

50 WAYS TO SAVE

We asked experts and real brides for their top tips on making your wedding budget stretch further.

Words: Lucy Dimbylow



PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDREW HARRISON

1 "For a cake with maximum impact but a more affordable price tag, talk to your cake designer about the possibility of using a 'dummy' layer (a polystyrene 'cake', iced and decorated) to add height while keeping costs down."

Valerie Mattinson, wedding and event director, benessamy.co.uk

2 "Not keen on cake? Then order a tiered cheese wedding cake. Not only are they much cheaper than a traditional cake, starting from under £100, but it can then form the basis for your evening buffet, with breads and chutneys."

Zoe McKeown, wedding planner, cherishweddingplanning.co.uk

3 "If you love the venue but not the price tag, negotiate a discount for a mid-week wedding. Most venues will jump at the opportunity to fill a less popular day, and it could save you hundreds, if not thousands, of pounds."

Jane Riddell, wedding planner, plannedforperfection.co.uk

4 "Book a late afternoon celebration. If you book your wedding ceremony for 4pm, then you'll only need to feed your guests once, rather than providing both lunch and an evening meal."

Kelly Hood, director, boho-weddings.com

5 "At around £8 per person, individual bowls of a warming and filling meal such as chili and

rice or a vegetable tagine can be much cheaper than a traditional evening buffet, which costs an average £17.50 per

"If you love the venue but not the price tag, negotiate discount for a midweek wedding"

head – a saving of £900 across 100 guests." **Isabel Smith, wedding planner, isabelsmithweddings.co.uk**

6 "If you have large areas to decorate and your budget won't stretch to extra flowers, contact your local garden centre. Many hire out topiary trees and hanging baskets and are considerably cheaper than florists."

Bernadette Chapman, events director, dream-occasions.co.uk

7 SAMPLE SALE SAVINGS

Hit the sample sales, where designer wedding dresses can often be snapped up for around 70% of the normal retail price. Dresses are usually sold as seen so check for faults and factor in the costs of repairs, cleaning or alterations." **Rachael Corigliano, wedding planner, serendipity-weddings.co.uk**

8 "A 'walking wedding', where you keep it local and walk to your venue with or without your guests, is personal and inspiring, cuts out the need for expensive wedding cars and lets you use glorious countryside as your backdrop." **Amanda Edwards, owner, steppingbeyond.co.uk**

9 "Save on your stationery bill by printing your own order of service on parchment-style paper. Roll each sheet into a scroll and tie with ribbon. They'll look amazing set out on the seats in your ceremony room." **Jackie Adams, bespokeweddingstationery.org.uk**

10 "Most flowers are now available year-round, but out-of-season blooms are still more expensive so choose seasonal



flowers if possible. If your heart is set on an out-of-season flower, combine them with in-season flowers, berries or foliage to keep costs down."

Audrey Louise, florist,
flowersbyaudrey-louise.co.uk

11 "Hold your ceremony and reception

in the same venue to cut down on decoration and transport costs. Avoid venues that are a complete blank canvas – you'll save a lot of money on styling and décor if your location already has some character."

Liz Taylor, celebrity wedding and event planner, tic-ltd.co.uk

12 "Our heart was set on an exclusive-use venue, so we recouped some of the money by re-selling bedrooms to guests who wanted to stay with us. It was cheaper than a hotel for them, and their contributions reduced our

bill. It was a win-win situation."
Alison Rhodes, real bride

13 "Beading and embellishments are expensive so save money on your dress by going for a simple style like Kate Middleton or Kim Kardashian's second wedding dresses. You

can then give it the wow factor with accessories such as a side headpiece with a lace-trimmed veil."

Lynsay Speirs, the-weddingstore.co.uk

"Hold your ceremony and reception in the same venue to save decor and transport costs"

14 "Have a cake table instead of paying for dessert. A fun idea is to run a cake competition, with guests bringing their

signature cake with small prizes for the winners."

Kelly Hood

15 "I picked up an old crystal necktie in a charity shop for £1, and used it to make my own tiara, following instructions from the internet. It was exactly what I wanted, and cost less than £5 in total."
Jo Hedges, real bride

16 "Cupcake towers look stunning and are easy to make yourself. Simply buy plain fairy cakes from the supermarket (for as little as 7p per cake) and book a cupcake decorating class for inspiration. Pile them high on pretty vintage cake stands to double up as centrepieces."

