



little white *e*-book  
of wedding planning

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# pop the champagne!

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Congratulations! Welcome to the little white e-book!

Thank you for letting me join you on this incredibly fun and exciting journey. Your first few steps may feel a little scary and uncomfortable, but there's so much to enjoy and it will all be worth it.

Let me give you a little background on my own Champagne-popping moments...

Blair proposed on 15-02-15 and (*dissatisfied with all other wedding-planning material*) I soon began *She Said Yes*. We got married on 20-02-16, by which time I'd realised that not only did us brides-to-be need some real, relatable advice, but we also needed an exceptional wedding organiser and diary to help us along the way - so the **little white book** was born!

This is an accompaniment to the **little white book** itself, to get wedding planning off to the very best start.

If you're brand-newly engaged, and want to start planning your wedding immediately, I encourage you to take a short break first (whether a weekend, a week or even longer!). Why? Organising a wedding may be a lot of work and even a little stressful. It will be a wonderful and memorable time of your life, and once you get started you won't want to stop, so *stop right now* and take a breath while you still can.

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Okay, are you ready for this?! Let's go - grab a glass of bubbles and get started!

*I got 99 problems but wedding planning ain't one #littlewhitebook*

# let's party

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Your engagement party is the first big celebration in the lead up to your wedding. Consider it a practice run in planning - you're the decision-makers, hosts, centre of attention, and hopefully the life of the party!

## *Why party?*

You need to ask? Everyone wants to congratulate you and hear about the proposal; and it's also a great (sometimes first) occasion to introduce your friends to your partner's friends, as well as family.

## *When?*

Traditionally the engagement party is held 1-3 months following the engagement. If it's going to be a long engagement, it may be held later, but ideally you want to host the party while you're still newly celebrating the *engagement*, rather than being half-way to the wedding.

## *Who?*

Perhaps the trickiest question is whether all of the engagement party invitees are also those who will be invited to the wedding. It's not strictly necessary to restrict the guest list to your wedding 'definites' yet. If it's a small and intimate gathering, it wouldn't make much sense that you'd invite those you weren't going to have at the wedding. If you'd prefer a casual 'come one, come all' BBQ or night out at a local bar, it's not necessary to restrict the guest list to your wedding 'definites' yet. Of course, as it is usually only 1-3 months into the engagement, it will be far too early for many couples to finalise their guest list. Keep in mind though, that older guests may assume an invitation to this will mean one for the other.

## *Where?*

There are countless suitable venues - as many as for a wedding: restaurants, bars, parks, you or your parents' homes. We had ours at a restaurant at which we organised a set menu with 3-5 options for each of starter and main, followed by a cake that we provided. Your style will influence your choice, as well as the number of guests, but don't be afraid to be creative.

## *Who pays what?*

Unless you're planning to provide all the catering and alcohol, keep in mind your guests' budgets, if you don't want anyone missing out. Our guests paid for meals and we provided champagne and cake.

## *How to invite?*

It's not necessary to have expensive invitations made - you can send emails, Facebook messages or texts if you prefer. Be clear about the details and give around a month's notice if possible.

*All you need is love - and a little white book.*

# the adventure begins

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Once you've celebrated with an engagement party, it's time to begin planning the main event. Hopefully at the engagement party someone thoughtfully gifted you the [little white book](#) but if not, now is the perfect time to buy one for yourself and begin taking note of the most wonderful and exciting adventure.

The first booking to make is the wedding venue, which can only be made after a few other considerations.

## *Guest Numbers*

Without knowing how many guests you'll have, it's impossible to settle on a wedding venue which may not be the right size later - so begin your guest list now, at least in draft. Write down the names of every person you'd like to see on your wedding day, and go from there. If it's hopelessly big, begin working out how much you can cut it back, with 'rules' and possibly ruthlessness. [See more.](#)

## *Budget*

The second most important (and demanding) B word in wedding planning. Like the bride, the budget demands constant attention. Without budget expectations, you can't possibly commit to a venue and all its related costs. Sit down early, talk it over with your fiancé and any parents or family who may offer to make a contribution to your wedding budget, and start working out your finances well in advance.

## *Date*

This also ties in with budget - if you don't have enough money, or won't be able to save within 12 months, you may want to consider a longer engagement. Your date also needs to consider your guest list - are there overseas guests who can only come home at a certain time of year - such as Christmas? If you've already set your heart on a wedding venue, your date may be dictated to by the venue's availability.

