

It's not just her day: *when 'just showing up' isn't enough*



Jeff Gable

There are a lot of big days in a man's life.

And yes, while his favorite team winning the Super Bowl or a national championship is right up there, the correct answer for *biggest day* is his wedding day.

People usually associate the wedding with the bride — after all, she's the star of the show. You don't see 600-page groom magazines on supermarket shelves, and you don't have "Groom Shops" with hundreds of tuxedos to pick from.

Nonetheless, the groom is an important part of the proceedings. After all, the wedding can't kick off until he's standing in the front of the church at the appropriate time.

So what can you, the prospective husband, do to help prepare for your wedding? And most important, how do you make sure you get everything done you're supposed to (and on time) to ensure a happy bride on your big day?

I got very lucky. I happened to propose to and marry perhaps the most organized (and beautiful) woman on the planet. People commented to me that she was the most calm, cool, collected bride they'd ever seen.

She did a lot to prepare for our wedding in 2002. She gets extra credit, too, because we wanted to get married in the summer, and mister-drag-his-feet didn't propose until March. But everything got done on time, and on a warm Saturday in August, we tied the knot.

Recently, we attended the wedding of a good friend of ours. It was a perfect day and a wonderful experience all the way around. You notice those great weddings — they stand out from the not-so-organized events you sometimes see.

So how do you make sure your big day goes smoothly? Here are a few pointers that I learned, both from my own experience and from other people's nuptials.

No. 1 — Be available! Immediately, probably before you even get off your knee from proposing, ask what she'd like you to help with. Don't just leave all the planning for her — get

involved!

Even if you don't have any preference whatsoever for the flowers or the cake or the church or the reception centerpieces, be involved in the decision-making. Not only will you make her happy, you might learn that you actually do have some ideas or some inclinations yourself.

Act as a team. You'll find things much easier if you go through the whole process together. So don't divide things up — take her when you go pick out a tux, and go along when she wants to look at cakes or bridesmaid dresses or reception halls.

No. 2 — Start early! My wedding process was a five-month sprint, since I waited so long to pop the question. But no matter how long you have to plan the wedding, try not to put things off.

Immediately make a checklist with your bride-to-be. First off, get a date and site booked, and make sure all the key parties (best man, maid of honor, pastor, parents, etc.) are available.

Then work backward from your date and make sure you leave enough time for everything. You don't want to try to order rings or get the right kind of tuxes two weeks before your big day.

Think of it in sports terms, guys. A football team doesn't start practice a month before the season opens. It's a long, gradual process to make sure everything is covered.

And remember, multiple tasks + not much time = stress.

No. 3 — Stay informed! Don't just let your fiancé deal with everything once the ball gets rolling.

Stay on top of things. Know how much things cost, when things are due and when appointments are. Be sure you know what your future wife is thinking (because after you get married, you may never know what she's thinking. Just kidding!)

You never want to have conversations in the month leading up to the wedding that start with "But I thought you..."

Have a gameplan. Get a nice leather organizer and keep up with everything as a couple. You don't want any surprises the weekend of your big day (what rental car? what plane tickets? who's got the gifts?)

No. 4 — Ask advice! Don't be afraid to seek counsel from others, be it parents, uncles, best friends or older married people.

Never assume that you know everything about everything. Find out what others think about renting tuxes, getting transportation from the

reception to the honeymoon, having gifts collected, etc.

Just like you wouldn't rewire your house without consulting an electrician, don't try to put together a wedding without talking to already married couples.

Because either situation could leave you with a smoldering mess.

No. 5 — Enjoy the moment! This is probably the best piece of advice I have.

Your wedding is something you'll always remember. It's a shared experience that you and your wife will treasure.

While the planning can be hectic, don't get too bogged down with things so that you don't enjoy the whole experience.

Remember, this is a celebration. It should be a time full of smiles and laughter. If you don't have fun with it, it becomes a convention.

It's a wedding!

I distinctly remember shortly after our wedding, Bev and I having pictures taken in the chapel with all our friends and family. Seeing everyone together, sharing the joy of the moment, was the one thing that I'll always remember from that day.

So have fun and create your own memories. They will last you a lifetime!



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