

THE SMART GIRL'S GUIDE
TO WEDDING PLANNING
THE GREAT, FANCY ADVENTURE

INTRODUCTION

Planning an event in the information age presents a challenge not faced by previous generations — the possibilities are *virtually endless*. Ideas are easy to access thanks to Pinterest and wedding blogs like Once Wed and Style Me Pretty. This can make the decision-making process difficult, even for people who are naturally decisive! To make matters more interesting, it's the first time most people have planned a large event requiring a substantial investment and hiring vendors. Oh, and it always seems to be an emotional process that can cause hard feelings or put distance between family members and friends. Are you starting to feel a little insecure, maybe overwhelmed or nervous? Well, leave that feeling right here in the introduction. The Smart Girl's Guide to Wedding Planning: The Great, Fancy Adventure will boost your confidence in event planning and help you make decisions you feel good about.

IT ALL STARTED IN ENGLISH CLASS

I bet you never dreamed English class would help you plan a wedding, did you? Well, writing a paper is actually *a lot* like planning a wedding. Every paper needs a thesis statement, supporting paragraphs and an audience. Every event needs an event planner, vendors and guests. Did you catch that analogy? You are the thesis statement, your vendors are the supporting paragraphs and your guests are your audience.

THE THESIS STATEMENT

You have a really important (and fun) responsibility. You write the thesis statement! This statement is the guiding light for your vendors, and it sums up what you want to communicate to your guests and how you want to communicate it.

Writing a thesis statement is no small job. So give it time. Give it the *most* time — more than flipping through magazines, more than talking about projects, more than Pinterest! When you give your thesis statement time and thought, every other facet of this big, beautiful diamond you are creating is just that — a facet, a small part of a big thing. Oh, I love that analogy! Let that pretty, new engagement ring remind you of this idea, and let these samples help you get your thesis statement drafted.

I want my guests to walk away remembering that love is fun and I'd like to use my passion for nature to help communicate this idea.

I want my guests to walk away remembering love stands the test of time and I'd like to use my love for antiques to communicate this idea.

So go ahead, you try now. Give yourself at least a week to perfect your statement. Don't rush it and enjoy it. Look through old journals, reflect, read love notes. Uncover patterns and boil it all down to a sentence. Don't get distracted, and if you find yourself "not having fun" at any point in the process hang it up and come back to it later. This is the most personal step in the process. Give it time.

THE SUPPORTING PARAGRAPHS

Your vendors are a huge asset to you and choosing the right one is important. Good vendors study and perfect their trade. Great vendors want to make you so unbelievably happy. Excellent vendors want to take the time to know you so they can reach deep in their hearts, pour out their creativity and share their art with you in a way that supports your thesis statement.

Choosing vendors can be really tough if you don't have a thesis statement, but you do! So this will help you keep your head clear as you begin to use the internet, a.k.a. the endless pool of possibilities.

If you're not sure where to begin researching, consider your local bridal guide or planning association. The High Country offers both ([The High Country Wedding Guide](#) & [The Association of Consultants and Event Specialists](#)). Wedding Wire is also a great option. Since Wedding Wire supplies event vendor information for Martha Stewart, Brides and Wedding Bee, you waste time visiting all three sites. They have the same information. Wedding wire is really best because you see all vendors in your area while the other sites require a paid subscription so not every vendor from Wedding Wire is fed into those other websites.

The other tool you can put in your pocket is the "Rule of Threes." Only consider three options at a time. As you begin searching, filter these questions through your mind. Does this vendor appear to be a good fit for my thesis statement? Do I like their work? Do they appear to be a realistic option (location, costs, etc.)? If the answer to all those questions is yes, put them in one of your three "possibility" slots. When you have three possibilities, select the one you love most of the three, discard the other two and replace them with new options. Continue working until you have investigated as many vendors as you would like to.

When you've selected the last group of three, send the vendor an email with your wedding date, location and time and let them know you are interested in their services and would like to learn a little bit more about them, and set up a time to talk with them via phone or skype. It's not a "consultation" just a casual chat.

