

New Hampshire

Bride & Groom

Quarterly guide to the perfect wedding



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Brides and Grooms: don't forget to buy each other a present

If you're reading this story, you're probably one of the approximately 825,000 couples who've just gotten engaged since Thanksgiving and are now planning your wedding. So here's perhaps the single most important reminder -- and grooms do seem to need more reminding than brides -- anyone will offer: Tradition holds that you both exchange wedding presents. (Yes, grooms, even though you just bought her an engagement ring.)

But what to get?

"Gifts should come from the heart," says WeddingChannel.com. Well, yeah. But that still leaves a lot of room for error. So here's some tips to keep in mind whether you two opt for some type of jewelry -- the traditional and most popular choice -- or something else.

♥ Practicality can wait. Etiquette dictates that gifts be exchanged at one of three times: the night before the wedding, the morning of the ceremony, or right before you leave on your honeymoon. So you could see where this has the potential for becoming a bigger disaster than Chernobyl if the groom's idea of "practical" is, say, a toaster.



♥ Being uniquely personal is appreciated. One of the best examples we've heard of is a guy who had a photographer secretly capture the moment he proposed in New York's Central Park, and then presented the results to his bride on the day of their wedding. "So cute!" read a typical blog post. The downside, of course, is that pulling it off requires imagination and -- in this instance -- a lot of advance planning.

♥ Jewelry can be "traditional" without being boring. Case in point: the very hot

Argyle diamonds trend (www.diamondswithastory.com), which fulfills the quest of even the most eco-minded couples for diamond fashion jewelry since the stones are produced in a socially and environmentally responsible way from the Argyle mine in Australia. And the diamonds, themselves, come in gorgeous neutral shades like champagne, cognac, silver and gray.

"If your bride likes something different from what all her friends have," says jewelry and style expert Michael O'Connor, "then the Argyle diamond bracelets, necklaces and earrings are perfect and available at

many retailers across the country -- I've even spotted women at gyms wearing the diamond pendants. And the cufflinks for men are truly elegant. "Perhaps because prices start at as little as a few hundred dollars for some pieces, O'Connor calls them "the ideal gateway gift." Meaning, you can use other occasions -- think birthdays and anniversaries -- to add to your collection through the years. Yes, brides and grooms, you'll soon have to start planning your next milestone together. (NewsUSA)



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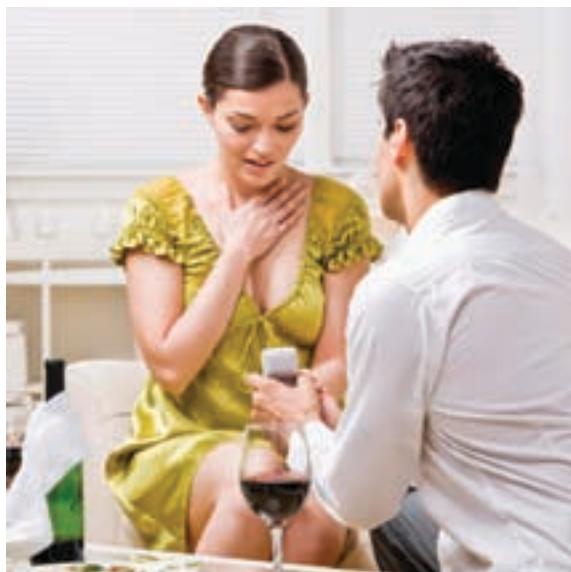
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4 steps to finding the perfect engagement ring

There are a few big purchases in life that you really don't want to mess up -- a first house, a health care plan, a new car, and especially, the engagement ring for your loved one. According to The Knot, a popular wedding inspiration magazine and planning website, the decision is so important it takes consumers more than three months to find the perfect ring, and the average cost is \$5,000. If you're starting to sweat under the pressure, here's a step-by-step guide to make your decision easier:

1. Determine the Metal

- Platinum is a naturally white metal, meaning it will never fade, change color, or need to be re-dipped or re-plated.
- White gold, on the other hand, is created by adding an alloy mix to yellow gold. As the white color fades, the ring will need to be re-dipped a few times.
- Platinum pairs well with all stones because its natural color will not cast any unwanted color onto the gem, plus its density makes for an extremely secure setting.
- If you want matching bands, be sure to consider what your partner likes before deciding



on a metal.

2. Determine the Cut of the Stone

- Traditionally, round and princess cuts are the most popular.
- Recently, celebrities such as Angelina Jolie, Sofia Vergara and Drew Barrymore have brought attention to less common cuts such as emerald,

cushion and radiant.

3. Determine the Style of the Ring

- Vintage: A traditional look, these settings can either be an actual estate piece or a new ring with a vintage style.

• Modern: Tension settings, where the diamond is held without prongs, are a popular style. Rough diamonds also offer a modern twist to a ring.

• Classic: Three-stone and solitaire settings offer a timeless look. Other classic styles include pave and halo settings.

