

weddings

The dos and don'ts of wedding proposals



People ready to “pop the question” may wonder about the right way to initiate an engagement proposal.

Because a marriage proposal is such a memorable moment in a couples' lives together, those doing the proposing often go to great lengths to ensure things go smoothly. While there is no proposal playbook, these guidelines can assist those ready to take the leap.

- Add a personal touch. It's easy to get caught up in making a marriage proposal a spectacle or something worthy of a social media post. But taking a sweetheart back to a special place that recalls a significant moment can set the backdrop for a memorable proposal. Incorporating the place you first met or a special song into the proposal can make it that much more personal and meaningful.

- Embrace the old-fashioned. It may be romantic to step back in time and follow the traditions of yesteryear.

Show respect to future in-laws by speaking to them about intentions to propose and ask for their blessings. Get down on bended knee when asking for a sweet-heart's hand. Such gestures add up to meaningful expressions of love.

- Consider timing. A person may be so excited to propose that he or she fails to consider how the other person in the relationship is feeling. If that person is overwhelmed by work projects or stressed about upcoming events, consider waiting to propose at a more relaxed time.

- Enlist help from others. It can be a challenge to keep your excitement hidden while collecting information about a future spouse's likes and dislikes. Ask friends and close family members to be your accomplices so that information can be gathered without generating suspicion. This can be especially helpful when finding the per-

fect ring.

- Keep it simple. The more complex a proposal, the more opportunities for things to go wrong. Simplicity, even if it means keeping the proposal to yourself until the question has been popped, can make for an extra special moment.

Marriage proposals happen every day. With humor, confidence and a heart full of love, popping the question can be a success.

Restaurant proposal tips.

Marriage proposals inside restaurants are popular ways to pop the question. Many couples find proposing over a candlelit meal is a romantic way to get engaged, providing a perfect setting to begin a life together.

Even though restaurant proposals have been popularized by television sitcoms and movies on the big screen, those taking this route should do some homework before sitting down to eat. As with all components of wedding planning, it's essential to get the proposal right to create lasting, positive memories.

DO choose a place with the right ambience. If you do not have a favorite restaurant in mind, go online and do some research for picturesque or romantic establishments. Many online reviews now include images, which can help you find the right setting.

DO make a reservation. An engagement should not be

left to chance. Call ahead and speak with a manager and mention that you will be orchestrating a proposal. Find out if the restaurant will help you make it extra special. Some may decorate your table with favorite flowers or provide a specific champagne once the proposal has been accepted.

DON'T propose at the beginning of the meal. Set the scene with conversation and start to enjoy as much of the food as possible. Take time to enjoy the service, food and beverages. Some appetizers and a little wine in your stomach can ease pre-proposal jitters as well.

DON'T forget the ring. The ring is its own spectacle, but there are ways to present it in an even more glorious light. Plan ahead so that the ring is tied to an exquisite tea cup brought out during dessert service. Or, if you're worried about putting the ring in the hands of others, bring along a hand-painted plate that asks “Will You Marry Me?” The wait staff can cover the question with the entree or a dessert. As your partner eats, the message will become clear.

DO expect a scene. Proposing marriage in a restaurant is bound to cause a big reaction — tears included. If you're not comfortable with public displays, you may want to reconsider popping the question in such a public setting.

DO consider a weeknight. Restaurants are less busy on weeknights than weekends, so you can expect a more intimate setting Monday through Thursday than you might find Friday through Sunday.

Make every anniversary count

Wedding anniversaries provide opportunities for couples to reflect and relive the excitement of their wedding days. Anniversaries can easily be forgotten amid the hustle and bustle of daily life, but many couples are making concerted efforts to ensure their anniversaries are celebrated as the special occasions they are.

A first wedding anniversary is a special one. Some couples celebrate their first anniversaries by enjoying a piece of wedding cake that has been properly preserved in the freezer. Couples may also dance to their wedding songs or enjoy a nice dinner at a favorite restaurant. The first anniversary also is a time to pull out the wedding video or photo album and reminisce about the wedding day. Anniversaries are a great way for couples to celebrate their

time together by stepping away from e-mails, text messages, work obligations, and even mundane everyday tasks to once again remember a day and moment that changed their lives forever. Those who may need a little inspiration celebrating their anniversaries can consider these suggestions.

- Have dinner at your reception site. Find out if the reception site, which may be a catering hall or restaurant, serves dinner or brunch. Make a reservation and enjoy celebrating in the spot where the memories all began.

- Take a second honeymoon. Honor wedding memories by booking a second honeymoon at a special location.

- Throw a party. Use your anniversary as an excuse to have friends or family over for a party. Be sure to include

your wedding song on the music playlist.

- Create a romantic evening. Rekindle the romance by pulling out all the stops, complete with a nice homecooked meal, candles and mood music.



Wedding anniversaries present ideal opportunities for couples to reminisce about their trip down the aisle and all the entertaining moments from the wedding.

They're also opportunities to connect as a couple and focus on each other.

Get the most out of bridal shows



Recently engaged couples may be excited to get a jump on wedding planning. Bridal shows can be a great way for couples to meet and familiarize themselves with local wedding professionals, all the while introducing themselves to the terminology of wedding planning.

Though they're a great source of information, contacts and samples, bridal shows also can be a bit overwhelming. Learning how to maximize time spent at shows can help couples plan their weddings as efficiently as possible.

- Start small. If the idea of

large crowds is unappealing, attend the more intimate, boutique shows that are often held at local reception halls and restaurants instead of the larger installations at convention centers and hotels.

- Scout out vendors. Check the bridal show's website for lists of exhibitors and see if your desired vendors are on the list. But even if they're not, keep an open mind and use the show as a chance to compare offerings. If an event map is available, marking off must-visit booths can help save time.

- Pre-register. Pre-registering for bridal events saves time at check-in, and doing so

may make you eligible for discounted tickets.

- Come prepared. Chances are each vendor is going to ask couples for information so that they can follow up with a phone call or e-mail with more detailed offerings and estimates. Couples attending the show can expediate the process by coming equipped with labels that feature their names, contact information and wedding date. They can then stick the labels on sign-in sheets or use them like business cards.

- Dress comfortably. Bridal expos involve a lot of walking and roaming around. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes. Consider a backpack or hands-free bag so you are not weighed down when collecting the swag and other handouts throughout the day.

- Ask questions. When face-to-face with vendors, rely on their expertise but don't hesitate to ask questions concerning themes, colors, recommendations for honeymoon locations, invitation paper suggestions and much more.

- Stay for the fashion show. Many shows will offer a run-

way experience to present the latest gown and tuxedo offerings. This can be an entertaining way for couples to formulate their wedding styles.

Wedding shows introduce couples to vendors and set them on the path to making decisions regarding the planning of their weddings.

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