

Wedding Budget

WHERE TO START

First comes the engagement, then (hopefully!) comes your Wedding Planner. The first thing your Planner will work on with you? The BUDGET. Even if you opt to not have a Planner, the budget is the uncomfortable and sometimes-not-fun part of wedding planning. This is the first time you'll ever have the opportunity to plan a huge event and often times what you want to spend and the actual cost of what you want doesn't match up. It really is impossible to know how much the wedding you envision is going to cost until you start really getting dirty and planning.

I'm sure you've read tips on how to save money and real-life hacks for your wedding. But how do you actually set an accurate and realistic budget in the first place?

The following template will help you to get started and make some decisions. Read on for a few tips before you get started.

HELPFUL TIPS

Guest Count

The number one determining factor in your wedding budget is the number of guests you expect. You will have a guest list that includes everyone you are inviting, and then a best-guess of how many you expect to attend. It is a guess, but try to make an informed decision here. If you have many couples with infants or toddlers, you can expect a lower attendance ratio. If most of your guests have to travel from far away (or other countries) to attend, you can expect a lower attendance ratio. If you plan to hold your wedding on a major holiday weekend (Thanksgiving, Christmas) you can expect a lower attendance ratio.

A wedding for 50 guests will have a much lower budget than a wedding for 400. Make sure you create your guest list and estimate your total attending *before* you create your budget.

What Style of Wedding Do You Want To Have?

This is where you start to dream. Do you want a big reception at a cool, urban space in downtown Columbus? Have you always imagined your wedding on your parent's property in a more rural setting with a tent? Or do you envision your ceremony at your church with the reception at your parent's country club? The location of your ceremony and reception can really impact the budget.



Don't spend too much time here, but start to put together adjectives that you'd use to describe your vision (romantic, FUN, comfortable, formal, delicious, etc). Then, really think about the costs associated with some of the elements you are wanting at your wedding.

Get on the Same Page with Your Fiance

This is most likely the first time you and your fiancé will work as a team on a project together. So, it is very important that you both agree on the direction of the wedding. If you selected a Wedding Planner (yay you!), he or she will walk you through the prioritization process. Here is how this goes:

Each of you writes a list of the top 5 “must-haves” at your wedding. Write your lists separately, not together. The list should be your individual thoughts for now. The list could be *anything*: great band, huge selection of hors d'oeuvres at cocktail hour, statement centerpieces on all the tables, comfort and ease for your guests, best photographer in the city, dream wedding gown, food truck for late night snack, full open bar with a flair bartender, etc. Most likely, the two of you will differ a bit here.

Once you have both completed your list, let the other see yours and compare. Then start talking it out. You'll need to settle on 3-4 top priorities for your wedding. This is where you'll focus your money, time and energy, and put you on a definite direction for the wedding. Here is an example:

You

Top Priorities

1. Ease and comfort of guests
2. Ballroom Venue
3. Big Dance Party
4. Highly Designed Space with Lighting and Décor
5. Day-After Brunch with Guests

Your Fiance

Top Priorities

1. Ceremony and Reception in Same Location
2. Served Dinner
3. Open Bar but also Creative Non-Alcoholic Options
4. Lots of Dancing
5. Day-After Brunch with Guests

Combined Priorities

1. Ballroom Venue with Separate Room for Ceremony and Hotel Rooms for Ease of Guests
2. Great DJ for a Fun Dance Party
3. Upgraded Food and Beverage

Get Real About Money

Now you have an idea of guest count, your style and priorities. It's time to talk money. I know it's uncomfortable...but do you know who is not uncomfortable talking about money? Yep – your Wedding Planner. We do this all the time and we put it all on the table. If you need some help talking about money, then I recommend you hire a planner. Easy!

You'll need to first talk with your parents to see who is contributing and how much. Then, take a look at you and your fiancé's monthly income and how much of that money you are able to contribute. You may have some family members that want to pay for a certain budget item (i.e. your Grandmother wants to pay for your wedding cake), so take that into consideration as well.

Use credit cards wisely. Use a card that give you travel points or cash back and make sure you do not charge more than you can pay back!

Once you have a total number, it's time to start plugging things into your budget spreadsheet. Your Wedding Planner already has a budget template and will track your budget for you throughout the planning process – such a huge relief! Keep in mind that there will be situations where you realize that you haven't budgeted enough dollars for what you want. **This will happen, so be ready!** The decision is yours to go over your set budget, but try not to let your emotions get the best of you. Imagine a few compromises that will keep you in budget and decide if the item is really worth it to you first.

Re-Evaluate

If your numbers are not covering what you want at your wedding, take another look at your finances and guest list and rethink things. Can you spend a little more to have your dream wedding? Is that something you and your fiancé want to do? Where are areas you can save that you didn't already consider?

HOW TO ACTUALLY SET A BUDGET

1. Use an excel spreadsheet to create categories and price points. You download our spreadsheet as a template.
2. List your budgeted total at the top and bottom.
3. Start to break down the budget by category, keeping in mind your priorities. If you don't have any expenses for a particular category, you can delete it. If something is not on the spreadsheet that you are including (i.e. day-after brunch), then add it!
4. Once you've broken the budget down by general category, start break down the category numbers further. For example, you have a Catering category – break that down into (1) Food, (2) Beverage, (3) Cake/Desserts, (4) Late Night Snack.
5. Have your spreadsheet total the actual expenses at the bottom to see where you are with your budgeted amount. If things don't match up, then re-evaluate and go back to step 3.

Your budget will live and breathe throughout your entire planning process. As payments are made, log them into your spreadsheet for actual amounts. Remember, when you start the budget it is an estimate of expenses. When you make an actual payment, it becomes real and your budget should have all real numbers by the end of planning.

Oh! Did we mention that a Wedding Planner will customize your budget for you?

Contact [Z Creative](#) for professional Wedding Planning and Design – we are eager to talk with you!

