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# WEDDING PLANNER

Selecting Flowers  
for Your Wedding

Choosing Your  
Wedding Rings

Timeline for Planning  
Your Wedding

& Much More!

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# Choosing a Great Reception Hall

BY THOMAS MYER

You've picked a wedding day, have picked out the cake, flowers, colors, and even dresses and tuxedos. But you have no idea where you'll hold the reception. There are the usual choices, a church hall, or a wedding/conference facility. But what about something a little different?

A lot of interesting options exist for your reception hall. You just need to use your imagination. Remember that romantic restaurant where you and your betrothed spent a wonderful evening together? What if you could reserve that restaurant (or a large room within the restaurant) for your reception? It can be done, especially if the

restaurant is privately owned. Speak with the owner about your needs and the size of the party. If the number of guests is large enough, you may be able to reserve the entire restaurant for the evening.

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to the needs of large groups. They'll have the right space available, they can offer catered meals, will have staff handy for any need, and may even

Regardless of where you hold your reception, here are some tips to keep in mind:


- \* Can the reception hall accommodate the number of guests you will have?
- \* Does it have adequate parking?
- \* Is the reception hall easy to find, so your guests don't get lost trying to get there?
- \* Is it within easy driving distance of airports, hotels, and the church where the wedding will be held?
- \* Are there options for indoor/outdoor facilities in case of rain/snow/inclement weather?
- \* Does the reception hall have adequate staff and equipment (chairs, tables, etc.) to provide services for the guests?
- \* Does the reception hall have an adequate kitchen for the kind of food you are planning to serve?




have on-site accommodations for key people: bride and groom, parents, and the wedding party.

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# Timeline for Planning Your Wedding

BY JOE TALENT

It may seem as if you have plenty of time to plan your wedding that is so many months away. You may be surprised to learn that you should begin planning a big wedding a year before the event. To prevent things from slipping between the cracks and to help you stay on track, use the checklist that follows.

## 12 MONTHS BEFORE

The question has been popped and you're in planning mode. Now is the time to pick the date, decide the style and scale of the event, and work out a budget. (If you're still speaking to each other after this important initial planning stage, that's a very good sign.) Once you've accomplished the above, it's time to:

- Buy an engagement ring (if you haven't already). Visit your local Jeweler to get advice on selecting a diamond engagement ring. The quality of diamonds varies greatly and you should select a trustworthy jeweler for professional advice.
- Determine the size of your wedding ceremony and reception with both parents.
- Set a date for the wedding.
- Talk with your parents about the budget for the wedding and reception.
- Now is the time to hire a Wedding Consultant if you want professional advice in planning your wedding.
- Decide and reserve a wedding and reception site.



- Hire a photographer
- Hire a florist and begin looking at options for the wedding and the reception.
- Select bridal attendants, best man, and ushers
- Plan for your financial future together. Talk about financial goals and prenuptial agreements now.
- Contact your local paper for inserting an announcement of your engagement.

## 9 MONTHS BEFORE

The date and location of the wedding have been set. Now you need to begin working on some of the details for the big day.

- Discuss the formality and customs of the wedding ceremony with your parents and fiancé.
- Plan the number of guests you will invite to the wedding and reception. This may be determined by the facilities where the ceremony and reception will be held.
- Start looking for a caterer. Begin looking at menu options for your reception.

## 6 TO 8 MONTHS BEFORE

Start shopping for what you and you fiancé will wear at your wedding. This usually takes some time to come to a decision you both agree on. You'll need extra time if your garments are being made to order.

- Choose a wedding gown and dresses your bridal attendants.
  - Select a tuxedo for the groom and his attendants.
- Choose a person to officiate at the wedding. If your wedding will be held at a church you should select a pastor, priest, rabbi or reverend. If the wedding is non-religious you can hire a judge, magistrate or legally licensed official.
- Plan your honeymoon. Do this together.
- Determine the guest list and order invitations.
- Reserve a room for your wedding night.
- Make arrangements for music at your reception.
- Have your engagement party if you are planning one.
- Choose your caterer and design your plan for your reception.

