

3. CEREMONY AND LOCATION



Extract

OVERVIEW

In this module, we will cover the following topics:

- Religious versus civil ceremony
- Choosing a physical location
- Weddings abroad
- Once your client has chosen a venue

SELECTION AND BOOKING OF VENUES

Determining whether the wedding will be a religious, civil or other type of ceremony will play a big part in determining the venue. In this module we'll look at the different choices of wedding venue available to your clients.

RELIGIOUS VERSUS CIVIL CEREMONY

The style of ceremony will dictate different types of customs to be followed in the planning of the wedding. There are expectations associated with each one and it's up to the bridal couple to help narrow the field down.

A religious ceremony is considered a very traditional wedding. It would take place in a house of worship such as a church or synagogue. It would be officiated by a rabbi, a minister or member of the clergy. Traditional religious ceremonies usually call for formal wear with a number of attendants and very traditional music.

Civil or non-traditional ceremonies can be held anywhere such as on board a yacht, on a cliff top, on a beach or even in a family backyard. The officiate is a Justice of the Peace (including relatives or friends who have been certified). There is no set theme for a civil or non-traditional ceremony. Bridal couples can wear beach clothing, casual clothes or even get married on horseback.

The differences between the two are the rigidity of form associated with the first and the freedom with the second. The bridal couple will determine what their priorities are and the type of ceremony they want to have.

Familiarity with traditional themes and ceremonies are important when dealing with religious weddings. A sense of adventure and fun can be explored in civil and non-traditional weddings.

Become aware of the wide variety of options available to couples in their wedding choices. They may very well ask for your advice on the type of ceremony or theme. The key to planning the perfect wedding for your bridal couple is found in truly listening to them. Be open to hearing their thoughts, their dreams and their expectations.

You want to know what their image of a perfect wedding day will be. You want to know what they like and dislike. If you are ever uncertain about their preference or desire, clarify it with them. They may be discussing a traditional wedding because that's what they expect they can have. But it may not be what they want. They may be planning a grand ceremony, because that is what is expected of them.

Your job is not to please their parents, their family or their friends. Your job is to help them realize their dream wedding.

FORMALITY

Your next task is to discover the formality of the ceremony. The choices are:

- Very formal
- Formal
- Semi-formal
- Casual/informal

Here is a description of each type of ceremony.

VERY FORMAL

A very formal wedding would be more likely to take place in a church, synagogue or prestigious hotel than in a garden. This is usually for 200

or more guests and can take place at noon, in the afternoon or after 6 pm for an evening wedding.

Some characteristics of a very formal wedding would include:

- Engraved invitations
- Semi-formal dress for guests with formal attire for the wedding party (including a long train and veil and full bouquet for the bride)
- A sit-down dinner or festive buffet
- Dancing to an orchestra
- Elaborate decorations including floral centrepieces
- A large wedding party (four to twelve bridesmaids)
- Formal photography with set-up shots as well as candid

A very formal wedding is generally the most expensive option available to you.

FORMAL

The ceremony could be held in a church, synagogue, hotel, a home, garden, or one of the many sites suggested under site selection such as a historic building.

Traditionally, a formal wedding is for one hundred guests or more.

A formal wedding would include:

- Formal invitations
- A bridal gown but less formal attire for attendants
- A meal (but perhaps a luncheon or simple buffet)
- Dancing to a band
- Floral arrangements in a church or at the head table
- A medium-sized wedding party (two to six bridesmaids)
- Professional photography

SEMI-FORMAL

Locations for semi-formal weddings can be more varied and a single location for ceremony and reception are more common for a semi-formal wedding.

This style of wedding would include one hundred or fewer guests. With a semi-formal wedding:

- Invitations can be simple, without inserts and return cards
- Dress is less formal, with the bride perhaps wearing a less elaborate dress (floor length or shorter)
- Food may be in the form of a simple buffet
- Dancing to a DJ
- Simple decorations
- A smaller wedding party (one or two bridesmaids)
- Mostly candid photography with a few set-up shots

CASUAL OR INFORMAL

An informal or casual wedding is probably the least expensive wedding option. With a casual wedding, locations are unlimited. Guests can be limited to family members and very close friends.

- Invitations could be as simple as a phone call or personal invitation
- Dress is casual with the bride wearing a street length dress or suit
- Food might be limited to cake with punch or champagne or perhaps cocktails and hors d'oeuvres
- Entertainment is optional
- Decorations are optional
- The wedding party may consist of a maid or matron of honour and best man only
- A personal friend may be responsible for capturing the event with a camera.

EXERCISE 3.1

Do some research on the internet into the different levels of wedding formality.

CHOOSING A PHYSICAL LOCATION

The choice of physical locations will be determined during the first consultation. If the bridal couple are religious then there is a very good chance that they will want to hold their wedding in their place of worship. They would provide you with the name of the church or synagogue, the minister, reverend or rabbi who would preside over the ceremony.

Your job will be to contact the facility on their behalf and begin making the arrangements for their target wedding date. One of the benefits of religious weddings is that Church facilities are used to hosting weddings and will be able to provide a clear outline of what they can and cannot do for the couple. This makes your job somewhat easier.

LOCATION FOR A NON-TRADITIONAL WEDDING

If the couple are not particularly religious or would prefer a non-traditional ceremony, they will probably have a few ideas in mind for different venues to hold their wedding. They may ask for your thoughts on their choice or if you have any ideas. It's good to keep a list of good locations on hand, either previously researched or recently discovered.

