

www.blockpartyservices.weebly.com

Wedding Games

By

Rowena Blocker

Active Wedding Reception Games

We've all been to receptions that are standard - we welcome and celebrate the new married couple, watch them dance, and enjoy cake with them. But creative couples often enjoy coming up with fun games that include the entire guest list.

Including the guests is an excellent way to get people out of their chairs, meeting people they might not otherwise know and feeling like they are truly a part of the celebration, not just observers.

One fun and active game that can be played by all your guests, including grandma as well as the young children, is "want it now".

In this game, you designate a master of ceremonies (if you have a DJ for your wedding reception, this person can serve as the DJ). The MC will have a list of "wants" prepared before the reception. Everyone sits at their tables, and waits to hear the command. The MC says he wants a person with painted toenails. All the women with painted toenails run to the front of the room, toward the MC. Each time a table sends someone to the front first, they get a point.

Points should be tallied during the course of this game and prizes awarded at the end of the game. Be sure to have some obvious "wants", such as the painted toenails, or a man with a mustache or a child with a pink dress. But also include some surprises, like "a man with a brown purse" which will require a man to find a woman at his table with the brown purse and run up to the front of the room with that.

Another fun wedding reception game that includes all your guests is musical chairs using men as the chairs. All the men line up and kneel on one knee. The women begin playing the game of musical chairs, but when the music stops, they must find a knee to sit on. No "chairs" are removed during the version of the game, but instead people are eliminated when either the man falls down when the woman finds his knee or when the woman falls down. Both are out either way, and if both fall down, they are also both out then (as well as perhaps a bit bruised). This is a fun game that often brings on gales of laughter and adds to a relaxed reception atmosphere.

If many guests are traveling a good distance to the wedding or don't know many other guests, it's always fun to include a game that will allow them to now only get to know each other but the bride and groom as well. For this game, you'll need a MC again, which can be a very outgoing member of the wedding party or the DJ. The reception guests are broken into two groups, which can be as simple as having people count off "1, 2, 1, 2" and

so on until the entire guest list is either a "1" or a "2". Then the two groups band together for the duration of the game.

The DJ, or MC, offers a series of questions relating to the bride and groom. The teams should work together to answer the questions, then as quickly as possible provide the answer. The bride and groom will confirm if the answer is correct or not. This is an excellent way for otherwise "stranger" guests to get to know one another and have some fun in the process. It's also an excellent way to get to know the bride and groom!

Organizing games at a wedding reception is a great way to get people involved and make them feel they are truly a part of the celebration. It's also a way to fill time, if the wedding planners know this isn't a "dancing" group or if you want to loosen people up for a long night of celebrating. Whether a small or large wedding, reception games work for just about any group.

In addition, don't assume wedding reception guests will be offended or annoyed by these active games. Most people report to wedding planners they truly enjoy being more active and having fun games to play during a wedding reception.

Bridal Bouquet Activities

When a bride orders her wedding bouquet, it might not seem that any "activities" will come from it other than as a thing for the bride to hold. But the bridal bouquet can be the source of many interesting activities and meaningful gestures.

During there ceremony there are all kinds of possibilities. Certainly you can go traditional and have a flower for both the mother of the bride and mother of the groom. The moms, in particular, love this activity and guests usually appreciate it as well. But what if you turned that traditional gesture on its head and supplied flowers for both the mothers and the fathers?

If the bride supplies flowers to both the men and women, there are a couple of ways to do this. What if dad's flower was enclosed in a verse that he will then get up and read at the ceremony? What if it was a flower to recognize the members of the family who have passed, and it gives dad an opportunity to recognize those family members?

If the bride chooses not to have a unity candle, but wants some gesture like it, she can have her bridal bouquet designed by having several small bouquets put together. At an appropriate time during the ceremony, the bridal bouquet is "broken up" and various people might receive a share, such as the mothers and fathers of the bride and groom.

Now, if the bride wants to hang onto her bridal bouquet during the wedding ceremony, but is willing to have some fun with it at the reception, there are a few options there as well. How about a dance involving the bridal bouquet? This is silly, but fun. The bridal bouquet is on display somewhere near the dance floor and guests must guess a flower that's in the bouquet before they can enter the dance floor. The first few guests might not have a problem as some flowers are obvious, like roses and tulips, but others might give people pause. Of course, this won't work if the bridal bouquet is all roses or some other single and obvious flower but for a traditional mixed bouquet, it can work well.

