



## THE DUTIES OF THE BRIDAL PARTY

Weddings are associated with traditions, some of which have been replaced or forgotten over time. Many of these traditions relate to the roles and responsibilities of the bridal party. Here we highlight the expected protocol, both traditionally and some of the modern day alternatives.

The people listed below all have crucial roles on, and leading up to, the special day. The bride doesn't and shouldn't need to remember anything on her wedding day. This is her moment to enjoy the results of all those months of planning.

### BEST MAN DUTIES

The role of the best man conjures up images of stag parties and hilarious wedding speeches. However, there are many other important tasks traditionally given to the best man. The role requires a lot of hard work and organisation. He'll be faced with the tasks of organising documents for the ceremony and honeymoon, attending the wedding rehearsal, making sure everyone has their buttonholes and will no doubt be in charge of collecting any hired suits or accessories. He'll also have to be ready long before the groom and make sure he has means of transport to get to the venue early, to ensure that you don't beat them there. The best man needs to be a hero on the day.

Aside from being organised and reliable, he'll also need a creative flair when it comes to decorating your 'going away' car, as well as being a real gentleman to your maid of honour, who he will escort out of the venue and take onto the dance floor during your first dance. When choosing the best man for the job, it should really be someone your husband-to-be trusts to make sure he's ready and waiting for you at the altar on the big day.

Looking after the needs of the groom is a best man responsibility; this is the man who lends an ear and keeps the groom calm when he is feeling overwhelmed. Other crucial best man tasks include carrying the wedding rings to the church and being in charge of and delegating tasks to the groomsmen. It is a best man responsibility to ensure everything on the wedding day runs smoothly, according to plan and on schedule.

#### Summary of Best Man Duties:

- Plans and pays for the stag do with the groomsmen
- Attends the ceremony rehearsal and rehearsal dinner
- Helps the groom get ready and to the church on time
- Supervises the groomsmen
- Welcomes the guests at the reception
- Offers the first toast to the bride and groom
- Collects and returns all formal wear rentals on time
- Issues the buttonholes and Orders of Service
- Organises the transport from the ceremony to the reception
- Delivers the 'Best man' speech at the reception
- Organises the collection of wedding presents and ensures they are safely stored
- Arranges and decorates the going away car for the bride and groom from the reception if required
- Announces the speeches and cake cutting, if there is no Master of Ceremonies



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## GROOM DUTIES

The main thing your groom needs to worry about is turning up on time and saying "I Do". Aside from this, the groom should be able to relax and enjoy the day. It's also traditional for the groom to give a speech giving thanks to the beautiful bridesmaids and mentioning how lucky he is to be marrying you, how incredible you look and how much he is looking forward to spending the rest of his life with you.

Most of the groom's duties will have been checked off long before the big day, for example, choosing the best man and groomsmen, buying the wedding rings and organising the honeymoon. Though, in modern times, you and your fiancé can share your opinions on wedding ring styles and honeymoon destinations, as well as other details like cake fillings and what he'll be wearing on the day.

The groom's involvement begins long before the wedding day; it begins before that life-changing moment of – the proposal. It starts with the choosing of the engagement ring and his role then extends as much as you want it to, perhaps to joint responsibility of major decisions such as choice of wedding venue, photographer and reception. His contributions should ease some of the pressure on the bride-to-be. Another traditional groom task is the compiling of the guest list (with the help of his parents) for both the ceremony and the reception. When finalised, the groom traditionally presents both lists to the bride's mother. In modern days, this is a joint effort between the groom and his parents as well as the bride and her parents.

On the day of the wedding the groom and his best man should arrive at the wedding venue at least twenty minutes prior to the ceremony. Following the signing of the register, the groom walks back up the aisle, with his new wife on his left, to begin the formal photographs. Afterwards, the groom is expected to introduce his new bride to friends and relatives who have not previously met her at the reception.

Following the bride's father's speech, the groom should thank the bride's parents for his 'new bride' and toast to the bridesmaids. Traditionally the groom would invite the bride's mother to dance, the bride's father would then take over, allowing the groom to lead his bride into their first dance. In modern days, the groom leads his bride to their first dance before inviting the mother of the bride to dance.

### Summary of Groom Duties:

- Chooses a reliable best man
- Purchases the wedding rings
- Helps the bride make decisions about venue, cake, honeymoon destinations etc
- Compiles the guest list
- Says "I do"!
- Signs the register with his new bride
- Introduces his bride to guests she hasn't met before at the reception
- Delivers a speech giving thanks to the bridesmaids, bride's parents and a message for his new bride

## MAID OF HONOUR DUTIES

When deciding on who would best fit the prestigious title of maid of honour, the question to ask yourself is: 'Who can keep me calm when I'm anxious, make me laugh when I'm emotional and give me brutally honest advice when



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I ask for it?' You'll need someone who really knows you right down to what sort of hen party you'd love and which flowers would look best with your complexion and your dress. She can prepare an 'emergency kit' for you, containing things like spare tights, make-up, plasters, tissues, safety pins, an umbrella and whatever else she thinks you may need for the day. If you don't require it, someone else definitely will.

