your vendors.
11. **Use free resources as much as possible.** One of the best sources of free information is the Internet. There are hundreds of great sites that will give you ideas on creating a fabulous wedding on a tight budget. Look for forums where other brides share what

has worked for them to get great tips. Another good source of free information is your local library. You'll find they have books and magazines on wedding planning, crafts, floral arranging and other helpful topics. And don't forget to visit the websites of the big bridal magazines. They often have promotions where they send out copies of the newest issue at no cost.

12. **Choose any day other than Saturday.** Since the majority of couples plan their wedding for a Saturday, choosing any other day of the week can be a huge cost saver. The most expensive elements such as the venue rental and reception fees can decrease by as much as 50% for weddings held on a Friday or Sunday. A great way to make this work for you is to choose the Sunday of a long weekend. Since everyone has Monday off, Sunday is just like Saturday!
13. **Avoid the wedding season.** The most popular wedding months are May through October. Therefore vendors charge more during these months because their products and services are in demand. Plan your wedding for November through April and you'll save a bundle. The cheapest month of all? January. And an added bonus is that you'll have an easier time getting your first choice venue or that floral designer you're dying to use.
14. **Take advantage of store discounts and coupons.** Some stores offer credit cards that give customers an initial 10% discount. If your credit is in good standing, take advantage of these offers to get a discount on large ticket items such as your wedding gown. But be sure to pay them off completely by the end of the first month or you'll have to pay ridiculously high interest rates.
15. **Negotiate on prices.** If you'll be making a large purchase from a particular vendor, don't be afraid to negotiate. For example if you'll be spending \$1,000 with your florist ask that they include your cake topper at no charge. Another great way to negotiate is to shop around and find out what other vendors are charging. Then approach your first choice and tell them that you'd really love to use their services but are working on a budget and can make your dollar stretch further at their competitor. You may be surprised how many are willing to work with you to win your business.

The Reception

16. **Know what you'll be getting at the venue you've selected.** If the event runs over you may have to pay overtime charges. Be sure to find out exactly how long you have the reception site/facilities for. Many places will allow you to bring your own wine but will charge a corking fee. Will you be charged an extra cleaning fee if your guests throw confetti? These are all hidden costs that can blow your budget.
17. **Have a brunch reception.** A less expensive alternative to a traditional sit down dinner reception is to have a brunch reception. A spread of muffins, fruits, pastries and mimosas can be very impressive, and very affordable. Since the brunch would be

held between 10am and 11am it means you would have to have your wedding ceremony early. But for a more casually elegant option, this is a beautiful choice.

18. **Have a luncheon reception.** Another option is a late morning wedding followed by a luncheon reception. This is a great option if you'll be doing the food yourself. Anyone can put together a spread of finger sandwiches and salads. Or make it even simpler by putting together a tray of assorted cold cuts and offering a variety of different buns.
19. **Have a dessert reception.** Avoid serving a meal altogether by opting for a dessert reception. This is the most inexpensive option but can be high on style if done with a little creativity. If you have a large guest list but really need to stick to a small budget, this is the perfect choice. Whether you choose to have it following an early afternoon wedding or after an evening wedding, serve an assortment of different homemade desserts such as cheesecakes, tarts, cakes, truffles and squares. Don't forget the tea and coffee – if possible make it fancier with espresso and café au lait.
20. **Have a cocktail party reception.** Another alternative to serving a full meal is to have a cocktail party reception. It typically includes hot and cold hors d'oeuvres and, of course cocktails! To save as much money as possible you can easily make a variety of finger foods yourself. Or, check with your local supermarket for pre-made trays. They're usually reasonably priced. A cocktail party reception is the perfect option for an evening wedding. Imagine a candlelit ceremony followed by an upscale cocktail party and dancing.
21. **Make the food yourself for a dinner reception.** A dinner reception is the most expensive reception option. However, if you're determined to have a full meal you can greatly reduce the cost by making the food yourself. Enlist the help of family and friends and you'll be able to put on an impressive spread for a reasonable price. The easiest is to serve it buffet style because it doesn't require servers. If the idea of doing the entire meal yourself seems intimidating, consider having a caterer do the main dish – such as the meat – and make the rest yourself.
22. **Have an afternoon tea reception.** An increasingly popular reception option is an afternoon tea. There's just something perfectly quaint about an early afternoon ceremony followed by an informal but elegant tea. Think finger sandwiches, pickle trays and an assortment of pastries for a menu that is easy and inexpensive. Since it's in the afternoon it's also acceptable to forgo serving alcohol which will save you even more.
23. **Have the wedding at home.** Whether it's your home, your parent's or a generous friend/family members', having a wedding at home is perfect for small, intimate weddings. There is a lot of versatility with this option. You can choose food and decorations that are formal or keep it wonderfully casual. Not only will you save venue rental fees but you'll also be able to make the most economical choices for food, drinks and decorations.

