

How to Find Your Wedding Gown

10 THINGS YOU MUST KNOW AND DO BEFORE YOU BUY YOUR WEDDING GOWN

The quest for your wedding gown can be one of the most exciting and fun-filled parts of planning for your wedding. Your gown will set the tone for your entire wedding and there are few other times where you will be so lavishly pampered as you are magically transformed into a beautiful bride before your very eyes. But before you buy your wedding gown, here are ten things that you need to know and do.

1. Get a clear picture of what you want your wedding to look like in your mind. Close your eyes and envision yourself as a bride. What do you see? Are you going to be walking down an aisle, getting married outside or uttering your vows by the soft glow of candlelight? Will you be wearing a full ball gown with your hair up and a long flowing veil? Or are you dressed in a flowing, romantic gown that accentuates your femininity? Write down six adjectives that best describe how you want to look and feel on your wedding day. For example, you may write words such as: traditional, romantic, princess like, lavish, minimalist, sexy, sophisticated, etc.

2. Try on the different silhouettes of gowns to find out what looks best on your figure. All wedding gowns fall under four basic silhouettes. These are: the ball gown (the most traditional of the categories, has a full bodice and waistline that leads to a very full skirt), the empire (has a high waistline which falls to a slimmer skirt), the A-line or princess (features vertical seams flowing from the shoulders down to an A-shaped flared skirt) and the sheath (closely follows the line of the body). An experienced bridal consultant can point out the features of how you look in each. You should let her know what you like about each style as well.

3. Select the color and fabric of your gown. The same dress style can look and feel quite different in a different color or fabric. Even though white has traditionally been the color of most gowns, more and more gowns are being designed with color in the details. You may want to consider an off white, ivory or blush/champagne color as a way to enhance your complexion. Choose a color and fabric that best reflects the mood you are trying to create at your wedding. When choosing the fabric, keep in mind that it will be the basis for the overall look and feel of your gown and will influence cost more than any other single thing. Textured material and overlays such as chiffon, tulle, and organza can also be used to create a special look for you.

4. Determine what features you want on your gown. These features include the type of neckline, waistline, train, beadwork or lace on the bodice and skirt, and other decorations or embellishments. Once you have determined which silhouette, color and fabric you like best, determine if the gown will have sleeves, straps or if you prefer strapless. You will want to try on a variety of gowns to help you find what you like best as you bring “the perfect gown” into closer focus.

5. Accept help from knowledgeable and professional bridal consultants. A good bridal consultant will ask lots of questions to get more clarity about your special day. They will want to be helpful to you and may have some recommendations for you. An expert consultant has seen gowns on many women in various shapes and sizes and will be able to recommend a dress that will look great on your body. Let an expert's opinion guide you to considering some shapes or styles you might never have imagined wearing. However, your consultant should make you feel comfortable and free to express your own opinion. From the moment you enter the salon, be mindful of the way you're being treated and of the way the salespeople make you feel. Do they treat you with respect? This is your special day and you deserve help that makes you feel comfortable and happy.

6. Be aware of traditions or religious guidelines that may influence how your gown should look. Different pastors, clergy or officiants of weddings in various religious and/or ethnic backgrounds require that your head, legs or shoulders be covered. It is best to check with your ceremony officiant to find out if he/she has any guidelines that may need to be considered before you buy your gown. This will prevent embarrassment on the part of you and your guests.

7. Bring along someone whose opinion you trust and respect to help you in your search. This person could be your mother, sister, bridesmaid, honor attendant, a close friend or another relative. An extra set of eyes can be helpful, but limit the number of people who come with you. Too many opinions will likely confuse you and lead to a frustrating experience. Such feedback can be invaluable. But, remember, it is your wedding, so you should make the final decision after careful consideration of your choices.

8. Make your decision. Making your final decision doesn't have to be stressful. You have your mother or friend and your consultant to help you. Be sure to give yourself a chance to look at several options before you buy. Trust your own instincts. You have likely been visualizing this day for some time. Ask yourself these three questions of the final dresses that you are seriously considering: 1) Which dress do I feel the prettiest in?; 2) Which dress accentuates my best feature?; and 3) Which dress most fits my personality or style? Try on each gown and go through this process until you have eliminated all of the dresses to the final one. Once you've found a gown that is everything you've imagined, smile and relax – you've done it!

9. Have your dress altered to match your exact figure. Once you have your gown, find a professional seamstress, who is an expert at altering wedding gowns, to help you make the final alterations that will help your dress fit perfectly. This process usually involves an initial fitting and one to two more alteration appointments.

10. Look for the final touches that will help you complete your gown and make your wedding day special. Once you've found your gown, look for matching elements such as veils, shoes, and gloves that will make your transformation into a new bride complete. You may want to ask your bridal consultant for suggestions for these final touches.

With these ten tips in mind, your quest for your wedding gown should now be an exciting, fulfilling and wonderful experience. Have fun!