For a naughty touch, the bride can hide her garter in the bridal bouquet and actually put it on her leg before the groom takes it off. Or she can have a couple of breakaway bouquets that are wrapped in garter belts, so hers doesn't get thrown, but instead the tiny bouquets with garter belts attached are thrown.

When it comes time for the bride to throw her bouquet, there are several options. Some brides choose not to keep their bouquet and simply pluck one flower out of it before chucking the whole thing during the bridal bouquet toss. This is an alternative to having a special bouquet set aside for throwing, and there are others as well.

Are there are a lot of single women coming to the wedding? Maybe one thrown bouquet won't be enough. Many brides these days are opting for something a little more fun. There are a few options, really. One popular option is to have the florist create several small bouquets and then bundle them to look like one bouquet. They are tied lightly with a ribbon. When it comes time for the bouquet toss, the bride unties the ribbon, and throws the "bouquet" which is actually several little bouquets. Several women will catch the bouquet, rather than just one.

Buffet Table Activities

Most wedding receptions include a buffet-style meal where everyone stands in an enormous line waiting while those at the food table decide if they want Italian or Ranch dressing on their salad.

There has to be a more unusual way to get people to their food, and a faster one at that, right? There are several fun options you can employ to feed your guests quickly and with a minimum of groans of hunger.

Here are some fun options.

One of the most popular is the number system. Each table is assigned a number and the MC or DJ calls numbers at various intervals. The people at that numbered table then find the buffet and begin their feast. You can place the numbers in a variety of locations. For the most utilitarian version, just place the number in the flower arrangement on the table.

Some brides don't like this look of numbered table as if at a convention. In that case, you can put the numbers under the flower arrangements, or under the chairs. If you have place cards at the tables, you can write a small number somewhere on the card so people know which table they're sitting at. For a fun variation, you can have the florist play around with the table floral arrangements. If the arrangements are going to have a dozen flowers, you could have the florist add one extra flower to table "one", two extra flowers for table "two" and so on and make the guests figure out which number table they are based on how many extra flowers they have in their arrangement.

The flower method could be cost-prohibitive, of course, if you have a large guest list and many tables.

Now, if the number system doesn't thrill you or make you think "unique", there are other options. Each table can have a color and the DJ simply calls out the color name. Depending, again, on how many tables you have at your reception, you could coordinate the tablecloths with the color of the table. So you might have white, pink, lavender, beige, and yellow tablecloths, and the guests sitting at that table simply move to the buffet table when the color of their tablecloth is called.

Another popular option for moving people easily to the buffet table involves having a little fun with your guests. You provide each table with a buzzer, either a bell like you might find at a store, or a small silver bell. Just something they can buzz or ring. The DJ or MC asks a trivia question, or a question about the bride and groom. The tables buzz in

with their answers. The guests at the table with the first correct buzzed answer move to the buffet table. You repeat the process until everyone is finally on their way to getting some grub.

The trivia method is an especially fun way to help guests to get to know one another, as they might have to work together to come up with an answer. If your guests are hungry, you're sure to hear muffled groans and sighs of exasperation. But even with the small complaints, this is always a crowd pleaser because it's fun and gets everyone involved.

Now, this next option is fun but can engender a bit of jealousy sometimes. When people get their place card, whether it's placed on the table, or they pick it up when they look at the seating chart, you can put a number on it. But not everyone at the same table will have the same number. If you have 100 guests, for example, you might choose to have 10 people at the buffet table at a time. So each person would be assigned a number 1 through 10.

In the same scenario as above, the DJ or MC will call a number and those numbers will head for the buffet table. There are sure to be more than one person from each table heading for the buffet table, but the guests at each table won't get their food at the same time.

This staggered feeding can be fun or a nuisance, depending. It solves the problem of half the room being finished with their meal while waiting for the "later" table to finish theirs before the festivities start, but it can also mean that one or two guests might be long done with their food (or wanting to head back for seconds) when others at the table haven't even eaten yet.

Centerpiece Activities

The question of who will get to take home the centerpiece can sometimes be a central discussion at reception dinner tables, particularly if the centerpiece is particularly pretty or original.

