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Get hitched to these wedding trends

Modern couples are choosing to start their lives together in style. The latest trends suggest it's bound to be a fashionable year for those tying the knot in the months to come. Check out these ideas that are on many a modern couple's wish list.

Scaled down style

It may be the year of the mini in terms of bridal style. From dresses to bouquets to diminutive foods, couples can't get enough of miniature items that, despite their small size, add maximum impact to the big day.

Celebrant-led ceremonies

For some, there is no more meaningful part of the wedding than the ceremony when two lives are joined together. Although many couples still prefer traditional religious weddings, others are opting for more customizable, celebrant-led events that are personalized and tailored to the couples' unique histories and stories. Flexibility in relation to the ceremony location, and options for

inclusivity and cultural diversity, are priorities among many modern couples.

Experiential extras

Sure couples are still opting for a band or a DJ to provide the bulk of the reception entertainment, but many also are branching out into new arenas. One new trend to emerge offers creative flair. Couples hire an artist to paint or sketch a portion of the ceremony or reception in real time, and guests can enjoy seeing how the scene unfolds. Additional options regarding entertainment include culturally specific performers.

Creative photography

For years now, couples are increasingly opting for less stilted, posed photos in favor of something a little less rehearsed. Candid photography and a photojournalism approach are popular requests among modern couples, but an even more adventurous photo style also is emerging. As drone photography becomes even more common, aerial photos and video are

being used to add an even more unique approach to wedding documentation.

Colorful fashions

Modern weddings are big on color, from bold and vibrant floral displays to wardrobe choices. Gone are the days when brides must wear white. They're now choosing everything from pastels to silver and even black if the mood hits. Plus, wedding party dresses are equally vibrant, with many brides opting to let their bridesmaids mix and match gowns and colors in a range of hues.

Weekend-long weddings

Some people don't want the magic of the wedding to end after one day, so they opt for an entire wedding weekend. Hitched says searches for weekend wedding venues have risen by 50 percent in the past year.

Wedding styles and trends continue to evolve, and couples have many options that can help them make their big day unique.



Today's hottest wedding dress trends

Among the items on a wedding planning checklist, choosing a wedding gown often is a top priority. While certain wedding dress trends withstand the test of time, others have shorter shelf lives. Though no one knows what the future holds for wedding gown trends, these are some that may be notable as brides walk down the aisle in the months ahead.

Floral appliqués and 3D accents

Florals are nothing new on wedding dresses, but they're being elevated this year with new interpretations. Floral embellishments give texture and help brides make a statement. Appliqués may be on sheer panels that serve as a top layer of the dress, or grouped together to form rosettes or additional three-dimensional floral details. Florals were on display at the Fall 2024 New York Bridal Fashion Week.

Coquette is everywhere

Flirty and feminine is the name of the wedding dress game, as many gowns showcase feminine details like corseted tops, bows and soft colors, say the experts with Martha Stewart. Hyper-feminine looks may not be for everyone, but this style merits consideration for the bride who wants to appear romantic and approachable.

Mini dress

Although one of the first pictures to come to mind when one envisions a wedding dress may be a floor-length

gown, mini dresses continue to make bold statements on bridal runways and in magazines. The abbreviated hemlines can be flirty and fun, and are featured on various types of dresses, including fitted, strapless, flowing, and even puffed styles.

Jacquard and other opulent materials

Lace long has been a bridal dress staple, but designers are branching out into other fabrics that lend luxury and opulence to dresses. Texture can make a wedding dress a unique visual during ceremonies and the after-party, and may help a bride feel like royalty.

Pearls and more pearls

Pearl necklaces and other jewelry has long gone hand-in-hand with weddings, but brides-to-be can now find pearls turning up just about anywhere. Pearls are embroidered onto dresses, veils, sleeves, and headpieces, and even can be used on wedding cakes to mirror a pearl aesthetic used elsewhere.

Bows

Along with pearls, a growing number of designers are opting for bows in their wedding dress designs. They may be subtle, such as stitched onto the bodice of the dress, or more over-the-top, like a huge bow at the waist or near the train bustle, according to One Fab Day.

Shimmer and sparkle

A little bling (or a lot) never goes out of style. For 2024, many brides plan to embrace even more shimmer and sparkle as silver takes center stage in dress designs. Silver thread embroidery or even mirror-type embellishments will ensure all eyes are on the bride when she makes her entrance.

