

20 Tips For Buying Your Wedding Gown

Contributed by Annette Durrett
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1. Start early - Once you have set your wedding date, begin your search for a wedding dress. Ordering a wedding gown can easily take four to six months for the complete process. Unless you purchase your wedding dress off of the rack, your wedding gown will not be sewn until you order it. Then you can expect to have one to two fittings for any needed alterations. Even if you purchase a gown off the rack, you need to allow time for finding the wedding gown and for fittings and alteration time.

2. Have an idea - Use the Internet and bridal magazines to get an idea of the type of dress you want, puffy sleeves, long skirt, etc? Consider the ceremony's location and time of year- don't plan a huge skirt for a tight little church or a thin silk sheath for an outdoor winter ceremony. Hint: Don't remove the magazine pages with wedding dress styles you like. Keeping them in the magazine will help keep them organized and will be easier for the sales staff to flip through and see your choices.

3. Do your homework - Contact friends and the local Chamber of Commerce for reputable bridal saloons and other wedding gown dealers in your area. Call the Better Business Bureau about any company you plan to patronize. Be wary of any wedding dress salon or seamstress that requires more than a 50% deposit on special orders, you want to have some leverage if the product you receive is not what you expected. Be aware that some wedding gown shops remove the tags from wedding dresses so you cannot identify the designer. Many times they will not offer you the style number of the wedding gown but try to get this information before putting money down so that you will know the exact wedding dress manufacturer. (Click here to see a special notice from the bridal council of America on where to find a wedding dress.)

4. Don't shop alone - It is best to take one or two people with you who can assist you in getting in and out of those beautiful, but big wedding gowns. Also, another person can give you an honest opinion on how the dress fits and help you determine its appearance from all angles. Most importantly, taking one or two people will make your experience more fun. Relax and enjoy yourselves! You don't have to buy your dress in one day (usually).

5. Plan to Pay 50% down - Generally a 50% deposit is required by most bridal shops on special orders and off-the-rack gowns that need alterations. Once the order has been placed, that money is absolutely non-refundable. We recommend using a charge card for this payment, in case there is a significant complaint against the establishment you may be able to work something out with the credit card company for reimbursement.

6. Call ahead - Many bridal shops and department stores require appointments to try on wedding gowns. Be sure to call ahead and secure your appointment before dropping by an establishment, you might find you have just wasted valuable time because they won't see you that day. Also, you will want to verify if the bridal shop carries the manufacturer you are interested in or if they have a sample of a particular wedding dress you have your heart set on.

7. Measure up - It is a good idea to have your measurements taken at a bridal salon or take them yourself before ordering your wedding gown. Each wedding gown designer has a different size chart and these sizes are generally a little

larger than your street clothes size. Wedding gown sizes are based on measurements and even though you may normally wear a size 6 you may order an 8 or 10 in your wedding gown.

8. Buy a dress that fits - Even though you may be on a diet to lose 20 pounds before your wedding, buy or order a wedding gown that fits you now. It is very easy to take in a wedding gown with minor alterations but it is next to impossible to increase the size of a wedding dress. Don't be stuck with a wedding dress that does not fit properly or worse that you can't wear because it's too small.

9. Get your purchase order in writing -Once you have chosen the wedding gown you are going to purchase and are prepared to put down a deposit, have the salesperson write up a detailed receipt for you. Included on this receipt should be a full description of the wedding gown, including any special charges, such as charges for petite or large sizes, extra length, change of sleeve length, or any other special requests. Delivery date and due dates should be included as well. Lastly, any special offers such as free alterations, free shipping or rushed delivery time should be spelled out on the receipt as well. Having a written record of your verbal agreement with the bridal shop will be added insurance for you should a dispute arise.

10. Consider the rear view - Remember that you will be spending quite a bit of time with your back to the audience. Be sure that the view from behind is as flattering as the front.

11. Know the styles and terms - Look through our list of wedding gowns terms to know to help familiarize yourself with wedding dress terms so that you can better tell a salesperson what you are looking for. Consider doing a little research on fabric types and different wedding gown companies as well. Your local library or bookstore will carry books such as Bridal Gown Guide by Denise and Alan Fields which will provide you with more information.