Making a game of who gets the centerpiece, then, can be an amusing diversion and one many guests will enjoy participating in. Here are some ideas for giving away that reception table centerpiece.

How about a game of 20 questions? Give each guest a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. The MC or DJ asks a series of 20 questions, but first gives the guests the basic background information, that is, that the answer is an animal, place, person or thing. Once that's taken care of, people can shout out questions and the MC or DJ will answer yes or no, and whoever figures out the answer first gets the first centerpiece, and that particular table is done playing. The game is repeated until one person at each table has won the centerpiece.

One of the most popular ways brides give away the table centerpieces is to put a number on the bottom of the centerpiece and give each guest a number. At some point in the evening, a number is called, each guest checks his or her number and whoever has the called number gets the centerpiece. There are many ways to put a twist on this traditional activity.

For example, you might provide each table with a number, but make it a lower number (ie. between 1 and 10) and the DJ or MC could move from table to table and have each guest do something a certain number of times. So, at the first table, for example, the guests might need to do "head, shoulders, knees and toes" six times and whoever does it first gets the centerpiece. Or, at the second table, the guests might be required to sing the alphabet 3 times or sing "twinkle, twinkle, little star" three times and whoever does that first get the centerpiece.

Another fun activity for divvying up the centerpieces is to require guests to produce a certain item. The DJ or MC moves from table to table, announcing what guests at that table will be required to produce in order to get the centerpiece. Maybe it's a Georgia quarter or a mint, or a doctor's appointment card. Whatever it is, the guest at each table who produces the requested item will get the centerpiece.

You can always make it easy and offer the centerpiece to the oldest person at the table, or the one who took the most number of years to finish college. Perhaps you could create an activity where the person who has the strangest talent (as voted on by the tablemates)

wins the centerpiece. Then, if possible, that person might show off the talent for the entire reception party.

If you like musical chairs, you can play a game of musical dollar bills in order to give the centerpiece away. Someone takes out a one-dollar bill and music begins playing. Everyone at the table passes the dollar bill around the table and when the music stops, whoever is left holding the bill gets the centerpiece. Or this game can be played a bit more traditionally with the person with the bill being eliminated, and the game continuing until only one person is holding the bill. That person can then be awarded with the centerpiece. Or, for a fun twist, the bill can be passed around and when the music stops, the person holding the bill is told to return it to the person who first supplied it. That is the person who gets the centerpiece.

Some fun, and fairly traditional, ideas include the birthday person getting the centerpiece. At each table, the person who has a birthday closest to the wedding gets the centerpiece. Or if there are married couples at the table, the couple who have been together the longest can get the centerpiece, or the couple who were married most recently. Perhaps the centerpiece should go to the person with the longest hair, or the strangest shoes (again, this would be voted on by tablemates).

Dance Floor Activities

Dancing is an essential component at most wedding receptions. We look forward to the couple's "first dance" and the bride's special dance with her father. It's also a place to get loose and funky, if you're a guest or a member of the wedding party.

But what if the wedding planners decided to add some fun and surprise to the dance floor by adding fun activities there? This doesn't mean a rousing version of the "Bunny Hop", which, while maybe essential, is hardly unique.

There are, however, many fun games and activities you can add to your dance floor activities that are sure to be a hit.

Try a fun game of the "chicken dance". Ok, so that doesn't sound too original. But if most of your guests are just sitting at their tables, watching a few brave couples dancing, or just finishing their meals, you might want to get everyone up and having fun. Try this game.

The DJ announces a number. Everyone looks under his or her chair, where there is a number. Depending on the number of guests at the wedding, there might be only numbers "1" and "2" or more, up to 5.

So, say the DJ announces number "4". Each person checks under their chair to see what their number is. These numbers can be written simply on a piece of masking tape and affixed to the underside of the chairs when the reception is being set up. Each "4" in this scenario will head to the dance floor to do the chicken dance with the other "4s". Not only does this get people out of their chairs and on to the dance floor, they get to know other wedding reception guests they might not otherwise know.

One dance floor activity that's gaining popularity is to bring in a dance teacher for the wedding reception. As a kind of pre-dance activity, the teacher will quickly walk people through their paces on the dance floor, perhaps teaching a bit of the waltz or, for something completely different, a little bit of the tango, before the music officially begins and dancing commences.

