

# Wedding Tips

## The Cost Of Getting Married

(NAPSA)—Even if you don't have cold feet about marriage, odds are you're a little nervous about the cost of your wedding.

The average ceremony costs between \$20,000 and \$25,000—up about 70 percent from 15 years ago, with nearly half of all couples spending more than they originally planned.

And as Echo Boomers—the demanding children of Baby Boomers—get ready to walk down the aisle, that price tag is expected to keep growing. (A sure sign that they're savvy shoppers who want the best: Echo couples now spend a total of \$4 billion annually on furniture, \$3 billion on housewares and \$400 million on tableware alone in preparation for their new lives together.)

So how could anyone drop \$20,000 on a wedding, you wonder?

Well, little things do add up. As in: \$1,000 and more for the bride's gown; \$500 for the groom's rented tuxedo; \$900 to \$1,500 for music; \$800 for flowers, \$350 to \$500 for invitations.

But prioritizing is key, and there's nothing more important than the three rings: the bride's engagement ring (signifying the promise) and his and her wedding bands (signifying commitment).

Men usually spend about two months salary on the engagement ring alone, with the general rule of thumb for the engagement ring being 80 percent going towards the diamond and 20 percent on the setting.

That's a big investment, but—unlike most wedding expenses—the right ring tends to be one of the best long-term investments you can make. And if you opt for Platinum rings and bands—and about 81 percent of brides do prefer it, according to Condé Nast Bridal Group—you certainly know you're getting value from a precious metal that will hold a diamond securely forever, no matter which of a variety of styles you choose.

The best news for would-be buyers may be that even the upscale Cartier starts at a relatively affordable Platinum engagement ring for \$4,200, while prices on the popular Web site BlueNile.com are as affordable as \$1,000.



“Platinum rings range in style from the sleek and shiny to the textured and funky,” says jewelry and style expert Michael O'Connor. “Designers such as Gumuchian boast non-traditional, diamond-intensive Platinum bands, while other designers—such as Jeff Cooper and Novell Design Studio—jazz up their Platinum designs by creating a multitextured appearance.”

But whatever ring you choose and whatever you end up spending, take heart: There will always be one wedding that costs more. Indian steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal recently dropped about \$60 million dollars on his daughter's wedding, making it the most expensive ever.

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