24. **Use a free location.** There are lots of unique and beautiful places to hold a wedding. Public gardens, the beach, a park or local tourist attraction are all potential locations that will save you money. And if you choose a unique spot it will most likely be perfect as it is – so you'll save on decorations.
25. **Hold the ceremony and reception at the same location.** Avoid the added expense of renting two venues by having them at the same place. Most locations won't charge you any extra to have the ceremony there as well. And you'll save on decorations!
26. **Choose a caterer that supplies everything you need.** Although it may seem like you can save money by renting your plates, glassware, tablecloths and silverware on your own, it often ends up being more expensive and is a hassle that you don't need. Instead look for a caterer or facility that has all of these items already that you can use free of charge.
27. **Make sure you only pay for services that you need.** Some of the providers you work with may have added services that they automatically include for weddings. For example some locations include decorating fees in their standard rental packages. Make sure you check your contract and ASK what all is included. Anything you don't need should be deducted from your bill or be replaced with something different.
28. **Rent a penthouse for a small, intimate event.** A great idea for small weddings is to rent the penthouse at a posh hotel. It will cost you a few hundred dollars but they'll set out flowers for you and clean up everything afterward. It can be a great way to do something truly unique!

Food and Drink

29. **Investigate school programs for your catering needs.** Depending on the size of the town in which you live, you may find that there is a local high school or college hospitality/restaurant management course. This can be a great source for inexpensive catering such as sandwich trays, dessert trays and pastries. Some programs may even offer catering for a full meal.
30. **Cut down or cut out the appetizers.** At most weddings there is so much food people can't possibly eat it all! Reduce your costs by cutting down the amount of appetizers or hors d'oeuvres you order – or consider not bothering with them altogether. If you do want to serve them, simply cut down on the number of different kinds. No one will notice whether there were 5 or 10 different options and you'll save a bundle.
31. **Order children and teen meals.** If children and teens will be attending the dinner be sure to request a child's meal for everyone under 11 and a teen meal (same as adults but without the alcohol) for ages 12 to 17. There's no sense in paying the same amount when they'll eat a fraction of the food!

32. **Buy your own liquor.** Most venues won't allow you to provide your own liquor because that's where they make a good portion of their money. However it's worth searching for one that will because it can save you a significant amount of money.
33. **Have a cash bar.** It's not always necessary to have an open bar. In fact, depending on where you live and what your culture is, a cash bar can be totally acceptable. And it can save you thousands.
34. **Serve only wine and domestic beers.** If you're set on having an open bar, consider limiting the choices to just white wine, red wine and a couple of different domestic beers. Serving hard liquor such as rye, gin and vodka - plus the mixes needed to go with them - can make your budget larger than it needs to be. If you want to go one step further, add a speciality drink such as crantinis (cranberry martinis) or pina coladas.
35. **Have an open bar for only one hour.** Another variation on a completely open bar is to set a time limit. Many couples are now opting for an open bar only during a cocktail hour before dinner. After dinner, the bar becomes cash only. With this option it's a good idea to make non-alcoholic drinks available at no charge.
36. **Have a wine bar.** If you and your guests enjoy wine, a nice option is to have a wine bar. Choose several different varieties - there are some really wonderful and inexpensive options available now.

Photography

37. **Choose a photographer that will give you the negatives.** One of the most expensive aspects of a professional photographer is purchasing the photos you want. A great money saving tip is to choose a photographer who will give you the negatives so you can have our own photos printed. Alternatively, if the photographs are digital you will get a CD.
38. **Look at the total cost for the photographer and photos.** Paying \$1,000 for a photographer is a good price but don't forget to consider all of the costs. Many photographers require that you pay per photograph for any that you want. Sometimes these prices are so ridiculously overpriced that it would have ended up being less expensive to go with the more expensive photographer who gives you the negatives. The key is to think about what you'll need prior to choosing your photographer so you can find one that offers the right package for you.
39. **Don't choose a photography package just because it sounds like a good deal.** Every photographer offers a slightly different package for weddings. It may include features such as multiple locations, more than one photographer, both color and black and white photographs, and albums for the couple and parent's. Before you automatically take the full package, consider carefully whether you need everything

that is included. If not then you're paying unnecessary fees. Instead negotiate with the photographer to remove or substitute options.