## 2 TO 6 MONTHS BEFORE

- Make arrangements for the rehearsal dinner.



- Make arrangements for out-of town guests.
- Make appointments for hair and nails. You may want to schedule a massage.
- Make final choices on food, wines and champagne.
- Address invitations.
- Make wedding gift wish list. Register at appropriate stores for bridal registry.
- Talk to the organist and musicians about music for your wedding ceremony
- Purchase the wedding rings.
- Make arrangements for wedding day transportation.
- Order your wedding cake.
- Begin looking for a new home.

- Purchase guest book and wedding album.

## 2 MONTHS AHEAD

- Finalize arrangements with the photographer, florist, caterer, musicians, reception hall, church and pastor.
- Have final fittings for bridal and attendants' gowns.
- Have fittings for groom and attendants tuxedos.
- Purchase gifts for bridal attendants, best man, and ushers.
- Send copies of ceremony plans to wedding participants. Identify their involvement.
- Write the your vows and plan your ceremony.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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# Timeline for Planning Your Wedding

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

## 3 TO 6 WEEKS AHEAD

- Mail invitations four to six weeks before the ceremony. Include maps for out-of-town guests.
- Design an itinerary for your wedding day. Assign a time schedule for each task for you and your florist, caterer, photographer and reception host.
- Get your marriage license. Be sure to take your birth certificates. If divorced or widowed take the divorce decree or spouse's death certificate.
- Schedule your blood test. (Not required in every state)
- Make changes of names and beneficiaries to bank accounts, medical forms, credit cards and insurance.
- Pick up forms from newspaper to submit your wedding announcement.
- Make a record of all gifts and

write the thank you notes as the gifts arrive.

- Make arrangements for a dressing room for the bride and bride's attendants.
- Send invitations to the rehearsal dinner.

## 2 WEEKS AHEAD

- Have your blood test.
- Go over final details with your caterer, florist, photographer, reception hall management, DJ or band, and the church administrator. (Or site administrator if your wedding is not at a church)
- Make lists of all last-minute questions.
- Go over itinerary to finalize time schedule. This is a time schedule for you, the florist, photographer, caterer and reception host.
- Give photographer the final list of pictures you want.
- Call guests who haven't

responded to your invitation.

## 1 WEEK AHEAD

- Relax and enjoy your rehearsal and rehearsal dinner.
- Wrap and tag gifts for bride and groom attendants.
- Pack for the honeymoon.
- Give a final count of guests expected for the wedding reception to the caterer.
- Create a seating plan for the reception. Make place cards for seating at the head table.
- Make sure all attendants have had final fittings of their gowns and tuxedos.

## THE DAY BEFORE

Everything should be ready, relax. Enjoy the day. Pamper yourself. Spend the day enjoying your friends and family. Go to the spa; get a manicure or a massage. Get lots of rest. Tomorrow will be a busy day and you must be rested and ready to enjoy your big day.

## THE BIG DAY

- Have a hearty breakfast. As the day goes on you may not take adequate time to eat.
- The bride should have your makeup and hair done about three hours before the wedding. Begin dressing one hour before the wedding.
- The groom should give the wedding ring and the marriage certificate to the best man to bring to the ceremony. Put fees for musicians and pastor in separate envelopes.
- Music should start 30 minutes before the ceremony. Five minutes before the ceremony, seat the groom's parents. Immediately before the processional march, seat the bride's mother.
- The groom should dance first with your bride and then with your mother, your new mother-in-law and the bridesmaids.

## AFTER THE WEDDING

- Send the announcement and wedding photo to local and hometown newspapers.
- Write and mail thank you notes.
- Love your spouse.

