

## Why does the bride wear white?

In fact, the tradition of the bride wearing a white dress is a product of the Victorian era. Queen Victoria began the custom when she married Prince Albert in February, 1840. Although white gowns were worn before this date, it was not as common until the queen herself donned a white dress.

Victoria's choice came about because she had some lace she wished to incorporate into her wedding dress.

Philippa of England was actually the first documented princess in history to wear a white wedding gown during a royal wedding ceremony. Hers was a tunic with a white silk cloak bordered with grey squirrel and ermine.

Today, white is still the choice of brides, although the shades vary from antique white to cream to ivory, including eggshell and ecru. Modern brides are also choosing to add color to their dresses, with accents in such shades as pink, blue, red, black, and gold.

The choice of white was not only inspired by royal fashion, but by brides who felt they could afford a dress that was only going to be worn one time, and therefore, did not have to be a practical shade.

Over the years, the bride's dress reflected her family's social status, and was usually fashioned in the richest fabrics. Poor brides wore their best church dress for their wedding day.

Prior to the Victorian era, a bride might choose any color, although black was frowned on, as it was considered the color of mourning, and red was associated with prostitutes. Although white came to symbolize virginity, that was not the original intent, as blue was actually the color associated with purity. The white gown is, in fact, symbolic of the christening gown, as well as the robes or dresses worn for first communion and confirmation.

Brides today may purchase a ready-made dress, wear a family heirloom, or have a dressmaker create an original design. Wedding dresses traditionally follow the popular styles of the day, ranging from the Roaring Twenties flapper look, to ballerina length full skirts in the Fifties, flowing hippie styles in the Sixties, a more Victorian look in the Seventies, big pouf sleeves in the Eighties, and the most recent favorite—the strapless, Cinderella ball gown.

Because many are second-time brides or marrying later in life, some women choose not to follow this trend and go for a less-traditional dress with a slim silhouette.