Having a dance teacher do a bit of teaching not only livens up the reception right from the start, but it gets people out on the dance floor who might otherwise be too self-conscious normally to get out there and let it all hang out. And practically speaking, it will likely make the wedding guests feel more confident in their skills before the "official" dancing begins.

Another fun activity to get everyone on the dance floor, including even the most reticent, is something you can refer to as the "snowball" dance. This is a good way to jumpstart the dancing at the beginning of the evening.

Here's how the "snowball" dance works. The wedding party, bride and groom included, will head to the dance floor for a fun dance. The music for this dance should be fast, something with a disco beat or a fast song that most people have at least a passing familiarity with. After a bit of wedding party dancing, the music stops. The female members of the wedding party move into the crowd and bring back one male each. The male members of the wedding party do the same, but they bring in female guests. The dancing then begins again. This is repeated until all the guests are dancing. It's truly a snowball effect!

Destination Wedding Activities

As brides get more and more creative in planning their weddings, locations weddings are becoming more and more popular. Although this might result in a smaller guest list, it can also result in some fun opportunities for activities.

Many brides like to have their weddings seaside, so they move the festivities to a beach locale, either on their local coast or somewhere more exotic like Jamaica or the Bahamas. In any event, there are several activities that can be planned around this theme. If the wedding is also a weekend event where guests will be around for more than just the wedding, the bride can plan a sailing excursion. Charter a boat for a day and bring your guests out on the water to relax, rejuvenate, and perhaps enjoy a meal.

If the wedding is in the Caribbean, how about a cooking demonstration? The bride and groom can arrange for the wedding guests to enjoy a complimentary cooking demonstration put on by the hotel or a local cook. Since much of the food the guests eat while visiting for the wedding will be different than what they eat at home, they might enjoy learning how to prepare it for home enjoyment.

Say the wedding is in Hawaii, another popular destination wedding location. Here, you can plan several activities around the location. For example, what about a luau? This could even take the place of a more formal or conventional sit-down rehearsal dinner.

In Hawaii, guests will enjoy a hula lesson. Depending on the age of your guests, be sure there is enough time between the wedding and the lesson for the resting of aching bones, in case there are any.

At the wedding itself, there are many ways to incorporate the location into the ceremony itself. At a beachside reception, you can play "pass the shell", where a large shell is passed around and guests "listen" for some advice from the other world. Once they get a piece of advice (really something they think of themselves) they share it with the bride and groom, either verbally, or it can be written into a book for the couple.

Other pre-wedding activities can include guided tours, shopping excursions and wine tasting activities (if applicable). If you choose to include any of these activities keep in mind that the bride and groom (or their families) are expected to pay for the bulk of them. If you arrange a sailing excursion, for example, you are expected to pick up the tab for the trip. Do not tell people ahead of time that the activity will be x dollars. It's likely that won't sit well with them.

Since one of the great benefits of the destination wedding is that only your closest friends and family will likely surround you, you can plan some meaningful activities that you wouldn't plan if the wedding were a larger event. For example, you might plan a slumber party night with close friends that includes movies, popcorn and drinks in your hotel room, villa or cottage, depending on where the wedding is held.

Of course, if you plan a destination wedding, for some people this might double as their vacation. In that event, you might not want to schedule too many activities but instead let people find their own activities and entertainment both before and after the wedding.

Fun Ideas For Unity Candles

If you are planning a wedding and plan to have a unity candle as part of the ceremony, you might want to think outside the box.

Traditionally, the unity candle involves three candles. The bride has one, the groom the other, and their two lighted candles light the third candle. This is done to represent the coming together of the two people to make one unit. In some alternate methods, family members are invited to participate in the unity candle lighting, often the mothers of the bride and groom, or other close members of the family. Each family then lights a candle, and together they light the unity candle to symbolize of the coming together of the families.

Now, there are a few twists you can add to this fairly conventional aspect of a wedding ceremony. You can provide each guest with an unlit candle when they arrive at the ceremony. After the couple lights the unity candle, they can ask the guests to move to the front of the church (or wherever the ceremony is being held) and light their candles with the lighted unity candle. This can take a bit of time and might be best with a smaller guest list. But it is a meaningful way to not only get your guests involved in the ceremony itself, but also symbolize the union of family and friends with the marriage.