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# Selecting Flowers for Your Wedding

BY CHRISTY POTTER

When it comes to planning your wedding, the flowers are an important consideration. They add color, texture and fragrance to your ceremony, and are a reflection your personality.

Ardith Beveridge, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, director of Koehler and Dramms Institute of Floristry in Minneapolis, Minnesota, said when a bride consults a florist, the first thing the florist should ask is if the bridesmaids have their dresses. "Before you do anything, you have to ask what color the bridesmaids' dresses are," Beveridge said. "Second, find out the date of the wedding, because the cost of the flowers is dictated by the date. We can get any flower at any time, but if flowers have to be flown in from elsewhere, it will be more expensive."

The florist will also ask the bride about the style of the wedding – whether it's a formal, evening wedding or a more casual, afternoon wedding. "For a more formal wedding, the bride may wear a long train and therefore would carry a longer, more cascading bouquet," Beveridge said.

She said most brides decide what colors they want first, then they go on to the specific flower they have in mind. The florist should help the bride decide on the texture of her bouquet. "Different combinations of flowers ensure good texture," Beveridge said. "The florist needs to remind the bride that she's really choosing flowers for photography and videography. The bouquet needs to look be three-dimensional or it won't photograph well. For example, a big bouquet of white roses may look beautiful in person, but in

the pictures and on the video, it will just look like a big, white ball."

Most brides, Beveridge said, know what they want in their wedding flowers before they arrive at the florist. "Sometimes it's the flowers their mom had at her wedding, or something they saw in a picture and really liked," she said.

It's important that bridal bouquet be proportionate to the physical size of the bride, Beveridge said. "The width should be inside hip bone to inside hip bone, and the length should be navel to knee."

The same holds true for bridesmaids' flowers. "Your 12-year-old niece and your sister who plays basketball need to have different sized bouquets," Beveridge said. "Talk to your florist about customizing. You don't want your little niece with a huge bunch of flowers that she has to drag down the aisle."

The groom's boutonniere is traditionally a flower taken from bride's bouquet. The mothers' corsages are often pin-ons or wrist corsages, but lately more people have been opting for a hand-held corsage, to eliminate pin damage on an expensive dress, Beveridge said.

Although the choice of flower varies greatly from bride to bride, Beveridge said tropical flowers, such as birds of paradise or orchids are very popular.

"They're not as expensive as you might think, because you only use one or two," she said. "Orchids, for example, are put in with more casual flowers now, and it makes a beautiful bouquet."

A bride should also consider how she could use flowers during the reception. Beveridge suggests rather than having the same floral design on every table, have the same flowers but several different designs. "It helps make the wedding so much more personal, and it gets people moving around the room because they want to see the different arrangements," she said.

And, when the bride and groom are about to leave, the bride can pull out an extra little floral surprise. "The florist can take about 12 accent flowers with a little foliage and tie it up with a ribbon, then tie them all together with another ribbon so it looks like a regular bouquet," Beveridge said. "When the bride is ready to toss her 'bouquet,' she pulls the ribbon and tosses, and 12 little bouquets go out into the crowd. People don't expect that at all. It's really fun."

Sherry Reinking, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, vice president of Armstrong Flowers, Inc. in Fort Wayne, Indiana, has been



in the floral business for 42 years and does between 80 and 100 weddings every year. She said when it comes to wedding themes; there is no such thing as "usual."

"Vintage weddings are popular right now, ranging from styles from the 1800s to the 1930s and 40s," Reinking said. "And I've been to bridal shows where they demonstrated futuristic styles. It really runs the gamut." Reinking said brides are often looking for flowers with vibrant, bright colors, such as gerbera daisies. "A lot of brides like to have their bouquet all one color," she said. "Our job is to enhance the dress."

The bouquet styles are also varied and depend on the bride's taste. "A bride with a full skirt and a long veiled train will usually opt for the presentation style, which she carries lying across her arm," Reinking said. Other bouquet types include the wand style,

in which the flower stems are extended about 18 inches and trimmed decoratively; and the ever-popular cascade. "I still have three or four out of every 10 weddings I do in which the bride wants the cascade," Reinking said. "It never goes out of style."