40. **Limit the number of locations where photographs are taken.** Most photographers charge extra for each location where they are required. If you're on a tight budget it's probably an unnecessary expense to have a photographer at the location where the bride and/or groom are getting ready. Unless of course you are doing your formal photos before the ceremony.
41. **Encourage your guests to be photographers.** Even if you opt for the most expensive photography package available, you still won't come close to getting a photograph of everything that happens during the reception. A great idea is to put a disposable camera on each table so that guests can help you capture that most important moments. Include a poem instructing people to take photos of things they think you'll want to remember and then leave the camera on the table for you. It's an inexpensive way to get great shots of the day's festivities.
42. **Keep the photographer only as long as needed.** You don't need your photographer to stay until the last dance. After all, who can tell the last dance from the first? Instead have him or her stay only as long as needed to avoid paying extra fees.
43. **Look for less expensive photography options.** If your budget doesn't allow for the cost of a professional photographer but you still want some nice pictures, consider hiring a photography student from a local college or university. The professors and directors of the photography school should be able to direct you to a promising student. Or hire a photojournalist from the local paper.

Videography

44. **Choose a video package with one camera coverage.** The more cameras you request, the more you'll pay. And pay you will! Wedding videos can cost upwards of \$3,000 if you opt for all the bells and whistles. Keep it simple and choose only the options that you really need.
45. **Ask for your wedding video unedited.** A large portion of the time involved in creating a wedding video is the editing. Some videographers offer the option to simply get your unedited footage. This way you can create your own video using any of the free or inexpensive video editing software that is now readily available. Or, you can have it professionally edited later when money isn't so tight.
46. **Ask a friend to be your videographer.** If you would like a video of your wedding but can't find it in your budget to hire a professional, consider asking a friend. Chances are you know someone who has a good eye for this sort of thing. To make sure you get exactly what you want, put together a list of events that you would like caught on tape. For example people arriving at the church, the toasts and your first dance. If your friend doesn't have his or her own video camera you can always

borrow one from someone else. People are always happy to help so don't be afraid to ask!

Rings

47. **Opt for simple but elegant rings.** The most inexpensive option is the classic gold band. For these you can expect to pay from \$150 to \$300 each. If you want a white metal choose white gold instead of platinum (which will cost twice as much). Another option is to choose silver bands. Although silver is not as durable, there are many styles to choose from that wear well. If you want your wedding ring to have a stone, consider semi-precious stones such as opals. It doesn't have to be diamonds to be beautiful.
48. **Avoid designer rings.** As with all things that include a designer label, designer rings will cost you significantly more. And since the bigger price tag doesn't usually mean better quality, opt for the less expensive choice and save.
49. **Buy your rings as a set.** Many rings are available as a set that includes the engagement ring and the bride's wedding band. Or you may even be able to find a set that includes the groom's band as well. Buying a set can save you as much as half price off the price to buy them individually.
50. **Consider using family heirloom rings.** This isn't an option for everyone. But if you have family wedding rings they are a beautiful choice. And an inexpensive one! Although you may have to have them cleaned or resized, this will cost you significantly less than buying new rings.
51. **Look online for the perfect ring.** There are hundreds of reputable online stores where you can purchase beautiful jewellery. And because they don't have the same overhead as a traditional store, they pass the savings on to their customers. Since this is such an important purchase, be sure to do lots of research before buying. You'll want to choose a store that offers excellent customer service in case you have any problems with your rings in the future.
52. **Make a plan to upgrade your rings later.** Just because it's not in the budget to buy your dream wedding rings now, doesn't mean you can't get them later. Start with something simple and inexpensive and start a savings plan to upgrade later. What a romantic 10th anniversary gift!
53. **Wait for a sale to buy your rings.** Start looking early for your rings so you'll know exactly what you want. Then wait for the jewellery store to have a sale to get your rings for a bargain.