If there is a large guest list and it would be a prohibitive waste of time to do a candle lighting involving everyone at the ceremony, some brides and grooms like to bring the unity candle to the reception. Light the candle again and provide each guest with a small votive candle (the candle holder will be on the tables at individual table settings). As guests come into the reception area or hall, they can light their votive and take it to their table to place into the votive holder. This small votive candle can double as a wedding favor, particularly if you decorate or enhance a plain votive candleholder in some way to coordinate with your wedding.

Of course, you can forget having a unity candle at the ceremony altogether. Many brides these days are trying to reduce the length of the ceremony and spend more time planning the reception. In that light, some choose to do away with a unity candle altogether. You can certainly do this, or you can cut it out of the ceremony and make it part of the reception.

To do this, you can use the votive candle option suggested above, or you can simply incorporate the unity candle lighting into the reception activities themselves. For example, you might choose a quiet moment in the reception to have a lighting of the unity candle. It might be during a short prayer prior to the serving of the meal, or right before the cake is cut. In this case, the unity candle can then be used as decoration on the

cake table. As the bride and groom cut the cake and pieces are served to guests, the candle can also serve as a reminder of the couple's new bond and that the bond is shared with all the guests as well.

Although having a unity candle at the wedding or reception isn't necessary, it is certainly an option that many brides and grooms opt to include. But it's important to remember that as with so much surrounding wedding planning there are ways to make it unique and interesting and special to the couple getting married.

Fun Wedding Music Activities

Music is as much a component of a good wedding as food and drink. You can have a wedding without music, but it's likely it will seem a little quiet and dull. So whether you have a full live band, a string quartet, a DJ spinning tunes or recorded music from a boom box, it should be included.

But music's not just for dancing. There are a myriad of activities you can plan around the music that will add an element of fun to your wedding.

One popular idea is to play musical chairs. Sure, this is a fun kid's game and you don't want to insult your guests in any way, but you can have some fun with this version of musical chairs. The chairs can be just about anything, from chairs lined up from the food tables, to the floor, if you think your guests might be open to sitting on the floor (and then having to get up and down again). One fun option is to use the men as the chairs - they kneel on the floor, with one knee on the floor and the other bent. The women sit lightly on the men's' knees as they are playing musical chairs. When either the man or woman falls down, that couple is out, until one couple is left.

Some brides and grooms like to play musical chairs in order to give away the table centerpiece, which many guests like to take home. Instead of assigning a number and awarding the centerpiece to the person in possession of that number, you have each table play musical chairs until the person left standing is the one that gets to take home the centerpiece.

How about a rousing game of "name that tune"? This is a game that's best for a smaller, intimate wedding where everyone knows the bride and groom well. Prior to the wedding, whoever is planning the wedding should get a list of favorite songs of both the bride and groom. Create a CD of those songs, and then create a game of "name that tune". Guests can be divided into teams and then be played just a small snippet of each song.

After guests hear that first snippet, they can then "bid" on how quickly they can name the tune. So one group might say they can name the tune in 10 seconds, while the other group might say 5 seconds. Once one group has bowed out, the other group will then have to "name that tune". This is a fun game that gets everyone involved and which the bride and groom are particularly delighted by.

Depending on the style of the wedding, there are many fun games you can play to get the bride and groom out on the dance floor. Now, if this is a very large and very elegant wedding, this option might not work since there is certain decorum to maintain, but for a casual, fun, family-centered wedding some of these games can be fun.

If guests want to "call out" the wedding couple onto the dance floor, they can be asked to get out on the dance floor themselves first and hula hoop or perform their own version of a break dance. Much in the way guests sometimes have to "perform" to get the couple the kiss this is another way to get the guests involved and having fun in order to create fun wedding memories for the bride and groom.

Fun Wedding Photo Ideas

Pictures are an integral part of any wedding. Newlyweds are usually thrilled to get their pictures back from the photographer so they can relive their special day. But there are many special activities you can build into a wedding that involve photos.

One fun idea that many brides employ is to take photos of everyone as they arrive at the wedding, almost like you do at a high school prom or company Christmas party. You can provide a backdrop and couples can pose either for a paid photographer or for whoever happens to pick up the camera. These pictures can be taken with a Polaroid camera for instant fun or with a disposable camera. If you want slightly higher quality photos, go for a digital camera.

This can be an excellent way to keep guests busy and happy until the "official" reception begins with the arrival of the bride and groom.