Reinking said she has done some interesting theme weddings over the years, including a Walt Disney-themed wedding and a cowboy wedding, for which she created a unique bouquet of protea and southwestern thistles. After the wedding, the bride and groom rode away on his horse.

Reinking was the floral designer for another wedding that took place on March 17. "We did the whole St. Patrick's Day theme, with shamrocks and moss on the cake table," she said. "It was really a fun wedding."



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# Makeup and Hair Styling Tips

BY AMANDA KNOLES

Aside from choosing an unflattering wedding gown, the biggest mistake most brides make is overdoing their makeup and hair. Instead of highlighting their best features and choosing a hairstyle that works with their face and veil, many brides try to copy a look they've seen on a celebrity or go for a complete makeover that can look totally unnatural.

It's not a bad idea to consult a hair stylist and makeup professional a few weeks before your wedding day. If possible, bring a photo of your dress and veil. Then listen carefully to suggestions. Your goal should be to look radiant and natural, not like a clone of a magazine picture.

Choose flattering light and neutral makeup colors that will give your face a healthy looking glow. Eye shadow shades of cream, peach and pink will compliment a white or ivory dress without looking too dramatic. Avoid heavy foundations and dark blush, eye shadow and lipsticks. Applying your lipstick with a brush and blotting will help it last longer. A lightweight waterproof foundation and waterproof mascara will help your makeup last through the inevitable tears. If you anticipate crying a lot, you may want to skip mascara on your lower lashes.

(No one wants to see raccoon eyes in wedding photos!)

Your foundation should match your skin tone as closely as possible. Careful blending of your foundation, eye shadow and blush creates the most flattering look. Avoid frosted shadows, blushes and lipsticks that are too dark or too shiny. Don't use a heavy lip liner. It can appear harsh in photographs. Remember that your wedding and reception will last several hours, so it's a good idea to keep a touchup kit handy with powder, blush and lipstick so you can touch up occasionally throughout the day or evening. A translucent powder will keep you looking fresh and reduce unflattering shine in photos.

Give yourself plenty of time to experiment with any new skin care products or makeup a few weeks before your wedding. You don't want to risk a rash or other allergic reaction that could spoil your big day.

Your hairstyle should compliment your face and dress and look elegant with or without a veil or hat. Study the bridal magazines for hairstyles that you like and consult with a hairstylist about what will work best with your hair type. Keep in mind that hair extensions, falls and hairpieces

can help you achieve a glamorous style if your hair is too short for an updo.

If you normally wear your hair long and straight, you may want to consider long, flowing curls adorned with a headpiece of flowers and pearls. Veils are available in a variety of styles and lengths from short to long. If you don't want to wear a veil, you may choose to accent your hairstyle with beautiful barrettes, combs and tiaras. Hair sticks curved like chopsticks can help keep a fresh twist or veil in place.

A smooth shiny updo of straight hair works well with a slinky satin gown. A dress with layers of tulle is better accented with soft curls. A short column dress looks terrific with a textured or sleek bob.

If you have a round face, sleeker styles with longer veils will be more flattering. Fuller hairstyles and veils compliment narrow faces. If you are wearing a long veil, a hairstyle with less volume on top is more appropri-

ate. Another option is a Juliet topknot or a chignon at the nape of the neck. The French twist is a classic wedding style that works beautifully with long and short veils and can hold up for hours. If you can't decide between an updo or flowing hairstyle, consider pulling part of your hair back with the rest left flowing down your back. If your hair is very long or you want to add hairpieces, braids can also be very romantic adorned with flowers or beads and crystals. You may also want to choose a style that can be worn up for the wedding and down at the reception.

