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ROGER PARKER  
PHOTOGRAPHYS  
ULTIMATE WEDDING  
PLANNING GUIDE

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## **Section one**

### **(Main Timeline guide)**

#### **Anything up to 2 or 3 years in advance**

##### **Set the date**

Start your wedding planning twelve months or as often the case more in advance to ensure you get to book the venues and suppliers of your choice, and at the best prices. You could save money by booking a mid-week, Friday, or Sunday wedding instead of a Saturday. And never be frightened to ask what deals they will do.

##### **Decide whether to plan your own wedding**

Most people are more than capable to organise their own wedding, however some choose to use a wedding planner because of their expertise. It's also worth remembering some venues will provide a wedding planner as part of their package.

##### **Set your budget**

Make it realistic without going into debt, and add in a contingency just in case.

##### **Draw up your guest list(s)**

Remember you need approximate numbers to book your venue. Try to make it equal where possible, attempting to keep both families happy. Have a separate evening reception guest list if you want some work colleagues or friends, or friends of the family to celebrate with you, however you don't know them well enough to invite them to the ceremony, and the wedding breakfast, or you are limited on space.

##### **Book your venue**

The sooner you book your venues, the easier everything else will be to plan. You'll need to book a venue for your ceremony (either a church, registry office or other licensed civil wedding venue) and a venue for your reception, i.e. Wedding breakfast, evening reception, disco etc. This of course may be the same as the ceremony venue. Remember to take in to account capacity for both, catering, bar and any hidden costs. Also think about your wedding photographs as well, do you have locations where they can be taken, and do you have bad weather options.

### **Take out wedding insurance**

We really advise everyone takes out insurance as soon as you start booking venues and suppliers, it's not costly and will give you extra peace of mind.

### **Appoint (ask) your Maid (Matron) of Honour, Best Man (Woman), Bridesmaids etc.**

You know you will ask, however do ask yourself will they be there to support you through the whole process, and are they thoroughly trustworthy. This is also a good time to think about ushers, flower girls, and page boys if needed or wanted.

### **Book your photographer (and Videographer if required)**

Find a photographer who offers the style of photos you are looking for within your budget, meet them in person or via video chat if not local to yourselves or you are getting married in a different location, we now advise you read our previous blogs on choosing the right photographer "The Trust Factor", and of course we would be more than delighted to speak to you regarding your photography. Please take a look at the website or give myself (Roger) a call on 07734 567961.

### **Meet your minister/registrar (depending on time period you may have to do this at a later stage.**

They'll be able to answer all your questions about the ceremony, and help you find suitable readings and music.

### **Book a DJ, Band, and Entertainers if required.**

This will really be personal preference most people have at least a DJ, however the options are endless for bands, solo artist, plus music for your ceremony or wedding breakfast. You may also want a table magician to entertain your guests, or face painter for the kids.

### **Book caterers if required for wedding breakfast and evening reception.**

If the reception venue you have booked is not doing your catering, then you'll need to consider hiring outside caterers, the options are endless from sit down meals, to hog roasts to fish and chips. Or, if your budget is tight, catering the wedding with a buffet created by friends and family.

### **Book your cars**

You'll need to book one bridal car for the bride and her father (or person giving her away), you may also wish to book additional cars for the Maid of Honour, Brides Mother, Bridesmaids. There are other options as well from fire engines, horse and carriages, to a vintage double decker bus.

### **Book your florist if required**

Decide your colour scheme, decide what flowers you want and where, you now also have many other options with silk and foam flowers.

### **Book a toastmaster (if you wish to have one)**

Some venues will provide someone to ensure people are in the right place at the right time, however some people still choose to have a formal toastmaster to ensure everything goes to plan and speeches are performed in the right order etc.

## **12+ Months Before**

### **Decide what kind of wedding dress or dresses you want**

If you're having a couture bridal gown made for you, then you will need to start this process now. If you're ordering a designer dress then you may need to allow 4-6 months, however if you are buying a dress off the peg or a preloved dress then 6 to 8 weeks should be fine, allowing for alterations if required.

### **Start your healthy eating diet and exercise programme (if you wish or need too)**

This totally up to you, nothing more said

### **Book your honeymoon/minimoon (if you are having one)**

Book it in your maiden name, and use your existing passport, then change all your documents to your married name on your return.