Your maid of honour will also be responsible for helping you get ready and making sure the bridesmaids are accounted for. She should attend all of your dress fittings and get to know your dress inside out so she can arrange it when you're walking down the aisle, dancing with your husband and posing for photographs. She'll hold your bouquet while you're saying your vows and hold your dress when you need to take a trip to the ladies' room. She will be involved with and offer her support during all the wedding preparations and help look after the other bridesmaids, flower girls and page boys.

The maid of honour's duties are perhaps the most demanding of anyone involved in the wedding, with the exception of the blushing bride herself. Traditionally, the maid of honour is the bride's sister or closest friend. A married honour attendant is technically referred to as a matron of honour, but this has become less important in recent times.

On the wedding day, the maid of honour helps the bride dress and accompanies her to the ceremony. She will sign the marriage license as your witness, arrange your veil and train during the processional and recessional, and hold your bouquet at the altar. At the reception, she should dance with the best man and organise the bridesmaids for formal pictures.

## Summary of Maid of Honour Duties:

- Helps the bride to pick her wedding dress
- Hosts the hen party
- Carries the groom's ring
- Helps the bride with dressing and assists with the train and veil
- Holds the bride's bouquet during the ceremony
- Carries an emergency kit
- Holds a copy of any special prayers or any readings for the ceremony
- Stands by the bride at the altar
- Supervises the bridesmaids
- Dances with the best man at the reception
- Helps the bride with her train during bridal waltz and during photography
- Gathers the single women for the bouquet throw
- Returns clothing items to the bride's home after the reception
- Confirms final travel arrangements with the best man and any other groomsmen, including the time of arrival at the church or registry office
- Obtains for the best man a list of family and guests who should be personally escorted to their seats
- Attends the wedding rehearsal if required
- Collects any hired clothing and accessories
- Ensures bouquets are ready for the bride, bridesmaids and flower girl
- Helps the bride with her hair, make-up and dress
- Leaves for the ceremony 10 minutes before the bride
- Arranges the bride's dress and veil before, during and after the ceremony
- Follows behind the bride and her father up the aisle, or some prefer she enters before the bride



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- Holds the bride's bouquet during the ceremony
- Witnesses the signing of the register if required
- Leaves the church accompanied by the best man after the bride and groom
- At the reception stands in the receiving line and greets the guests
- Helps to display and record gifts received
- Has the first dance with the best man

## BRIDE'S PARENTS

Traditionally, the bride's parents had the 'privilege' of paying for the majority of the wedding expenses. Today the costs are likely to be distributed among both sets of parents and the couple themselves but there are still other responsibilities that the bride's parents maintain.

Traditionally they host the first engagement party. They also help the bride with the guest list and offer assistance (and moral support!) with wedding details. The bride's mother chooses her attire, then informs the groom's mother of her choice so they can complement each other.

The bride's mother has a vital role in supporting her daughter with all her preparations. She should listen and respect the bride's wishes at every stage, even if these wishes do not match her own.

On the day of the wedding, the bride's father escorts the bride to the ceremony site and may walk her down the aisle, sometimes with her mother on the bride's other arm. He is the last to leave the reception, after saying goodnight to guests and settling outstanding bills.

### Summary of the bride's parents' duties:

#### Bride's Mother:

- Discusses and agrees the wedding planning with the groom's parents
- Hosts the engagement party
- Assists the bride with the guest list
- Assists the bride in sending out the invitations
- Witnesses the signing of the register
- Acts as host and hostess at the reception
- Greets the guests as they arrive at the reception
- Mixes with the guests

#### Bride's Father:

- Travels to the church with his daughter
- Escorts his daughter down the aisle
- Gives his daughter away during the ceremony
- Witnesses the signing of the register
- Escorts the groom's mother from the ceremony
- Makes the first speech at the reception
- Raises a toast to the bride and groom



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- Bids farewell to departing guests
- He is traditionally the last person to leave the reception

## GROOM'S PARENTS

There are no traditional roles for the groom's parents to carry out. In the past it was an accepted obligation of the bride's parents to meet all wedding expenses. Today however, it is not unusual for the groom's parents to make a considerable financial contribution. Therefore, it is good manners to consult the groom's parents and include them in as much of the planning as possible.

