

How to Create Your Dream Wedding Guest List

Creating a guestlist can be a daunting task when planning your wedding. It's impossible to know your wedding costs right from the start, and the amount of attendees at your wedding can greatly add to the overall cost of your wedding. Can you believe that the average cost for each guest at your wedding ranges from \$280-\$304 and those estimates are largely from alcohol, catering and table, chair and linen rentals. So, let's go over a comprehensive plan of attack on how to dial in the ideal number of guests based on your wedding budget.

The Average cost of a wedding in the United State as of this video is \$36,000. Of course, this varies greatly based on location. For example, it would be on the higher end of that number in places like San Francisco or New York City than perhaps Memphis, TN and Omaha Nebraska. The majority of your wedding budget will go to your venue, followed by catering. The rest will go to places like photography and videography, Dj's, flowers, cake and other creative services and décor. Furthermore, the average guest count at a wedding is 145 people. So, when the second highest cost of a wedding revolves around seating and feeding people, you'll see why creating a guest list to accommodate your budget should be a primary issue, one you should tackle early when creating that list.

Step One: Venue and Catering

One of the earliest topics you need to do in your wedding planning is to choose your wedding venue and caterer. You should have a good idea of what the cost for each guest after making this choice. You'll be deciding in this first step if you want a small wedding; under, say 50 people, or a normal to large wedding; up to 150 guests or more. If you haven't done this step yet, but want to start your guests list, that's fine. You'll just need to do this step at a later point. I know you're excited to start planning your wedding, so dreaming about your guest list can start immediately, but Perhaps after step 2 or three below, you'll need to make this list more reality based.

Step Two: Create Your "Dream" List

Create your master list. This is everyone you can possibly think of that you've known over the years. This is the fun and brainstorming part of compiling your wedding list. You'll definitely want to start with immediate family; parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, godparents and all of their spouses and children. From there, extend your list to friends, co-workers, teachers, mentors, acquaintances, college roommates, neighbors....everyone in your lives. It also may be best to divide the responsibilities with you and your partner when creating this first list. You cannot possibly know or remember all of the people in your spouse's life as easy as they can. Each partner should come up with their own master list when starting this first step. Once you've done this, go over each list with one another. I'm sure each of you will remember someone forgotten by your partner.

Step Three: Set Boundaries

A few topics you'll want to set early on are:

Will there be children at your wedding?

Will there be a "plus-one" on the invite?

What role will your parents or others have in creating the guest list?

Children at a wedding could be an entire, but children will play a role in not only your budget but will you have entertainment for these children so they're not running wild during your first dance and toasts...and yes, I've seen the worst of this. You'll also need to think about that "plus one" on your wedding invite as well. If you invite Aunt Diane, you'll assume you'll be inviting Uncle Gary as well. But what about cousin Katrina who is single or may be seeing someone at the time of your wedding? Another rule you'll want to think about early on is what role your parents and others will have in your guest list. Of course, if your parents are paying for your wedding, then they'll have a lot more say in who will be coming. If not, you'll want to stress to them the importance of your wedding budget. Making these three harder decisions early on will help ease the creation of your guest list in the later steps.

Step Four: Prioritize List to "Must-Have Guests" and "Would Like Guests"

Once you have your master list and your boundaries, categorize the list into the "Must Haves" and "Would Likes". Must haves would include people in your immediate family I stated earlier. The "would likes" would include everyone else; friends, co-workers, teachers, , acquaintances and so forth. Of course, there is also some hierarchy on this list as well. I think an acquaintance you've had for several years would take priority over a co-worker you've only known for a few months.

Step Five: Reevaluate your budget.

This is the time when you'll definitely need to know the cost for each person at your wedding. Remember, each guest at your wedding could cost upwards of \$300 each. Twenty extra or fewer guests can cost or save you Six Thousand Dollars.

Step Six: The gamble

This is the biggest unknown when creating your wedding guest list. You really may want your cousin Alex to come, but he may live far away or in another country and you're not positive he will be able to attend. Him not attending would have opened up the option to inviting your new pickleball partner you've been hitting it off with so well. This is where you may want to look at your "finalized" list and go over, what I call, "the wobblers". There are always close family members that won't be able to attend, so go over your "would like" list again and add several more to your "must-haves". This is where some flexibility in your budget will come in play. Take the number of "wobblers" who you think may not make it and supplement it from your "B" list or your "would like" guests. But the gamble is everyone RSVPing "Yes", and you've gone over budget.

Step Seven: Send Out Save The Dates

The final step is you now have your final guest list and it's time to send out your save the date cards. You'll want to send these out around 6 months from your wedding date. This gives your guests the opportunity to start making their travel plans and getting time off from work. Obviously, the people on your save the date list will also be those receiving their formal wedding invitations. Wedding invitations are sent out 10 or so weeks before you actual wedding date. You'll want to give your guests a sufficient time to respond to the RSVP, so you'll want to post on the invites a deadline to RSVP. This way, you will have your final guest count around a month out from your wedding, this lets the venue and catering know how many guests will be in attendance so they can plan accordingly.

So now that you've read this, are you feeling more energetic about tackling your guest list? I hope I eased some of your apprehension and you now have a clearer way to navigate this process. I'm going to assume you're reading this because you're stuck or haven't even started your wedding guest list. Hopefully I've helped you out a bit 😊

Bill