As an extension of that idea, you can take instant photos and create scrapbook pages or memory book pages with the photos. There can be supplies on hand so guests can create pages on site, or pages can be pre-made and photos simply placed into the prepared spaces. If guests don't want to create pages on site, or the bride doesn't want this particular activity going on, the photos can be saved for later. As a gift for the bride and groom, someone can create memory books with these photos.

If Polaroid cameras are used, another option is to have the people in the photo sign the Polaroid photo and place that in a basket somewhere. The bride and groom will enjoy looking at the photos later.

While it's not a particularly unique idea, many brides like to provide disposable cameras on each table at the reception so guests can capture candid shots of the reception and the table guests. These photos can be added to the newlyweds' wedding album or they can be placed into a separate album showing the wedding from the guests' perspective.

Another fun activity sure to be entertaining is to create a "silent photo guess" area. Here's how this works: before the wedding, someone close to the bride and groom collects pictures of the bride and groom at various stages in life. The photos should depict the bride and groom doing things, not at Christmas or with their first birthday cake. In other words, the photos should include some action, but it shouldn't be obvious in the picture what has taken place or where the person is.

Much like a silent auction, people will come along and look at the photos, then take a silent guess as to what the photos show. They can write their guess on a piece of paper

and put it in a numbered basket that corresponds with the number on the photo. Reading these guesses during the reception is entertaining and sure to be amusing. The bride or groom can provide the real answers. This is a particularly fun activity at a relatively small, family wedding where the participants know the bride and groom very well.

If you want to provide an area for guests to have their photos taken but aren't thrilled with the "prom night" idea, how about having a photo corner set up somewhere in the reception hall or facility. Here, the wedding photographer will take candid shots of wedding guests. They might be couples, but could also be entire families, friends having a good time, or the groom being carried on the shoulders of the best man. Whatever the pictures end up being, they provide a fun, "let it all hang out" area for the wedding guests and a surprise for the bride and groom. Since they will likely be busy with all the reception details and having the time of THEIR lives, they might appreciate knowing their guests had a pretty good time too, as evidenced in the photos.

Kids Wedding Reception Activities

Not all brides and grooms want to exclude children from their wedding. Many are happy to welcome children into their wedding both as members of the wedding party and as guests.

Having children at a wedding, however, poses a myriad of problems. Do you leave the children to their own devices and hope they behave and don't get in the way? Do you provide a room with childcare so they are "present" but not too much under foot? Perhaps the best solution is a simple mix of both, with a smattering of fun built in.

First of all, if children are invited to the wedding, take into consideration the ages of the children. Babies will have to stay with mom and/or dad, for a variety of reasons. So planning to have all the children in another room might not be feasible. But if the children are toddlers up to about age 12, you can provide a separate room for them with childcare and a make a number of activities available to them.

If the children will be in a separate room at the reception, you can provide a coloring table, perhaps a TV with an appropriate movie ready to roll, and some board games. That could probably be enough for the duration of the wedding reception. Be aware of a few things: there should be a ratio of at least 1 adult for every 5 children if the children are toddlers, or 1 adult to every 10 children if the kids are older. Don't expect the kids to take up the activities on their own, but rather tell the childcare provider to get the kids involved in the activities by doing them him or herself.

What if the children will be part of the reception festivities? What activities can be geared specifically to children at the reception? There are plenty of things you can do, really. You can certainly plan a coloring table at the back of the reception hall or room. There, you can provide loads of paper, coloring books, markers and crayons. Paints are not recommended, for obvious reasons, and moms will thank you if you remember to supply the kids with washable markers and crayons only.

The art table can be more than just coloring, however. Buy a huge bag of pipe cleaners. Kids can amuse themselves for long periods of time, making animals, odd figures and the like. Make sure you have at least 20 or more pipe cleaners for each child, however, as children can go through these quickly. Think about "clean" clay, the new products that don't stick to anything and don't leave a trace on furniture. With a few different colors, kids can create a variety of figures, faces or forms.

Many brides like to plan more formally for their small guests. There are several options if this is the route you want to take. One popular option is to have paid entertainment on

hand just for the children. This can take place in a separate room or toward the back of the reception room or hall if it's large and the guest list is big. You can hire a clown or a balloon artist. You can have someone braid the children's hair and provide temporary tattoos. If there is a separate room available, you can even hire a children's musician to come and entertain the kids. The options are endless.