4. Determine the Budget

• According to a 2011 jewelry study by The Knot, the bride views setting, stone cut and quality, and metal used as the most important aspects of a ring, whereas the groom focuses on stone quality, style and price. Each of these attributes factors into the price of the ring, so it helps to make sure the couple is aligned before shopping.

• Platinum rings come in a variety of price points -- with many costing less than \$1,500 -- so couples are sure to get the best value for the ring. Learn more at www.preciousplatinum.com. (NewsUSA)

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Find wedding bliss this Fall with these tips

Caterers, event halls and wedding planners are gearing up for fall wedding season, one of the busiest times of the year for hopeful couples.

Fall guarantees exquisite photo opportunities without the heat of summer -- and the wealth of in-season decorations are beautiful and affordable.

In fact, September and October are the most popular and third most popular months for weddings, respectively.

If you're planning a fall wedding this season, read on for some helpful tips:

• **1. Keep warm.** Since outdoor fall weddings have the potential to get chilly, keeping your guests warm is a must. Offer hot cocoa and homey baskets of soft blankets or cozy shawls. Set up fire pits or outdoor heating stations where guests can shake off the chill.

• **2. Location, location, location.** Select a locale that is known for its fall scenery. For example, as much as it's known for history, Valley Forge and Montgomery County, Pa. is celebrated for its brilliant autumnal hues and stunning landscape -- a picture-perfect place for memorable fall nuptials in a historic area of southeastern Pennsylvania. Named among the

top 10 national parks for fall foliage, the 3,500-acre Valley Forge National Historical Park offers a perfect fall backdrop. Learn more at www.valleyforge.org.

• **3. Incorporate fall colors into the wedding party wardrobe.** Chocolate brown compliments a variety of fall color schemes, and it's flattering for most women. But if brown doesn't suit the plans, burgundy is another great fall shade that makes the bridal white pop.

• **4. Select in-season flowers and decorations.** Unless the bride has her heart set on lily of the valley or orchids, there are beautiful in-season flowers to choose from. Dahlias, chrysanthemums, asters, roses, zinnias and sunflowers all create elegant bouquets and floral displays with a lovely hint of fall. Add some crab apples for a playful, non-floral element.

• **5. Mix and match gourds, pumpkins and squash.** Pumpkins can be tacky or a little too reminiscent of Halloween, so class them up by serving pumpkin soup, pumpkin cocktails or tiers of mini pumpkins. Gourds also make eye-catching vases, and all three can be arranged as charming centerpieces. (NewsUSA)



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Make your 'I Do' last forever with these ideas

In between the guest list, the flowers and the perfect three-tier cake, it can be hard to find time to shop for your wedding rings. However, it is important to remember that most of the wedding details are fleeting and gone after a few hours of enjoyment, while your rings are enjoyed forever. So, whether you are having a smaller gathering or a more traditional affair, this important to-do on your event checklist should not be overlooked, especially since your rings mark your commitment to one another and will last a lifetime.

Jewelry and style expert Michael O'Connor has a few tips that are sure to help you find matrimonial bliss when it comes to ring selection:

• Create a budget. There are many details to consider when planning a wedding that can quickly drain your budget. It is important to set aside money for a lifelong symbol like your wedding bands. Not sure how much to budget? Consider that in 2006, couples spent an average of \$2,079 on wedding bands, according to the CN American Wedding Study. And since the age-old rule for purchasing an engagement ring is to spend two months salary, plan to spend one month's salary for the two wedding bands. Check out the "Budget Calculator" at www.



TheKnot.com.

• Shop together. It is a good idea to shop for rings together. In fact, 80 percent of couples do, which isn't a surprise since your rings, which don't have to match, should reflect your personal styles and tastes.

• Plan ahead. Don't wait until the last minute to go shopping for your wedding bands, they're simply too important. Plan to start

shopping for your rings six months prior to your "I do's." Not only do you need time to research and shop, but you also need to allot time for custom orders, sizing and engraving.

• Invest in quality. Because you want your ring to last a lifetime, it is important to put thought into the quality of metal you choose. Platinum 950 is the most durable precious metal and will last a lifetime. It's 30 times more rare than gold, and for wedding bands set with diamonds, its natural whiteness will ensure the diamonds sparkle and stay secure. It is no wonder that Hollywood's A-list designers such as Tacori, DeBeers, Ritani and Kwiat are all choosing Platinum in their designs. But don't worry, you don't have to be a star to own a Platinum ring. Platinum engagement and wedding rings are available for a wide variety of budgets ; making it an affordable luxury. Some resources that offer popular price points include Lieberfarb, Scott Kay and Blue Nile.

"As the ultimate metal, Platinum's unmatched durability and beauty make it a top pick among designers and 81 percent of brides," said Michael O'Connor. For more information, visit www.engagementguide.com and www.preciousplatinum.com. (NewsUSA)

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Pre-wedding beauty tips to help out the bride

You want everything to be picture perfect for your wedding, including your smile. But like everything else about your big day, that perfect smile could require some work ahead of time. In fact, experts suggest starting your entire beauty regimen six months before the wedding.

