

Smooth operators

Whether you've chosen to plan your wedding in three weeks or three years, you'll want everything to run like clockwork. We quizzed four couples for their top tips on the big-day build-up

How much time should you take to plan your wedding? It's a big question many couples ask themselves soon after getting engaged. However long you need, rest assured that it will

all fall into place on the day with proficient planning, careful management and a clear vision of what you want from your suppliers.



Couple's name: Gemma Goodale and Adam Mansell
Wedding date: 27th December, 2011
Time spent planning: Three weeks



Couple's name: Tiffany Cannock and Dean Chambers
Wedding date: 28th April, 2012
Time spent planning: Six months



Gemma and Adam's post-Christmas nuptials were organised in a whirlwind after their chosen venue offered them a last-minute deal. Silver hearts and cappuccino colours set the wintry tone for their festive big day.

Tell us more about your wedding planning – what happened at each stage?

We went to look at a potential venue for the first time and fell in love with the place. They offered us a package with a substantial saving if we did

things sooner rather than later. We called the register office two days later. Once we had the go-ahead, Gemma made a list of things to organise and got to work.

What was the most difficult part to organise?

Ordering multiple bridesmaids' dresses in the right colour – they were tricky to get hold of in such a short space of time.

Would you have done anything differently?

With our wedding falling straight after Christmas, we should have bought our presents much earlier!

How long does it take to plan the perfect wedding?

It depends on the circumstances and how long the couple has been together. We wanted to be a family after having our little boy so were keen to move things along. We were also fortunate to have savings so we didn't need the extra time to put money aside.

“Our advice would be not to panic. There isn't time to look at too many options so just trust your instinct.”

Tiffany and Dean's candy-themed contemporary wedding boasted a drum and bass table plan named after their favourite DJs, bright Cadbury-purple colour scheme, cupcakes and sweets galore.

Tell us more about your wedding planning – what happened at each stage?

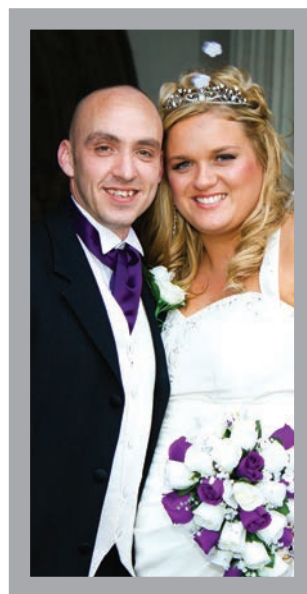
We were engaged for a little longer than expected as we had to save up after the birth of our second child. We started to plan when it felt like the right time, shopping around and comparing prices. Our families helped us financially so we could have the perfect day.

What was the most difficult part to organise?

The food – our venue offered to provide the catering but had to pull out. Luckily, we found a small wedding planning company that was just starting out and it helped us organise everything and provided some amazing nibbles.

What advice would you give to couples currently planning their wedding?

Remember it's your day. Make sure each idea suits you both so there is no disagreement, and remind yourselves that it's all about taking your vows.



“Don't stress. It will all fall into place if you stay calm.”



Couple's name: Emma Ridley and Robert O'Connell
Wedding date: 1st September, 2012
Time spent planning: One year

Emma and Robert each put their own stamp on their fairytale wedding, with a pink twist from the bride, and sporting influence from the groom with an Arsenal-themed table plan.

Talk us through your planning process.

We booked our venue six months after our engagement and sent out save-the-date cards. Then we took a break for around four months to enjoy being engaged. We used the remaining time to organise the photographer, florist and cake. It took Emma two months to find her dress, but by the end we still had over four weeks to sort out minor details.

What was the trickiest part?

Definitely the seating plan, which took four drafts.



We finally managed to get everyone seated in the right place after some re-arranging.

What was your priority when planning?

Our guest list – we had to make sure that we didn't leave anyone out and had everyone we wanted there on our big day.

Would you have done anything differently?

Absolutely not, we had the perfect day and I think it helped that we had plenty of time to plan.

What advice would you give to couples planning their wedding?

Seek as much help as you can from as many people as possible. They may have some good ideas and will be more than willing to chip in.

“We had over a month to organise the little things like appropriate dancing shoes.”



Couple's name: Kelly Maile and Andrew Barnwell
Wedding date: 24th May, 2012
Time spent planning: Two years

Kelly and Andrew took their time when it came to organising their magenta-themed special day. Kelly allowed for plenty of hair trials and trips to find the perfect dress.

Why did you opt for a long engagement?

We wanted to take our time for a number of reasons – to save money, enjoy being engaged and avoid a mad rush. We organised the biggest things first, such as the venue and photographer, before moving to smaller things like the invites and rings. We arranged little details like the table plan whenever we came across things we particularly wanted, or as time and resources allowed.

What was your priority when planning?

The venue, as it sets the tone of the wedding. It was important to us that it had wow factor, but was comfortable for our guests too.

Would you have done anything differently in the lead-up to the wedding?

I think we should have relaxed a little more. We worried too much about whether everyone else would have a good time.

How long do you think it takes to plan the perfect wedding?

We found that two years gave us ample time to save all the money we needed for a perfect day. We didn't want to scrimp on anything or hurry things. There is no rush to get married if you are going to spend the rest of your lives together.

What advice would you give to other couples?

Make time for each other and don't let the organising take over your lives. Go out for dinner and don't talk about the wedding. If it's all you talk about, you might not enjoy it as much and planning may become a chore.



“Choosing the right dress was very important for Kelly.”