Overskirts

Many brides want a dramatically shaped dress for the ceremony, only to pare down a bit for the reception. The style experts at Vogue note an overskirt provides the flexibility to easily remove layers of fabric to unveil a more fitted silhouette.



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Grooms must make decisions on their wedding style, too

All eyes tend to gravitate toward brides during a wedding ceremony. That's for good reason, as brides typically spend a significant amount of time searching for the perfect dress and tending to additional parts of their wedding day look, such as hair and makeup. But grooms also try to look their best on their wedding day, and they must make various style choices as well.

Classic tux or something less traditional?

Black tuxedos call to mind many things, including the fictitious British spy James Bond and, of course, traditional weddings. The classic black tuxedo with black tie can set an especially formal tone for a wedding, and grooms must decide if they prefer this classic look or something less traditional. Outdoor wedding ceremonies might encourage grooms to look for something



stylish but less formal than a black tuxedo. In such instances, a white tuxedo can be ideal, particularly if the wedding is scheduled for spring or summer.

Fine-tune with tailoring

Grooms accustomed to buying suits off the rack may feel they can take the same approach on their wedding day. However, wedding day photos will serve as a visual record of the big day for decades to come, so working with a tailor to ensure the tux or suit fits perfectly is the way to go. A well-fitting suit may

prove more comfortable throughout the day, and tailoring ensures grooms look their best.

Timing and texture

Grooms can experiment with various textures and materials as they seek a wedding day tuxedo that suits their desires and demeanors. A velvet tuxedo jacket can set a sophisticated and unique tone, though such attire is arguably most suited to indoor ceremonies during colder months. The same goes for corduroy and tweed, as these materials tend to be a

little warmer. Linen and seersucker tuxes and suits also can shed light on a groom's personality, and these might be best suited to warm weather weddings in outdoor settings.

Accessories

A tuxedo ensemble is not complete without a tux and pocket square. Matching the color of the tie and the pocket square is a classic look. Grooms whose brides are wearing a dress with some color can choose a tie and pocket square combination that matches the color in her dress. Socks also merit consideration and can provide another way for grooms to make a statement without drawing attention away from their brides.

Brides garner the bulk of guests' attention on a couple's wedding day. But grooms also can use fashion to make a statement during their weddings.

Did You
KNOW!

Couples need not feel beholden to any particular tradition come their wedding day, and that freedom is perhaps reflected in the shifting attitudes toward white wedding dresses. Wedding trends come and go, so what's trending one year will not necessarily remain popular in any ensuing wedding season. However, a recent Etsy analysis of user data found that searches for colorful wedding dresses increased by 223 percent, suggesting that brides are looking to add at least a splash of color to their wedding day look. That analysis reflects findings from other surveys as well. A 2021 survey conducted by Brides.com and Investopedia found that 28 percent of brides planned to forgo a white wedding dress in favor of an atypical alternative.



Say 'I do' to these bridal jewelry trends

The fashion-conscious understand that the right jewelry can serve as the finishing touch to any look. Therefore, during weddings, when all eyes are on the happy couple, bridal jewelry can be especially important. Those who want to stand apart can look to these trends for their weddings.

Maximum appeal

After several years in which the mantra "less is more" has dominated, brides are now embracing the glam factor with their jewelry. Bold choices, sparkly items and statement pieces are favorites among modern couples, says Verstolo Fine Jewelry. Fading into the background has given way to bold earrings, bracelets and necklaces this year.

Floral jewelry

Riding on the coattails of the growing popularity of floral elements on wedding dresses, floral jewelry is big right now as well. Many designers are giving a nod to natural inspiration in their creations, and these pieces add a touch of grace and femininity to bridal style. In addition to floral jewelry made from metals and precious stones, some brides are opting for rosette floral ties made



from ribbon or soft jersey fabric that are worn choker-style around the neck.

Pearls

Pearls are the latest old-is-new craze in the bridal world and even in everyday attire right now, according to The Knot. Brides can wear pearls on their ears,

wrists and neck, and pearls also are right at home on a bridal headband. Cultured pearls are a more affordable option than natural pearls, and can look just as beautiful.

Touches of color

Jewelry can be a way for the bride and others to showcase some color at the wedding. Why not make that "something blue" a vibrant pair of blue sapphire or blue topaz earrings? Couples also may want to opt for wedding bands with a pop of blue or another color rather than a plain band or a colorless gemstone, advise the style experts at Vogue.