## *Style*

With the right decor, you can transform almost any room, but if you're likely to want a classic and elegant wedding, a rustic venue may not suit. Before you sign on the dotted line of a wedding venue's contract, work out whether it suits your style, or whether it'll cost a fortune to decorate it.

When you do find a venue, make an appointment for you both to sit down with the owner or the venue's wedding planner and have a detailed list of questions to ask them. It's so vital to understand exactly what the venue fee includes, and what it doesn't, and which party has which obligations and liabilities.

The [little white wedding planning pack](#) (\$45, or \$99 with the little white book) has a comprehensive list of questions to ask each and every one of your vendors, so you're never caught out - but because the venue is so important, I've also got a venue questionnaire list available - see last page for details..

*Getting down to business!*

# the 'b' word

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The budget can be a pretty scary thought – for many couples, a wedding is the first time you and your fiancé will have ever had to plan a huge event, let alone save for and pay for it.

## *Savings + Budget = Wedding Date*

You can't do much before you've got a wedding budget, at least in draft. Even the date itself is contingent on the budget – depending on whether you'll be saving for the wedding. While you might think planning a wedding a year in advance gives you plenty of time to budget and save, as soon as you want to lock in a venue, photographer or caterer, the demands for deposits come rolling in.

## *What's the magic number? (And where's it coming from)*

Sit down with your fiancé to have a realistic wedding budget discussion. Work out how much you can put aside each week for the nuptials, who else may contribute, and what they may expect in return.

*Parents:* Many parents still choose to assist and financially support their children's weddings so have this conversation with them early. Make sure you each understand how much they can contribute; whether it's a loan, advance on inheritance, or gift; and what they expect in return. While any offer to contribute is generous, if you feel they may try to exercise too much control in exchange, a good alternative to a lump sum is for them to pay for something specific.

*Homeowners:* If you're already mortgaged to the hilt, paying for a wedding too can seem impossible. However, while you already have significant outgoings, you may be able to extend your mortgage. I'm not saying that you should 'go into debt' to pay for your wedding, but the reality is that if you have a mortgage, you're already in debt, and you may be able to work with your bank to make it work in a way that you can afford.

*Savings:* Beyond parental contributions and the option to extend your mortgage, it's up to the two of you to save, so get serious about figuring out how much you have to spend. Look to what you can put away per week over the next year (or more) and be strict if you need to be. Sit down with your partner and figure out how much money you are ready, willing, and comfortable spending out of your own money.

## *Prioritise*

Instead of seeing wedding-planning as a hugely expensive process where everything blows the budget, it's sensible to make a list of priorities – things to splurge on, and others you're more prepared to save on. You and your partner should each pick your top three priorities for the wedding day. [See more.](#)

Whatever your financial position, I have a really good [excel spreadsheet](#) to use for your wedding budget within the [little white planning pack](#), as well as budgeting pages in the [little white book](#). The [bundle](#) includes both of those, or you can [buy it separately for \\$17](#).

*I've discovered I'm planning two weddings -  
one on Pinterest, and another one I can afford!*

# it's a date

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Armed with a budget, you should now have a clear idea of how long you need to save for the wedding. You can easily whip together a wedding in 6-8 weeks if you really want to, but there are a few things – and people – to consider before you do so.

## *Bridal Party*

Before you set a date, check with your bridal party that they are available. If your wedding is in peak season, they could have other weddings they are already attending, or they may have other prior commitments or travel. If they do, you and your fiancé need to ask yourselves whether you can change the date if you really want them by your side.

## *Overseas Guests*

Give your friends from far and wide as much time as possible. Keep in mind that they need to arrange leave, save and book for flights, accommodation and everything else that goes with travelling overseas. It may be easier to try to choose a date where they could already be here – such as Christmas time.

## *Popular Venues*

As you look at venues, you will be asked to let them know your date requests right away. Popular venues book up a year in advance for Saturdays in Summer, for example, so if (like many others) you're seeking one of those key dates at a popular venue, you may want to get in quick.

## *Seasonal Preference*

The season will influence your budget accordingly. If you were thinking of a warm beach wedding in February with plentiful peonies, keep in mind you will be paying more for it. Just like weekday weddings, changing the season of your wedding can heavily impact upon your budget.

## *Coinciding with a special date*

Thinking, with your budget in mind, is there any particular date which would mean something to you? Your first date, your anniversary or one of your parents' anniversaries, for example. On the flip-side, there may be dates you wish to avoid if any have a negative inference.