Here's a complete pre-wedding beauty checklist.

Lips: Get soft, kissable lips by brushing away flakes of dry skin with an infant toothbrush soaked in baking soda and water. Apply healing ointment, and in no time, your lips will be ready for that "kiss the bride" kiss.

Teeth: A cosmetic dentist can often correct an imperfect smile with veneers. But if spending painful hours in the dentist's chair getting your teeth ground down sounds like it would put a damper on all the joyful planning, here's good news: Lumineers (www.lumineers.com) are now used by thousands of dentists nationwide and can be applied in two short, pain-free appointments. Unlike other veneer procedures, Lumineers are so strong and thin that they don't require removal of sensitive tooth structure. The procedure is quick, painless and even reversible.

Makeup: Women with warm skin tones

look best in makeup with pink, coral, peach, amber, brown and red with yellow undertones. If you have a cool skin tone, choose pink, berry, lilac, mauve or red with blue undertones.

Skin: Make your face glow with a good cleansing program. Use a cleanser that's appropriate for your skin type in the morning, makeup remover and cleanser at night and a daily moisturizer. Use a gentle facial scrub once a week.

Hair: If you're planning to change your hairstyle or color, experiment several months before the wedding so you have time to correct any mistakes.

Nails: If you're a nail-biter, get weekly manicures to keep your nails healthy. Plan your last manicure a couple of days before the big day. Choose a pretty pale pink or splurge on a French manicure, not just because it looks great, but because the chips won't show as much and are easy to fix. You'll have beautiful hands for the rehearsal dinner and any other festivities.

Don't forget, practice makes perfect. Schedule a trial run with your hair and makeup artists several days before your wedding, so there are no surprises the day of the ceremony. (NewsUSA)



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Turn your fantasy fairytale wedding into reality

Every girl dreams of her fantasy wedding. It usually includes a Prince Charming standing next to her at the altar, saying "I do," while surrounded by friends and family in a fairytale atmosphere.

Now it's time to turn that fantasy dream into reality. And while Prince Charming has been replaced with Mr. Right, the rest of the fairytale doesn't have to change. Every bride should feel like a princess, and here are some ways to pull off the special wedding:

♥ The dress: The right wedding dress and accessories can make any bride look like a princess. A strand of pearls around the neck for a Cinderella look or a long, decorative braid down one side of the head completes the Rapunzel look. Many brides love the look of a simple tiara woven into an elegant hairstyle. And the dress can have a full or puffy skirt, or long flowing tresses to really bring out the princess style. Disney also has a collection of designer princess cut dresses based on several of the Disney princesses.

♥ The invitations: Set the tone for your fairytale wedding right from the start with Disney Princess Wedding Invitations from Invitations by Dawn. The collection features eight



elegant princess invitations inspired by Ariel, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel, Belle, Cinderella, Jasmine, Tiana and Snow White. You'll love the deep embossing, the shimmer paper and the raised print that looks like an invitation from

royalty. The flowers and motifs will capture the eyes of your guests and evoke a sense of fairytale nostalgia, having them anticipating the wedding itself.

♥ The decorations: Shimmery gossamer, twinkle lights and decorative candles provide beautiful touches to help make the fairytale a reality when it comes to your wedding and reception. If you are a crafty person, use DIY crafting sites like Pinterest to find centerpiece and table decoration ideas you can make yourself. Also ask your florist and cake decorator if they have any suggestions on decorating your reception and the wedding hall in a fairytale theme. They may suggest a fountain centerpiece, or creating a forest backdrop behind the cake to help enhance the theme.

If you've been dreaming about your wedding for many years, you probably already have some ideas for those special romantic touches that will make your wedding memorable and special. Share those ideas with the wedding specialist helping you plan your special day, and let the magic happen. Your guests will be awed by how you pulled together the entire fairytale theme, from the invitations to gifts they'll take home to remember your special day. (BPT)

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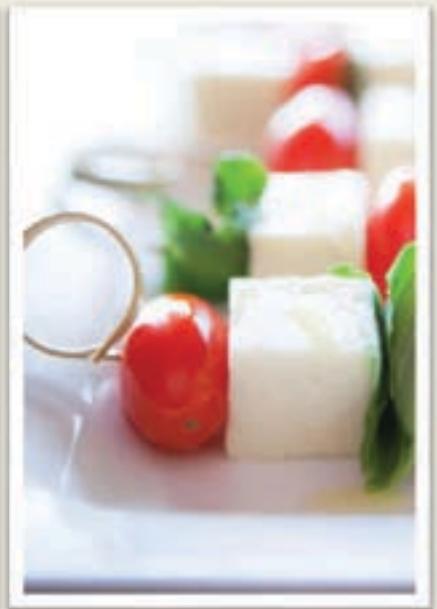
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