

2027-2028 EDITION

THE CURATED BRIDE

Wedding *Command* Center™

Your complete guide to planning a beautiful wedding
with clarity, confidence, and intention.

VISION

BUDGET

VENDORS

TIMELINE

GUESTS

BOUNDARIES

The Wedding Vision Foundation

Make decisions before you spend a single dollar.

Wedding Style Questionnaire

Circle or underline what resonates:

Vibe: Romantic · Modern · Bohemian · Classic ·

Minimalist · Garden

Size: Intimate (under 50) · Medium (50–100) · Large (100–200) · Grand (200+)

Season: Spring · Summer · Fall · Winter · No preference

Setting: Ballroom · Barn · Garden · Beach · City · Destination

Palette: Neutrals · Bold florals · Moody · White/ivory · Earthy

Feel: Elegant · Relaxed · Party · Intimate · Extravagant

Guest Experience Priorities

Rank 1–5 (1 = most important):

Amazing food & drinks _____

Dancing & entertainment _____

Stunning venue & décor _____

Beautiful photography _____

Seamless, low-stress day _____

Must-Haves vs. Nice-to-Haves

✦ NON-NEGOTIABLES

◇ WOULD BE LOVELY

"What matters most to us is _____. When we look back on our wedding day, we want to feel _____. The one thing our guests absolutely must experience is _____."

The Realistic Wedding Budget Blueprint

Know the truth before you fall in love with a venue.

Why Most Couples Go Over Budget

- ◆ They set a number before researching real costs
- ◆ They forget tax, service fees & gratuity (adds 25–35%)
- ◆ They add guests after setting the budget
- ◆ They don't track payments & deposits in real time
- ◆ They make emotional decisions in vendor meetings
- ◆ They have no buffer for surprises (budget 10–15% extra)

3 Biggest Budgeting Mistakes

01. Booking the venue before setting the full budget — the venue dictates your caterer, your bar, sometimes your florist. Lock the total first.

02. Confusing "package price" with "final price." Packages rarely include tax, service charges, or gratuity.

03. Not getting three quotes per vendor. One quote is a starting point, not a market price.

How to Create Your Realistic Starting Number

01

Start with what you *can* spend — not what you want to spend. Add confirmed family contributions *only* when they're in writing.

02

Subtract 15% immediately as your buffer. This is not optional — this is your "the florist delivered wrong flowers" fund.

03

Divide the remainder across the Allocation Guide on the next page — *before* talking to a single vendor.

The rule nobody tells you: Your guest count is your budget — not the other way around. Every guest you add costs roughly \$150–\$250 more in food, drinks, favors, and seating. The fastest way to reduce your budget is to reduce your guest list.

2027–2028 Budget Allocation Guide

Real ranges based on current market pricing. Percentages are starting points — adjust to your priorities.

CATEGORY	\$10K BUDGET	\$25K BUDGET	\$50K BUDGET
Venue & Catering (35–40%)	\$3,500	\$9,000	\$19,000
Photography & Video (10–15%)	\$1,200	\$3,500	\$7,000
Florals & Décor (8–12%)	\$900	\$2,500	\$5,500
Music / Entertainment (5–8%)	\$600	\$1,500	\$3,500
Attire (both) (8–10%)	\$800	\$2,000	\$4,500
Hair & Makeup (3–5%)	\$350	\$800	\$1,800
Stationery & Favors (2–4%)	\$250	\$600	\$1,500
Transportation (2–3%)	\$250	\$600	\$1,200
Planner / Coordinator (4–6%)	optional	\$1,500	\$3,500
Buffer (10–15%)	\$1,150	\$2,500	\$5,000

The Costs That Sneak Up On You



Dress alterations
\$200–\$800



Marriage license
\$35–\$115



Postage (invites)
\$150–\$400



Vendor meals
\$25–\$50 each



Rehearsal dinner
\$500–\$3,000



Day-of gratuities
\$500–\$1,500



Wedding party gifts
\$300–\$700



Last-minute décor
always something

Where to Splurge vs. Save

Your money should go where your memories live.

✦ WORTH INVESTING IN

Photography — your photos are the only vendor whose work you see every day for the rest of your life. Budget for the photographer you love, not just one you can afford.

Guest experience — food, drinks, and atmosphere are what guests remember and talk about for years. Don't cut corners here.

Your wedding dress — you'll look at it forever. Worth it.

Hair & makeup trial — a trial prevents a bad surprise on the day.

Day-of coordinator — this person saves your sanity. Non-negotiable if you don't have a full planner.

◇ POTENTIAL PLACES TO SAVE

Wedding favors — most guests leave them behind. A pretty dessert or a donation to charity in guests' names goes further.

Trendy décor — if you saw it on Pinterest in 2023, guests have too. Timeless beats trendy for photos that age well.