Decorations and Accessories

54. **Make your location the focal point.** Choose a location that is naturally beautiful such as a site overlooking the ocean or a beautifully restored historical building. Add some simple floral arrangements and voila! No need to spend a bundle on decorations when the location itself is already stunning.
55. **Shop for decorations at end of season sales.** If you started your wedding journal as soon as you got engaged, you should have lots pictures of decorations that you like the look of. By knowing what you're looking for, you'll be more likely to spot it on sale. Shop the after Christmas and end of summer sales to get great decorations at a fraction of the price.
56. **Don't overlook dollar stores and other bargain shops for decorations.** Remember, you'll only use these items once. You don't need them to hold up over years of use. So take advantage of dollar stores and other bargain shops to get a great deal. You'll be able to save on pillar candles, tea lights, vases, baskets, silk flowers and lots of other decorative items. Most of these are exactly the same as you'll get at bridal shops – only you'll pay a fraction of the price.
57. **Take a group photo instead of having a guest book.** How often will you really look at your guest book? Probably only once in a blue moon. So save the cost of the book and pen and instead take a group photo of everyone who attended the wedding. It won't cost you anything extra because you're already paid the photographer and you'll have a beautiful keepsake.
58. **Watch the yard sales and ebay for decorations.** Lots of brides spare no expense when it comes to their wedding decorations. Then once the big day is over, they're left with a basement full of items they'll never use again. This presents a great opportunity for you to pick up vases, glassware, baskets, fabric, table cloths, silk flowers and all sorts of other decorations when they sell them off at yard sales and on ebay. It can take some time to find what you're looking for, but the huge savings makes it worthwhile!
59. **Find a creative way to make your own place cards.** There are lots of great options for creating your own place cards so you don't have to buy expensive, printed ones. If you know someone who does calligraphy that can be a beautiful option. Or design something unique and graphical on your computer and print them out.
60. **Use artificial plants instead of cut flowers.** Fresh flowers can be very expensive, especially if you have large areas to fill. Instead, borrow some artificial plants such as ficus trees (everyone knows at least a couple of people who have some). They're a great way to add greenery and for a romantic look you can add white mini-lights!
61. **Use the church's decorations.** Plan your wedding for a day shortly after a big religious holiday like Easter and take advantage of the fact that the church will already be decorated.

62. **Find freebies to use in baskets for the ladies room.** Having a basket in the ladies room full of toiletries is a nice touch that will be appreciated by your guests. Put one together yourself for practically no cost by searching the web for sites offering free samples. Look for items such as hair styling products, mouthwash, gum, deodorant, moisturizers, feminine products and perfume.

Centerpieces and Head Table Decorations

63. **Use the bridal party bouquets as decorations.** Instead of leaving the bridal party bouquets out of site, use them to decorate head table. Simply put them in vases of water down the length of the head table and you have instant floral arrangements that match your color scheme - and doesn't cost anything extra!
64. **Choose unusual items for centerpieces.** Choosing a centerpiece that is not traditionally for a wedding can save you lots of money. Instead of shopping at bridal stores, you'll be able to find what you're looking for at craft stores, bargain shops or garage sales. For example, fishbowls with floating flowers or candles make a beautiful and inexpensive centerpiece. Or borrow interesting teapots from friends and family members and fill them with flowers.
65. **Turn your wedding favors into centrepieces.** A great idea for unique centrepieces that won't add a cent to your budget is to use your wedding favors. Simply stack them neatly in the center of the table or put them in a pretty basket. To add some height to the display, opt for a raised tray or cake stand. Talk about killing two birds with one stone!

Wedding Favors

66. **Buy wedding favors from a store that offers free decorating - or do it yourself.** Some stores charge extra to add decorations to your wedding favors. For example adding a ribbon that co-ordinates with your wedding colors or attaching a tag that includes a thank you to your guests. These extra details can add up quickly! Take the time to shop around (including online) to find a store that does the decorating for free. Or – if you have some extra time on your hands – buy the supplies at your local craft store and add your own embellishments.
67. **Make a donation to your favorite charity instead of giving wedding favors.** Let's face it, most people don't need or want another trinket from someone's wedding. As an alternative, many couples are now opting to make a donation to their favorite charity. If it's a larger charity they may provide cards that can be placed on each table explaining that a donation was made. Or, you can have your MC make an announcement.

