

## TOP 9: Wedding Budget Killers

No matter how hard you try, certain items have a way of killing your bridal budget. Watch out for the following problem areas:

1. **THE FOOD.** The reception is the costliest item in your budget, and the type of food you serve will determine how far off the deep end you go. We know it's your Big Day, but do you really need to serve shrimp appetizers and a surf-and-turf entrée? Think about serving stations instead of a sit-down meal. Consider (now don't yell at us!) a fancy luncheon or brunch. Think about a big outdoor barbecue in the summer. Be creative and save lots of money!
2. **THE DRINKS.** If top shelf booze is high on your list of must-haves, be prepared to pay top dollar to provide it to your guests, who will most likely be happy with whatever you serve, seeing as its free to them. Or, eliminate the hard liquor altogether and serve beer and wine. Or, choose one or two special drinks to serve. Give the drinks a special name, in keeping with your bridal theme.
3. **THE CAKE.** Here's our advice: If it's included with your package, take it. Nobody really cares about the cake except for you, and you only eat one bite of it anyway before it ends up all over your face. Put the extra money into something else.
4. **THE FLOWERS.** Here's another area where it's easy to go crazy. Think simple. Think multi-uses. Some flowers are much less expensive than others, and they look just as gorgeous. Forget about bouquets of orchids or lily-of-the-valley (the latter can easily run \$300 or \$400 for one bouquet). For centerpieces, consider using candles and votives. Re-use flowers from the church for the reception. Think about silk arrangements, or making them yourself.
5. **THE GOWN.** Yes, we know you want to look like a princess. But, the truth is, you are only going to wear this dress for one day in your life. You can look just as stunning in a \$1,000 (or less) gown as one costing many thousands. We know the fabric won't be as luxe, or the trim as lavish, but your guests are going to believe you look beautiful anyway. All brides are.
6. **THE MUSIC.** Shop around. All bands and all deejays are not the same. Be sure you know what they are



providing for you. Will they play for the ceremony as well? Do they provide props like leis and plastic hats (if you want them)? Do they take long breaks and leave your guests sitting in silence? Ask questions. Then ask some more. The music makes or breaks a reception, and you want your guests up and dancing all night long.

7. **FAVORS.** You can also go crazy for these little doodads that most people throw away. Then again, your Aunt Sybil will have a fit if she doesn't have a freebie to take home. What to do? Give something edible and delicious. Keep within a budget. Best idea of all--make a donation to a favorite cause in the name of your guests.
8. **THE PHOTOGRAPHER:** Well, yes, you can save a whole lot of money by having Uncle Frank take the photos on his new digital camera. In fact, a lot of people are doing just that. Then again, if Uncle Frank gets sloshed at the reception, he may forget all about that great shot of you cutting the cake. And, let's face it, few of us amateurs really know how to photograph a wedding. Let the professionals do it. But shop around for a good price on a package that includes everything you want. This is an occasion where if the moment is lost, it is lost forever. Don't take chances.
9. **GIFTS:** No, not the ones you are receiving, silly. The ones YOU have to give—to the bridesmaids and groomsmen, flower girl, ringbearer, drivers, minister, bags for out-of-town guests, and the woman who helped you decorate the church for free. Nothing's for free, honey. And all these items will add up quickly. Draw up a list of the gifts you need and start shopping around. Maybe you know someone who is a whiz as making jewelry that you can present to the attendants to wear for the wedding. Maybe you can make something special yourself. And don't forget, you need to give your soon-to-be-spouse a wedding gift as well. Usually, the groom gifts the bride with a piece of jewelry she can wear on their wedding day. The bride usually has a harder time coming up with an idea, unless her groom can use a sparkling pair of studs for his tux, or a shiny new watch. Make your gift budget early, and shop around.

