

LEVEL UP YOUR WEDDING

AND ELIMINATE REGRETS



A free value-packed wedding planning guide with 35 actionable tips to take your wedding day to the next level by eliminating regrets before they happen.

BY BEN LARIVIERE

WHAT THIS GUIDE IS **NOT**

This is not a resource for helping you to choose your wedding theme, menu, or bridesmaid dresses. This isn't the big picture stuff that you probably have strong feelings about already, the kinds of inspiration you might look for in a wedding magazine. This guide is all about the small details that you might not think about until it's too late.

This guide is a result of over a decade of first-hand experience in the wedding industry- all of the little mistakes I've seen couples make over and over again. Nothing in this guide will make your break your wedding, but follow this advice if you want to take your wedding from "great" to "**perfection.**"



hey, I'm Ben!

I'm not the kind of wedding photographer who does the bare minimum, showing up only as a camera operator. I'm genuinely invested in the success of your wedding day and one of my goals as a wedding pro is to provide as much value and support to my clients as I can. Sometimes the value I provide is directly related to photography, and sometimes it's just about making the best of your experience. My number one priority is that each couple who trusts their wedding memories with me has an unforgettably amazing wedding experience.

YOU ARE THE VIBE

1. You've probably heard about preparing an "emergency kit" - my advice is that both sides of the wedding party should have access to an emergency kit all day long.
2. Your emergency kits should include, among other things, a sewing kit, safety pins, double-sided tape, and scissors. I also recommend printing off a copy of the wedding timeline with addresses and phone numbers of key people and vendors. Phones can get lost, batteries die, and cell networks have outages. Always have a hard copy of vital info.
3. Wedding dress buttons can be difficult. Pack a **crochet hook** in your emergency kit to help get those buttons done up without breaking a nail.
4. Bouquets should be removed from water and dried off a half hour before ceremony/photos begin.



5. The people spending your wedding morning with you will reflect your energy back to you.

YOU are the vibe

set the tone and bring the ENERGY.

NOT THE DAY TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW

6. Suit/tux jacket tips: The back flap may come stitched closed for transport. Be sure to cut the threads before wearing your jacket. Lower front pockets will also likely come stitched closed, but don't unstitch those. They're not to be used.
7. While we're on the topic, if your suit/tux jacket has more than 1 button, the bottom button should **always** be unbuttoned, and you should fully unbutton when sitting.
8. For some, a wedding day can be the first time for things like: pinning a boutonniere, tying a necktie, folding a pocket square, etc. If these items are part of your attire, make sure at least one person on your crew knows how to do these things. A wedding day is not the time to learn a new skill via YouTube.
9. Ask your florist to attach **magnets** to your boutonnieres so you don't have to worry about pinning them at all.



10.

Plan to be ready one **full hour** before the ceremony. Your stress level will thank you.

RINGS, STRAPS, & DRINKS - OH MY!

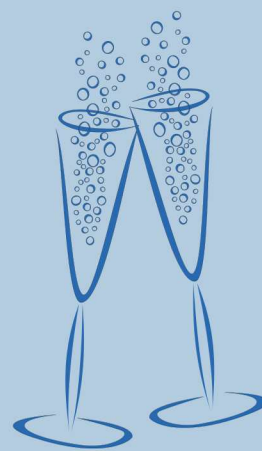


11. Move your **engagement ring** to the opposite hand early in the day, so that you don't forget to later on, and to give time for the ring imprint to vanish.

12. For the same reason, be aware that **bra straps** can leave imprints in your skin for longer than you might expect, and be careful to avoid sunburns on any exposed skin.

13. While you're at it, check your wrists and ankles for bracelets, hair ties, etc.

14. Cheers! Plenty of wedding parties have a few **drinks** before the ceremony - I'm all for it, but be aware that your officiant can't legally marry you if you're under the influence of drugs or alcohol to the degree that your mental capacity is impacted, so just take it easy until the legal part is over.



GET LOW

15. Assign a trusted guest (or your officiant) to take a quick look at how guests are seated, in the minutes before the ceremony is to begin. Often guests will avoid sitting in the front few rows in order to leave space for close family and VIPs, so if there are gaps of empty seats near the front, your assigned guest-herder can ask guests to move forward to fill in the empty seats. This way, latecomers will have room to sit at the back and there won't be any photos of empty seats.

16. When you're holding your bouquet, take Flo Rida's advice and *shawty*, **get LOW**. It looks better when flowers are held at your bellybutton or lower.