Elaborate centerpieces — guests talk over them, not about them. Greenery and candles are stunning and affordable.

Groom's cake / extra desserts — most get left on the table. One beautiful cake is enough.

Printed programs — many guests don't keep them. A beautiful QR code or digital version is just as meaningful.

The 5-Year Test Worksheet

"Would we still care about this in 5 years?"

ITEM / EXPENSE	STILL CARE?	GUESTS NOTICE?	KEEP OR CUT?
_____	Y/N	Y/N	_____
_____	Y/N	Y/N	_____
_____	Y/N	Y/N	_____
_____	Y/N	Y/N	_____

Vendor Decision Center

Venue

Ask: What's included in the rental fee? Is catering exclusive to your vendors or in-house?

Ask: What's the rain plan? What's the noise curfew?

Red flag: No site visits allowed, or pressure to sign same day.

Compare: Per-person cost, date flexibility, vendor restrictions.

Photographer

Ask: Can I see a full gallery from a recent wedding — not just highlights?

Ask: Who shoots if you're ill? Will it be you or a second shooter?

Red flag: Can't show full galleries, vague on who owns the RAW files.

Compare: Delivery timeline, number of edited images, album options.

Planner / Coordinator

Ask: How many weddings do you coordinate per weekend? Who is my point of contact?

Ask: What's the difference between your full-planning and day-of packages?

Red flag: Handles more than 2 weddings on your date, no backup plan.

Florist

Ask: Can you work within my budget, or will you tell me if you can't?

Ask: What happens if a bloom I love isn't in season?

Red flag: Won't show you a detailed itemized quote, vague pricing.

Compare: Itemized quotes, delivery/setup fees, teardown included?

Caterer

Ask: Is the per-person price for food only, or does it include service staff?

Ask: How do you handle dietary restrictions and allergies?

Red flag: Won't allow a tasting, or charges extra for tastings.

Compare: All-inclusive vs. food-only pricing, staffing ratio.

DJ / Band

Ask: Will you take a "do not play" list? How do you read the room?

Ask: Do you provide your own equipment, and have you played at this venue before?

Red flag: No live performance or videos to review, vague on overtime rates.

The rule: Always get everything in writing — every promise, every item, every price. Verbal agreements mean nothing if a vendor goes out of business, gets sick, or overbooks.

The Wedding Timeline

18+ MONTHS OUT

- ✓ Set your total budget — before anything else
- ✓ Draft your preliminary guest list
- ✓ Tour and book your venue (most book 18–24 months out in 2027)
- ✓ Hire your photographer and videographer
- ✓ Hire a planner if using one
- ✓ Begin dress shopping — allow 9–12 months for delivery & alterations

12 MONTHS OUT

- ✓ Book your caterer (if not venue-bundled)
- ✓ Book your florist
- ✓ Book music / entertainment
- ✓ Reserve hotel room blocks for guests
- ✓ Send save-the-dates
- ✓ Begin honeymoon research & booking

9 MONTHS OUT

- ✓ Order dress (confirm lead time with boutique)
- ✓ Book hair & makeup — schedule trial
- ✓ Book officiant — confirm they're licensed
- ✓ Build your wedding website
- ✓ Create your registry

6 MONTHS OUT

- ✓ Send invitations (6–8 weeks is fine; destination weddings, earlier)
- ✓ Apply for marriage license (check county requirements)
- ✓ Do cake/dessert tasting and book baker
- ✓ Finalize ceremony readings, vows outline, & music

3 MONTHS OUT

- ✓ First dress fitting
- ✓ Confirm all vendor details + timeline
- ✓ Finalize seating chart
- ✓ Prepare vendor tip envelopes
- ✓ Confirm RSVP final count with venue/caterer

FINAL MONTH & WEEK

- ✓ Final dress fitting & pickup
- ✓ Deliver tip envelopes to coordinator or trusted person
- ✓ Pack your emergency kit (see Day-Of section)
- ✓ Rehearsal + rehearsal dinner

"The day before: eat, sleep, hydrate. That's your only job."

Guest List Strategy

Your guest count is the single biggest driver of your budget. Be intentional.

Who Needs to Be Invited?

Before adding someone, answer these three questions honestly:

01. Have we spoken in the last 12 months — not just liked each other's posts?

02. Would I be genuinely happy to see them there — or am I inviting them out of obligation?

03. Am I inviting them because I want to, or because someone else wants me to?

"A smaller wedding with people who truly love you will always feel more magical than a large wedding filled with obligation."

Plus-One Decisions Made Simple

The only rule that works: Be consistent. Either all single guests get a plus-one, or none do. Exceptions create hurt feelings.

