

How do you select a comfortable wedding gown?

Many brides-to-be visit bridal shops with specific goals in mind regarding the style of their wedding gowns.

Some women come equipped with magazine tear-outs or pull up ideas on their mobile phones. Others may have an entire scrapbook filled with various ideas they've been compiling for years.

Much consideration is given to wedding gowns. The cost and silhouette of the dress may garner the bulk of that consideration, but brides might want to spend more time considering comfort.

Depending on the time of day their weddings take place, brides can spend 12 hours or more in their wedding gowns on their wedding day.

However, when shopping for their gowns, brides may prioritize beauty over

comfort, even though it's entirely possible to find a gown that's both stunning and comfortable.

When staff and friends or family who have come along to offer advice start to blush over wedding gowns, brides-to-be may feel pressured to downplay any discomfort they feel.

To make sure brides look flawless and elegant but are still comfortable in their wedding gowns, consider the following tips.

- Know what to highlight and what to cover up. No two body types are the same, and many women feel certain parts of their bodies are their best assets while they want to downplay others. Try on gowns that play up your best features. If you have shapely legs, consider a dramatic gown with a slit to show them off. Certain gowns can enhance the décolleté

or show off an hourglass shape. Remember, many gowns can be modified so that you feel secure and confident. Sleeves can be added or fabric placed to cover up any perceived flaws. Confidence and pride are important parts of the comfort factor.

- Get sized correctly. Bridal gown sizes do not coincide with street sizes. Depending on the manufacturer, brides may have to select gowns that are several sizes larger than they would normally wear. This should not be a cause for alarm. Brides should go by their measurements. Attempting to squeeze into a dress that is too small will only lead to discomfort on the wedding day.
- Purchase the right undergarments. Improperly fitting bras, shapewear and other undergarments can lead to discomfort as

well. Some seamstresses can sew in supportive cups to remove the need for separate bras. Brides can explore various options to reduce the visibility of certain accoutrements.

- Move around in the gown. Brides should not just stand in front of the mirror and smile when trying on gowns. Put them through their paces. Try sitting, bending and even a little dancing. Make sure the dress is comfortable to move around in.
- Try different options. The gown brides have in mind may not be the one they ultimately go home with. Explore different styles and materials. Choose cooler, breezier fabrics and lightweight gowns, like crêpe, georgette or organza, for summer weddings. Heavier fabrics, such as brocade, may be more comfortable in the winter.



WISE CHOICE — Wedding gowns can be both beautiful and comfortable for those who know how to shop.

Try these tips for a special mother/son dance

Weddings celebrate the unions of happy couples ready to pledge their lives to each other.

In theory, the wedding day spotlight should be shared equally by brides and grooms. But brides often eclipse their grooms, as guests are drawn to stunning bridal gowns.

Though grooms might play second fiddle for much of their wedding days, there is one moment when all eyes are on the groom and a special lady in his life.

The mother/son dance is a wedding tradition that many grooms embrace as their opportunity to show their mothers how much they love and appreciate them.

The mother/son dance is an ideal time to create a special moment, and the following are some tips to personalize the dance.

- Precede the bride and her father. Make your own tradition and switch up the timing of the dances. Be the first to take a spin on the dance floor and set the

tone for the other traditional songs to come.

- Create a photo montage. Work with an entertainment company or photographer to create a slideshow of images showing you and your mother together and separately. If possible, include some photos that were shot during the wedding ceremony, asking the photographer to capture the look on your mother's face during pivotal moments of the ceremony.
- Show off your dance skills. One increasingly popular wedding trend is for fathers and brides to choreograph the father/daughter dances. Grooms and their mothers can follow suit, particularly if you both have some stellar dance moves.
- Let Mom choose the song. Give your mother the opportunity to express her sentiments to you, as mothers of the groom do not typically toast their sons during weddings or even rehearsal dinners.
- Invite other son/mother



GOOD MAN — Grooms are the unsung heroes of weddings. They often put others first, including letting their own mothers shine on the dance floor.

duos up. If the idea of dancing alone with your mother is a bit intimidating, give other mothers in attendance an opportunity to share the spotlight.

Celebrate all mothers in attendance, encouraging any mothers and sons

who are present to dance together.

Grooms may not garner the bulk of guests' attention on their wedding days. But they can take steps to make their special dances with their mothers more memorable and unique.

Weddings and nontraditional families can work just fine with planning

Families come in all shapes and sizes. During special events — particularly those steeped in tradition, such as weddings — blended families may have to employ certain tactics to ensure the events go off without a hitch.

When planning their weddings, couples must give consideration to the needs of their families. Even though a wedding is about the union of two people, oftentimes couples engaged to be married must contend with the politics of divorce or other familial issues. This includes if and how to incorporate stepparents and stepsiblings into the ceremony and celebration.

There are no traditional rules regarding how to handle blended families, so brides- and grooms-to-be can customize their decisions based on their own unique situations. Even when families have been happy through the years, the unique circumstances and traditions surrounding the nuptials can dredge up former insecurities, and certain aspects may require extra patience and tact. Here's how to navigate the process.

- Consider stepparents and stepsiblings VIPs. Brides and grooms who are not particularly close to their stepfamilies still have to recognize the role they play in the family dynamics. These people are still family, so respect and courtesy should be offered. If there is any lingering animosity, extend the olive branch on this day and try not to let anyone be made to feel as if they are unimportant. A simple announcement of who stepparents are at the wedding reception or inclusion of their names on wedding itineraries can help smooth over any potential bumps.
- Put others' needs before your own. While the wedding may be about you and your future spouse, you must consider the feelings of others. Biological parents and stepparents may act defensively if they feel uncomfortable or hurt, and that can create an air of negativity to the day. Try to avoid this by considering potential areas of conflict. For example, mothers might be hurt if their ex-husbands' new girlfriends are asked to be in a group family photo. Instead, select separate times to have everyone included. Remember to give parents and stepparents priority seating as well, and they each should be seated next to someone they love and someone with whom they can converse comfortably. You may think everyone can play nice, but it's best not to push the issue just to make a point at the wedding.
- Recognize that some families break the mold. Recently, a father made waves on the Internet when a video of him pulling the bride's stepfather up to assist in walking her down the aisle went viral. This was a wonderful image of families making it work despite their differences or the awkwardness that can result when brides or grooms have parents and stepparents in attendance. Although this scenario might not play out for all, find ways to impart a

Did you know?

According to the 2015 Real Weddings Study from the premier multiplatform wedding resource The Knot, the most popular month for couples to get engaged is December. Sixteen percent of survey respondents became engaged in the final month of the calendar year. The survey also found that the average length of a couple's engagement is now 14.5 months.

Where June once was the most popular month of the year to tie the knot, today's couples are now heading down the aisle most often in October. Seventeen percent of weddings now occur in October, closely followed by 15 percent in September.

And at what age are couples saying their "I dos"? The average marrying age for a bride is 29 and it is 31 for the groom.



IF 'RULES' INTRUDE — The wedding is all about that special couple, but family tensions can spoil the happy event. Don't be afraid to toss traditional rules of etiquette in favor of good vibes at your wedding.

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