17. Maybe you love the idea of having a close friend or family member officiate your wedding, but you'll soon find out that getting ordained to perform a legal ceremony isn't as easy as Hollywood would have us believe. Thankfully there are a few ways around this:

- Get legally wed at a courthouse or city hall in the days before your wedding – the symbolic ceremony performed on your wedding day is no less special by not being the exact moment you're legally wed.
- Have your chosen person lead your ceremony, making it personal, warm, and funny, and then a legal officiant can step in for a few minutes mid-ceremony to do the bare minimum stuff to make it legal.

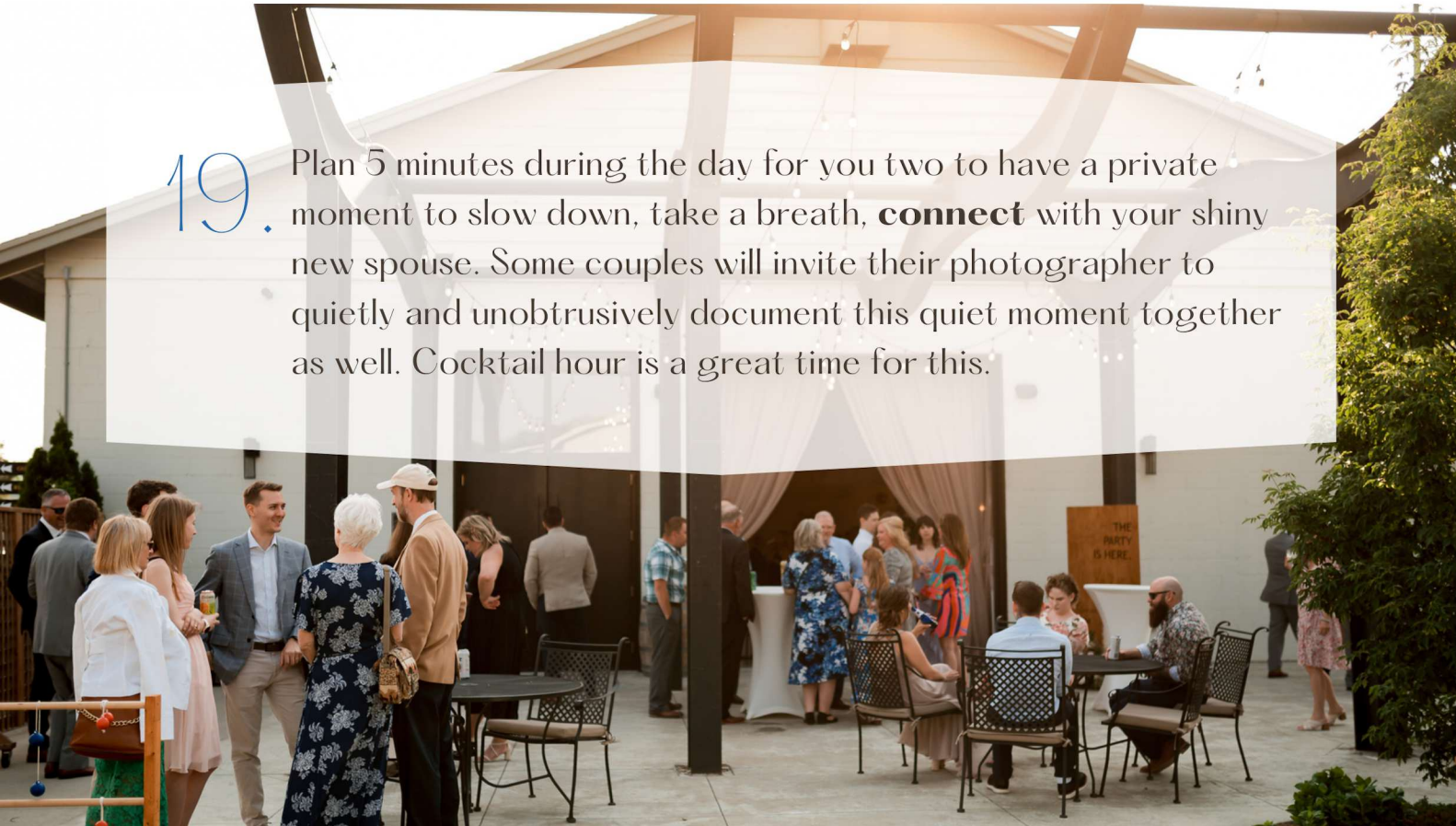


18.

During the recessional, stop about halfway for **another kiss.**

TAKE FIVE TO RECONNECT

19. Plan 5 minutes during the day for you two to have a private moment to slow down, take a breath, **connect** with your shiny new spouse. Some couples will invite their photographer to quietly and unobtrusively document this quiet moment together as well. Cocktail hour is a great time for this.



