

# 1000 BEST

## wedding bargains



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- \* Create your own invitations and save big
- \* 25 ways to have your cake and eat it too
- \* 17 ceremony locations that save you a fortune
- \* Get your music for free

**SHARON  
NAYLOR**

# 1000 BEST WEDDING BARGAINS

Sharon Naylor



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For Lucky



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# Introduction

**W**eddings can be expensive. According to several national surveys, the average bride and groom's wedding budget hovers between \$25,000 and \$45,000. That would be a nice down payment for a house, or an amazing two-month long honeymoon in Belize. It could pay off your school loans or get you a new car. These are the things that so many newly engaged couples think about when the shocking reality of the wedding's cost hits them square in the face. It's so much money. Do we really want to spend so much on JUST ONE DAY?

The answer to that is it's not just one day. It's not just a party. It's a supremely important ritual to celebrate the joining together of you and your fiancé, and it's packed with meaning, sentiment, and importance for both you and your families. Couples who let the money issue get to them and

either eloped or “played it small” with their weddings ultimately have some nagging regrets that they didn’t find a way to make their dream wedding a reality. And these are the ones who renew their vows a year later to have the big event, the gown, the cake, the champagne, and the pictures they’ll someday show their kids.

Are the memories you’ll make at the wedding, those that last forever and bond you for the rest of your lives, worth the investment? Absolutely. Do you need to spend \$45,000 for that? No way. You can have your dream wedding for a fraction of that price, using the secrets within this book.

Use these ideas, and you can copy expensive ideas celebrity brides and grooms have shown off on television specials and in the pages of magazines. You can have twice the wedding for half the cost. You can “trick” your guests into thinking you spent a fortune on the reception, your gown, and the cake when, in fact, you found great ways to save without the savings showing. And you can get many things for free.

If you aren’t the star of a reality dating show, a bona fide movie star with more money than several small countries combined, and if a network isn’t paying for your wedding, then you can use the following insider wedding planning secrets to make your budget go a long, long way—no matter what your money situation may be.

This is great news if you’re among the many couples who will be paying for the wedding themselves, with no financial help from Mom and Dad. It’s great news if you are getting a cash infusion from your parents, or even from the groom’s

parents. The more ways you can find to save them money along the way, the better for all of you. It's just ridiculous not to search for and implement budget-saving tips for your wedding when there are so many easy ways to do it!

You can beat the money trap for your wedding. You can erase your financial fears and guilt. You can plan your wedding without getting buried in debt or putting your dreams of owning a house on hold for years. And you can achieve more for your wedding dream starting right this moment. You have all the answers right here in your hands, just waiting for you. Let's get started...



# Part One:

Setting the Stage for  
Big Budget Savings



# Size, Style, and Formality

**C**all these the Big Three. So much of what your wedding will cost depends—obviously—on how many guests you will invite, the type of wedding you'll have, and how formal it will be. When you make these decisions, you're laying the groundwork for every one of your decisions about the wedding. For instance, a formal wedding will call for a formal full-length gown, which is extremely likely to cost a few thousand dollars more than the pretty white sundress you'd wear to your informal outdoor wedding. Inviting three hundred guests to your wedding means you'll spend more than if you invited twenty-five or fifty guests.

But it's a lot more complicated than these simple formulas, as you'll soon find out. If you plan an informal wedding for twenty-five guests all accompanying you to Belize, it could still cost



more than a formal wedding for one hundred back in your hometown. See how that works?

All the puzzle pieces fit together differently, with each of your big decisions working together in the way that fits your wedding dream best. Not every category has to be “the least expensive option possible.” That would leave you with ten guests eating hot dogs in your backyard. Not your wedding dream, I’d imagine. So go through all of the options in each of the next few chapters, fit your puzzle pieces together, and lay the groundwork for a wedding that allows you more for your dollar in all of the remaining categories.

## **YOUR WEDDING’S SIZE**

We’ve established that it’s not an automatic guarantee that you’ll save more if you have a smaller guest list, because the second half of that equation is how formal a wedding you’re planning. You can spend a fortune with the most elegant, formal wedding decorated in a sea of white imported roses, the finest champagne, a designer dress, and only fifty wedding guests. Once that’s established, then you’re dealing with the original question of how many guests you will invite. That’s where you get the price per person, and that’s where your totals start adding up.

Once you have all your ducks in a row and find out, say, that your price-per-head is \$55, then you can look at the number of guests you want to invite. Obviously, at this point, two hundred guests will cost you more than one hundred guests. That’s where the pure math comes in. But what’s important for you to realize is that you

must not sacrifice the most important part of your wedding just to save money. And that most important part is the people with whom you want to share it. People are more important than money. For many brides and grooms, they'd rather have a less formal wedding than even dream of cutting certain relatives and friends from their guest list. They'd rather have their friends from college with them than buy a designer wedding gown.

Consider your guest list to be a defining factor for your wedding plans, not the other way around. At minute one, right now, you should create your desired guest list and then use the following tips to make your budget work.

**1** ● If you're considering planning a destination wedding, it might already be in your mind that your guest list will be limited to just a few close family members and friends. Most brides and grooms limit this guest list to under twenty-five people, which obligates fewer of your loved ones to shell out for a trip to the Cayman Islands to join you (or saves you a fortune if you're offering to pay for their airfare and lodging!), and also costs you less for those per-guest catering fees at the reception site.

**2.** Don't forget that the wedding reception is not the only event for which you will be paying a per-guest price. With the spread of wedding weekend events, like cocktail parties, brunches, and picnics, you can wind up paying a small fortune for the other events you'll invite your guests to. So keep that added expense in mind as you decide on your total guest tally—you will be paying for more than one party for each of them.

**3.** Choose a smaller bridal party with fewer bridesmaids and ushers. With four bridesmaids in your party instead of eight, that's four fewer presents you'll have to buy, perhaps even four fewer gown purchases and tux rentals for the guys if you're among the couples who generously pick up their bridal parties' expenses.

**4.** A smaller guest list can open doors at less expensive wedding locations, like restaurant party rooms that can hold only eighty-five guests as a matter of size and safety standards. At sites like these, catering costs and wedding packages are much more likely to be lower-priced per guest than at the cavernous ballrooms that can hold your 300+ wedding guests. At some of these smaller-sized, but still equally beautiful locations, it can be as much as 45 percent less per person.

**5.** Leave kids off the guest list for the official reception.

- Hosting kids other than the flower girls and ring bearer adds up when you consider that caterers will often charge you a full guest fee for each child in attendance. Even a caterer's cut-rate children's fee is often too pricey to justify. Why pay \$50 per child when that child is just going to pick on a few bites from the buffet and then run around with the other kids? Your guests' kids can be invited to other, less expensive wedding weekend events like picnics and cookouts. You can pay for a kids-only pizza party and DVD movie night with hired babysitters during the wedding celebrations for less than what it would have cost to pay for just one or two of those kids to attend the reception. It's a huge savings for you, and parents will enjoy the kid-free night.

**6.** Fewer guests, naturally, means having to buy fewer favors. The choice is up to you

- whether you'd like to translate that savings into getting better favors for the smaller number of guests you do invite!