In Figure 3.1 there is an example chart of how you might rate their potential choices whether for a traditional or non-traditional wedding. You'll need the:

- Name
- Contact information
- Estimated cost
- Estimated number of guests the location can support
- Availability for the chosen wedding date

- Whether an appointment has been made for you and the couple to visit the location

	# 1	#2	# 3	# 4
Location				
Contact				
Phone #				
Est. Cost				
Est.# guests				
Available				
Appointment				

Figure 3.1 Physical Notes

EVALUATE THE NON-TRADITIONAL SITE

It is especially important for you and the couple to see the site of the wedding well in advance. You need to be able to get a real feel for setting up for the ceremony. If they are going to be married on a beach, you need to address issues like parking, permits and how the guests will get on to the sand.

While the wedding couple may see visions of standing atop a cliff overlooking the sea and exchanging vows as the sunset paints the sky in vibrant oranges, reds and purples, you must address the logistics of a location. It's important to keep in mind that while you want to give your couple their ideal wedding, you also must provide them with the grounding of how realistic their dream wedding is going to be.

For example, if the location is on the side of a mountain that has limited access, the choice of that particular spot may need to be adjusted. While few couples will choose a very remote area for a wedding, it can happen and you must be prepared for that.

When it comes to planning a ceremony in a non-traditional venue, be sure to ask the couple about any special needs guests. Wheelchair access may be necessary and that can require special planning to accommodate in some situations.

CREATE A LIST OF NON-TRADITIONAL VENUES

Once again, it is important that you keep list after list after list. The lists will save your sanity as you go through the selection processes. You have numerous bits of data that must be accumulated and every piece of information will play a role in the selection of the physical location as well as the arrangements that need to be made.

When building your file folder on alternative locations start by becoming intimately familiar with your local area and expand it to include locations within a 60 to 90 minute radius. Yes, this information gathering will take time and the file on different locations will continue to be updated throughout the life of your wedding planning business.

At the end of this module there is a sample sheet of questions you might use to evaluate a potential venue. If there is more than one location the clients are interested in, the worksheets can help generate a pros and cons list for each venue and ease decision-making.

Some alternative location suggestions:

- Amusement park
- Zoo
- Art gallery
- Backyard (Couple, Family, Friend)
- Boat
- Beach
- Lake
- Botanical gardens
- Community centre (Hall)
- Country club
- An Inn
- A bed and breakfast
- Historical location
- Hotel
- Church
- Synagogue
- Park

- Resort (i.e. Disney World)
- Winery
- Chapel

EXERCISE 3.2

Think of some more alternative venues and make a list here:

REMINDER

Have you completed the following exercises?

- Exercise 3.1
- Exercise 3.2
- Exercise 3.3
- Exercise 3.4

Tick each box when you have completed the exercises. Then you can move on to the assignment that follows.

SUMMARY

1. You are aware of what needs to go into determining the venue and how to evaluate each venue individually.
2. You understand the differences between a traditional and non-traditional ceremony.
3. You know how to secure a wedding location.
4. You have done some research into weddings abroad.
5. You understand that a wedding planner's portfolio of knowledge and resources evolves continuously from one job to the next.

ASSIGNMENT 3

Mary and Mark are engaged. They are both busy, career-oriented people involved in the technologies industry. A friend who attended one of your planned weddings has recommended you to them. They call to set up an appointment. Your booking calendar is quite full, but you schedule a meeting with them in ten days. You tell them that they should expect to be at the meeting for 90 minutes to 2 hours.

Prior to the meeting, you send them a presentation file of information similar to the wedding file discussed in this module. It contains your business information, personal history and interest in wedding planning as well as detail sheets of the services you offer. Included in the file is a questionnaire about their personal information, wedding wish list and inquiries into their personal tastes and ideas about their 'dream' wedding.

On the day of their appointment, they arrive without the file. However, you have anticipated this possibility. During the consultation, you will interview them with the questions on the questionnaire in mind. It is important for you to not only note their answers, but also their body language and manner in which they answer.

You spend time getting to know them. You discover that Mary comes from a very small family with only one or two living members. Mark, however, comes from an extremely large and extended family. They both have different ideas of what the ideal wedding would be like. Mary would prefer a very small, intimate ceremony. Mark would rather have a large and lavish affair.

Neither wants to be married in a traditional format. A non-denominational minister or Justice of the Peace is fine by them. Mary only has one attendant, but Mark would like to have three or four groomsmen to accommodate his brothers and best friend. Mary does not want to be given away and would prefer to walk down the aisle by herself.

Mark believes that the ceremony and the reception should be a fifty-fifty split of the budget they have for their wedding plans. Mary would prefer to spend minimal on the actual ceremony with a larger reception and use the rest to invest in their honeymoon.

They seem to disagree on many aspects of the how and when, yet their manner remains jovial, teasing and good-natured. They are obviously in love. They seem to embrace their differences with a sort of fond toler-

ance. Recognizing that they aren't going to agree unilaterally, they look at you and say, "Can you help us?"

Answer the following in essay format:

1. Mary and Mark are looking for guidance. What suggestions can you offer to help them blend their differing desires on a wedding venue?
2. What types of questions should you ask when discussing their ideas about wedding attire?
3. What advice can you provide the couple on their options?
4. Discuss what arrangements seem ideal for 'Mark and Mary's' reception.
5. List what other information, if any, would have helped you handle this situation better.

When you have completed this assignment, send it to your tutor for marking. If you email your assignment, make sure you include your name and assignment number at the top of your work.

If you send the assignment by post, attach the cover sheet, which is on the following page.

Well, that's the end of the extract. If you want to know more, you'll have to register!

We look forward to welcoming you on to the course, and helping you become a professional wedding planner.