

wedding wars

You want an amazing wedding—just not at the expense of your relationship. BY KRISTIN KOCH

Ahh, engaged life—fancy parties in your honor, cake tastings, a legitimate excuse to plunk down thousands on a dress. You never expected the downside: hissing at each other in bridal-registry departments, screaming matches over the guest list. Welcome to engagement, when sometimes a seating plan isn't just a seating plan. Here's how to deal when you don't exactly see eye to eye. >>

*Don't worry—
you'll get here!*

WEDDING WARS CONT.

the fight: the budget

You want to splurge on your gown. He doesn't see what the big deal is about "some dress you're only going to wear once" and thinks that money should go toward the food.

the fix Believe us, we get it. But we have to side with both of you on this one. In wedding planning, like marriage, you have to play fair. "This needs to be an equitable deal," says Tina B. Tessina, a psychotherapist and coauthor of *True Partners: A Workbook for Building a Lasting Intimate Relationship*. Let's face it: As much as he's going to be blown away by how amazing you look in the dress, you'll probably get more thrills out of it than he will. The food, on the other hand, is a spend that you'll both enjoy, not to mention all the guests. That doesn't mean you have to kiss Vera perfection good-bye. If you splurge on the dress, cut back in another area that was a priority for you but not for him. To avoid budget brawls altogether, work out a fair breakdown from the beginning.

the fight: the registry

Settling on a wedding style is hard enough, let alone picking out a style for a future home. But you're not ready to argue over china patterns and thread counts yet—you can't even agree on what types of things should go on your registry. He (really his sister) insists on the basics: crystal and silver. Your idea of the basics: skis, an iPad and stemless wineglasses. The worst part: This fight happens in the store, in front of people—you know, the ones who know you're getting married and now think you shouldn't.

the fix What's the difference between the Cuisinart blender and the KitchenAid one? Do you need a Crock-Pot? *Can* you register for skis? If this sounds familiar, maybe the issue is more that neither of you really knows what you should register for. To prevent a standoff in the Crate & Barrel aisle, study up before you scan. We can help you there: Turn to page **TK** for the registry must-haves; then go to **TheKnot.com/registry** for more tips. And don't be afraid to ask for help. Most stores have registry experts who can assist you. >>

WEDDING WARS CONT.

the fight: the wedding location

She wants to get married in her hometown: "That's tradition," she says. Plus, it's important to her parents. You want to get married in your current town. "That's only fair," you say. After all, your families don't live in the same city.

the fix The key to solving the location debate: Don't make it a power struggle. As hard as it is, try to take emotions out of it and focus on practical considerations. If her family is footing the bill and feels strongly about hosting the wedding in their neck of the woods, you don't have much of a choice (unless you want to pay for the shindig yourselves). If everyone's chipping in, let key guests dictate the location. Maybe her sister will have just had a baby, so you decide to marry in her hometown so she can fulfill her maid of honor duties. If your families are spread apart, pick a place in between, or an entirely new locale, and throw a destination wedding.

the fight: the to-dos

You mention how you'd like your bouquet to match his boutonniere, and his eyes glaze over. You show him a motif for the invites, and he responds with a shrug. Bottom line: Your partner isn't acting like much of a partner and zones out every time you talk wedding.

the fix It's easy to interpret reactions like these as disinterest in your wedding (and, in turn, your relationship), but don't jump to conclusions. Your groom's mild interest in the details doesn't mean he doesn't care about the wedding—it means he trusts your taste and maybe doesn't trust his own. Also, make sure he doesn't think he should defer to you because it's "the bride's day," says relationship expert Michelle Gannon, PhD. If you want feedback, ask him specific questions, like "Which flower do you like better?" If you feel like your partner isn't pulling his weight, split up the duties. A smart approach: Tackle key tasks together and divvy up the rest by interest, Tessina recommends. So choose the venue and guest list as a team. From there, maybe he covers transportation and you handle stationery. >>

WEDDING WARS CONT.

the fight: the in-laws

His mom is way too involved. Not only does she have an opinion on everything, but she's also putting your groom in the middle instead of talking to both of you about what she'd like for *your* day. Or maybe it's your parents who are the ones butting in all the time and trying to take over the wedding.

the fix If your parents seem to be competing for the "worst in-laws of the year" award or have elevated meddling to an Olympic sport, your best bet is to separate and each confront your own. Try to be as nice as possible to your parents while clearly expressing your loyalty to your soon-to-be spouse and the plans you two have made. Even if your parents are actually being pretty cool, figure out ahead of time how much you want your families to be involved and what specific tasks you'll ask them to oversee, so you can set limits.

the fight: the ceremony

You want to get married outside with a nontraditional ceremony. He's all about the church wedding...or at least his parents are.

the fix Different beliefs can make planning a ceremony difficult. But that doesn't mean you can't find a way to honor both of your faiths at your wedding. If you practice different religions, you might consider having a representative of each faith officiate. Some couples are even opting to have two separate ceremonies. Another idea: Maybe the priest from his church would be willing to officiate at the outdoor venue you love and to edit the standard ceremony wording so you feel more comfortable. Regardless of which option you choose, now's the time to figure out where you stand on major issues as a couple and how you'll deal with the stuff you don't agree on for the wedding—and after. Even if you don't have a religious affiliation, you might want to consider premarital counseling. A neutral party can help you figure out how to handle disagreements over big issues like religion.

click>> Find more ceremony ideas and traditions at **TheKnot.com/ceremony**

prewedding prep

Key questions to address before you start planning the ceremony

ARE WE WRITING OUR OWN VOWS?

Sit down with each other a few months before the wedding to talk about whether you want to write your own vows or go with the traditional ones. (Check with your officiant first to make sure your congregation allows this—some don't.) If you choose to write your own, set some parameters, like how long they should be and if there's anything (think: a personal anecdote) you don't want included.

WHAT FAMILY TRADITIONS DO WE WANT TO INCORPORATE?

For him, it might go without saying that certain traditions are a part of the day or that a specific song is played. Or for you, it may be a given that certain rituals or foods are included. Explain to each other any traditions you want to observe and why they're important to you, so that you can *both* be a part of each other's family rituals.

ARE THERE ANY MUST-HAVES YOU WANT FOR THE WEDDING?

It's easy to go down a checklist of wedding details without stopping to ask each other if there's something either of you has always dreamed of having on your wedding day. Maybe one of you has taken the planning reins and figures the other would say something if there was anything they really wanted for the wedding. But that may not be the case. So don't just assume—ask. Whether it's a salsa band, red velvet cake or even a display of family photos, you should both have at least a few things (within reason) from your dream wedding list.

couple comebacks

Tired of your fiancé's excuses? Respond with these witty words

HE SAYS

"Suits are stuffy."

SHE SAYS

"So are Spanx. Deal."

SHE SAYS

"I don't need to hear the band—my friend says they're good."

HE SAYS

"The same friend who gave us a Chia Pet as an engagement gift?"

SHE SAYS

"But my coworkers made plans to go out for drinks tonight."

HE SAYS

"But they didn't make plans to marry me."

HE SAYS

"I don't care; pick whatever."

SHE SAYS

"Great, a seven-tiered fondant cake it is."

HE SAYS

"I can't help address invites—my handwriting stinks."

SHE SAYS

"Congratulations, you just won stuffing and stamping duty!"