Long-term partner rule: Anyone who has been in a relationship for 1+ year should receive a plus-one.

The "they don't know anyone" consideration: If a guest is traveling far and won't know another person, a plus-one makes sense.

If you can't afford it: It's okay to say "Due to venue capacity, we're keeping our guest list to immediate family and close friends."

Guest List Worksheet

MUST-INVITE (A-LIST)

Total: ____

WOULD LOVE (B-LIST)

Total: ____

IF CAPACITY ALLOWS (C-LIST)

Total: ____

Family Expectations Conversation Guide

When family wants to add people:

"We have a firm capacity limit and have already made our list. We'd love to celebrate with you [at a dinner / post-wedding party] instead."

When family wants to split the guest list:

"We're keeping the guest list to people we both have a close, current relationship with. We really appreciate your understanding."

Wedding Decision Tracker

This is what makes the Command Center feel like a system — not just a guide.

VENDOR / DECISION	TOTAL COST	DEPOSIT	DUE DATE	CONTACT	STATUS / NOTES
Venue	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
Photographer	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
Videographer	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
Caterer / Food	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
Florist	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
Music / DJ / Band	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
Hair & Makeup	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
Attire & Alterations	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
Transportation	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
Cake / Desserts	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
Stationery / Paper	\$_____	\$_____	_____	_____	_____
TOTAL SPENT	\$_____	\$_____			



Screenshot every vendor contract and save to a dedicated folder. You'll thank yourself later.



Pay deposits with a credit card when possible — extra protection if a vendor cancels.



Set payment due dates as phone reminders 1 week early — never miss a balance payment.

Bride Stress & Family Boundaries

The part nobody talks about — but every bride needs.

Handling Conflicting Opinions

What to say when someone doesn't like your venue:

"We really love it and it feels so 'us' — we're so excited to celebrate with you there."

What to say when someone criticizes your dress:

"I felt completely myself in it, and that's what matters most to me."

What to say when the budget conversation comes up:

"We've put a lot of thought into what works for us — we're staying on plan."

Questions to Ask Your Fiancé Before Planning Gets Stressful

- ◆ What's the one thing you absolutely want at our wedding?
- ◆ What would you be okay eliminating if we needed to cut costs?
- ◆ How involved do you want to be in vendor meetings?
- ◆ How do we handle family members who give unsolicited input?
- ◆ What does our "ideal day of the wedding" look like to you?
- ◆ How do we make each other feel supported during stressful moments?

How to Communicate Your Priorities (Without the Drama)

SET IT EARLY

Tell family members who have opinions what your top 3 priorities are before they start volunteering ideas. It's easier to redirect than to undo.

USE "WE" ALWAYS

"We've decided..." is much harder to argue with than "I want..." — it signals a united front and takes the blame off any one person.

DELEGATE A BUFFER

If you have a planner or MOH who can field questions and opinions, let them. You don't have to be accessible to everyone about every decision.

The Bride's Permission Slip

- ✓ You are allowed to say no to things that don't feel like you.
- ✓ You are allowed to not love every part of the planning process.
- ✓ You are allowed to have a different vision than your family does.
- ✓ You are allowed to take a full weekend off from wedding planning.
- ✓ You are allowed to change your mind — even after you've decided.
- ✓ You are allowed to prioritize your mental health over perfection.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN YOUR BUNDLE

Your Complete *Toolkit*



This Guide

The Curated Bride Wedding Command Center™

- ✓ Wedding Vision Foundation + worksheets
- ✓ 2027–2028 budget allocation guide
- ✓ Splurge vs. save framework
- ✓ Complete vendor vetting system
- ✓ 18-month planning timeline
- ✓ Guest list strategy + scripts
- ✓ Decision tracker template
- ✓ Family boundaries + bride scripts



BONUS

Google Sheets Suite

Three live spreadsheets you'll actually use

Wedding Budget Calculator

Auto-calculates totals, tracks what's paid vs. remaining, shows how much you're over or under by category — in real time.

Vendor Comparison Tracker

Compare up to 3 vendors side-by-side per category. Includes scoring for price, communication, and experience.

Payment Due Date Tracker

Never miss a vendor payment. Color-coded by urgency with auto-alert when a payment is within 14 days.

*"Planning your wedding should feel exciting — not like a second job.
This is everything you need to stay organized, stay on budget,
and actually enjoy the process."*

— THE CURATED BRIDE

YOU'VE GOT THIS

Your most beautiful chapter *starts here.*

Wedding planning doesn't have to feel overwhelming. With the right system, the right information, and a clear vision — you can plan a wedding that feels like *you*, without the stress, the second-guessing, or the budget blowouts.

8

COMPLETE SECTIONS

50+

ACTIONABLE PROMPTS

2027

CURRENT EDITION

curatedbride.com

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