68. **Give guests lottery tickets as your wedding favor.** What better gift than a chance to strike it rich! Giving lottery tickets is becoming a popular wedding favor choice. They're only \$1 each so you can't beat the price.
69. **Ask your guests help you with a creative wedding favor.** A great idea for a very inexpensive wedding favor is to ask your guests to send back their favorite recipe with their RSVP card. Compile them all, group them by type (appetizer, main course, dessert) and print them on your computer. You can then have them spiral bound at your local print shop. Definitely something people will use for a long time to come!
70. **Do something fun and inexpensive as a gift for the kids.** If you'll be inviting children to your wedding and want to give them a wedding favor of their own, choose something simple you can make yourself. Great options are to buy a coloring book and crayons at the dollar store and tie them together with ribbon. Or make "candy kabobs" using a wooden shish kabob stick and a variety of different jube-jube candies from the bulk food store.
71. **Opt for couples wedding favors instead of individual ones.** Don't feel obligated to give a gift to every guest. Since most people come as couples – or even families – you can save money by giving one gift for all of them.

Wedding Cake

72. **Make your wedding cake all the dessert you need.** It's nice to be able to offer guests a variety of different desserts, but the price can add up. Avoid this extra expense by having your wedding cake made with a different flavour for each tier. You'll then have 3 or 4 different options for guests to choose from!
73. **Opt for a fake wedding cake.** If you don't plan on serving your wedding cake, don't pay the extra for a real one. Instead opt for a fake cake. Your baker will be able to use Styrofoam forms in any size and shape you want and then simply decorate them the same as a real cake – for substantially less money.
74. **Order a smaller version of your dream cake.** The larger the cake, the more it costs. If you have your heart set on a certain design but the prices are too much - just order it in a smaller size. If you'll be serving it to guests simply purchase some sheet cakes or simply decorated round cakes in the same flavor.
75. **Have a cupcake tree instead of a wedding cake.** A cute new trend is to order (or make) cupcakes that are beautifully decorated and stack them on a "cupcake tree". This unique stand can be rented from your local party supply, bridal or cake-decorating store. And since they're single servings you know exactly how many to order – and you can easily have different flavours so everyone gets their favorite!

Music

76. **Play your own CDs instead of hiring a professional DJ.** Most halls have sound systems with multi-disc players that are available for your use. Simply ask friends and family members to help you compile CDs of great dance music and you'll have a full nights worth of entertainment for a fraction of the cost.
77. **Check out BookLiveMusic.com for an affordable band.** If you have your heart set on a live band you can find affordable options in your area at <http://www.booklivemusic.com>. Their site makes it easy to search for talent by the type of music they play, and the price range. You can even listen to audio clips to see whether the band's sound will suit what you have in mind.
78. **Don't bother with all the extras that DJs offer.** A DJ is a less expensive alternative to a band, as long as you don't go for all the extras. Special lighting, smoke and bubble machines and even fireworks are all available if you want them for your wedding. But do you really need them? Most likely not. Forgoing these extras is an easy way to keep your music budget in check.

The Bridal Gown and Tuxedo

79. **Choose an inexpensive gown and make it look expensive.** Lots of stores sell simple evening and cocktail gowns in white and off white. Find one that you love the fit of and then add your own embellishments such as lace, trim and bows to make it unique. For \$100 - \$200 you can have a dress that looks like you spent a fortune on it!
80. **Rent your wedding dress.** Although it's not right for every bride, if you're okay with not having your dress to keep once the big day is over, renting a bridal gown can be a great option. Not only will you be able to choose from some very expensive designer styles, but you'll also save a lot of money. And who's going to know it was rented if you don't tell them?
81. **Buy a floor sample bridal gown.** At the end of the season, bridal shops sell of the gowns that they have made available for brides to try on. Since they've received a little wear already you can get them at unbelievably low prices – and all they usually need is a cleaning. Even if the size is not perfect you can take it to a seamstress for alterations.
82. **Choose a bridal gown store that includes custom alterations.** Having your dress altered can add several hundred dollars to the price. Order a dress from a bridal gown manufacturer that does custom alterations. That way you can save time and money instead of taking it to a seamstress for alterations.

83. **Rent the tuxedos from a store that offer discounts to AAA members.** If you're a member of AAA then be sure to look around for stores that offer discounts on tuxedo rentals.
84. **Look for stores that offer the groom's tuxedo for free.** If several people in the wedding party will be renting tuxedos, look for a store that gives the groom's rental for free. The requirement is typically if you rent a minimum of 4 tuxedos, the groom gets his for nothing.

