

Wedding thrills minus the endless bills

Many newlyweds start married life struggling from heavy debts from their big day. But with a proper financial plan, a walk down the aisle can also be a stroll in the park.

With the average cost of an Australian wedding now well over the \$30,000 mark,¹ tying the knot can mean a huge financial burden for many couples. It can also have a knock-on financial impact for years to come – for example, if they use credit cards or a personal loan to cover costs, or if their wedding debt means they have to put off buying their first home.

Of course, most couples want the happiest day of their lives to be as grand as it is in their dreams, but that doesn't mean it needs to break the bank. In fact, with some careful cash flow management (and maybe some minor compromises), a couple can save themselves significant amounts. And if the parents of the bride or groom are also chipping in as well, it's important to make sure the festivities aren't overshadowed by family tensions over a blown budget.

Watch out for hidden expenses

Wedding budget blowouts can happen without warning and can easily snowball out of control. To avoid this happening to you or your loved ones, ask recently married friends if there were any unexpected costs that tripped them up. Here are some of the common ones:

- **Package deals.** Many wedding venues offer food and drinks packages at a fixed cost or per head. Make sure you know what's covered, so you can see which option will give you the best value for money.
- **Venue extras.** Be clear about what you're getting for your venue hire fee, otherwise you could get stung for the extra cost of things like lighting, sound, décor and bar staff. Plus, if you've booked an outside venue, is there an inside option if it rains on the day – and is it covered by the venue fee?
- **Overseas costs.** If you're planning an overseas wedding, remember to factor in things like visa costs and currency fluctuations. The last thing you want is for your guests to have to pay more than they bargained for.
- **Taxes and service charges.** Check and double check the fine print in your contracts and service arrangements to make sure there will be no difference between the price you've been quoted and what the final bill will come to.



5 ways to do a wedding cheaper

If you want to keep costs down, there are plenty of ways to go about it – you might even end up making the event more memorable for your guests:

1. **Wedding on a weekday.** If your wedding is a gathering of your nearest and dearest – and you give them plenty of notice – no one will begrudge taking a day off work to attend.
2. **Budget clothes.** Okay, the words 'budget' and 'clothes' together for a wedding day may seem unappealing, but so does paying thousands on outfits you wear once. A non-traditional wedding dress will always be cheaper, and you could save even more by hiring or making one.
3. **Buy your rings online.** To find the cheapest price for your wedding jewellery, start looking online. But if you're buying overseas, make sure you factor in the exchange rate and any taxes.
4. **Make your own decorations.** Not only will this save you money, it also gives your wedding a personal touch. If you don't think you're arty enough, enlist a friend who is to give you a bit of creative support.
5. **Keep it small.** A small family ceremony can create a special and intimate event. And if you have it at home rather than hiring an expensive venue, you could save a fortune.

Stay on track

When you're planning a wedding, a sensible budget and savings plan can make all the difference. You might also need to adjust your household spending, and both make regular contributions to a joint savings account in the lead-up to the big day. Your Financial Adviser can help you manage your cash flow and your wedding budget so you can start married life on the right foot.

1 ASIC, 2015. 'How much can a wedding cost?' MoneySmart.

Speak to us for more information

If you would like to know more, talk to your Count financial adviser. They can give you more detailed information on the best approach for your situation.

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