



So you're engaged! What now?

Congratulations! Your new fiancé has bravely popped the question at the most romantic time of the year! Whilst floating around in a bubbly daze of happiness, you can't help but think to yourself where to begin with the wedding planning...

STOP

There is no rush. As much as you can't wait to start putting invites together, give yourself a little breathing space. The engagement period is one to be enjoyed for as long as you like. Take the first few months to relax and spend time as a newly engaged couple. Once the initial excitement and constant flow of texts from family and friends has died down, you can begin jotting down ideas for your fairy tale.

1) VENUE

Just like any good story, your wedding needs a setting. Finding a venue that suits all your needs can often be a long process! If you and your partner originate from the same town/city/county- deciding on a wedding venue will be a little easier for you! If not, find a middle ground that has more pros than cons! It's your day, and giving loved ones a head start will ensure everyone can be there.



First, decide on the **type** of venue you would prefer. Do you see yourself in a converted barn decked with twinkly lights and bales of hay? Or perhaps a historic castle with winding stairs and mesmerising grounds overlooking the countryside? Make note of how these venues suit **you both**. Try not to worry about what family, friends or guests will think. This day is about your exciting new journey together. Once you know your location and style, you can use Hitched.co.uk to filter out search results (or a quick Google search will help).

- Book show rounds with the venues you are interested in. This is mostly very informal and just for you to have a look around the site and see if it suits you!
- Ask lots of questions, even if you think they are silly! This could save you a lot of hassle once you go away and try to decide between places.
- Take pictures, try and visualise how you would like everything set up.
- Check availability- are you looking at sooner rather than later? Venues can book up very quickly. Make sure to reserve a date if you are interested in booking for the

same or next year. Most venues require a non-refundable deposit which can be anywhere up to £1000 (and often a percentage of your overall booking). Make sure if you are reserving a date that you check when you are due to pay your deposit!

- Does the venue have accommodation? Is this part of the package price? If you planning on getting married a distance away from friends and family, check the surrounding area for places to stay. Sometimes a suite for the bride and groom is included in the package price, but often not too! Do **check** with your wedding coordinator.
- Attend any wedding fairs/open days your shortlisted venues may be holding. This is a great opportunity to see the venues set up in all their glory. There will also be chances to chat with their recommended suppliers, and local ones that can help put together your wedding day. Go in with an open mind, take every freebie (especially food) and make sure you leave with enough information and reassurance of the venue.

2) BUDGET

Sit down with some of your family members and discuss how much you are looking to spend on your wedding. This can be quite daunting at first, but having trusting family or friends there will help ease the stress. It can also be useful to delegate certain areas of the cost to different people (if this has been agreed previously). Do not worry about over-budgeting just yet, it's better to make a rough estimate and spend less than what you planned! A simple Excel document works a treat. Just section everything off into separate spends: venue, accommodation, catering, photography, florists etc., then add in your estimates or how much you would ideally like to spend. This document will help in the long run of planning and searching for suppliers.

If money is precious and you don't want to leave yourself short up until the big day, be sure to ask suppliers and venues if you are able to set up payment instalments. Most are happy to do this, and building a trusting relationship with the owners will make the planning process a lot smoother. Best to start thinking about this when making your budget document!

3) Suppliers

It's never too early to start looking into suppliers. If you are planning your wedding a year or so in advance, some suppliers might not have advanced prices up yet. **But do not fear.** If you are keen to start booking (florists, photographers etc.), they might be kind enough to honour you their current prices! This is a win-win scenario. You get your booking firmly secured (for a great price) and your supplier has already taken an advanced booking. Hurrah!



- If you are looking into having a civil ceremony with a licensed registrar, you can book up to 3 years in advance! Check with the council office in your venue's area to arrange this. **Also**, make sure that your venue is licensed for this. You can check on the council's website of listed venues (or with your wedding coordinator). There will be a fee for this, so be prepared when booking and check your council's website for prices.
- Although you can book a registrar in advance, you won't be able to ***give notice*** of your marriage until 12 months before the wedding day. This is a meeting to declare that you are legally free to marry your partner, and to provide certain documents to prove identity. Nothing too scary! (And there's another fee, don't forget to check the fees!).

Once you get these first few steps completed, you can start to plan more exciting things!

Most importantly, don't forget to **enjoy** this brief period as fiancés!

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