

I DO... MY WAY

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I know that for some, an extravagant wedding witnessed by 200 of their closest friends is their dream come true, and for others just the thought of it gives them anxiety.

When you think about the most important part of every nuptial celebration, wedding themes should be a general guideline that you can choose to follow in its entirety or use as an inspiration for your own original plan. While there is something to be said for tradition, your wedding should be a beautiful celebration of you and the one you love. If you're like me and not into the whole "white gown" thing, who cares?

I believe the ceremony not only sets the tone for your special day, but is the absolute best part of any wedding. Following in the footsteps of generations, the exchange of vows and all your emotional family members and friends make it one of the most special moments of your life. My advice for the ceremony is to remember to slow down ... this is the time to take it all in. These are the memories you want to last a lifetime (and make sure your photographer knows this!).

Here are a few of my favorite unconventional wedding ceremony ideas ...

- Face your guests during the wedding vows.
- Arrange for your guests to sit or stand in a circle around you during your vows.
- Have both parents walk you down the aisle.
- Have an uneven number of attendants.
- Have a "man of honor," instead of a maid of honor.
- Have the groom choose a "best woman."
- Instead of attendants, have your parents, your children (if this applies), siblings and any spouses (if this applies) stand with you at the altar.
- Dress your flower girl in a bright colored dress.
- Tie a fisherman's knot for your unity ceremony ... it's the strongest knot, and will only get tighter with pressure. It also makes for a great keepsake.
- Have a "ring warming" ceremony to take the ring exchange one step further. Early in the ceremony, the rings are tied together and passed around to the guests who imbue the rings with a silent prayer or blessing for the couple when the rings reach them. By the time the bride and groom exchange the rings, they are filled with the warmth and love of their family and friends.

*It matters not who you love, where
you love or how you love, it matters
only that you love.*

-John Lennon





The best advice I could give a couple planning their wedding is to, "be your own authentic selves and stay romantic!" Allow your mind to wander and dream about what this day will look and feel like. Where do you see it? Who do you see there? What time of the year is it? Is it formal, laid back, fun or serious?

This would be the time to discuss your vision and decide what's most important to the two of you. Now you're at the starting point for a meaningful and authentic day, as well as focusing all your decisions moving forward.

There are many accepted (and expected) traditions that surround weddings, but who says you can't be the next "tradition setter" for your family? If you don't see yourself in a white dress ... wear any color you want. If you don't see yourself walking down an aisle ... don't have one. Do it ... your way!

Here are a few of my favorite unconventional reception ideas ...

- Rather than a guest book, have guests sign Jenga blocks! It will make a great game to play for years to come.
- Create a handwritten note in each place card ("Richard, thanks for flying in from Colorado! Glad you're here today!").
- Instead of a bouquet toss, toast the woman who has had the greatest impact on your life, then hand her your bouquet as a tribute.
- For a fresh twist on the hot photo booth trend, set up a "Video Confessional Booth." Rent a video booth where guests can record a quick on-screen message for you. Ask your videographer to edit some of the best clips into your wedding video. Then, post your other favorite video "confessions" on your wedding website and encourage guests to check them out in your thank-you notes.



When planning my wedding day schedule, I knew I wanted toasts to be happening on the mountain top during the "Golden Hour," that brief window of time before sunset when everything is glazed in that rich, warm, yellow light when the sun lies between the horizon and 6 degrees above ... or more accurately accounts for the speed of the transition from day to night around the world at different times of the year.

I would definitely encourage you to do a fun wedding dance—it not only is a highlight of the night for family and friends, but the weekly dance lessons will be the best time spent having fun together and relaxing as you get closer to the wedding day.

A wedding timeline should be just a guideline ... nothing is set in stone. Other than making sure your food gets served while it's hot and fresh, it's always best to follow the timeline as it feels appropriate in the moment. Things ALWAYS take longer than you think they will. If you overestimate how long everything will take you'll probably be right on schedule.

There are a multitude of amazingly talented and creative vendors just waiting to work with you so being clear from the beginning about what you want to achieve will make your search so much easier. Pick vendors whose work you love, but more importantly, who you love as people. They will be your biggest support system on your big day. Perhaps most importantly, remember that after this day is over, your wedding pictures are what you will have left of your day, so find a photographer that can bring your vision to life.

The planning will all be worth it. Remember, be happy! Weddings are fun, but even more so when it's your own.