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Top Ten Wedding Do's and Don'ts

by Kristin Banta

EVERYONE DREAMS of a perfect wedding. Although it almost never, ever happens, there are ways to make things run smoother, look better and come closer to reflecting what you as a couple want to express on the most important day of your lives. LGBT couples are discovering that the possibilities for their ceremony are wide open. Here are ten helpful tips to make those possibilities a reality.

DO...

DO think about what you and your fiancé love and what defines you as a couple (your favorite cocktail, the best meal you ever had, that one song you can't help but get down to, that one painting that you are both drawn to at the museum, the magazine tears you've saved featuring your dream home) and find ways of incorporating those things into your wedding day.

DO hire a trained full-service wedding planner if your budget allows. The benefit of having one person with strong vendor relationships who is in a position to design and produce your wedding according to your unique vision is worth every penny. You only have one chance to do this, and a trained wedding planner will know how to guide you. They will introduce you to the best vendors for YOU with your specific style and personalities in mind. Even if you are on a budget, steer clear from the "day-of" planner (as this might elicit wedding day questions such as, "Beautiful flowers! Are they supposed to be purple?") as this is often not any different than hiring a random personal assistant for the day but often considerably more expensive. At the very least, consider hiring a month-of planner to tie up the loose ends and to guide you and your vendors through the day as it will make a world of difference.

DO think beyond your "wedding colors." Your wedding day is too significant a day to be dumbed down to two complementary colors. Unless you're the out-of-the-box client designing something highly conceptual like an "art installation" wedding, I

always suggest to our clients to think of hosting their wedding from their vision of their uber-home and letting the design develop from there. Think more in terms of inspired decor, textiles, accents, patterns, and textures. If you love a living room setting, why not seat all of your guests on love seats and ottomans for the ceremony as opposed to white wooden folding chairs? If you are attracted to chevron prints, think about bringing that in somewhere—perhaps as a backdrop for the altar or in some of your tabletop linens or to upholster your bar.

DO bring in new traditions that are meaningful and important to you and your family. Your wedding day is all about you as a couple, so if a unity candle is really important to you, do it! Or if you want to start a new trend where the best man and maid of honor do the first dance, why not? It's your day.

DO remember to stop, take a breath, and look into your new wife/husband's eye throughout your wedding day, taking it all in as it will go by faster than you think.

DON'T...

DON'T follow tradition just because you feel obligated. There is no reason to have a bridal party unless you want one—you can even forget the garter toss! If you don't envision yourself in a white dress, wear canary yellow, red, even black. Create something personalized and magical. There are no rules!

DON'T follow trends. Unless something resonates with who you are as individuals and as a couple, the trend has no place in your wedding. Not into mason



REGISTRY TIPS

Many same-sex couples are considering wedding registries at retailers who offer gay-friendly programs. These include Target, Crate and Barrel, Macy's, JC Penny and REI.

Because some couples have set up households together before getting married, they are opting for charitable donation registries instead. One of our favorites is the I Do Foundation (www.idofoundation.org). They make setting up a charity registry easy for you and your guests.

A donation to a charity can make your wedding become a chance to do something good and raise awareness for your guests.

jars? Why have them! Not into crystal chandeliers, photobooths with ironic moustache props, a sea of mismatched vintage decor or paper lanterns? Don't use them! It's all about articulating your unique voice as a couple.

DON'T ever have a cash bar—do not even think about it. If you're low on funds, think about a beer and wine only bar and maybe incorporating one or two of your favorite specialty cocktails. Ditch flowers and the band before making your guests pay for anything let alone their own cocktails.

DON'T be a bride- or groomzilla. Yes, your wedding day is all about you and your fiancé, but do not

forget that your family members are (perhaps) funding your wedding day, that your closest friends are spending (in many cases) \$1,000 or more on your wedding (from bridesmaids dress/tux rentals, bachelor(ette) parties, showers, gifts, airfare, accommodations, etc.), and that many of your guests are traveling great distances to support the new life that you are creating together.

DON'T let your wedding become an open mic night. It's important to determine who is making speeches in advance and to plan when and where they will be speaking as speeches can deter from a smooth event flow and can drain the energy out of an event if not properly strategized. 