If no plans are made for the children, but they arrive at the wedding expecting entertainment, you'll have to make some plans. One option is a "child only" dance, which allows only the children on the dance floor. This is not only cute to watch, and could be entertaining as well, but it will bring a smile to the face of every grandma and grandpa present.

Outdoor Wedding Reception Activities

If you are having your wedding reception out of doors, that opens the door for many activities that would be hard to pull off indoors. You can plan games and activities based on the outdoor theme and carry that theme indoors if part of the reception is inside as well.

Depending on where the reception will be held, you can plan many activities based on the setting. Whether it is the park or on a farm, there are a myriad of activities you can plan.

Let's start with some basics based on popular wedding locations. One fun game for a winery wedding is a blindfolded wine tasting game. If the bride and groom are wine drinkers, this might not a game the bride and groom should be a part of, but instead guests and wedding party members. Blindfold perhaps a half dozen volunteers and have them do a blind taste test (provide something to clean the palate between sips). The volunteers should guess which wine is the pinot noir, which is the Cabernet, and so on. A bottle of wine is the obvious prize for the winner of this game.

Say you are having a reception at a country club on a golf course. It's possible your theme will include golf elements, so why not include golf in some reception activities or games? You certainly could head to the golf course for a "hole in one" contest, or have a driving contest to see which guest has the best stroke. As a simple, "who gets the centerpiece game", you could have people guess how many golf balls there are in the floral centerpiece (which could decorate a plain large glass vase filled with flowers). Similarly, there could be a large vase or other clear container filled with golf balls at the reception somewhere and guests could guess how many golf balls are in the vase.

A silly game could be made on the dance floor by asking everyone to include their best golf swing into their dancing for one particular song.

Now, if your reception and ceremony are both to be held outdoors and guests will be milling outdoors, think about games or activities that can take place outdoors and still keep to your level of formality or informality. For example, if the reception is being held at a park, perhaps guests might enjoy a "walk down memory lane". Prior to the reception, someone can use potted plants or arbors to create a little private lane, which guests can walk through. Along the path, guests will find pictures of the bride and groom at various stages in their lives. There should be a place for guests to record their thoughts and memories along the way as well.

If your wedding and reception are fairly casual, you can always tell guests ahead of time to prepare for a ball game or some other fun outdoor activity. Women can bring a pair of

sneakers. Just imagine the fun photos you'll get out of a rousing game of football or baseball played by women in dresses and sneakers and men in suits and sneakers!

You can provide a challenge activity involving barefoot dancing in the grass or a Frisbee toss in the backyard. Is there a pool in the yard where the reception will be held? Why not have a swimming activity for after the whole of the reception is done?

Overnight Wedding Reception Ideas

Some brides these days are turning wedding receptions on their head and creating super long receptions that run through the night and into the morning. If this is you, planning some activities for those long nighttime hours is essential.

Generally, if an all-night reception is planned, it goes something like this: the wedding is held in the early evening and reception follows. By about midnight, many of the guests will have left and the group that is remaining (generally the younger guests, but not always) will continue to dance and party and revel into the early morning hours. At some point, breakfast will be provided and everyone will go home to crash.

Why do you need activities for such a reception? The answer is simple. You want to keep people entertained through the nighttime hours, you want to keep them at the reception and not let them give in to driving home to crash and sleep and you want to provide them with a real party. Let's face it: if they are willing to hang in with you for the duration, they deserve something for their effort.

First, you need to be fairly organized about the activities you plan. Consult with your DJ about these activities and leave it to him or her to keep things on a schedule. Do not plan to cut cake in the middle of the night. That activity should take place during the more traditional evening hours, so those not intending to stay all night can leave. However, if you're determined to keep your guests all night, you could hold one activity back with the hope it will keep guests in the house longer.

Depending on your guest list, you might hold off on the father-daughter dance until after midnight, or you could save a few toasts for the late night hours. In any event, having some other fun events is a great idea.

As guests begin to fade, bring in a piñata, which you can find shaped like a wedding ring, a bridal dress or a champagne flute. Fill it with a variety of goodies. Candy is always popular, but you could also fill it with silly toys found in the carnival section of the party store. Have the DJ play a spirited song and let everyone have a chance at the piñata. Do this on the dance floor and really let people have a swing at it. There should be plenty of room. Once the piñata breaks, everyone can enjoy a taste of sweet candy or can enjoy some silly little carnival game or toy.