Along with your dress and face shape, take into consideration the height of the groom and the time and place of the wedding. Elaborate headpieces and sparkly crystals are a better choice for an evening ceremony. Flowers, wreaths, headbands and hats are perfect for daytime and more casual settings.

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# Best Man & Maid of Honor Responsibilities

BY DELLA SERENE

One of the highest honors anyone can receive is being asked to stand up for a bride as the maid or matron of honor, and for the groom as his best man. But, with the honor comes great responsibility. In the weeks leading up to the wedding day, there are some time-honored requirements that the attendants must fulfill. Then, on the day, itself there are additional responsibilities that can only be trusted to someone who has shown loyalty to the bride and groom over the years. Because the bride and groom have a lot to think about, keeping the jitters to a minimum is a major part of the job description for the attendant.

Exactly what the responsibilities are will vary upon the needs and wants of the bride and groom and the scope of the wedding. The bride and groom will usually convey their requirements and carrying them out will not be a problem.

Traditionally, the requirements of the best man and maid or matron of honor has been to make sure the groom and bride shows up at the wedding and to warm up those last minute cold feet. After all, a person's wed-

ding day is high on the list of all time important days in a person's life. The anticipation may be too much for some people to handle alone.

Robbin Montero, of A Dream Wedding, outlines the role of the best man and maid or matron of honor. "The best man pays for his tuxedo and the maid of honor pays for her gown. The maid of honor and best man are each also responsible for arranging for a gift from the other attendants. Each one contacts the bridesmaids or groomsmen and arranges for a special, joint wedding gift from that group. It is the duty of the best man and maid of honor to collect the money from the attendants and choose a gift they know their friends will love." More of Montero's wedding tips can be read at [www.foreverwed1.com](http://www.foreverwed1.com)

Sara L. Ambarian wrote a guide for the best man and maid or matron of honor. The following responsibilities have traditionally been what has been expected of the second in command to the bride and groom and are what Ambarian suggests.

## THE MAID OF HONOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES ARE:

- \* Attending all fittings and appointments for their clothing.



- \* Attending pre-wedding parties/showers if at all possible (out of town maids-of-honor are exempt)
- \* Hosting a shower for the bride (usually).
- \* Helping to address invitations.
- \* Helping the bride shop for the bridal gown and/or maid's gowns and accessories.
- \* Helping with decorations and other pre-wedding preparations.
- \* Attending the rehearsal.
- \* Fielding messages for her at home/ceremony site so she isn't interrupted for every little thing.
- \* Protecting her privacy/quiet time, pre-ceremony if the bride values it.
- \* Taking messages/gifts to the groom so the bride and groom will not see each other.
- \* Helping the bride transport her gown and attire to the ceremony site.
- \* Helping the bride's dress on her wedding day.
- \* Helping distribute bouquets and boutonnieres or any other task to make things run smoother on the day of the wedding.
- \* Standing with the bride at the altar.
- \* Holding the groom's ring during the ceremony.
- \* Greeting guests in the receiving line.
- \* Making a toast, before or after, the best man at the reception.
- \* Dancing with the best man at the reception.
- \* Attending pre-wedding parties/showers if at all possible (out of town maids-of-honor are exempt)
- \* Signing the license as a witness.
- \* Presenting the minister with the fees before the ceremony starts.
- \* Escorting the maid/matron out of the church during the recessional.
- \* Assisting the groom during the pre-wedding rituals, ceremony and reception.
- \* Helping pack and preparing the get-away car and protecting it from tampering.
- \* Returning the tuxedos to the rental outlet.
- \* Transporting the wedding gifts to the couple's home.
- \* Proposing a toast to the couple at the reception.
- \* Dancing with the maid/matron of honor at the reception.

If there is a dollar dance at the reception, the best man and maid or matron of honor are required to get it started by dancing with the bride and groom, respectively. One of them will arrange for someone to collect the money and give the bounty to the couple when the dance is over.

Decorating the car and driving around town, with horns blaring, is also the best man's responsibility. The maid or matron of honor can help.

