Naturally, you want to look terrific on the day your daughter or son gets married—because while it’s true that all eyes will be on the bride, they’ll also be on you.

The old concept that both moms are supposed to look matronly was retired long ago, along with the adage that the mother of the groom should wear beige.

These days, virtually anything goes—formal gown, short or long dress, skirt-and-jacket ensemble—so long as it matches the style of the wedding and stays within the limits of good taste. Some guidelines to keep in mind:

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Choose a color that will blend nicely with the dresses of the wedding party.

- Avoid wearing white. This color is reserved for the bride. If you want to wear a light color, choose a pastel in a light or medium tone.

- Traditionally, the bride’s mother has the honor of selecting her outfit first.

- The mother of the groom, in picking her outfit second, should ideally wear a different color from the bride’s mother. When in doubt, she should go with a soft or neutral color, rather than an excessively bold color.

- The mothers do not have to wear dresses of equal length, although many choose to do so in order to create a more harmonious look—especially in wedding photos.

Wedding Outfit Wisdom: Top Five Tips

1. A specialty store, rather than a department store, will offer much more personalized attention throughout the process—from choosing a dress to making alterations to selecting just the right undergarments.
2. If possible, bring in a swatch of the bridesmaids’ gown material when you go shopping, or have a description of the gown’s color.

3. Order your outfit at least two to three months ahead of time, and allow at least two weeks for alterations.
4. When buying your dress, get specific advice on which undergarments and hose will go best with it.
5. As for who calls whom to discuss ‘our outfits,’ the mother of the groom shouldn’t stand on ceremony; if she hasn’t heard anything once the initial wedding plans are underway, she’s perfectly welcome to call the mother of the bride.