

Keeping a Lid on Wedding Costs

Can you have a memorable wedding day without breaking the bank? Absolutely. Even though the average wedding costs nearly \$30,000, according to TheKnot.com, many happy couples have joyous celebrations for far less money. If you're planning your own nuptials, the Massachusetts Society of CPAs offers this advice on how to be frugal and still have a festive occasion.

Decide What's Most Important

Every bride and groom will have their own unique ideas about the most important facets of their wedding. Would you be willing to have a more casual, buffet-style meal in order to afford a long invitation list? Would you forgo a designer dress so that you can pay for live music? Would you accept simple table centerpieces in exchange for a delicious customized cake? If you sit down together and decide what elements mean the most to you—and what compromises you're willing to make—it will be easier to spot cost-cutting possibilities.

Avoid Peak Times or Dates

Saturday is the most popular day for weddings, so choosing a Friday, Sunday, or even a weekday, may reduce your expenses. June is the traditional wedding month, but you can save a lot by setting your date in November or January through March, as long as you avoid Valentine's Day. To avoid country club or catering hall prices, consider locations such as a beach, public park, historic house, or your parent's backyard, but be sure to remember the potential added costs of bringing in tables or other catering equipment if necessary.

Don't Be Afraid to Negotiate

The fees you're originally quoted aren't always set in stone. Tell the caterer, the band, the photographer, or any other vendor how much you love their work, then ask if there's any chance they could give you a lower price. If you're booking far enough in advance or during a slow time in their schedule, they may be willing to do so.

Make the Most of What's Available

If you've always loved your mom's wedding dress or your sister's veil, ask if you can borrow them for your special occasion. By borrowing from family and friends instead of buying, you'll cut your costs and give them a chance to contribute to the big event. Also, consider how you could involve other talented loved ones. Your uncle who is a great speaker might be willing to get ordained to perform the ceremony, your childhood friend with the beautiful voice might sing during the service and your cousin who has learned calligraphy might address the invitations. Even if you pay them, it will likely be less than an outside professional would charge.

Keep the Numbers Down

Wedding catering costs an average of more than \$60 per person, TheKnot.com found, which means that whittling down your guest list will be crucial to curbing expenses. Crossing off individuals is tough, but eliminating groups—such as friends you haven't seen in more than five years or people you work with—makes it seem less personal. Limiting the size of your wedding party also cuts down on the cost of things, such as bouquets and boutonnieres.

Consult Your Local CPA

Like other life milestones, a wedding is an exciting time, but it also requires economic considerations. Your local CPA can help you address the many related financial questions and help make the decisions that are best for you. Turn to him or her with all your financial questions. To find a CPA in your area, contact the MSCPA at 617.556.4000 or www.msccaonline.org/findcpa.

About the Massachusetts Society of CPAs:

The Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants, Inc. is the state professional association of certified public accountants, representing over 11,000 members in public accounting practice, industry and business, government and education. The Society works to develop and maintain high professional standards and offers a wide array of legislative, technical and referral services to its members.