If a vendor is unavailable, slide someone from the previous group of three into their spot.

When it's time to chat with the vendor, be prepared to tell them why you chose to talk with them. Tell them what stands out to you about their business, their work and their company. Tell them your thesis statement, and the products and/or services you'd like.

Then let them take the lead. Remember, it's your first date. So just use the opportunity to be perceptive and see if "you like them."

After the conversation, if the vendor is still a possibility, request a rough estimate, and provide a deadline. Final estimates are typically discussed during the final booking. It's best to make this request via email and provide a detailed list of the products and services you are requesting. Use the same text for each vendor so results can be compared more easily. If you find yourself with questions after the meeting, include those questions in this email.

You may walk away from all three meetings and like them all. You might not like any of them. You might be able to eliminate one. And if you can eliminate two on the first round, you're golden! Just do your best to rate them.

When you have it narrowed down, ask yourself these questions to solidify your decision.

- Does this decision create any distance between me and the people I love? If so, resolve it.
- Do I trust this vendor's heart, creative instincts and ability to deliver what I need?
- Is this person helping me make my event better than I could myself?
- Do I appreciate this vendor's time and work?
- Do I like this decision?
- Do I have any hesitations? If so, get them cleared up before moving forward.

When you've finalized your selection, present it to others (mom, sister, fiance, etc.). Explain your decision-making process and why you like the vendor. Show vendor websites, photos, etc., and ask your family for input, questions or concerns. If this conversation generates more questions for your vendor, send them.

When you are ready to schedule a consultation, contact your vendor. Let them know what you and/or others who will be attending would like to accomplish at the meeting.

Each meeting will vary since their services and industries differ. For example, cakes tend to be more straight-forward than flowers. You choose from a menu of flavors that are typically available year-round, and in most cases, the designer can provide an exact sketch of what the product will look like. Flowers on the other hand are seasonal, and availability fluctuates from year to year, week to week, sometimes even day to day. It's important to not get stuck on a particular variety of a particular flower. Instead think in terms of color, size and the overall feeling you want to capture in the bouquet.

If you still feel good after the meeting, let them know you would like to complete the booking process.

You can use this decision-making process with most vendors. Start with your venue, then move down the list of service-related vendors like event planning, photography, cake, and flowers. These types of vendors "book up" so getting your date on their calendars is important. Follow service vendors with product-based vendors like fashion and invitations.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

Review your decisions and confirm your thesis statement is clear and coming together. Tweak areas as needed. Follow up with your vendors as needed, and stay on top of payments and due dates. Two weeks before your wedding, email them to confirm arrival dates, times and planning logistics, and provide this information, along with final payment information to a family member or bridal party member who is very organized.

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Stick to your strengths and surround yourself with people whose strengths are in your areas of weakness. If you are exceptionally poor at making decisions and doing research, have a logical friend who loves you walk through it with you. If you are really gifted at music, you make the playlist, but hand off the favor making to your aunts. Don't try to do it all.

Do not take advantage of your friends. For example, if you have a friend that makes wedding cakes and you want them to make yours, treat them like you would treat any other vendor. Ask for their pricing guide, etc. Most times they will offer you a discounted rate, but never expect them to take on a large project without being compensated. If they do offer a discount or waive their fee altogether, make sure you go out of your way to thank them. No one likes feeling "used."

Let go. You've communicated an amazing thesis statement, and you've been thorough in the decision making process. Now it's time to let go, and let the people you've set in place take care of you. If you hold on too tight, you'll lose it — your mind, your joy, your close relationships. While this is your special day, if you push an "all about me" attitude on your vendors, your friends and your family, you'll find yourself feeling alone, distant from others and perpetually dissatisfied.

A NOTE FROM THE WRITER

Hey Pretty,

Thanks for reading! I hope this information helps you as you embark on what I consider one of the most stressful chapters in life — engagement!

I felt compelled to share this information with you so you could spend less time searching, wondering and worrying and more time embracing the beauty of the present moment! Today is a wonderful gift :)

All the best to you sweet girl!

Warmly,
Kelly Perry
Philosophy Flowers