

Getting married?

by MK Pulse's
image consultant
Nancy Stevens of Altered Image



Nancy's passion (and there are many!) is weddings, in particular getting an outfit together, whether it is a first time wedding complete with big dress and veil or a second time bride in an elegant suit, her goal is to make her brides look wonderful. She also rescues Mothers-of-the-Bride from the hell of that pastel head-to-toe.

Welcome to my special bridal column. Getting married should be the most exciting time of our lives, yet often it turns into a stressful and emotionally charged event. Here are some pointers to keep you calm, in control and organised.

Firstly start an alphabetical wedding file with a year to view planner or countdown.

Below I have itemised as many pointers as possible:

Accessories Once your dress is chosen, choose your accessories. Ensure that if wearing a veil, it is the right length for your dress. I didn't think that Kate's floaty veil was in keeping with her rather structured dress. Keep to a theme.

Bridesmaids Personally I think it's most important for the bridesmaids to be wearing dresses to suit their particular shape, rather than what is in vogue. They will only thank you for it! Assess differing body types, for example an apple-shaped girl looks better with some ruching across her middle and a pear shape looks great in an empire line. If you have a buxom girl, then go for a strappy dress so she can wear a bra and similarly if you have a less-well endowed girl, then strapless is fine.

Colour Ideally have your colours analysed before buying the dress. I offer colour clinics on an individual basis, or for a maximum of five

people. This is a fun evening to be pampered with your bridesmaids but also helps you decide whether to go for off-white, cream, ivory or white for your dress, it is really helpful to ascertain what colour wedding dress best suits your skin tone. Will also help in choosing bridesmaids shades according to whether they are olive or fair.

Dress THE most important decision you will ever make apart from your choice of husband!! Allow at least nine months in which to find a dress as most dresses need to be ordered at least six months in advance and then need time for alterations. Choose a dress which really suits your shape and that will not date. The current trend has been for strapless dresses and continues to be very popular but this will not suit if you have big boobies, not great upper arms and suffer from 'back fat'. If it's a second marriage or a beach wedding, Monsoon does the best dresses on the High Street and all under £300. After Dark in Woburn Sands offers the most stunning range of dresses in the region and Laura Buckingham, the proprietor's product knowledge is second-to-none.

Eating! Having worked in the Bridal industry I have lost count of how many brides have bought dresses that are several sizes too small with the premise of going on a diet and trying to lose weight for the big day. It's ludicrous to put oneself under all that pressure to lose weight just for one day and put it all on again after the wedding. It's far better to buy the dress a size or two too big as it can be taken in but obviously cannot be let out if it is too small!

Exercise A good way to get toned and fit and would also benefit you as a couple is to take up dancing; Ballroom, Salsa or Ceroc. You could really wow your guests on the dance floor by strutting your funky stuff!! (This is kind of aimed at your husband to avoid any Dad-style dancing!)

Feet Book a pedicure so your tootsies are in tip-top condition and that you choose a pair of shoes that obviously look fab but more importantly are comfy, 12 hours on your feet makes for a very long day.

Grooming If you are not a devotee of waxing, do not try it two days before the wedding. Book an appointment four days before your fake tanning treatment. Another tip is to get your eyelashes and brows tinted, this will save on having to wear makeup on honeymoon and a tint usually lasts up to three weeks. As with feet, have a manicure as your hands are on display all day.

Hair Have a trial at least a month beforehand. Show your hairdresser a picture of your dress and explain the look you are trying to achieve. If you are going sophisticated and elegant, then a chignon will suit, if you are going romantic and feminine, then a half-up do, with the sides up will be in keeping with your look. As Kate quite rightly stated that she wanted 'her husband to recognise her', so keep it as close to your natural style as possible.

Image How you look on this most special day has to fit with who you are, this is not the time to try something daring and avant garde as you may send your fiancé screaming for the hills and you want to be comfortable. You want to look like you, only better!

Jewellery What you will wear will be dependent on if your dress is very plain, add a bit of sparkle with crystal or diamante necklace and earrings. If your dress is very Hollywood and you are going for the tiara and a cathedral length veil, DON'T go for necklace, earrings, bracelet etc – you will be over egging the cake and thus will detract from the dress. If you are going for pearls, ensure yours match as the shades vary hugely.

Kissing Not only will you be puckering up to your beloved but will probably be kissing lots of maiden aunts that you haven't seen since you were four, who will exclaim, "Aah, hasn't she grown?" So you need to ensure that your lipstick stays on all day. Max Factor Lipfinity is THE only lippie which will stay on all day and it's only £10!

Lingerie Please, please visit Bravissimo or John Lewis to get the correctly fitting bra and take your dress (if appropriate) with you to be measured. A word of warning: If you don't normally wear stockings and suspenders, the biggest day of your life is NOT a good time to test this out; it will also be setting a precedent for the rest of your married life!

Makeup Wedding makeup is an art. Most of my prospective brides say, "I don't wear much

makeup, I want a really natural look." I have to stress both the importance and difference of day makeup to wedding makeup. The camera never lies and if you're hardly wearing any makeup, you'll look washed out in the photos.

Nerves If you suffer from nerves, try a few drops of Rescue Remedy on your tongue just before you enter the church. Avoid alcohol on an empty tummy and if you feel positively nauseous with nerves, ginger biccies will do the trick.

Something old No, not your Father-in-law! If you are given something old, for example, your grandmothers' pearl necklace, ensure that you have pearl earrings to match. Remember the devil is in the detail.

Photography Practise your poses, if you aren't comfortable in front of the camera, start practising flashing those pearly whites now. Any photographer worth their salt will show you how to pose, never stand full on in front of the camera, it will only widen you, always stand, slightly twisted, best foot forward. Take a leaf out of Liz Hurley's book – she is Queen of posers! This, apart from your dress, is the most expensive part of your wedding.

Queen You are Queen for the day, your wedding day will fly by in a blur of excitement, nerves and joy, try to pause every now and then and take it all in.

Rest and Relaxation Try to get plenty of it beforehand.

Skincare If you are a soap and water girl (naughty you!), start a new skincare regime at least six months before the wedding. Get into the cleansing, toning and moisturising habit now.

Shoes Order well in advance and wear them around the house to break them in, have a boogie in them to see if they are suitable. Remember you will be on your feet for an average of 12 hours so it is no use performing the 'Ugly sister' stunt on the morning of your wedding!

Tanning There are a plethora of fake tans available. Please, please have a trial session at least a month before the wedding. Fake Bake, Heavenly Bodies and St Tropez are best. Do not forget to exfoliate within an inch of your life though – streaks are not attractive!

Here's wishing you the most amazing day of your life!

Nancy xx

If you would like to book a consultation with Nancy to discuss your wedding needs, call now on 01908 587860 as the wedding season starts in earnest!



All three gowns pictured are by Maggie Sottero, available from After Dark in Woburn Sands.



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