

WHERE TO

Splurge

&  
WHERE TO

Save

ON YOUR  
WEDDING DAY

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When it comes to planning a wedding, brides and grooms are bombarded with images of what makes a perfect day. It can be hard to decipher what wedding day purchases will make an impact, and what will go unnoticed. MoneyTalk Life asked those who have already tied the knot about what their money was best spent on, and what they could have done without.

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eddings are big business. We are programmed by fairy tales and Hollywood to believe a wedding day is the most important day of your life; if it's not perfect, you may face a lifetime of regret. Because that has been burned into our psyche, weddings now have grown into a multi-billion dollar industry in Canada.

While couples can certainly choose to get married for just the cost of a marriage license, the chamber rental at City Hall, and some gas money to get there, the average Canadian wedding now costs tens of thousands of dollars. Whether you are planning a lavish do or something a little more simple and intimate, we've asked some brides and grooms about where to spend your money, and where to scrimp.



Image courtesy of Katelyn DiGiulio and Josh Cornell.

## *Venue & Décor*

### **SPLURGE**

The one detail that you will remember for life will be where your wedding was held, including the ceremony and reception. The right venue will set the tone and feel for your big day, so if you've imagined a rustic country wedding, you may want to spend your money renting a country inn, and may want to sidestep an inexpensive community centre hall, with inauthentic hay bales. But couples warn against some of the premium upgrades that

your venue might offer. "No one noticed that we bought the fancy champagne for the toast, or that we paid more for the artisanal bread," recalls recent bride Katelyn Di Giulio, who got married at a luxury hotel in downtown Toronto.

## Wedding Favours

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Couple after couple warned us against spending a lot on wedding favours. Bride Amanda recalls stressing out for days before her big day about her wedding favours. "We worked hard on having wedding favours that most people just left behind. We'd stressed about those for, really, no reason," she says. Something simple and edible is a good choice, as people often balk at knick-knacks that clutter up a home, or don't fit their taste. Also in this category are specially-printed or embroidered, bride and groom t-shirts, robes, and other clothing items. It might make for fun social media posts, but the "likes" may not be worth the money.



## Photography & Videography

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Brides and grooms warn that no matter how relaxed you are, the day will be a whirlwind. So, your video and photos are what will be left to remind you of your special day. In fact, almost every couple we spoke to said that this was the most important spend of their wedding. Bride Amanda Buckiewicz splurged on two photographers at her 2016 wedding. "Splurging on having two photographers was such a great choice," she confirms. "We had so many moments captured, even ones that we missed out on because we were off doing other things." Hire a professional (so, not Uncle Joe with his smartphone), who shoots in a style you like, has professional equipment, and has good reviews or references. A photographer who is amazing with candid shots will help you to remember the key moments of the day.



Image courtesy of Amanda Buckiewicz, Cole Burston, Brian Bettencourt.

## Flowers & Centrepieces

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Centrepieces for the reception hall can also double as decoration for your ceremony. Amanda agrees and says she had more flowers than she needed. Choose locally grown varieties, and flowers that are in season. Larger blooms fill space; carnations and baby's breath are generally inexpensive, and a good way to fill a bouquet. But whatever you do, you may not want to DIY your arrangements, if you're using real flowers. Your arrangements will need to be done the day before your wedding, and trust us, with all the other things that need to be done during this time, a florist can be your best bet to get this done for you.

## Food

**SPLURGE**

Every party is judged by its fare. It doesn't have to be lobster or filet mignon, but the food should be delicious and of a high-quality. Make sure to try the menu first before committing to a caterer. Even if you aren't a fan of the venue's in-house food, ask if they will allow an outside caterer. If you can afford it, go for sit-down service instead of buffet. It may cost a bit more, but guests aren't always fond of a giant line-up for food, especially when they're hungry and don't get called up first. Groom Robert Petrilli, going on his three-year anniversary, says he regrets paying for a premium bar that had fancier beer and liquor. "Our guests were not picky about what the bar was stocked with," he relays. "People are going to drink whatever is there." But even without premium alcohol, you can still have a mixologist or bartender develop a delicious cocktail or mocktail named after the lovely couple.



Image courtesy of Amanda Buckiewicz, Cole Burston, Brian Bettencourt.

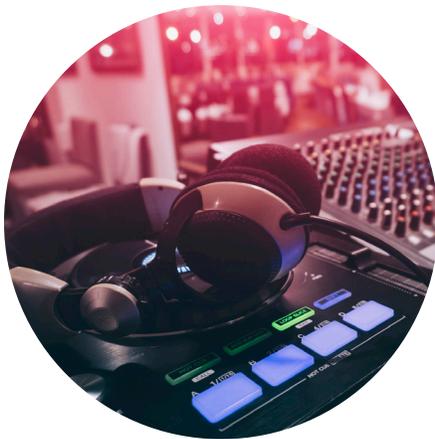
## Invitations

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Custom stationary can be pricey. And while you may keep one as a keepsake, the majority will end up in the recycling bin. Bride Jennifer Kaufman, who had a television-themed wedding, came up with a smart alternative for save-the-date, invitations, and thank you notes. "I made fun, unique videos for all of those things and emailed them," she says. She even did personalized thank-yous to each guest. "Thank yous took a lot of time, so I didn't save on my own time, but still worth it." She admits she got some push back from parents and her husband, but in the end, everyone thought it was great and personal.