## **Send out your save-the-date cards/magnets/pencils/keyrings etc**

This ensures the guests you really want there don't book their holidays at the same time and miss your special day.

## **6+ Months**

### **A quick note about DIY.**

If you're planning to make your own invitations, table decorations, cake or favours, then remember to allow some additional practice time, as well as production time in to your schedule, so start earlier rather than later.

### **Order/make your wedding invitations**

Don't forget all the other wedding stationery including orders of service (if required), place cards, and thank you cards.

### **Order your wedding cake**

Or Cakes, cupcakes, or make/plan your own.

### **Buy your wedding shoes and accessories**

It's a good idea to get your shoes in time for your first dress fitting, and head-wear/veil for your make-up and hair trials. It's also a good time to think about the jewellery you wish to wear on the day.

### **Book your makeup artist and hairdresser**

Speak to several to find the one that's right for you, then book hair and makeup trials complete with any head wear if possible.

**Buy your maid (Matron) of honour, and bridesmaids dresses, hire/buy suits (dresses) for the groom, best man (woman), ushers, fathers, and any outfits for page boys or flower girls.**

### **Book a honeymoon suite if not included with the venue**

Remembering to ask for some special touches.

## **3+ Months**

### **Have your wedding dress altered**

And then don't lose any more weight!

### **Start having regular facials**

To ensure your skin is healthy and glowing on your wedding day. Think of all those wedding photos.

### **Buy your wedding rings**

Make sure they are both the right size, and that your wedding ring will sit comfortably alongside your engagement ring, if you plan to wear both together. You may have to allow more time if you are having custom rings made.

### **Send out your wedding invitations**

Traditionally they are sent out 6-12 weeks before the wedding, however these can be sent out earlier if you prefer. Include information for your guests on overnight accommodation, transport, parking, and any dress code if appropriate. Include reply cards to ensure they all RSVP, and ask your guests if they have any specific dietary requirements.

### **Order or finish making your venue decorations**

Including wedding favours and table centrepieces.

### **Decide on a gift list**

Make it available to all your wedding guests (normally through your invitations) and your wedding website if you have one.

### **Choose wedding music and readings**

Your minister/registrar will be able to advise further

### **Buy gifts for your best man, maid of honour, bridesmaids, and ushers etc.**

### **Arrange to have vaccinations done if required**

If required for your honeymoon.

## **Start to plan your hen and stag parties**

With the help of your best man and maid of honour.

## **Find your 'Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue'**

Ask your mother or grandmother for something old, the rest is easy

## **1+ Month Before**

### **Arrange for a final fitting of your wedding dress**

And take along your mum, sisters, or best friends too.

### **Reconfirm the wedding arrangements with all your suppliers**

Speak to them personally and make sure you have confirmation of dates, places and times in writing from them.

### **Have your last nights of freedom**

And don't do anything you wouldn't want him/her to do....

### **Finalise the seating plan**

And make your table planner

### **Arrange the wedding rehearsal**

A few days before is ideal and you could make an evening of it by inviting the bridal party along to dinner afterwards too. It's a good opportunity for them to all get together just before the big day.

### **Contact any guests who have not replied to your invitation**

The venue and the caterers will need to know final numbers at least 1-2 weeks before.

**Arrange a date to pick up any hired suits**

And make a note of when they need to be returned - give that honour to your best man.

**Write the wedding speeches**

Write them from the heart, and practice, practice, practice.....

**Have a facial to ensure your skin is glowing**

And stay calm and unstressed knowing everything is in order. Stress-free = spot-free.

**1+ Week Before**

**Have your hair trimmed and or coloured**

Then you'll know it's looking it's best for your 'up do' or curls on the big day, but only do as planned in your hair trials - this is not the time to experiment with a new colour or drastic style changes!

**Have the wedding rehearsal**

This will help you know where to stand and when to speak and will prepare you so you don't feel nervous on the day.

**Pack for your honeymoon (if you are going on one straight after your wedding)**

You're going on the holiday of a lifetime!

**Wear-in your wedding shoes**

Don't wear them outside, but do wear them around the house to make sure they're comfy on the day.

**Create a wedding emergency kit**

Include make up, a compact mirror and powder, lipstick, tissues etc. - anything you think you might need on the day. Ask your Maid of honour to carry this for you.

### **Order your foreign currency for your honeymoon**

And make any other last-minute arrangements.

