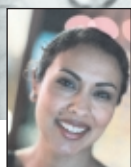


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ASK THE EXPERT

Wedding planner Nafisa Mark answers your wedding dilemmas

SEATING DILEMMAS

Are there any traditions we should adhere to when sorting out the seating arrangements? Can't we just let people sit where they want?

Your close family and friends should be seated nearest to the top table with other relatives and friends sitting further away. If you have round tables, guests with partners are usually seated side by side. If you choose to have long tables, partners are usually seated opposite each other. It is customary to alternate male and female guests. If you decide to split up couples, they should not be too far away from each other. Children should always be seated with their parents.

Although this will not be possible in all cases, at least try to have similar age groups or guests with similar interests seated together such as aunts and uncles, friends and work colleagues.

Set the budget first and stick to it throughout the whole planning schedule

SPIRIT OF THE DAY

We're not religious but would like to have a spiritual service. Any thoughts?

There are many couples who are spiritually led, who are not committed to one religion or church therefore a more formal traditional church wedding with religious words may not be suitable. Humanist ceremonies can provide you with a more spiritual service focusing on words and music that have real meaning to you and your groom, without any religious words or connotations.

A humanist wedding celebration can take place anywhere from gardens, marquees, on boats, beaches and in castles. Humanist ceremonies are very spiritual and ultimately an expression of your deep feelings for one another.

They are however, not legal, and you would still require to attend a Register Office, sometimes a day or two before the humanist ceremony, to deal with the legal formalities and obtain a civil marriage certificate.

For further information visit www.humanism.org.uk

FEELING STRESSED!

I am getting married and I don't know where to start with all the planning, what do you advise?

Planning a wedding is an exciting and important event, therefore it does take time and dedication to get every detail correct, which can be very stressful.

My top tip would be to set the budget first and stick to it throughout the whole planning schedule. Ask yourself how much can you really afford? There is no reason to go all out on a wedding if you can't pay for it. You can also save time searching for wedding suppliers by defining the type of look and feel you want, for example, theme, décor, location or type of venue and size of your guest list. Once you have these details, you can easily communicate them to the right potential supplier, saving you lots of precious time in seeing only those companies that can actually deliver your requirements. Be sure to get quotes and estimates written down before you book a service and always ask about hidden charges.

Take advantage of free wedding planning tools such as a 'to do list' and a 'budget planner' which can be found in bridal magazines or on online wedding websites to help you keep track of your plans and expenses, which will ease the stress.

If you are still feeling stressed with all that you need to do, why not call in a wedding planner. They know the business and have access to the best contacts. They can secure you a good deal, which should save you money and you benefit from great peace of mind!

SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS

Email your wedding queries to weddingadvice@intermags.co.uk