Kate Thompson, confetti.co.uk

17 "If you're happy with how you do your own foundation and lips, save money by booking a make-up

artist just to do your eyes rather than to create your entire bridal look."
Helen Kalli, celebrity and bridal make-up artist, thebridalmakeupartist.co.uk

18 "Rather than sending a save the date card, send a well-designed save the date email instead. It's cheap (or even free, if you design it yourself), simple and saves on paper, printing and postage costs."

Vaishali Shah, creative director, ananyacards.com

19 "If you have a pinboard or intranet at work, post a request for wedding services – you never know what talents your colleagues and friends might have. By asking around, I secured my make-up artist, florist, cake and photographer all for just £750."

Nicola Lally, real bride

20 "We got married in Portugal so rather than paying a local florist to make centrepieces I contacted a café near our venue and asked them to save glass bottles and jars for me, which I filled



21 DOUBLE DESSERT

"Serve your wedding cake as dessert. You could have a cupcake tower with a cutting tier on top, and give each guest an individual cake, or take inspiration from Italy and have your chef make a Mille Feuille wedding cake in front of your guests."
Geeta Randev, chief planner, weddingstie.cc.uk



with flowers from the market."
Emma Hall-Phelan, real bride

22 "Rather than forking out for a videographer, we've bought a mini handheld video camera and we're asking a family member to do some filming. We'll also pass the camera around to get lots of personal footage, then have it professionally edited."

Daniella Snowden, real bride

23 "I found a pre-loved dress through a dress agency. The previous owner must have been a similar shape and size to me because it fitted well, but even if I had it altered it would have been cheaper than buying new."

Helen Tylee, real bride

"Have a cake table instead of paying for dessert. Run a competition with your guests!"

24 BUBBLES OF FUN!

"For an inexpensive way to keep young children amused during an outdoor drinks reception, buy a battery-powered bubble machine from a toy shop."
Sarah Handlick, wedding planner, helencarterweddings.co.uk

25 "We really wanted a photo booth for our NYC-themed wedding but couldn't afford it, so I bought a double duvet cover with an NYC skyline, added box of props, and left our digital camera out for guests to take photos."
Clare Harvey, real bride

26 "Employ a wedding planner, especially if you're having a larger wedding. Although you'll pay for their services, they'll act as a broker between you and your suppliers,

27 DRINKS ON US

"Supply your own alcohol. Even if a venue charges a corkage fee, this nearly always works out cheaper, especially if you buy when supermarkets have offers on. Also, substitute sparkling wine for Champagne – only the best wine connoisseurs will be able to tell the difference."
Suzanne Prout, wedding planner, rsvpweddings.co.uk

ensuring you always get the best deal and saving you money overall."
Rachel Tilford, wedding planner, wedding-matters.co.uk

28 "Tamara Holmes and Ruth Langford had a huge fountain in the centre of their marquee, dressed in white roses and foliage. Get the look with smaller water features as centrepieces, such as perspex troughs filled with water and set them out down the centre of each table, decorated with candles and white roses."
Liz Taylor

29 "Entertainment is always a focal point, with everyone from the stars of X Factor to Diana Ross wowing at celebrity weddings. Look for a tribute act and create a



celebrity cabaret of your own, on a more modest budget." **Liz Taylor**

30 "Keep your numbers down. The more people you invite, the greater the cost. Setting rules such as no plus ones for single guests, inviting work mates to the evening celebration only, or having an adults-only policy will all help keep the numbers under control."

Rachael Corigliano

31 "Alternating larger floral arrangements with smaller ones across the dining tables not only adds texture to your styling, but also saves you money, with large decorations costing around £75 each compared to approximately £45 for smaller displays."

Isabel Smith

"Ask your girlfriends to contribute to the cost of a make-up masterclass for your hen party..."

32 "We were shocked at the cost of traditional hotel wedding venues, so we held our reception in the cricket club that my husband belongs to, and saved over £1,000 on room hire."