12. Set a budget - Be realistic about your budget and try to stick to it. There are many options for buying a wedding gown ([click here to see where to buy a wedding gown](#)). Don't try on wedding gowns that are out of your price range because you are only setting yourself up for disappointment and making the decision process even harder on yourself.

13. Review your options - There are many places to find your wedding gown such as Bridal Shops, Sample Sales, Department Stores and Renting. ([Click here for more information on where to find your wedding dress and how their service and price compare to each other.](#))

14. Comfort matters - Remember you will be wearing your wedding gown for the entire day and well into the evening; so choose a gown that feels comfortable. An important test (after you have your wedding dress on) is to attempt to bend over, sit down, dance or do whatever it takes to assure that you can move in the wedding dress so that you will feel comfortable wearing it on your wedding day.

15. Try them all on - Even though you may have an idea of what type wedding gown you want, be open to the suggestions of a professional bridal salon staff. A wedding dress that is not very appealing on the hanger may surprise you and look very flattering once it is on your body.

16. Soften up - Stark white dresses are not flattering on many women. Consider an ivory, soft pink or other antique white that might be more becoming with your coloring. Also, understand that dye changes many materials vary slightly and the wedding dress that you special order may not be the exact color of the wedding dress you try on at the salon. If your wedding dress is being made, request a swatch of the fabric to get an idea of the exact color you will be wearing.

17. Wear a little make-up - We are not proposing that you wear a heavy application of make-up or lots of dark lip stick, but do put at least a little make-up on so that you don't look "washed out" in everything you try on. If you wear your make-up and fix your hair before shopping, you will have a better idea of how you'll look on your big day.

18. Try on the whole package - Bring with you shoes that are roughly the same height of the shoes you plan to wear during the ceremony and a strapless bra. Before you make your final decision on a wedding gown, try on your head piece and bridal slip to see what the total package looks like. You want to make sure that the headpiece and other accessories you choose will all look great together with the wedding gown.

19. Inspect each wedding gown - If you are planning to purchase a wedding gown off the rack, be sure that you inspect each wedding gown very carefully. Turn the wedding dress inside out and inspect each seam to make sure the construction of the wedding gown is solid and that the fabric is not unraveling at the seams. Inspect the applique's and beading to insure that they are securely fastened and not just glued onto the wedding dress. Be wary of purchasing a wedding gown that needs "minor" repairs because once you begin to alter a wedding dress, you can not return it if the repair is not successful.

20. Relax and enjoy yourself - Remember to relax and enjoy the shopping experience. Allow the bridal salon salespeople to pamper you or enjoy the thrill of the bargain shopping of a warehouse sale. Whatever you do, remember the goal of your wedding is to marry the person you love and that your wedding gown is just one part of the ceremony. Being an educated consumer will help you feel more in control and feel more comfortable with the purchase you make.

****A special notice from the bridal council of America:**

The Best Place to Buy Your Gown from The Bridal Council of America?

The best place to buy your wedding gown is at the store you try it on. You may be tempted to order your wedding dress through a "no inventory" dealer, an 800#, or the Internet, thinking you will get a lower price. However, when all things are considered, you may end up paying more. Here are three tips:

1) Beware of anyone who wants to ship your wedding gown to you. You have little recourse if anything goes wrong. Chances are the extra charges you will have to pay someone else for fitting, steaming, pressing and shipping will outweigh any discount.

2) Beware of anyone who requires you to pay in full for your wedding dress before ordering it. They are saying, "We do not service what we sell. We do not guarantee the fit. We do not want to be responsible." OUR ADVICE: You should never pay more than a 50% deposit at the time of ordering your wedding dress.

3) Beware of anyone who suggests that you "do the footwork" - select your style preference somewhere else and then call them to order. If they can't show you wedding dresses to try on, don't show them the money.

Our recommendation is that you buy your wedding gown at the same place that you select it. When you consider terms and what the price includes, you can usually save time and money by doing it all at one place - a full-service bridal store where your satisfaction is guaranteed. A wedding is too important to take chances.

Annette Durrett has been in the wedding business for over 10 years helping brides prepare for their big day. To learn more about wedding dresses review [Wedding Dresses](#). Also, for information about all things wedding related visit us at [AffordableWeddingInvitations.net](#).