Diamond cuff bracelets

Cuff bracelets have been a staple on fashion runways for some time, and they're increasingly spilling into wedding fashion. Diamond cuff bracelets are popular among brides and mothers of the newlyweds, and can be thoughtful gifts for these special ladies. Jewelry is a personalized choice and should match the style of the dress or other attire. Grooms and groomsmen also may want to make jewelry choices, although they typically are more subdued than those for the ladies. Sparkling cufflinks or a gemstone tie tack are understated choices that can add a pop of style on the wedding day.

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Small gestures to make a wedding reception more memorable

Wedding ceremonies feature the special moment when a couple officially ties the knot. Such moments have elicited many a tear over the years and helped to create lasting memories for couples and their loved ones. Wedding receptions also help to create lasting memories, and this fun-filled part of a couple's big day can be made even more memorable with some small, unique gestures guests won't soon forget.

• **Go off the beaten path with your guestbook.** It's customary to set out a guestbook at a wedding reception. Traditional

guestbooks ask guests to sign their names and jot down a brief sentiment expressing their love for the happy couple. Couples who want a less traditional guestbook can set up a photo booth for a digital guestbook, leave out a Polaroid camera and encourage guests to snap their own photos or asks guests to sign something unique, like baseballs or planters that can initially be used to house a centerpiece and then be kept as keepsakes for years to come.

• **Get creative with seating assignments.** Numbered tables are the standard at plated dinner wedding recep-

tions, and couples can even get creative with this familiar tradition. Write guests' names and table numbers on the side of handheld vases with a small bouquet of the couple's choice of flowers inside, which can double as wedding favors guests take home at the end of the night. In lieu of numbering tables, couples can name them to go along with the theme of the wedding. If it's a beach wedding, name each table after a favorite beach. If couples love Hollywood, name each table after a favorite actor.

• **Create a cake to remember.** This will likely require some close collaboration with a local bakery, but the options here are as limitless as couples' and their baker's imaginations. Cakes can be created to recreate a

favorite piece of art for couples with an artistic streak. Sports fans who met at a game can offer a cake built to mirror the stadium of their favorite team. Couples who love to travel together can create a cake made to look like a jet or a favorite locale they visited prior to tying the knot.

• **Get guests moving.** The dance floor is a popular place at a wedding reception, and couples can spice things up by hosting a dance-off. Encourage guests of all ages to participate and offer rewards to the guests who impress with their ability to cut the rug.

There's no end to the ways couples can make their receptions more memorable. By focusing on fun, couples can ensure everyone remembers the reception for years to come.

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Unique wedding favor ideas

Guests bring gifts to weddings to express their love for couples. Gift-giving also tends to be reciprocal, with couples making sure that guests leave the celebration with their own tokens of affection and mementos of the special occasion. Although favors are not mandatory, they often are included in wedding planning to make the celebration that much more special.

Favors run the gamut from simple, such as tulle-wrapped Jordan almonds, to elaborate, like crystal vases. While there are no rules regarding the type of favors couples can offer, most soon-to-be-newlyweds prefer something that is not only unique, but will have utility as well. The following are some favors to consider.

• Food-based favors: Guests who already have a drawer full of personalized shot glasses, pens and drink stirrers with couple's names and wedding dates may appreciate the simplicity of a favor they can enjoy without having to store. A gourmet cookie, special jerky, small bottle of olive oil or maple syrup, or another food item that is widely enjoyed can be practical and affordable.

• Thank-you cards: Offer each guest in attendance a heartfelt thank-you for attending the wedding. Personalize the sentiments to each guest. If you have a photo of yourself with that guest, include it in the card.

• Candy or snack bar: A wedding takeaway can be

as simple as letting guests fill up decorative containers with various candies and other treats displayed on a special table at the reception. For a fun twist, try to find old-fashioned candy or items you remember eating as a child to stir up nostalgia.

• Flower seeds or seedlings: Sustainable gifts such as flower seeds or small seedling plants can let guests plant something as a remembrance of the day.

• Scratch-off lottery tickets: The opportunity to return home from a wedding with a winning ticket and a few extra dollars in their pockets can appeal to guests.

• Charitable donation: Rather than giving guests favors, you may want to offer donations to a charity instead. This is a popular gesture among modern couples.

