

Cutting corners on your wedding can also make it more meaningful

As more couples pay for their own weddings, many also look for ways to minimize costs. No one wants to leave loved ones off the guest list, skimp on special touches or eliminate those little extras that make the day dazzle. With a little creativity, cutting corners on your wedding day can also make it more meaningful.

- Choose a venue that has meaning to you as a couple. Is there a place where you know many people on staff? Somewhere one of you has done volunteer work or otherwise made your name known? If you're a regular, member or contributor at a park, museum or other attraction, you may be able to get a discount.
- Pick an off-day or time to hold your ceremony. Fridays and Sundays are generally less popular – and therefore less expensive – than Saturdays. And the time of day matters, too. Inquire about discounts for holding a wedding mid-to-late morning rather than later in the afternoon or evening.
- Stand up for savings when it comes to seating. If your ceremony will be held in a place where you'll need to rent chairs, think about how long the service will actually go. Do you really need to spend several dollars per guest for seating that will be used for 10 or 20 minutes? Ask about using a few on-site seats if necessary for older guests, but for able-bodied attendees, let them stand and save the cash.
- Timing – and place – is everything when it comes to the reception. Do you and your love have a favorite restaurant? Consider hosting your party there. Holding a luncheon rather than dinner – at a restaurant you trust – can save literally thousands of dollars over a reception hall where food has to be catered. If the eatery is a place you already like to spend time, chances are it's appealing to the eye – that means you won't have to decorate much. And don't be afraid to ask them to open up for your party at a time the restaurant is usually closed. It will be extra business for them, and the staff will be there to focus on you and your guests – which will make for great service and a more intimate feel.
- Cut costs by cutting flowers – literally. Check around to see if your town has an urban farm or botanical garden that will grow flowers for your wedding. Some will allow you to choose what is planted ahead of time. Your wedding party can make a day of it before the ceremony by cutting and arranging bouquets yourselves. Your friends and family will have time to bond before the big day and your flowers will be fresh, seasonal, beautiful and grown for a great cause – your wedding! Many places will do this in exchange for a small donation – even as low as \$100. And it can be tax deductible.
- Get creative with your centerpieces. Do you love board games, movies, TV shows or old toys? Shop at yard sales and thrift stores throughout the year before the big day, and make your own special centerpieces out of items that mean something to you. Choose a different theme, movie, show or game for each table and assemble fun pieces that really show who you are as a couple. These can also make great conversation starters at tables where guests don't know each other well.

Having a wonderful wedding day doesn't mean you have to spend a lot of money. Think about what's important to you and plan ahead. There are easy ways to cut corners that will make your day even more special and deeply personal than you had dreamed.