

Consider Some Relevant Dress Criteria



Short of the ring and the proposal, I can't think of anything more central to dreaming about your wedding than the gown. However, there's more to managing wedding attire than selecting your dress. Add your mother's opinions to your gown search, a quest for flattering bridesmaids' dresses, and coordinating outfits for your mom and his, and it can feel like you're becoming a pincushion yourself. Not to worry. Once you're aware of some etiquette guidelines, you can temper the stress and focus on making everyone feel beautiful on your big day.



Etiquette of the Bridal Gown

Before you set foot inside a bridal salon, think about any relevant dress criteria. Is your wedding a breezy summer beach affair, or a formal winter extravaganza? Are you marrying in the morning or the evening? Your dress ought to reflect the type of wedding you plan to have, and a filmy slip dress at a black-tie affair would be as out of place as a hoop skirt with a train at the beach. There are few restrictions on style and color nowadays, so white is as optional as it is acceptable. However, if a cocktail-length skirt or a Tiffany-blue dress will be greatly upsetting to your parents or grandparents, it probably isn't worth it though the decision is yours. Finally, if you are being married in a house of worship, be sure to ask about restrictions and requirements, such as a ban on bare shoulders or mandatory hair coverings.

Inside Weddings: Wedding Attire

Written by Anna Post

When it comes to shopping for the dress itself, your mother does need to be invited if she's helping to pay for the gown. What she can't do, though, is force you to choose a dress you don't like just because she's financing it. On the other hand, if your dream dress comes with a price tag that leaves mom fanning herself on the salon's sofa, she has every right to ask you to keep looking.

Some mothers want their daughters to wear the dress that they wore. This idea can work out beautifully, but only if the bride is on board -- you are under no obligation to wear your mother's gown. However, you should at least consider it if your mom is really excited; maybe try it on so she can "ooh" and "ahh," but never commit unless you are sure you want to wear it.

The Last Word on Choosing Bridesmaid Gowns

Think of the search for bridesmaid dresses as a collaboration with a dash of negotiation. The process should start with a conversation between you and your bridesmaids about budgets, the level of formality, and any religious restrictions. Bridesmaids are expected to pay for their own attire, shoes, and accessories, so brides do need to be sensitive to any budget restrictions. There is no required price range for bridesmaids dresses -- it varies from wedding to wedding and is based on a budget the whole group can live with. The bride can offer to make up the difference in cost if she is in love with a bridesmaid dress her bridal party just can't afford.

The most dreaded part of the process is deciding on a style and color that fits both the theme of the wedding and is flattering for the bridal party as a whole. The idea that a group of women would be willing to wear the same dress to the same event goes against the very nature of most girls! It's fine to mix and match either styles or colors, though usually not both. If the group is leaning toward a color that makes a particular bridesmaid look seasick or a style that leaves her looking like a "before" photo, it's okay for her to speak up about her concerns -- as long as she brings some alternatives to the table. And in the end, the bride does get to make the final call.

Dressing the Mothers of the Bride and Groom

Though the mothers have it easy compared to the bridesmaids, there are a few rules to keep in mind. The mother of the groom should reach out to the mother of the bride to ask what she is wearing, and then choose her own outfit accordingly. They don't want to match, nor do they want to look jarring next to each other. This courtesy is still expected today, and can provide a terrific way for these two women to get to know each other better. While you can certainly talk to your mom about what she's considering, the decision is hers in the end, as it's important that she feels good in what she wears on your wedding day. Perhaps you could propose a shopping trip together, where you could suggest outfits you think would work and offer gentle

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feedback if a color just isn't working: "I'm not sure that's your best shade. Maybe trying this in lilac would be better?" Concern over your future mother-in-law's choice of attire is a little harder. You should certainly communicate any rules that your venue has (see above), but unless she asks you for help or advice, it's best to let her express her style and accept her as she is.

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