• Temporary tattoos: As a funny gag gift and segue to entertaining photo opportunities, give guests temporary tattoos that have your photo on them. They're clever and will not go to waste.

• Luggage tags: Guests will always think of you when they travel far and wide thanks to luggage tags printed with sweet sentiments.

• Wine stoppers: Customized wine stoppers will keep guests' bottles of wine fresh without taking up much space in a home bar.

Unique favors will help wedding guests feel even more special at the end of the celebration.



A rundown on sustainable weddings

Wedding trends come and go, but an emphasis on sustainability is one practice that could exhibit some staying power in the years to come. As the world confronts climate change, sustainability is gaining steam as a sound and vital practice.

Modern couples recognize the significance of sustainability. In fact, a 2022 Sustainable Wedding Alliance poll of couples planning their wedding found that 78 percent of respondents identified sustainability as important to them. As couples plan their big day, they can keep these sustainability practices in mind to ensure their wedding reflects their desire to protect the planet.

- **Repurpose for the big day.**

Repurposing is a tenet of sustainability, and that pillar is easily applied to weddings. Brides can repurpose wedding gowns used by family members, which can add a touch of sentimentality to a sustainable wedding, particularly if the dress is being handed down from a previous generation, such as a parent or grandparent.

Furnishings and decor also can be repurposed after the wedding. For example, couples can encourage guests to take centerpieces home after the reception so they get a second life and are not simply discarded after a single use.

- **Focus on reducing waste.**

Weddings are not the first event to come to mind when pondering eco-friendly affairs, and waste contributes to that less than environmentally-conscious reputation. But there are plenty of ways to cut back on wedding waste. When shopping around for a reception venue, prioritize those that do not use single-use plastics. Cocktail hour plastic utensils might be convenient for venues, but they contribute to a substantial amount of ocean pollution. For instance, the Ocean Conservancy notes that volunteers removed nearly two million plastic knives, forks and spoons from the world's waterways in a single day.

- **Arrange for leftover food to be donated.** Food waste is another notable area where weddings tend to be less eco-friendly.

When discussing reception plans with their wedding venue representative, couples can express their desire that any leftover food be donated to a local organization catering to those in need. This is an especially effective strategy, as the organization Feeding America notes 92 billion pounds of food are wasted annually in the United States. Donating leftovers ensures that all the energy that goes into planting, harvesting, transporting, preparing, and serving food is not for naught.

- **Host a local wedding.** Destination weddings appeal to many couples, but those focused on sustainability may want to stay closer to home. Doing so decreases the likelihood that most guests will have to travel great distances to attend the wedding. That can help lower the carbon footprint of a couple's big day by lowering guests' overall fuel consumption in relation to the wedding.

Sustainability is having a moment, and couples can embrace the practice when planning their wedding.



Write wedding vows with relative ease

The exchange of vows is an integral part of many wedding ceremonies. Vows are promises made to one another that serve as the basis of the marriage commitment. Historians say some of the oldest traditional wedding vows can be traced back to manuals of the medieval church in England. There are no formal wedding vows in the Christian Bible, but those who profess this faith typically incorporate the teachings of Jesus Christ into their vows.

Many modern couples prefer to exchange their own vows rather than share standard verses. This is particularly true for couples who will be having ceremonies customized to their own beliefs and relationship histories. Writing vows enables the soon-to-be betrothed to be creative, personal and speak from

the heart. However, when faced with writing sentiments that will be expressed in front of others, nerves can set in. These tips can help couples draft vows more easily.

- **Identify who this person is to you;** put a label on your relationship. Is he or she a friend, partner in crime, confidante, or all of the above?
- **Be sure to say, "I love you" in the vows.** Many couples get so hung up on language that they may forget these most basic words at the heart of the wedding.
- **Gush about all of the reasons for that love.** Offer personal stories, anecdotes or something that will illustrate to the crowd why you want to spend your life with this person.



- **Look to the future.** Think about how you want to spend the years ahead. Paint a picture of what you envision your lives will look like, whether that includes children, traveling the globe, or other ideas.
 - **Make promises to one another.** Vows are essentially promises, so come up with some you agree to abide by. These can include similar sentiments to ones that are shared in traditional weddings, or clever and humorous promises, such as to always do the dishes, or pick up clothes from the bedroom floor.
 - **Include stories that point out your collective strengths and weaknesses.** Don't forget to mention instances when things were tough and how you overcame them, and how you can use these lessons in your future as a married couple.
- Couples who are writing their own vows should realize they do not have to rival the words of the most profound authors or learned scholars. They should be honest and simple and express the sentiments that mean the most to them as they embark on this new journey.

