



ASK THE EXPERT

Wedding planner Samm Riley answers your wedding dilemmas

FEELING OVERWHELMED

I am right at the start of my journey and have no idea where to start; the enormity of the task in hand feels quite daunting. Where should I start?

As with any large task, the best way to deal with it is to break it down into small tasks and tick them off as you go. So put aside all your 'big picture' thoughts and concentrate on the nitty gritty. My advice before doing anything at all is to draw up a guest list as this will determine the venues you choose and the budget you will need. I have seen it time and time again when couples get this wrong and end up overspending on the venue and hospitality element and then having to sacrifice and compromise on the rest of the wedding to stay within budget.

The provision of food and drink to your guests will take up approximately one third of your budget, so if you have £15k to spend and 100 guests you have approx £50 per head for food and drink. So if your maths doesn't work at this stage, you will need to tweak your guest numbers or hospitality costs so that it does.



PHOTOGRAPH BY HARVEY COLLARD www.harveycollard.com

This follows on from the last question and is often asked. Every wedding is different which is why it is almost impossible to give a guide. My advice would be to write a list of everything that you want at your wedding and cost them, your research will provide a broad spectrum of prices and quality. Once you have your costs, number each item in order of importance to you. The items at the top of the list are most important and are the things that you will spend the most on and the items towards the bottom can be compromised on. You can now set about putting your costed items into your budget plan. If the total costs fall within your budget great, if they don't you will need to reduce costs in areas less important to you. **DO NOT BOOK ANYTHING UNTIL YOU HAVE DONE THIS!** Spending £5k on the venue and having 400 guests will not fit into a £15k budget!

this) and you would be surprised at how many people ask this question. The reason 12 months plus is given as a guideline is to secure venues that are in demand and to allow for people who work full-time (most of us) to utilise their weekends and evenings to plan their wedding without too much stress. Planning a wedding in six months is labour intensive and requires a plan and an organised mind. If you want to order a bespoke dress and rings, do so straight away. You will need to do everything else in the usual order, just double quick time. Draw up a guest list and a budget, then book the venue. Ideally give three months notice when sending invitations, these need to go out as soon as your date and venues are secured. Once this is done you can book ancillary services and keep on top of your tasks and administration. This is hard and stressful work and I would highly recommend that you enrol some assistance.

HOW TO GET A FAIR PRICE

How do I get a good deal on my wedding goods and services?

Ah the negotiation question! If you fear looking silly or don't like to ask, I'm afraid that you will need help negotiating. Getting a good deal is about knowledge, boldness, and confidence. For example if you know that most food and drink suppliers work on margins of 60 – 85% then you know how much room they have to negotiate and have an even playing field. If you don't ask they are highly unlikely to offer! Have you ever seen signs that say "please don't ask for credit as a refusal often offends" I like to follow this with "...but agreement often delights!" Ask the questions, furnish yourself with information and be bold.

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

Samm Riley can be contacted at: [Wedding Matters, 08450 721200](tel:08450721200)



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY CLIFTON-GOULD www.jcphoto.com

SHOW ME THE MONEY!

I have read in newspapers that the average cost of a wedding is £17k, but they don't tell you how this money is spent; can you help?

LAST MINUTE BRIDE

I'm getting married in six months and all timelines I have seen are for lead times of 12 months plus – have I left things to late? Will I have to set a new date?

No and no, a wedding can be planned in three months (although I don't advise