Above all else, the best man and maid or matron of honor should enjoy themselves and make sure they ensure the Bride and Groom enjoy their special day.

Once the day is over, and the couple embarks upon their married life together, the best man and maid or matron of honor can relax and revel in the fact that they did their part in the bride and groom beginning a beautiful life together.

## THE BEST MAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES ARE:

- \* Arranging a bachelor party or other party for the groom (or perhaps a party for the couple.)
- \* Helping transport the groom's clothes and luggage to the ceremony/reception.
- \* Helping the groom dresses and



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# Planning the Affordable Honeymoon

BY THOMAS MYER

So you can't fly to Rome for your honeymoon? Don't worry. There are a lot of opportunities for a wonderful, memorable honeymoon right in your own backyard.

Consider the possibilities of a honeymoon within driving distance of your wedding.

Whether you choose to explore a nearby big city, or take an adventurous trip into the country, your own region has a lot to offer and explore that many people overlook as honeymoon destinations. The best part is you won't have to spend a small fortune on rental cars or airfare to get there.

Think about a trip to a big city. Even large metropolitan areas have affordable hotels and quaint bed and breakfast options. Most cities offer inexpensive museums, historical sites or site-seeing tours, and restaurants that the tourists don't even know about. Contact the visitor's bureau for the state or city at which you would like to honeymoon or look for them on the Web by searching ivisitor bureau. Most bureaus offer a calendar of events, lists of special interest areas in the city, and general information for

visitors to their city.

Although off-peak season travel will get you the best rates on accommodations, you can still find a wide variety of budget hotels at very competitive rates throughout the year. Many hotels offer a free continental breakfast every morning, which can save you the expense of dining out for one meal each day. This can add up to big savings by the end of your stay. Bed and breakfast establishments, as the name implies, also offer this breakfast perk and usually offer a more homey feeling in your accommodations.

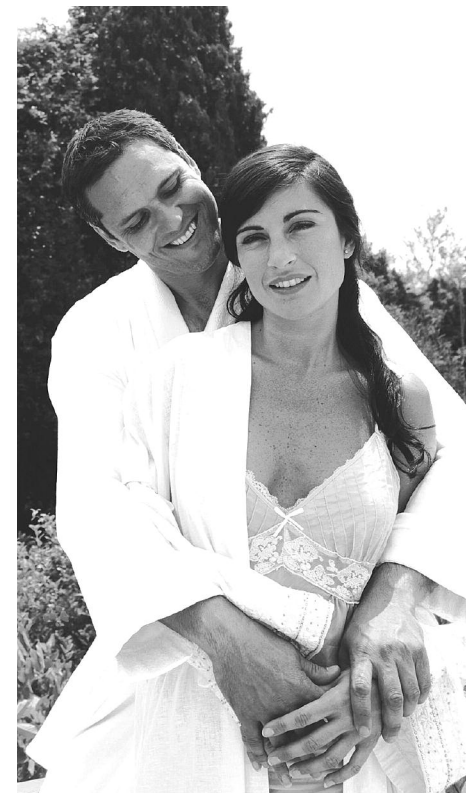
For the least costly meals, ask the locals where they eat. Either the hotel staff or proprietor of your bed and breakfast can recommend the best local eateries that tourists don't know about. Eating where the locals eat can save you a lot of money over restaurants in or near the tourist hot spots, where prices are often inflated because of their convenient location.

Perhaps you want to spend your honeymoon in a quiet, secluded spot away from the big cities. Look into mountain, beach, or desert areas of interest that are off the beaten path. The national and state parks systems offer beautiful scenery in quiet settings at

very reasonable prices. Hiking, watching wildlife, and exploring historical sites are just a few of the options available when you honeymoon in these areas. You'll find the pace much slower, the air fresher, and you'll feel yourselves relaxing after the hectic wedding events. On the Web, start your search by checking out the National Park Service web site at <http://www.nps.gov/parks.html>

Whichever affordable honeymoon you choose, plan ahead for the best availability and price. Give yourselves plenty of time to explore the options for site seeing and tours, and be sure to allow for enough leisure time with your new spouse.