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Songs for your wedding ceremony



Weddings feature a combination of elements that set the stage for memorable events. Music is one component that can enhance any celebration. Couples often give considerable thought to the music that will be played at the reception, but they should not overlook the music that will be featured during the wedding ceremony. After all, the ceremony comes first and often helps to establish the tone for the occasion.

Whether the ceremony is traditional or not, couples can keep these tips and songs in mind when selecting music for their wedding day.

Know the song number

There are a few big moments during a ceremony where music can enhance the vibe. These include the prelude, processional and the recessional. The prelude is the music that is playing while guests arrive and find their seats. The processional occurs when the wedding party enters and walks down the aisle. The recessional is when the wedding party and newly married couple make their exit before their guests follow suit.

A religious ceremony may have music that precedes or follows certain ceremonial rights. Understand-

ing how many songs will be needed gives couples a starting point for narrowing down song choices.

Identify potential restrictions

Conservative wedding venues, including houses of worship, may have certain requirements that govern song choices. In such settings, religious songs, including popular hymns or modern worship music, may be the standard. It's best to discuss ceremonial music guidelines with an officiant to understand what can and cannot be played during the ceremony. Non-religious venues typically allow for more flexibility in relation to music played during a ceremony.

Consider instrumental

Instrumental music can be a great choice for ceremonies, as it is understated and classy. Guests will be familiar with the songs, but will not be distracted by the lyrics. Instrumental selections also are easily played if live musicians will be performing at the ceremony.

Popular ceremony song choices

Religious and inspirational:

- "Amazing Grace"
- "The Lord's Prayer"
- "How Great Thou Art"

- "Ave Maria"
- "Here I Am, Lord"
- "The Prayer"
- "You Raise Me Up"

Classical:

- "Ode to Joy"
- "Water Music"
- "Bridal Chorus"
- "Air on the G String"
- "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"
- "Claire de Lune"
- "Prelude in C Major"
- "Adante"
- "Serenade"

Modern:

- "Over the Rainbow" by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole
- "A Thousand Years" by Christina Perri
- "Hallelujah" by Jeff Buckley
- "Lucky" by Jason Mraz
- "Make You Feel My Love" by Adele
- "First Day of My Life" by Bright Eyes
- "Speechless" by Dan + Shay
- "Rewrite the Stars" by Zac Efron and Zendaya

