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# BRIDES

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Wrestling with your budget? You don't need a maths PhD - just follow our tips

## Setting the budget

OK, so it's not the most glamorous part of planning, but you need to nail down your numbers before you can get to the good stuff. Here's how to make the process practically painless

**Work out what you want** 'It may seem obvious, but you need to decide the type of wedding you want *before* doing your sums and booking venues,' says wedding planner Julia Dowling. 'I've seen a lot of couples book the venue first - only to realise they've blown their budget and can't have another element they were desperate to include.'

**Have the money talk** Around 52%\* of couples foot the whole bill themselves, which means that nearly half ask for help, mainly from Mum and Dad. Sit down with each set of parents individually - you with yours, he with his - and ask if they would like to contribute.

**Add it up** Your parents' contribution + yours = your total budget. Note: Do not include your credit card limits in the total. You don't want to start married life in debt.

**Spend it wisely** Now that you have a figure, start thinking about your priorities. What do you want most? A jam-packed dance floor? Amazing food? Allot the bulk of your budget there and find ways to save in other areas.

**Consider every cost** 'Most couples go over budget by at least 30% because they didn't account for everything up front,' says planner Annie Lee. Be sure to include the following hidden costs: dress alterations, weather back-up plans (tents, heaters), taxes (if you've planned a destination wedding) and even postage for the invites!

## What every ENGAGED girl needs to know

'Choose your 'maids carefully. We recommend an organised friend to help with planning, a creative bridesmaid to make you feel inspired and a fun 'maid who will keep you smiling.'

**Michelle Hailey,**  
[twobirdsbridesmaid.co.uk](http://twobirdsbridesmaid.co.uk)

'Don't feel like you need to ask *everyone* for their opinion on *everything*. Yes, it's flattering for them to be asked, but the more people you involve in the decision-making process, (whether it be the dress, the venue or the menu) the more opinions you need to juggle.'

**Bruce Russell,**  
[bybrucerussell.com](http://bybrucerussell.com)

'Pick just one or two DIY elements and make them the very best they can be. People can get carried away and before

long they're drowning in a sea of unfinished favours and half-sewn bunting. A couple of unique personal touches will be more appreciated by your guests than lots of different ideas all thrown together.'

**Joanne Scott,**  
[theweddingdolls.co.uk](http://theweddingdolls.co.uk)

'Struggling to fix a date? I always suggest couples start with their preferred season, then work out three dates that work for you, your fiancé and both sets of parents. Only then, when you've got this flexibility, are you ready to visit venues.'

**Kerry Jackson-Rider,**  
[kerryjackson-rider.co.uk](http://kerryjackson-rider.co.uk)

'It's fun to tap into bridal fashions and reception trends, but beware of being seduced by them unless they *really* reflect

your personal style as a couple. Even the queen of rock'n'roll, Kate Moss, went for an elegantly understated country wedding.'

**Sophie McCorry Day,**  
[quintessentiallyweddings.com](http://quintessentiallyweddings.com)

'Plan the day from your guests' perspective as well as your own. This means making sure that it flows naturally, that they aren't left standing around without a drink while you have pictures taken, and that they get to spend time with you both, even if it's only briefly.'

**Julia Dowling,**  
[snapdragonparties.com](http://snapdragonparties.com)

'Start the search for ceremony and reception locations first. These sites fill up fast and are often booked more than a year in advance, whereas you can safely leave the search for a cake and florist much further down the line.'

**Emma Zamani-Hawke,**  
[hawkeandhughes.com](http://hawkeandhughes.com)

## Where will your money be spent?

To get you started, here's how the average Brides reader divides up her budget\*

Wedding and reception venues: **29%**

Honeymoon: **18%**

Catering, including all food, wine and the cake: **15%**

Engagement and wedding rings: **14%**

Bride's outfit, including dress, shoes, accessories and beauty: **9%**

Photographer and videographer: **6%**

Entertainment, including DJ and band: **3%**

Flowers: **2%**

Bridesmaid and groomsman outfits: **2%**

Stationery: **1%**

Groom's outfit: **1%**

\*BASED ON 2012 FIGURES IN THE JOHN LEWIS INSURANCE WEDDING REPORT AND THE BRIDES ANNUAL READERS' SURVEY. WORDS: HEATHER LEE. ADDITIONAL RESEARCH: ANNA HART. PHOTOGRAPHS: ACP/CAMERA, TRUNK ARCHIVE