

Great news: Your daughter or son is getting married!

Before you do anything else, take a moment to savor the thrill of this great news.



Finished? Good. Now roll up your sleeves -- because whether you are deeply involved in every aspect of planning the wedding or whether the bride and groom prefer to rely on you as a sounding board while making the major decisions themselves, it's likely that you're going to find yourself juggling the role of advisor, therapist, communications hub and trouble-shooter. You'll need to be able to:

- Keep the planning process on track without nagging
- Offer guidance without being pushy, and
- Be a rock of supportive encouragement -- even if you disagree with the bride and groom on a particular decision.

All this, of course, is in addition to any specific parental responsibilities that you take on, such as throwing an engagement party, spreading the word about gift registries, contributing to the guest list, bonding with your daughter's or son's new in-laws, arranging the rehearsal dinner, negotiating sticky family situations, and welcoming guests at the big event itself.

Finally, there's the issue of who's going to pay for it all. While the parents of the bride are no longer automatically expected to foot the bill for the ceremony and reception, deciding how to split the expenses can be a delicate matter, requiring the utmost tact and empathy. ([Click here to see a list of who traditionally pays for what.](#)

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Here are four general principles to guide you through the process:

1. Follow the lead of the bride and groom. No matter how many good ideas you're brimming with (or how many you are contributing to financially) this wedding day belongs to the engaged couple. When you offer suggestions, do so with a light touch, and give way gracefully if your suggestion is overruled.
2. The mother of the groom should defer to the mother of the bride. In general, the bride's parents lead the way for all of the parents and other relatives. With the exception of the rehearsal dinner, the parents of the bride are almost always the official hosts of the ceremony and reception, as well as the major events leading up to the big day. If you want to throw a party, send out announcements, or contribute to the wedding in some way, always discuss your plans with the parents of the bride first -- then adhere to their wishes.
3. Keep backup copies of all key information. Even if the couple is doing a superb job of planning, you'll stand ready to be a hero whenever a glitch occurs.
4. Communicate on a regular basis. Regular chats -- whether conducted online or verbally -- allow you to address problems as soon as they arise and also give you an opportunity to provide ongoing emotional support to the bride and groom.

□ **Mother's Etiquette Alert:**

Think before speaking. Your child may want to tell certain friends and family members about the impending nuptials personally, so be sure to coordinate sharing the news with the couple before you begin telling one and all. Also, be careful that in the excitement of the moment you don't mislead those you tell into thinking they're going to be invited to the wedding when this hasn't yet been determined. People will invariably ask for details about the upcoming nuptials. If the person doing the asking is on your 'maybe' invitation list -- or isn't on the list at all -- simply reply that the wedding plans haven't been drawn up yet or prepare your questioner for a non-invitation by saying something like, "It looks like we will be having a fairly small wedding ...". Vagueness is always a far better approach than making a misleading comment and causing hurt feelings. "I hope you'll be able to come to the wedding!" should be reserved strictly for people you're absolutely certain you'll be inviting.