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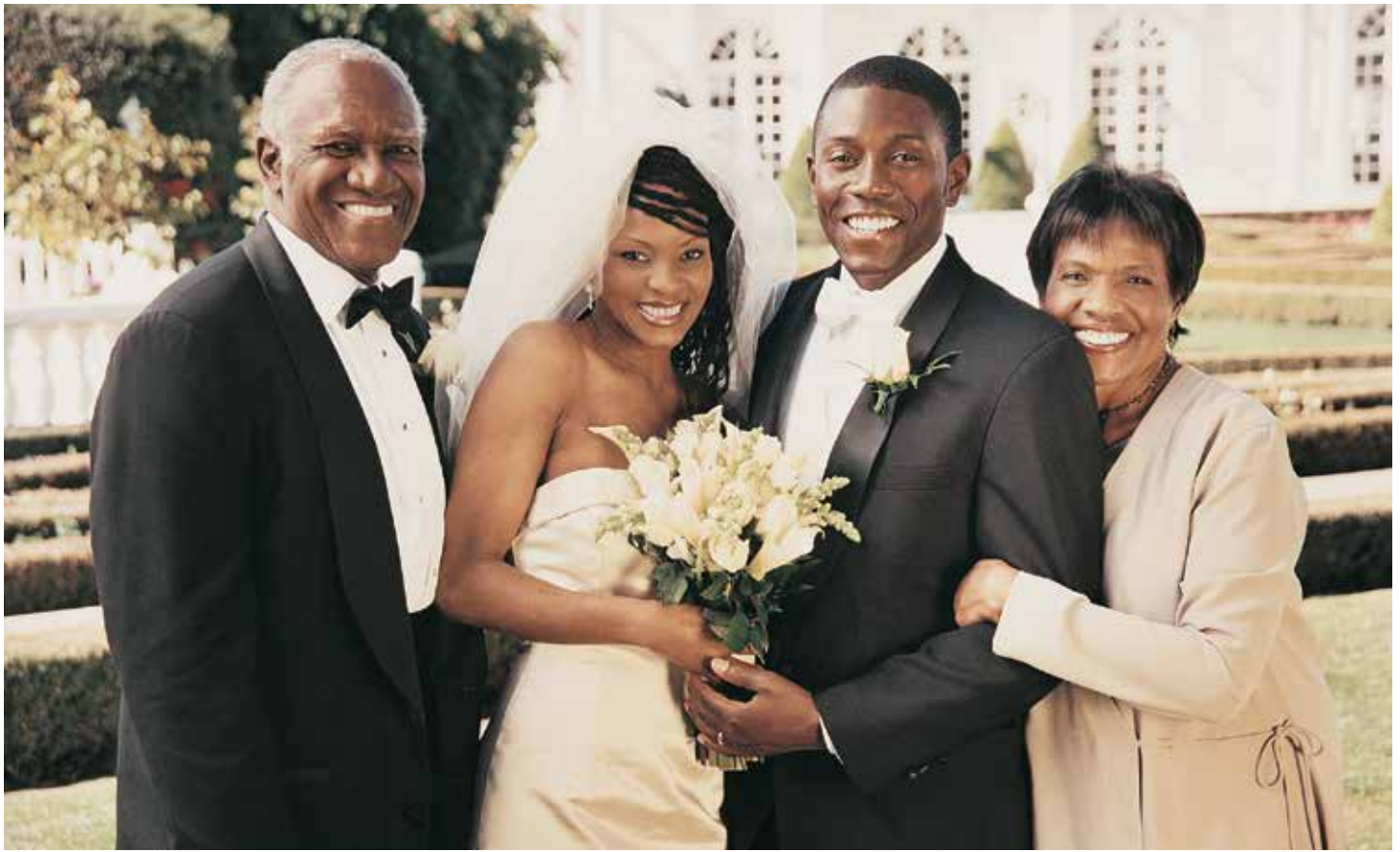
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Meaningful ways to honor parents during a wedding

During a wedding, guests' attention is directed at the happy couple tying the knot. But couples don't make it to their big day alone, and many give ample credit to their parents with helping them along the way. With that in mind, a wedding day also can be the right time to honor parents in meaningful ways.

Engage in a joining ceremony

Couples can incorporate a variation of a joining ceremony in the wedding. Some use flowers, others colored sand or candles. Each set of parents can be highlighted and symbolically join together the families by mixing

sand into one vessel, putting flowers together to form a bouquet, or using individual candles to light one larger candle.

Participate in the processional

During a wedding prelude, guests arrive at the ceremony and find their seats while they wait for the formal processional to take place. Highlight parents during the processional by allowing them to lead the wedding party in walking down the aisle.

Wear a small token

Couples can wear charms, accessories like a father's wristwatch or a mother's wedding dress so parents are part of the

wedding ensemble. These tokens can be visible, or hidden in bouquets or tucked into pockets so that only the couple and their parents will know they are there.

Participate in special dances

Even couples who are not going the traditional route with their wedding reception may want to pause and give thought to how meaningful it may be for parents to participate in traditional dances that customarily take place early in the reception. After a first dance as a married couple, it's customary for the bride to dance with her father and the groom to dance with his mother. However,

any variation of these traditional dances can work.

Speak to the photographer

A couple can dedicate a special time for photo sessions with parents, whether separately or together. Arrange to have a framed photo made up for each set of parents, or a folio with a photo collage of the parents alone and together as the newly combined family.

Honoring parents at a wedding is a great way for couples to express their love and gratitude to the people who raised them. There are several meaningful ways to give parents the recognition they deserve.

Tradition figures prominently in many weddings, but one notable custom is perhaps losing steam among modern couples. According to The Knot 2023 Real Weddings Study, which surveyed nearly 10,000 couples across the United States who tied the knot in 2023, 56 percent of couples did a first look on their wedding day. The first look refers to couples seeing each other all dressed up in their formal attire prior to the wedding ceremony. The Knot reports that just five years ago only 8 percent of couples surveyed did a first look, which suggests the tradition of a couple waiting to see each other until the ceremony begins is one wedding day tradition that is perhaps falling by the wayside.

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