### **Have your beauty treatments**

Go for a pre-wedding and honeymoon waxing or fake tanning in good time before the big day. Get eyebrows shaped and anything else that needs attention done the week before, not the day before.

### **Hand over the supplier list of contacts to a designated person**

Give the list of all the wedding suppliers involved in your wedding day, with their contract details and times they are meant to arrive, in case they need to be contacted to your best man and or maid of honour and then do not give it all another thought!

## **The Day Before**

### **Have the day off to relax**

Don't go to work, spend the day with friends or family and don't do anything exhausting.

### **Have your nails manicured**

Book it for the afternoon to avoid chips and breaks

### **Try to get an early night**

You're getting married in the morning!

### **And just one final word of advice....**

Enjoy your day no matter what happens. After all the years/months of planning the day will pass in a blink of an eye so take 10 minutes to yourselves and take it in!

## **Congratulations!**

## Section Two

### (Questions for wedding venues)

No matter which supplier you are dealing with there are always those questions you forget to ask that can catch you out afterwards. So with that in mind we have compiled a list of question to ask your wedding venue to ensure there are no hidden clauses or costs that you may regret later on.

1. Which dates are available in our chosen wedding month?
2. How many guests can this venue accommodate (Day and Night)?
3. Would it be possible to have our wedding ceremony at this venue? Which rooms could we use for this purpose?
4. How long do we have the use of the venue for? Is there a set ending time? Can we extend?
5. Will you be hosting any other weddings at the same time as ours?
6. Do they provide a wedding suite as part of the package, or is this extra if available at all & can you view? Also, is this available the night before or what time can you have the room before the service if wishing to get ready there?
7. Do they provide discounted accommodation for wedding guests, if so is there a minimum amount of bookings/maximum?
8. What time would we be able to start setting up for the wedding?
9. What are the guidelines for decorations?
10. Are the tablecloths, chairs, cutlery, and glasses provided or do we need to rent our own? Can we have a look at the available choices?
11. Do you have a list of preferred caterers? Can we see sample menus? Check food hygiene rating?
12. Can we bring our own alcohol? If so, what corkage do you charge (including alcoholic wedding favours)?

13. Do you have the option of a paid bar? Would there be a specific amount that would have to be reached before the end of the reception?
14. Can this venue accommodate a band or DJ, including all of their equipment? Are there enough electrical outputs for the music and the lighting?
15. Do you have any special facilities for children?
16. Do you have disabled access/rooms?
17. When do we need to pay our holding deposit? Are there any other fees we should know about? (Corkage, taxes, service charge)
18. Would there be a venue coordinator available on the day?
19. What deposit is required, what are the payment terms?
20. Is VAT included in the price?
21. Are there any extra penalties if you date had to be moved or wedding cancelled?
22. (If an outdoor wedding) What are the possible options in case of inclement weather?
23. Are fireworks allowed/sparklers/confetti?
24. How would car-parking work on the day?
25. Do they have liability insurance, and do your suppliers need it?
26. Are there any hidden costs, such as electricity for photo booths, light up letters?
27. Is there a limit to the number of extras we can have (Photo booth, chocolate fountain, etc.

## **Section Three**

### **(Insuring Your Wedding)**

I've met a lot of our lovely readers of our blog in the wedding groups on Facebook, and one thing I see too often is couples either being scammed or venues or suppliers going bankrupt or closing without notice.

We have covered this before in short within other blogs, but wanted to really emphasise making sure you are covered as much as possible. So, with this in mind here are a few suggestions to help protect yourselves, in conjunction with our other blogs.

#### **Wedding Insurance**

As soon as you start booking your wedding take out wedding insurance, but check the fine print as if you are planning more than two years ahead you may have to ask suppliers to re-issue contracts after two years. A few of the main suppliers of good insurance are John Lewis, Debenhams, and M&S.

#### **PayPal**

I think everyone knows they should never use friends and families to pay suppliers, I know some of you have to pay ourselves, however I have always expressed we are happy to be paid as a commercial transaction, and take the hit on the charges to insure our customers are happy.

#### **Credit Cards**

Now I would never advise anyone using credit cards to pay for a wedding, however for things like venue deposits I would suggest paying with a credit card then using your savings to pay it straight off, this will provide you with extra insurance if the venue does have problems before your wedding. This goes for any major purchases where possible.

