

Let's Talk About Weddings

Weddings Excerpted from "Intellectual Foreplay: Questions for Lovers and Lovers-to-Be" by author and wedding officiant Eve Eschner Hogan

I have been to a wedding in which the couple wore formal dress in an old Victorian house with a beautiful quartet. And to another on the beach in which the bride wore a white bikini and veil while the groom wore swim trunks and a bow tie. I attended still another in which the bride and groom (and everybody else) were completely naked. I have been in a wedding in which I was the "best man" even though I am a woman, and I have performed weddings in Hawaii in a labyrinth, underwater, and on a boat. The variations and possibilities are endless.

We have heard many stories about couples who fell in love and happily planned to get married only to get into huge disagreements over the wedding plans. Getting married is something that starts to be planned when we are kids. Fairy-tale weddings are shared with us through books. Children look up to brides and grooms with wide eyes at the weddings they attend, as if they are looking at royalty or movie stars. Little girls sit around the playground at school and talk about what their weddings will be like. Then we grow up and meet a partner who has no intention of having a "royal wedding." In-laws also have their pre-envisioned ideas of what their son's or daughter's wedding will be like. Instead of planning a simple ceremony, you are dealing with issues of status, money, beliefs, desires, and philosophies. Suddenly, instead of needing a copy of *Bride Magazine*, you need *Psychology Today*! Financial issues can also move into the forefront of a relationship during wedding planning. One couple, Julie and Ron, spent \$50,000 (of her father's money) on a wedding only to divorce a couple of years—and a couple of kids—later. Some see the extreme expense of weddings as a waste of money that could be better spent on their livelihoods, while others figure they are planning the event of a lifetime and money should be no object.

Wedding styles also range tremendously. Consider what you want this memorable occasion to include, and discuss it with your partner to create an experience you'll both want to remember. Don't underestimate the importance of talking about the bachelor and bachelorette parties, and the impact they can have on your relationship as well. We have seen several weddings that were almost called off on account of them. It is wise, if you insist on having such an event, to do it well in advance of the wedding so that you have time to deal with any emotional reactions that may occur.

This article addresses the nuts and bolts of a wedding ceremony. Foreplay: Describe your vision of the ideal wedding. Where would it be? How many would attend? Who would be the best man and the maid of honor? What would you wear?

Questions to Ask Each Partner:

How important is a marriage ceremony to you? What type and size of wedding do you want?

What is your vision of an ideal wedding?

How flexible are you on the type of wedding you will have?

Would you consider an unusual wedding (underwater, skydiving, etc.)?

Do you think a wedding should be a public display or a private exchange?

How do you feel about eloping? Under what circumstances would you consider it?

How do you feel about bachelor and bachelorette parties?

What do you consider appropriate and inappropriate at these parties?

What does this tradition mean to you?

Are you willing to make changes based on your partner's concerns or discomfort?

Questions to Explore as a Couple:

Who's in charge of the wedding plans?

What do you want the vows to say?

How much do wedding vows mean to you?

Do you want to write your own?

How do you feel about the word "obey" in traditional vows?

What are your feelings about the father giving the bride away?

Will you include this tradition in your wedding?

Who will be your best man, ushers, maid-of-honor, and bridesmaids?

How many will you include?

Where do you want to get married (which state, town, etc.; particularly if the families live in different locations)?

Where do you want to get married: a church (what denomination?), outdoors, in a home, on a beach, etc.?

Who will pay for the wedding?

Does that person then have control over wedding plans?

How much money do you consider appropriate to spend on your wedding?

How do you draw the line between friends, acquaintances, and friends of the family in terms of who to invite?

How do you feel about inviting former partners and spouses?

If you are of different faiths, who will preside over the wedding?

Will you limit the ceremony to one faith's rituals or create a combined ceremony?

If your parents are divorced, how will you work out family photographs, who gives the bride away, and who pays for what?

What are your preferences around the honeymoon?

What do you think about the concept of renewing vows later in life?

How do you feel about the woman taking, or not taking, the man's last name?

How do you feel about hyphenated names or keeping individual last names?

After marriage, do you think the woman should go by Ms. or Mrs.?

Observations of Your Partner:

Does your partner consult you before making decisions that affect you? Are you experiencing interference from in-laws? If so, do you feel that your partner is supportive of you and your desires?

Self-Observations:

Are your and your partner's expectations regarding weddings compatible? Are you and your partner able to stay strong in your relationship throughout this series of difficult decisions?
Are you able to compromise on differences in preferences? Are thinking about and planning the wedding fun or stressful to you?

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