



Wedding jitters

YOUR BELOVED just popped the question and now you're faced with planning the wedding to come.

What do you do if your families live far apart? What if your parents are divorced? Or if this is your second marriage? What do you do if, heaven forbid, one of the bridesmaids has to cancel at the last minute?

Planning ahead certainly helps, as does relying on the basic tenets of etiquette. Bride's Magazine and Modern Bride magazine offer practical planning tips. Turning to the pages of author and authority on manners Letitia Baldridge's book, "Complete Guide to a Great Social Life," or her revision of "The Any Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette," can guide you through a sticky situation.

With people moving around more and more, it's not unusual for the bride from California to meet the man of her dreams in Boston. If this scenario sounds familiar, you know that introducing the in-laws can be tricky. Ideally, the parents of the bride and groom should meet in person. But, if distance precludes meeting face to face before the big day, Baldridge stresses the importance of "lots of telephone

What do you do if you've planned everything down to the last detail and disaster still strikes? The advice from experts is to make do and carry on with grace.

calls and contact."

THE GROOM'S FAMILY should be kept informed of wedding plans as they develop, says Baldridge, so that they can enjoy the excitement of the upcoming day, even if they can't actively participate.

The editors of Bride's Magazine suggest that the initial contact between parents centers on something other than the high-pressure topic of wedding details.

"It becomes incumbent upon the bride and groom to recognize this," says John Taulbee, associate professor of social psychology at Florida Atlantic University, "and to bring their in-laws together in a non-threatening and low-key way."

You can pave the way to a smooth relationship by acquainting your future through photographs, home movies

and anecdotes about your family. With the average cost of weddings exceeding \$10,000, you know how much economics figure into your plans. There are a number of ways to contain costs without sacrificing the joy of the day.

• The guest list often is the first place to trim expenses. If your budget dictates a small wedding, Baldridge suggests inviting close family members and friends to a small ceremony, followed by a cocktail party held at a later date to introduce your spouse to the rest of the family.

So far as the office is concerned, invite only your boss and perhaps one close friend.

• And make it known to everyone that you are having a tiny wedding," says Baldridge.

• Prioritize. Decide on what facet of the ceremony or reception will make

the day for you, then economize where you can. If exquisite flowers and a spectacular wedding cake really are important to you, opt for simpler food at the reception and limit the music to one strutting musician to keep costs down across the board.

• Plan early so you can comparison shop and find the best value. Also, do your shopping early — that way you won't have to settle for something that's out of your price range.

• Share the expenses. As the cost of weddings escalates, more couples are shouldering part of the expense.

The groom's parents also are getting involved. Bride's Magazine suggests dividing specific expenses (flowers, photographer, music, food) or having one family handle the ceremony while the other takes care of the reception instead of splitting costs right down the middle.

THERE MAY BE some question as to who gives you away if your parents are divorced. According to Baldridge, the father ideally should give the bride away, even if her mother has remarried. But if you are estranged from your father, your stepfather should be

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