

ASK MARTHA

Wedding wisdom and practical solutions for all your pressing questions



We're registering at multiple stores, and I'm worried some of the items may not match once they're under one roof. How can I plan ahead?

—Alex, via email

A: Begin by narrowing down your aesthetic. “Many registry sites, like Zola, Amazon, and MyRegistry.com, offer curated galleries to help you put things together,” says our style director, Naomi deMañana. And before you shop, crystallize what you need. “Going without a list may result in a blend of odds and ends, like mismatched linens,” says Lee Mayer, cofounder and CEO of online interior-design service Havenly. “Instead, break down the rooms you'd like to design, and list what you need.” When shopping, look for common accents. For example, white china with varying gold details would work together. The same general idea applies to glassware, linen, and even cookware.

THE INSIDE SCOOP

Q: We found our dream venue. What should we do before signing a contract?

—Leah, via email

A: Great news! First, firm up exactly what you're paying for. Real weddings editor Shira Savada suggests you ask about:

1. What's included in the price

How many hours? Is there an on-site coordinator; are there lighting services?

2. Restrictions

Are there specific requirements for caterers or other vendors? Are there décor rules (no open flames, no wall installations), noise restrictions, or end-time ordinances?

3. Capacity

Will your guests (plus the band or DJ) fit comfortably?

4. Catering

Does the venue cater? Ask for price per head and minimums.

5. Other events

Multiple weddings could limit vendor access or divide resources.

6. Bad weather

What are backup options in case of rain or storms?

Q: I'm close with both my dad and stepfather. How do I handle the father-daughter dance?

—Sarah, via email

A: Every situation is different.

If your father and stepfather are on good terms, sharing a shorter dance with each of them to two different songs played consecutively is a nice way to give equal attention. “If back-to-back is not ideal, then split up the dances with the mother-son dance, or even have one before the first dinner course, one after,” suggests Lauren Fremont, owner of New York- and Paris-based Loli Events.



BRYAN GARDNER (BAKING SUPPLIES); RYAN RAY PHOTOGRAPHY (DANCE)

Have a planning question for Martha or our team of editors?

We've got answers. Send us a note via email at ask.martha@meredith.com, and we'll get back to you via email, or in a future column!