Image courtesy of Amanda Buckiewicz, Cole Burston, Brian Bettencourt.



## Music

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Whether a band or a DJ or the organist for your ceremony, make sure you hire professionals and skip downloading a playlist on your phone. A professional knows the right mix of music, can incorporate your favourite tunes, and is there to ward off any technical difficulties. The last thing you want is the slow father-daughter song playing as you line dance into the reception with your wedding party.

## Wedding Cake

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Wedding cakes are normally large, and a good way to feed a large number of guests. But not everyone likes cake or the flavour you will choose. Add on the plating fee that most venues will charge for cutting it up, and you can have a very expensive dessert. Usually a lot ends up left on the table and in your freezer. Display cakes are a great way to have your cake and eat it too. Have a cake for show, and a slab in the back for cutting and serving. Buttercream is less expensive than fondant, or skip the cake altogether and just go for an expansive dessert table with something for everyone.





Image courtesy of Amanda Buckiewicz, Cole Burston, Brian Bettencourt.

## *A Planner*

### **SPLURGE**

Spending money on a planner might actually save you money. That's because venues and vendors often cut planners a deal. So a \$5,000 planning package may pay for itself. And some may not advertise this, but many can be booked for just a day. Bride Amanda hired one to be her on-site coordinator for the day, and said that it was worth every penny. If you want someone on site just putting out fires, it might be an expense worth forking out for. It can give you peace of mind, and you can relax a little more, and enjoy the day, your guests and each other.

## *Dress & Tuxedos*

### **SAVE**

This is a controversial one, but as much as television reality shows may make it seem like there is just one dream dress for you, there are likely many. The key is to try on as many as you can, within your budget. And even if you can't find one within your budget off-the-rack, you may be able to hire a seamstress or tailor to recreate your favourites, with a few amendments to make it just perfect for you. Julia Rowland chose a dress that wasn't white. It turns out that a stunning gown in a different colour will cost a fraction of the price. "My dress would be considered a 'splurge' by my standard of regular clothing costs but not by wedding costs," she says. Instead of renting a tuxedo, you may want to be practical and buy a well-tailored suit that can be worn again. Some interesting alternatives to wedding salons exist, like organizations where brides donate their gowns to be sold, and their proceeds are donated to charity. Some brides report getting designer gowns for a fraction of the price this way.



Image courtesy of Amanda Buckiewicz, Cole Burston, Brian Bettencourt.



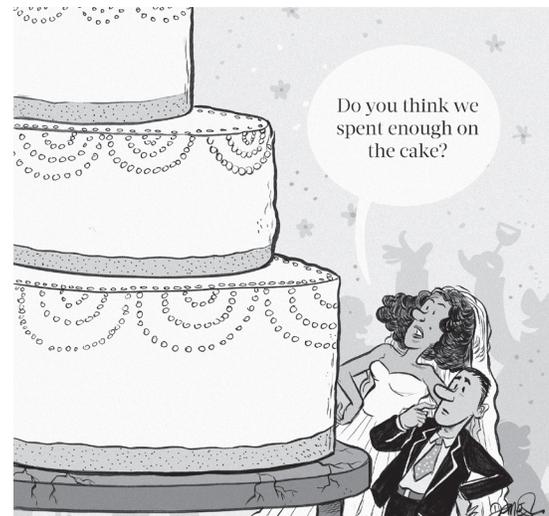
Of course if you've dreamed of an elaborate wedding cake since childhood, then by all means splurge responsibly. "A great wedding day is one that fulfills your dreams, whatever it may be," says Elena Rizzuto, Regional Vice President of Financial Planning at TD Wealth. "But you should be realistic about what you can afford, what is flexible and what is very important to you and your partner. Arriving in a helicopter might be nice, but if it's not the most important part of your day, it might be more financially reasonable for you to get there in a really nice limo or even a luxury bus."

Rizzuto says that saving is the key. "Consider establishing a budget, and then put money aside every month during your engagement to finance the celebration. A TFSA may be a way to invest that money tax-free in the short-term," she says.

The couples we talked to routinely went over-budget on events surrounding the big day, like bachelorettes, showers, and rehearsal dinners.

Rizzuto reminds couples to factor in everything, even if it seems peripheral, and work with a financial professional to determine your goals, a realistic budget, and to keep you on track leading up to your big day, and onto your life together. "Your wedding can be a significant and memorable start to a great life together," she says. "When the excitement from the big day has died down, it can be a good time to continue talking about new goals and finances, like starting a new family, or buying a home."

— **Denise O'Connell, MoneyTalk Life**



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