20. Set up a self-serve water/refreshment station during your cocktail & dinner reception. If standing in the long line at the bar is the only way to get a sip of water, some folks will just go without. The last thing you want is a guest getting ill from dehydration.

21. List your seating chart in **alphabetical** order instead of by table number, especially if you have a large guest count. This will allow guests to find themselves on the list quickly and easily.

22. To add a personal touch to guest tables, accompany each table number sign with a photo of each of you at the age of that table number, or ask each table to write a letter that you'll open on the anniversary of that number.



Alphabetical seating chart by:
Red Bicycle Paper Co.

RAISE YOUR GLASS, DON'T FORGET IT



23. The grand entrance should **HYPE UP** the crowd for the night ahead. Some MCs take the grand entrance of the wedding party as an opportunity to introduce guests to each member of the wedding party with a couple sentences about who they are and their relationship to the couple. It's a nice idea, but more than a few words brings down the energy between each entrance. Keep the energy up, and save the long intros for later on.

24. Unless you request otherwise, your vendor table will always be served dinner last. If you like, you can request that your MC, DJ, photo and video teams are served early so that they have time to refuel before the start of speeches (which typically start *seconds* after the vendor table is served). If your photographer & videographer are eating while you're eating, the only moments they will miss is when you're chewing.

25. Ask your MC to give a heads up to each person giving a speech (which I just learned is called a "**speechifier**"), and remind them to bring a filled wine/champagne glass to the lectern, if they intend to toast the couple during their speech. Nervous speechifiers always forget their glass. If I had a dollar for every time I saw somebody mime holding a glass during a wedding speech, I could retire.



PREPARE FOR **WATERWORKS**

26. Often the lectern is set up right in front of the DJ's station, and not having a messy backdrop during speeches can be nearly impossible for your photo & video teams. If possible, set it up with your photos/video in mind. A neutral wall behind the lectern is ideal for photos.
27. The lectern should have these: enough **light** to read from a paper, **tissues** in case the waterworks start, and a **surface** to put down a glass (a lot of lecterns are slanted - put a small table next to the lectern if you need to).
28. Encourage speechifiers to print off their speeches on paper with a large font. If they are reading off a phone in a dark reception hall, their face will glow bright blue in your photos. *Not cute.*
29. Speechifiers should hold the microphone in their hand, down and close to their mouth so they are heard loud and clear. A microphone stand will look ugly, and often block the face of shorter people, or cast shadows.
30. Encourage **short and sweet** speeches. Suggest to family and friends that they can give you a printed copy of the long version of their speech, but have them cut it down to about 3 minutes to say aloud on the wedding day.



YOU MAKE THE RULES



31.

Feeling nervous about your own speech? Most couples think they have to be the last to speak. But guess what? It's your wedding and **you make the rules**. Volunteer to do your speech first, or even go before dinner service begins. You can take the opportunity to officially welcome guests and say your thank you's. Then, you can relax and enjoy the rest of the night without the nerves.

32.

Some couples find the first dance a bit awkward – too much attention, I get it. If you think you might want to bail on your first dance before the song ends, mention this to your DJ and agree on **a hidden 'signal'** to let them know you're ready to end it. (Tell the DJ "If you see us hug mid-dance, you can fade out the music and move on.")

33.

If there's a raised platform next to the dancefloor, like a stage, there's an awesome opportunity. Just before the dancefloor is set to open for the night, have your MC/DJ/band invite everyone to the dancefloor for a group photo. Your photographer can stand on the platform to see everyone, snap a quick informal group photo, and as soon as that's done, the beat drops and your dancefloor is **already packed**. Just be sure to set this up with your photographer and DJ ahead of time so we're prepared for it.

34.

If your priority is dancing and partying the night away, give guests permission to take an **"Irish Goodbye"/"French Exit"**: be upfront that you will not be offended if they leave the party without saying goodbye. You can mention it in your speech, or even have your MC announce it. That way – just MAYBE – you won't be pulled off the dancefloor halfway through your FAVOURITE song for a 10-minute goodbye from your chatty Uncle Frank.

35.

Lastly, if you have the option to choose where the bar and the dancefloor are positioned in the space,

**keep them very close
to each other.**

This way, instead of folks spending their time chatting next to the bar on the other side of the venue, they'll be tearing up the dancefloor all night.



I'd love to hear from you if you're interested in working together to create photographs of your irreplaceable wedding memories.

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Thank you!