

When it comes to arranging a wedding couples want to make it a day to remember. However, with the tendency in recent years to try to plan an occasion that is bigger and better than those of one's friends or relations, the cost of doing so can rise in an alarming way. However the first priority is to set an affordable budget and try to keep to it - you really DON'T NEED to spend lavishly in order to have a special Day. The enjoyment of all concerned is far more important than trying to outdo friends and relatives with more elaborate outfits, exotic foods and locations. There are ways of saving money, while still providing a memorable occasion. Some tried-and-tested money-saving ideas are offered here:

CHURCH:

Banns & Marriage ceremony: Most churches have fixed fees, but these may vary from parish to parish. They do not usually include organ, choir, bells, flowers etc.

Music: **Organist's fee** depends on the particular church and it may not be possible to economise on this. Usually a charge is made for the services of a **choir**. Do you particularly want or need one? **Bell-ringers** are not essential and could be another expense.

Church Decoration: Provide your own **flowers**. Shop around for a florist with reasonable prices. Or maybe a keen gardening friend or relative would agree (plan in advance) to **grow flowers** for you. Arrange your own flowers or find a **friendly flower arranger** – arrangements don't need to be large or elaborate to be attractive.

If you choose to marry **during one of the church festivals** (Easter, Harvest?) the church may already be decorated, thus saving the cost of flowers. If there are several weddings on the same day, get together and plan a **mutually acceptable colour scheme** and share costs. Ask **church flower arrangers** to decorate and give a donation for costs, or **rely on** whatever **display** will be in the church on the day.

TRANSPORT:

Cut down on the number of cars hired. Use family & friends' cars where possible.

You could manage with **one hired car to take the Bride to church and one for Bride & Groom to the Reception**. Family cars could be decorated with ribbons and used for other journeys. You could ask a **friend with a larger car** to loan it for the occasion (and maybe act as chauffeur)

DRESS:

Make your own dresses (Bride/bridesmaids) or **ask a relative** or friend with the expertise to do so. **Hire** the dresses. Go to a local **Charity Shop**, which may have a display of dresses which can be hired cheaply. **Borrow from a friend** or relative who is the same size. (The dress is likely to be worn only once unless it can be altered for evening wear)

Buy simple, attractive material and **find a local dressmaker**. A **veil** is not necessary. Maybe a simple **floral spray** (real or artificial flowers can be obtained at a local market) Bridesmaids' **headbands** can be made in this way as well.

Buttonholes can be made from **silk** carnations and supplied only to the immediate bridal party. Flowers from the garden could be used, if available. **Bridal bouquets** and bridesmaids' posies can be home-made as well. A single **flower and a prayer book** is another alternative.

Smart lounge suits for the men would be cheaper than **hiring morning dress** and can be used afterwards for ordinary wear.

STATIONERY:

Print your own, if you have the facilities. Computers can produce quite professional results for someone with the expertise. Buy **coloured stationery** and print on that for better effect.

Find someone who can **design an invitation** (maybe artistic school pupil) and have the results copied – as well as service sheets if needed. **Dispense with order of service**, if your chosen hymns are in the church hymn book. Ask a **local school or church** if they will **print stationery** for you – probably cheaper than commercial printing.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

Take your **own photographs**. This is cheaper and quicker on the Day. Have at least **2 reliable friends** or relatives willing to do this. Agree a **list of necessary shots beforehand**. Provide the films, SD cards etc. and get them **printed yourself**. Do you really need a **video of the event**? Some churches charge **extra** for this privilege. Again this could be filmed by a friend.

RECEPTION:

Hire a **Church/Village Hall** or School Hall – it can work out cheaper than a hotel. **Book early** to avoid disappointment. You may need to tip a Caretaker. If you plan to book a **hotel or other licensed premises**, arrange that the **first drink** (or similar) is **free** and thereafter, guests pay for their drinks. A **small reception** could take place in a **garden**, with a **marquee** borrowed from a **local Scout/Guide Group**. A local caterer could provide crockery, cutlery & glasses.

Do your **own catering**. **Buffets are cheaper** than a sit-down meal. Food can be prepared in advance and frozen. Friends could be asked to help. Cut down on costs by **inviting smaller numbers** – you could arrange a **party for others at a later date**. Have a small **'family only'** Reception followed by an **evening buffet/barn dance/disco** for friends. **Local groups/bands** may be willing to play for a modest fee.

Balloons make an effective decoration and are quick & easy to prepare. **Make your own cake** or ask a friend/relative to make it. Ask someone gifted in cake decoration to decorate it. **Buy a 'luxury' fruit cake** and decorate or ask someone to do so. A **local pub** may be willing to provide a **finger buffet** for reasonable costs. A good-quality home-made **Punch** drink can be refreshing and go a long way at an evening party.

GENERAL:

You don't have to have many bridesmaids or honeymoon in exotic locations. Say you want a **simple** wedding and mean it. It can be a happy day even if you don't spend so much. **GOOD LUCK!**



Planning your Wedding?

Need to keep costs down?

Here are some ideas which may help

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Diocese of Hereford