#### **Contracts**

Very simple, no contract no business and read the fine print, and that goes for any service supplier big or small, and please never pay a deposit before getting and signing a contract.

## **Receipts**

Simply always ask for a receipt, even if just a PayPal one, and keep them until your wedding is over and fingers crossed you had the most wonderful day of your lives.

## **Insuring your engagement and wedding rings**

Remember to add your engagement ring(s) and wedding rings to your household insurance as a listed item if they are valued over the standard item level.



## Section Four

### (Choosing the right wedding Photographer)

Once you have decided on your budget and style of photographer you will also want to think about what coverage you would like, be it just the ceremony and a few photos afterwards or all-day, prep to after first dance.

So, what makes a trustworthy photographer, what questions you may ask before booking?

Like any supplier just making sure you do your due diligence on the basics but you also need to have a rapport with your photographer as they are going to be at the side and seeing you at your most exposed all day.

So the very basic questions should be

1. Do they supply you with a clear contract stating you have printing rights to YOUR photographs?
2. Are they able to match reviews and photographs, and can you see at least two or more full weddings albums to check consistency of work?
3. Are their photos realistic, or do they look too good to be true? Some new photographers will use photos from training sessions to sell their work, these are perfectly posed models with perfect light so no comparison to a real wedding. However, do remember most of us will use photoshop to enhance your photos, but never make them so unrealistic that they, won't remind you of your day. unless you want something different.
4. Are Photography packages clear with no hidden charges?
5. How do they expect payment, where possible always use a business transaction on paypal unless you are very confident with them being an honest supplier?
6. How long does it take to get your photographs?

7. Does the Photographer carry back up equipment?
8. Do they have a back-up photographer?
9. Personal fit & Ego! I'm sorry to say some of our colleagues think they are more important than their customers are. Even if they produce amazing photos, what is the cost, will they upset you or your guests on your special day. If looking at a pure documentary style photographer, or reportage style, which there is nothing wrong with, however be prepared not to get those shot of you with your mum as you weren't together at the right time to get a photo. So always ask if they are flexible enough for you to ask for a posed photograph with your parents, or grandparents. They might also make lavish claims about being international photographers with bases all over the world, believe me I know of some of the best photographers in Europe and they don't even have to advertise.
10. Don't be fooled by the number of facebook likes certain photographers have, some will be genuine, and some long-established photographers will have earned them over a long career, however, sometimes if you see a photographer with thousands of likes, they have run competitions offering free photo shoots for example 5000 likes, and the poor people, taking part often never get the prize as they never reach the ridiculous targets set.

## **Section Five**

### **(Confetti, Bubbles, Petals. Pom Poms, Rice, or Candy Floss!)**

Things have certainly changed in the world of confetti since I went to my first wedding, when every other person had the obligatory box of Woolworth's confetti, now it seems to be the norm the couple are expected to supply confetti, if you are allowed it, or it's biodegradable, or real petals. <sup>1</sup>

We often carry a biodegradable confetti canon with us just in case, however it's becoming a real pitfall, especially with so many plastic confetti around now, so I thought we could share a few suggestions for alternatives and the pros and cons of each one.

So here we go.....

Non-Biodegradable confetti - Please just don't use it, it's fine for table decorations where it can be collected, but not outside, I've seen venues where the same confetti remain there for weeks if not months.

Biodegradable confetti - often made from rice paper, so just breaks down in water, can cause marks on dresses if wet, but normally fine.

Bubbles, looks great if not too windy, but you really need bubble guns to get any real effect, also can leave marks on clothes.

Petals are a great natural choice, simple white rose petals are beautiful and safe on wedding dresses, but be careful with coloured flowers as with biodegradable confetti, if they get wet can cause colour leakage on to dresses.

Rice, natural and can look great in photos, however if thrown with any force can be painful, if not dangerous.

Now for two new ideas that have started being used, Small balls of candyfloss, biodegradable, however as never seen it used, would imagine it could mark clothes or leave sticky residue, and would hate the thought of small children picking it up and eating it afterwards.

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So that just leaves a lovely idea, Pom Poms, easy and fun to make yourselves, Kids can help make them or as part of your hen or stag if so minded. colours could match your theme, or you could go mad with assorted bright colours, easy to clear up with a brush or spring rake if on grass, they could even be washed and used again.