Customarily, the groom's parents contact the bride's parents after the engagement. They may host an engagement party (after the bride's parents do). They provide a list of guests to the couple - hopefully sticking to an agreed-upon number. They consult with the bride's parents on attire. They host the rehearsal dinner on the evening before the wedding, and they may contribute a considerable amount to the wedding expenses.

### Summary of the Groom's Parents' Duties:

- Congratulate the bride's parents on news of the engagement
- Welcome the future daughter-in-law into the family
- Organise a meeting where both sets of parents can discuss arrangements
- Agree the wedding plan with the bride's parents
- Inform the bride's mother of the number of guests from the groom's family
- Welcome the guests to the wedding
- Mingle with the guests

## BRIDESMAIDS

Bridesmaid duties and bridal etiquette is taken very seriously by the bridal party. Bridesmaids are usually family members or close friends of the bride and their responsibilities are usually delegated to them by the maid of honour and the bride. The number of bridesmaids depends on the size and cost of the wedding.

It's a great compliment to be in the bridal party. The bride has sleepless nights picking her members; she knows they will be her supporting cast, before, during and after the wedding.

Bridesmaids' duties will vary according to how many bridesmaids you have. If you have 3 bridesmaids, you should delegate different tasks to each girl - your wedding planning will run smoothly if you do.

A bridesmaid duty may include some or most of the list provided below, as this is only a guide, you can add or subtract off of the list to suit your wedding requirements. The bridesmaid responsibilities will also differ because each wedding is unique.

The main role of a bridesmaid is to assist the maid of honour with her wedding-planning duties - especially the bridal shower - and help the bride as needed. Of course, bridesmaids walk in the processional and recessional. During the reception, they mostly mingle and dance with the groomsmen and other important guests.

### Summary of Bridesmaid Duties:

- Help the bride with the planning of the wedding
- Help the bride with errands on the wedding day
- Help decorate the ceremony if necessary
- Help with organising or assisting with hair and make-up
- Help with the making of table decorations
- Help maid of honour with hen night arrangements
- Attend ceremony rehearsal and rehearsal dinner
- Walk behind or in front of the bride during the wedding procession and stand near her during the ceremony
- They are photographed as part of the wedding party
- Have a dance with the groomsmen
- Assist the maid of honour when needed
- Help with any clean-up at the end of the night, if necessary

### FLOWER GIRL

Flower girl etiquette dictates that the flower girl walks down the aisle in front of the bride and bridal party. The flower girl is usually between the ages of four and eight, depending on her level of maturity. During the processional, she walks ahead of the bride, scattering flower petals in her path or simply carrying a pretty bouquet or basket. She should also be included in the wedding rehearsal so that she is comfortable with her role. Her parents are expected to pay for her attire and arrange for her transportation.

For centuries bridal flower girls have symbolized the fertility of the nuptial union and melted the hardest of hearts with their cherub-like looks and angelic smiles.

### Summary of Flower Girl Duties:

- Attends the ceremony rehearsal
- Walk directly in front of the bride into the church, or in front of the bridesmaids
- Walks in front of the Maid of Honour when leaving the ceremony
- Scatters flowers whilst walking down the aisle
- Carries a small bouquet, a ring of flowers or a pomander bouquet
- Is photographed as part of the wedding party
- Has several dances with the page boy or ring bearer

### GROOMSMEN

In ancient times, groomsmen were essentially the groom's bodyguards, so the groomsmen duties were to ensure nothing happened to prevent the groom from taking his rightful place next to his bride. Today, their duties tend to be a little less dangerous and are generally restricted to helping the best man organise the stag party and to ensure the wedding runs smoothly.



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The groomsmen are usually relatives or close friends of the groom or bridal party. The number of wedding groomsmen depends on the size and cost of the wedding. Traditionally, in Christian ceremonies, the bride's family and guests sit on the left and the groom's on the right.

The groomsmen (sometimes referred to as ushers) have very few responsibilities before the wedding. On the wedding day, the groomsmen should arrive early at the ceremony site, ready to greet and seat guests. They'll be involved in the wedding, and are expected to remain at the reception for its entire duration.

## Summary of Groomsmen Duties:

- Help pick out the tuxedos/tails/suits and show up for the fittings
- Help plan and share the cost of the bachelor party with the best man
- Attend ceremony rehearsal and rehearsal dinner
- Responsible for returning of any formal wear or tux
- Greet and seat guests at the ceremony in the appropriate positions
- Stand near the groom during the ceremony
- Escort the bridesmaids from the ceremony
- Photographed as part of the wedding party
- Dance with the bridesmaids
- Confirm final travel arrangements with the best man and any other groomsmen, including the time of arrival at the church or registry office
- Obtain for the best man a list of family and guests who should be personally escorted to their seats