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# Choosing Your Wedding Rings

BY AMANDA KNOLES

Before you begin shopping for engagement and wedding rings, ask a jeweler to measure your fingers for the proper size. Jewelers can measure you with a wide sizer for the wedding bands and a narrow sizer for the engagement ring. Keep in mind there should be some effort needed to push the correct sizer over your finger joint, but on the finger it should fit comfortably and not too tight. The ring should never feel so loose that it might slide off when you wash your hands or reach for something on the floor. Your finger size may change with extremes in weather, medical conditions or even the time of day. It's a good idea to get measured a few times over several days or weeks before making a final selection. Rings can always be resized to fit, but you'll save money if you get it right in the beginning.

It's a good idea to seek out a local jewelry store with an established reputation. A jeweler who has been in business for many years will take the time to show you a variety of quality rings and make sure you are a happy cus-



tomers. Many couples find choosing engagement rings confusing because they know little about the variables in diamond quality and value. A patient jeweler will show you a variety of styles in different price ranges and explain how carat, clarity, color and

cut determine the cost.

The most popular diamonds for engagement rings are square, oval, marquise or round shapes. Engagement diamonds are usually paired with white gold, yellow gold or platinum bands. But there is great vari-

ety in band styles. The manner in which the diamond is placed on the band is what the jeweler calls the setting. Some settings place the diamond high, somewhat away from the band, while others set the stone lower, closer to the band. A lower setting is easier to



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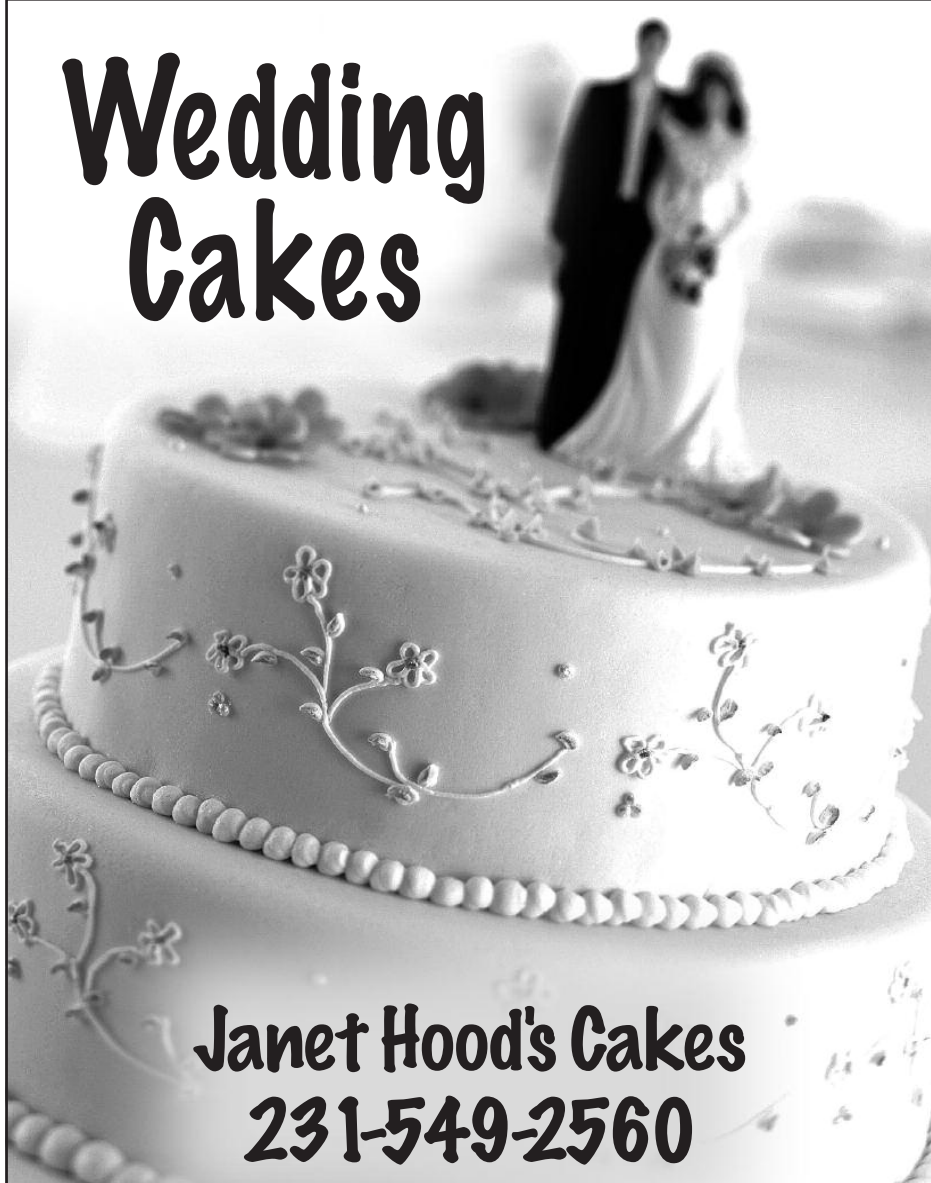
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wear on an everyday basis and offers more protection for the stone.