Flowers

85. **Keep your bouquet simple.** Instead of choosing a fussy – and expensive – bridal bouquet, consider a simple bunch of flowers tied together with a ribbon. Flowers such as calla lilies, roses and gerbera daisies are excellent choices. For an added bit of romance, have friends and family members hand you the flowers for your bouquet as you walk down the aisle.
86. **Use silk flowers.** For large arrangements and centrepieces, consider using silk flowers instead of real ones. There are so many affordable options nowadays that you're sure to find whatever flowers you're looking for. An added bonus to using silk is that you can collect them over time when you see them on sale. And you'll be able to save the cost of having them arranged because you can do it yourself.
87. **Order flowers from an online wholesaler.** If your heart is set on fresh flowers, you can save by ordering them from an online wholesaler. A few of the most popular options are <http://www.onlinewholesaleflowers.com>, <http://www.freshroses.com>, <http://www.theflowerexchange.com> and <http://www.sommerflowers.com>. Keep in mind that you will have to do the prep work such as removing the leaves and trimming the stems yourself.
88. **See if you can rent plants as decorations.** Some florists and garden centers will let you to rent large potted plants to be used as decorations instead of cut flower bouquets. Or purchase the large plants and use them in your home after the wedding.
89. **Choose flowers that are in season and locally available.** You'll save yourself a bundle if you choose flowers that are in season and grown locally. Ask your florist for recommendations that will match your desired color scheme but that will be inexpensive and easy to get. Also check out <http://www.freshroses.com> for a list of flowers by month and their approximate costs.
90. **Use flowers from your own garden.** If you – or someone you know – has a beautiful garden, choose some of your favorite flowers and use them for your wedding. Some good choices are tulips, hydrangeas, roses, magnolias, apple tree branches and dogwood branches.

91. **Carry a single flower instead of a bouquet.** For a simple but elegant look, carry just one perfect bloom. To make this work choose a flower that is stunning by itself such as a calla lily or spray of orchids. Finish the look off by tying a ribbon around the stem in a color that co-ordinates with your bridesmaids' dresses.
92. **User filler flowers for large arrangements.** Most of the time, large arrangements are only seem from far away. So instead of filling them with expensive flowers, use cheaper alternatives such as carnations and snowball mums. When grouped together they create a visually stunning look.
93. **Save the cost of buying a bouquet to be tossed.** Many brides opt to have a second, smaller bouquet made for the bouquet toss. Avoid this unnecessary expense by simply taking one flower from your bouquet and using that. After all, once a group of clawing females fights over it there's nothing left of the bouquet anyway!
94. **Keep floral arrangements inexpensive by using lots of greenery.** If you're creating your own centerpieces, do it like the pros. They start by placing the greenery and then they add the flowers. This way you'll need fewer flowers to create a full look. Or use all greenery such as hosta leaves or palm frawns for an inexpensive but elegant arrangement.
95. **Ask your florist to do a "market special".** If you like to have everything organized down to the last detail, this option is not for you. A "market special" is when your florist goes the day before the wedding and chooses whatever she can find on sale at the wholesalers. You never know what you're going to get but if you're working with a florist who shares your vision this can be a great way to save.

Invitations

96. **Make your own invitations.** Invitations can add a lot to your overall budget. By the time you purchase the invitations, response cards, envelopes and postage it's not uncommon to spend upwards of \$600 for a wedding with 150 invited guests! Cut this cost considerably by making your own invitations. There are several websites dedicated to the topic or you can purchase wedding invitation creation software for your computer. You can even buy unprinted invitations at most stationary stores. Simply run them through your printer and add your own embellishments for a beautiful invite at a fraction of the cost.
97. **Order plain invitations and decorate them yourself.** If you want to have your invitations professionally printed you can still save by adding your own embellishments. Ribbons and appliques are easily added and turn a simple invitation into something spectacular!
98. **Use thermography printing for your invitations.** Raised lettering gives invitations an expensive feel. Usually this is done using engraving, but for a less expensive

option choose thermography. They look similar but there is a big difference in the cost.

99. Don't bother using two envelopes for your invitations. There was a time when it was considered proper etiquette to mail your invitation with an outer envelope that included the address and a blank inner envelope. Nowadays wedding invitations are more informal so there's no need to bother with this extra expense.

100. Use your company's discount on stationery. Most companies get a discount on stationery products. If they'll let you use it, you should be able to find supplies to create your own invitations, ceremony programs, place cards, menus and thank you cards.

101. Make your own personalized thank you cards. A great option for beautiful thank you cards that won't cost you an arm and a leg is to take your favorite wedding day photo and have it printed as many times as necessary. Then write a personalized thank you on the back.