

# the costs you don't know about

Before you sign a single check, read what the experts say are the most common reasons couples blow their wedding budgets—and how you can stick to yours. BY KRISTIN KOCH

You already know that the first step in the planning process is setting a budget. But did you know that almost half\* of all couples go over? And it's not because of a crazy spending spree (though we know sometimes it feels like it) or vendors who are out to get you. The fact is, things cost more than you think, and most couples don't know what to ask in order to budget correctly. Read on for the little-known fees that can break your budget if you don't account for them. >>

**deceptive décor**  
Even simple decorations may come with setup and delivery fees.

## THE COSTS YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT CONT.

**parking**

**why it's hidden** Many couples assume that if valet parking is offered, it's included in the venue quote—but it's almost always additional.

**the cost** Around \$35 an hour (or more if you require extra parking attendants)

**don't be caught off-guard** Ask about the parking options and costs, and factor them into the venue price. Consider skipping the valet.

**band equipment**

**why it's hidden** The band's quote typically includes fees for the musicians' time and the minimum amount of equipment needed. But it's very common to need additional gear.

**the cost** Anywhere from several hundred to several thousand dollars. Cha-ching!

**don't be caught off-guard** Before booking a band, explain the layout of the space (or have them check it out) so they can tell you if they'll need extra equipment—and why it's necessary.

**postage stamps**

**why it's hidden** Stationers don't advertise the shipping costs with invitation samples.

**the cost** Oversize, awkwardly shaped or bulky invites can cost \$2 each to mail.

**don't be caught off-guard** Skip the fancy boxed invitations and multilayer cards. Weigh sample invites so you can budget for postage.

**dress alterations and steaming**

**why it's hidden** Most stores don't include alterations (or steaming!) in the price, and they're not doing it for free—it can take up to three hours just to alter the bustier!

**the cost** A simple hem can be under \$100; rebuilding a bodice can run upwards of \$500.

**don't be caught off-guard** Ask what the store charges for every alteration you may need.

**officiant fees**

**why it's hidden** Many couples forget they have to pay the person marrying them.

**the cost** Between \$200 and \$400

**don't be caught off-guard** Factor the officiant fee (or the donation for a house of worship) into your ceremony budget. >>

## THE COSTS YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT CONT.

**welcome-bag delivery**

**why it's hidden** Many hotels charge a welcome-bag delivery or holding fee, which they may fail to mention when you block rooms.

**the cost** Up to \$7 per bag

**don't be caught off-guard** When booking, ask about the hotel's policy on receiving and delivering gift bags. See if it will waive the fee if you recommend the hotel to your guests. No dice? Distribute the bags at the rehearsal dinner, or ask a maid or relative to.

**rental setup and delivery**

**why it's hidden** You'd think that the rental companies would include these fees in the per-item costs (do they honestly think you'll fit 150 chiavari chairs into your Prius?). But the price you're given is almost always product-only.

**the cost** From \$50 to more than \$500

**don't be caught off-guard** Ask the rental company for the shipping, packaging and setup fees up front. Shop around—you might actually save money by renting items from a more expensive place that includes delivery costs.

**taxes and gratuities**

**why it's hidden** Okay, these aren't exactly hidden, but many couples don't realize how much they'll end up shelling out for both.

**the cost** Depends on the total cost and the location (taxes vary in different areas, but it can range from nothing to over 8 percent)

**don't be caught off-guard** There's no getting around taxes, but paying the entire bill in one lump sum can help reduce the amount. A safe bet: Tack on an extra third of your total costs to your budget for tips and taxes.

**cake-cutting and corkage fees**

**why it's hidden** If you use your venue's baker or booze, the charge is typically wrapped into the cost. Going with an outside baker or bringing in your own vino can jack up the price.

**the cost** From \$2 to \$5 per guest for the cake; from \$1.50 to \$3 for every bottle the venue opens

**don't be caught off-guard** Calculate the cake-cutting and corkage fees before you decide to go with an outside source for either. >>

## THE COSTS YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT CONT.

**overtime costs**

**why it's hidden** Your band, photographer and videographer are booked for a set amount of time. If the party runs over, they'll charge more.

**the cost** Starting at \$250 per hour

**don't be caught off-guard** Factor in additional time for getting dressed and taking photos; that way, you can book your vendors for a more realistic timeline. Get overtime costs in writing (they shouldn't be more than 50 percent more per hour than the regular rate) so you'll know what to expect if you decide to keep the party going.

**cleanup and breakdown costs**

**why it's hidden** Many brides spend so much time planning the actual day that they forget to budget for what happens when it's all over.

**the cost** While a full-service venue won't charge for these things, if you're paying a flat fee to rent the space only, anticipate fees for garbage removal (up to \$250), freight elevator use (up to \$150) and cleaning (up to \$500). And even most full-service venues require same-day setup and cleanup. So if you're getting married on a weekend, expect to pay time and a half for labor, and if your party goes into the wee hours of the morning, you may face extra charges for late-night pickup and cleanup.

**don't be caught off-guard** Read your contract carefully—the setup and breakdown costs should be included in the labor charge.

**non-approved vendors**

**why it's hidden** Some venues require you to use caterers or florists from their preferred vendor list—and tack on a fee if you don't.

**the cost** Usually an extra 20 percent or more  
**don't be caught off-guard** Stick to the list, or choose a venue without one.

—Special thanks to Lindsay Landman, event designer; Kimberly Schlegel Whitman, wedding expert and founder of RSVP Soiree Luxury Event Rentals; and Marcy Blum, event planner and founder of Marcy Blum Associates



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