Many women like the idea of another gem such as a sapphire surrounded by accent diamonds. If you love a particular stone, a jeweler can create a special ring to suit your needs.

Wedding bands are available in many styles but generally are constructed from three basic metals: gold, silver or platinum. The majority of couples choose 14K yellow or white gold because it is extremely durable while still retaining beautiful color and shine. Rings made of 18K gold are more costly, softer and more easily scratched than 14K but they also exhibit a richer color. Gold that is 14K is 58.5% pure gold and 41.5% other metals such as silver or copper. Rings constructed of 18K gold are 75% pure gold and 25% other metal alloys. It's a good idea to avoid 10K gold since it is only 42% gold and lacks the luster and durability of 14 or 18K. Although 24 karat gold is 100% gold it is generally considered too soft to use for rings.

Silver is less expensive than gold and it is a much softer metal. It is prone to tarnishing and discoloration. However, if you are on a tight budget, there are many attractive silver rings to choose from.

Platinum is deemed the most precious metal and it is increasing in popularity for wedding rings. It is much heavier than gold. Small amounts of

ruthenium and iridium are added to increase the hardness of platinum. It has excellent durability and shine. A ring constructed of white platinum is an investment that will last a lifetime.

Flat bands are a good choice for those seeking an understated, simple style. They are constructed with a rectangular cross section with slightly rounded edges. Half-round bands have a cross section that is flat on the inside and rounded on top. They have traditional styling with a domed or raised center. Sometime half-round bands have a beaded edge for decoration. Comfort-fit bands are heavier and more expensive than other types. They are constructed with an oval cross section and have smooth, rounded edges for a more comfortable fit. They are also available with a mill-grained edge.

Don't be afraid to ask questions about diamonds and wedding bands. Good salespeople enjoy sharing their knowledge with customers. Trust your instincts. If a salesperson is pressuring you into buying a ring you can't afford, take your business elsewhere. If a ring seems too good to be true as far as carat weight versus cost, it probably has flaws or may even be a fake. Don't feel embarrassed if you want to purchase simple gold bands. Many couples prefer the classic look of plain gold bands and they never go out of style.

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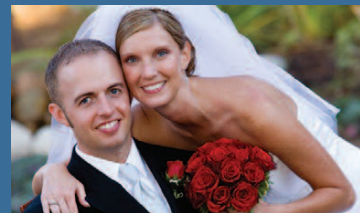


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