

Cut spending on weddings, ignore the average

Tying the knot can be an expensive endeavor. According to The Knot 2017 Real Weddings Study, which surveyed nearly 13,000 brides and grooms in the United States who got married in 2017, the average cost of a wedding was more than \$33,000.

That figure may surprise some couples planning their weddings, many of whom may not be able to afford spending so much on their ceremonies and receptions. Couples may feel pressure to compete with friends and relatives whose weddings they have attended in the past, and that may compel some to stretch their budgets and even go into debt to finance their nuptials. However, there are ways for couples to curtail their wedding spending and impress guests at the same time.

· Trim the guest list. The 2017 Real Weddings Study found that couples spent an average of \$268 per guest in 2017. Many couples are recognizing that smaller guest lists are a great way to lower wedding spending, and The Knot study found that the average guest count decreased from 149 in 2009 to 136 in 2017. Trimming the guest list may seem harsh, but

The per person average couples spend on guests at their weddings has risen considerably since 2009, as more and more couples seek to provide unique guest experiences. According to The Knot 2017 Real Weddings Study, which surveyed nearly 13,000 U.S.-based brides and grooms who tied the knot in 2017, per-guest spending increased from \$194 in 2009 to \$268 in 2017. Some of that increase can be traced to couples wanting to provide memorable experiences, including customized entertainment, for their guests. Among the couples surveyed, 69 percent paid for photo booths for their guests, while 24 percent provided sparklers. Twenty-two percent of couples included selfie stations or video booths in the festivities, while 19 percent provided games for guests during their receptions.

couples who work together need not cut their guest lists in half. By working together, couples can likely find between 10 and 15 acquaintances on their initial lists who won't be offended if they're not invited. · Expand your venue horizons. A greater number of couples are looking beyond traditional wedding venues and opting for more unique locales to tie the knot. The 2017 Real Weddings Study found that 15 percent of 2017 weddings were held on farms, ranches and even in barns, while just 2 percent of weddings were hosted in such venues in 2009. The growing popularity of unique wedding venues may make some locations more expensive

than couples anticipate, but a willingness to tie the knot in a unique venue greatly increases couples' options, improving the chances they will find more affordable venues.

· Cut back on guest entertainment. Customizing experiences for guests is a major reason why today's couples are spending so much more per guest than their predecessors. Spending for customized guest entertainment, which includes things like photo booths, sparklers and video booths, tripled between 2009 and 2017. Couples may want to give their guests unique experiences, but should not stretch their budgets or go into debt to do so.

· Tie the knot in winter. Summer and fall were the most popular wedding seasons in 2017, and that does not figure to change anytime soon. Couples can take advantage of those trends by getting married in winter, a slow season for wedding venues and vendors, who might be more flexible with their prices. The most popular months to tie the knot in 2017 were September, June and October, so couples who don't want to wed in winter but want to avoid paying top prices should avoid those three months.

Weddings are expensive, but couples can find ways to cut costs without sacrificing quality.



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