Kate Nelson, real bride

33 "Buy a simple wedding dress from a high street store, then ask a local dressmaker to customise it, perhaps adding a lace overlay, satin ribbon or a brooch. A bespoke dress for a fraction of the cost of a designer gown."

Bernadette Chapman

34 "As an alternative to expensive flower arrangements, pots of lavender make lovely table centres, while satin bows are a cheaper option for decorating pew ends than fresh flowers."

Zoe McKeown

36 "A good way to make a hand-tied bouquet of inexpensive flowers look more



luxurious is to use a top-quality ribbon to cover the handle, perhaps decorated with an heirloom brooch from a charity shop."

Audrey Louise

37 "The wedding I planned for *Coronation Street's* Simon Gregson appeared in the pages of glossy society magazines. You too can commission a replica magazine cover with your own wedding photos and memories – a unique souvenir of your big day."

Check out mycoverpics.com.

Liz Jones

38 "Why not ask your girlfriends to contribute to the cost of a make-up masterclass for your hen party? It's a fun activity and you'll learn how to do your own make-up for your wedding day."

Helen Kalli

39 "DIY wedding favours can be both inexpensive and thoughtful. Collect berries and use them to make your own jams and preserves, spooned into pretty jars and tied with colourful ribbon."

Daniel Gill, managing director, dine-services.com

35 RAID THE ATTIC!

"I raided my parents' attic and dug out lots of old bed linen from the 1960s and 1970s, which I'm using to make vintage bunting for our shabby chic wedding reception."

Laura-Jane Abbott, real bride



40 "If you're getting married in July or August, consider delaying your honeymoon. Booking your trip for the autumn or even early in the New Year will avoid premium fares and give you something to look forward to once the excitement has died down."

Geeta Randev

41 "We saved on photography by buying a CD of images from our photographer, rather than getting prints and an album from her. We chose our own shots and designed a photobook online for under £50."

Rebecca Neal, real bride

42 "Big guest list? Keep the wedding breakfast small and intimate, with only close family and friends, then invite everyone else to the evening party so you only have to pay for a buffet, barbecue or hog roast for the majority of your guests."

Kelly Hood

43 "Colour concepts are on-trend with the A-list elite. One football player requested that all his guests wore his team colours, so get yours to dress all in white, all in black or in a particular colour – a quirky concept that doesn't cost

and looks great in group photos."

Liz Taylor

44 "Ask your venue if they'll include extras like bottled water or tea and coffee free of charge. These things cost relatively little to buy in, but the mark up can be substantial, with hot drinks often costing £3.95 per person – a saving of £395 across 100 guests."

Isabel Smith

45 "For eye-catching centrepieces on a budget, arrange fresh fruit such as lemons, limes, oranges and strawberries in cheap glass vases. Freeze soft fruit so it doesn't get squashed, and set against simple white linen for maximum impact."

Bernadette Chapman

"For eye-catching centrepieces on a budget, arrange fresh fruit like lemons, limes and oranges in cheap glass vases"

46 "I booked a make-up trial at a department store cosmetics counter to learn which products suit my skin and how to create my bridal look. I've been practising at home and am planning to do my own make-up instead of hiring a make-up artist."

Georgina Simon, real bride

47 "Double up with your floral arrangements, moving them

48 DRIVER VOLUNTEERS

"Save on transport for guests by nominating some designated drivers to help ferry guests from your ceremony to your reception venue, and if any of your friends have a particularly nice classic or prestige car, ask if you could use it as your wedding car."

Aimee Dunne, wedding and events planner, aimeedunne.com

from the ceremony room to your reception venue after you've said your vows. If you're relying on your florist to move them, check whether they'll charge an additional fee."

Audrey Louise

49 "Instead of including a separate RSVP card with your wedding invitation, put your address, phone number or email address on the invitation for guests to reply to, saving on printing and postage."

Vaishali Bhat

50 "Unusual wedding transport is popular with the celebrity set, but you may not have the budget for a helicopter. *Coronation Street's* Alan Halsall arrived at his wedding to *Wild at Heart* actress Lucy-Jo Hudson in a batmobile!"

See starcarnhire.co.uk.

Liz Taylor