*I love you more today than yesterday,  
but not as much as tomorrow.*

# venue

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Hopefully by now you've thought about your guest list, budget and date - because the size of your wedding, how much you're willing to spend, and when it's going to be are crucial elements to help determine where to tie the knot:

*Guests:* You can't choose a wedding venue until you've approximated your guest list. There's no sense securing a venue which seats 100 and then making a guest list which spreads to 120.

*Wedding budget:* This will indicate whether it's a lavish party or an intimate affair, and you can't book a wedding venue before knowing exactly how it's going to affect the rest of your budget.

*Date:* If you're planning a wedding in a short space of time, you're less likely to secure an in-demand wedding venue on the popular Friday and Saturdays in peak seasons.

## *What are your venue priorities?*

Think about your wedding venue priorities, such as style, theme, time of year, whether you'll have your ceremony and reception at different locations, or if you want an all-in-one wedding venue. What's important to you – you may not be able to have everything you want, so set your priorities.

## *What else could you be looking for?*

If it's a religious ceremony, you'll obviously need to choose your church or other religious building. If transport is important to you (perhaps a helicopter entry or limousine arrival) you need to ensure the venue suits that requirement. Talk to your partner about what's crucial to both of you.

## *Keep in mind*

A 'ready-made' wedding venue like a hotel or vineyard may be much cheaper (and easier) than having a bare venue like a hall, house, or piece of land with a marquee. In that case, you're creating the wedding venue from scratch, which means complete flexibility in terms of how to design the day.

If you go for a 'Dry or DIY hire' wedding venue (as we did), you have the opportunity and responsibility of doing everything yourself, preparing the room, organising the catering, alcohol, bar tenders, and servers. It can be a big job for one person. I'm not saying you need a wedding planner, but you might want to enlist the help of a friend or parent, and definitely stay on track with [a wedding organiser and diary](#).

It's all your choice, but it's all at your expense.

*A place for everything and everything in its place - Benjamin Franklin*

# venue considerations

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When you visit each venue, keep in mind:

## *Capacity*

Ensure the capacity of the venue fits, and not just according to how many tables and chairs there are. Look at whether there's enough room for everyone to dance, space for older people to sit down, and ample space for everything else you want to have. Buffet tables take up lots of space, bands take up more room than DJs, and if you may need space for a present table too.

## *Style & Theme*

Does the venue have the right feel and ambience, in accordance with the style, theme and environment you want to create? If you're planning a casual wedding, don't pick a venue with a fussy, fancy feel, as you'll have to spend time and money changing it to suit your theme, when you could choose a venue that's more suitable to start with. What is the existing decor, will it match your wedding colours, or will you have to spend a lot of money on other decorations and flowers to make it suit?

## *Catering*

Many venues restrict catering to in-house only, or specify which caterers to use. This may be of importance of you for many reasons, including personal or religious, so ensure you consider the options and limitations for caterers. The same applies with BYO – understand whether there is an option to bring any of your own wine (and if a corkage fee applies).

## *Accessibility*

If you have a lot of elderly guests attending, or friends and family in wheelchairs, ensure that the wedding venue is not just accessible, but also enjoyable for them.

The same goes for parking – is the venue accessible for guests to park and walk to; safe to leave their vehicles overnight; is there public transport available for intoxicated guests to get home, or are you okay with needing to provide transportation for guests from a hotel to your remote venue? Transportation can be a fairly big line item on your budget if you're bussing or shuttling people to and fro.

These are just some of the questions I prompt you to ask with the wedding planning pack ([\\$1 - see last page](#)), as well as others including:

- o What are the noise restrictions?
- o Can you bring in whatever outside vendors you want?
- o How many tables fit into the room?
- o What sound equipment is provided?
- o Is it a licensed venue?
- o Are candles or other open flames allowed?
- o What are the overtime charges?

# we're just getting started

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Hopefully by now you're off to a flying start, and at least have your guest list, budget, date and venue set. You won't believe how much easier the rest will be in comparison, it's pretty much a walk in the park.

That brings me to another really important, but often overlooked part of wedding planning, writing about it. I truly believe that this adventure is exceptional, and one that you'll want to remember, and relive with your husband/wife and later with your children. You can't forget what you've written down, which is why I created the [little white book](#). Of course, you don't need to use that, you can use any diary you like, or even write something on your computer, but whatever you do, do something. You won't regret it.

I've mentioned throughout this e-book the products I have for sale to assist you, and because your venue decision is so important, I've discounted the [venue selection pages](#) for just \$1 using the code HOORAY.

I hope you'll revisit [She Said Yes](#) soon and follow me on the below links:



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*Keep a diary, and one day it'll keep you – Mae West*