

TOP 20 COST-CUTTING TIPS

1. Start planning early.

When planning a wedding, allow yourself plenty of time to research the best and most cost effective options. Decisions made in haste can end up costing you more money than you intended to spend.

2. Set up a wedding account.

Before you make any other decisions, decide on the dollar amount you want to spend on the wedding. Set up a wedding bank account and deposit this budgeted amount into your new account. If you draw only from these funds for the wedding, you'll be sure to stick to your budget. If you must go into debt for your wedding, open a wedding-only credit card with a set limit. Pay it off each month, if at all possible, and do not increase your limit for any reason.

3. Enlist help early.

Since weddings can be overly stressful if all of the responsibility lies with one person, enlist the help of friends and family members. Wedding to-do lists don't look quite as overwhelming when the tasks are delegated among your friends, family, and members of the wedding party. Chances are, many of these people would be more than happy to help with your wedding — just don't saddle them with too much work. Respect their time, and assign them only one or two tasks. They are your friends, not pro-bono employees.

4. Use seasonal products.

The use of seasonal fruits, vegetables, or flowers in your wedding will be less expensive than produce or flowers sourced out of season or shipped from an exotic location. Let the DIFL seasonality chart (page xxx) help you make the best decision for these aspects of your special day.

5. Have an off-season wedding.

In general, more weddings occur throughout the late spring, summer, and early fall months of the year. You'll find better deals on locales and vendors during the "off season" of late fall, winter, and early spring.

6. Have an off-day or off-hour wedding.

Most weddings occur on Saturday afternoons and evenings, and pricing for these peak times will likely be nonnegotiable and expensive. Avoid the high prices and competition by having your wedding on a Friday evening, Saturday morning, or Sunday morning or afternoon.

7. Make your own invitations.

Scrapbook and stationery stores carry many beautiful and elaborate papers that you can use for making your own invitations. With some creativity, your own computer, and a printer, you can make invitations that are both beautiful and within your budget. If you don't trust your own skills as a designer, use the creative resources of your friends and family or look at online samples and base your design on one you found.

8. Have your ceremony and reception at the same location.

Some ceremony sites also offer fellowship or reception halls. By keeping your guests at the same location for the entire event, you can save on multiple site fees, ease the hassle of transportation for your guests and the wedding party, and most importantly, simplify the planning process for yourself.

9. Have a smaller wedding.

Don't feel obligated to invite anyone other than those you want to share in this special day. By having fewer guests, you can focus on quality over quantity. A small wedding on a moderate budget has the potential . . .

INVITATIONS AND OTHER STATIONERY

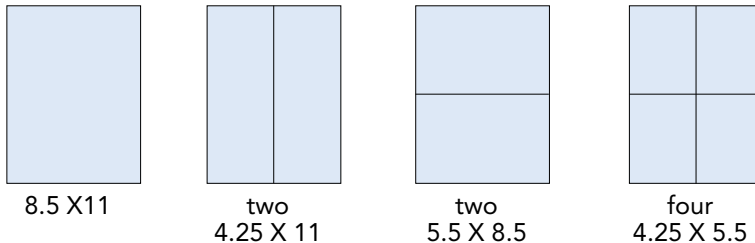
Types of Printing

Wedding invitations can be as simple as a handwritten card or as expensive and elaborate as your imagination allows. Most, however, depend on one of these basic forms of printing: laser or ink jet printing, 4-color digital printing, thermography, engraving, and letterpress. Each of these techniques produces a different look for your invitation, and each technique varies in price. Some are more expensive than others. Using one of these techniques for your invitations depends on how you want your invitation to look and how much money you have allowed for it in your wedding budget.

Do-It-for-Less Laser and Ink Jet

Elegance can be found in the most simple of invitations, if you have good taste and creativity. By far, the most inexpensive way to print your invitations is to buy nice card stock, type out the desired text for your invitation, print it on your home laser or ink jet printer, and then make inexpensive copies on a copy shop's black and white copier. Don't forget to have the employees trim your invitations to the perfect size.

A generic 8.5 X 11-inch card stock yields two 4.25 X 11-inch pieces, two 5.5 X 8.5-inch pieces, or four 4.25 X 5.5-inch pieces.



Depending on your resourcefulness and style, you can easily get four invitations out of a single sheet of paper. These cards would fit perfectly in an A-2 envelope. (See the charts on page xxx to learn more about envelope styles and sizes.)

If simplicity is what you want, leave these invitations as they are. For more decorative flair, use inexpensive stamp sets, embellishments, and dusting glitter, available at most scrapbook and stationery stores. This option does require a modicum of creativity to keep your invitations from looking like a kindergarten project, but it works well for brides and grooms on a strict budget. Done well, DIFL invitations can be a beautiful technique for efficient and creative brides, grooms, or their friends.