People who stay for the duration of the wedding are going to need a rest. Plan a photo presentation or video viewing for this purpose. You could have someone who's familiar with PowerPoint create a photo presentation or have someone put together a video of photos. Do this around 2 or 3 am and have it last a good half hour to 45 minutes. This

gives everyone a chance to sit down and relax and also gives the DJ a chance to sit, have a rest and rejuvenate for the next round.

In that same vein of allowing the guests a little relaxation, one activity that some brides employ is a non-activity. If the wedding is outside, you can provide inflatable mattresses and have some torches lit. If guests want to sit down and relax, they can do so on the mattresses and still be part of the activity while resting. If it's been a long day and someone needs to rest, those reception room chairs don't seem the most comfortable. If the reception is indoors, think about providing large pillows for guests to sit on or create a corner with inflatable mattresses and lots of fabric. This can be a chatting area where people can go to rest but still be part of the fun. They can chat and catch up with other guests and then head back for more partying when they're rejuvenated.

Post Wedding Activities

For many couples, the wedding is not over once the reception is. Depending on the location of the wedding and the couple's relationship with their families, often there are other activities that follow the main event.

One of the most obvious is a breakfast the day following the wedding. This is a time for everyone to touch base with each other, check in on how everyone did and perhaps share memories of the night before. This breakfast activity can be as simple or elaborate as you like. Some people like to have this breakfast at a relative's house because that is friendly and familiar and more conducive to everyone hanging out and enjoying themselves. It can be potluck style or catered. You can also meet up at a restaurant.

Many families like to have the bride and groom open presents the day after the wedding. There are many who believe the bride and groom are required to open presents in the presence of family for good luck. In that case, building in the opening of presents is essential. This can be a simple gathering of friends and family or you can turn the present opening into an all-out activity, where each item is opened, demonstrated or displayed and discussed in great detail.

Opening gifts doesn't have to be a dry activity. You can add some silly fun. How about starting with the smallest and moving to the largest gifts? Or working in the reverse order? You might even create a game. Everyone has to guess what's in each gift prior to its being opened. (Of course, people can't guess on their own gifts.) Someone can be in charge of keeping a tally and whoever gets the most right, wins a small prize.

The women in the bride's family might want to help her pack up her gown (or send it to the dry cleaners) and preserve her wedding bouquet. This can easily be done at home and the women (particularly those who are crafty) might want to get started on preserving the flowers as well.

In the crafty light, some brides might want to plan a scrapbook party for after the wedding. You won't have photos back from the photographer, but you can scrapbook many other wedding events, such as pre-events like manicures, various parties and the candid photos taken by wedding guests the night before. More than being focused on the photos, this activity gives the women a chance to reflect on the events of the wedding, laugh at all the fun times and journal and preserve memories before some are lost. It will also help the bride feel as if she's partly in control of all those photos before she leaves on her honeymoon and takes yet more photos.

If gifts were opened on this "day after the wedding", crafty groups might want to make thank you cards. Choose a design long before the wedding, perhaps even making a

prototype as well. Then have all the supplies on hand and give everyone good ideas about how the cards should be made. Even the men can get on this act, helping to fold the cards, perhaps handling any computer work and even getting their fingers on glue and scissors. Send the bride and groom off with these homemade cards so when they get back from their honeymoon, all they have to do is jot off a quick note.

Some brides and grooms plan activities the day after the wedding that are designed to help everyone calm down, relax and unwind after what has likely been a busy weekend. In this light, you can plan a picnic at the park and bring along games to play. You might pack a football, a volleyball net or items to play baseball. You might bring along water guns or a dartboard. Whatever it is, the idea here is to have some fun and blow off steam. Make your own rules when playing the games. It really doesn't matter. Today is about relaxing, unwinding and spending some quality time with friends and family before the special weekend is over.

Pre Wedding Reception Activities

There are so many little details to worry about when planning a wedding some might get forgotten. One tiny detail that often gets overlooked is how to keep guests entertained before the wedding reception "officially" begins.

There is no requirement that brides entertain their guests at all. After all, they have already attended your wedding ceremony (which was surely engaging and entertaining, right?) and they will soon get music, food and drink. What more could they want? It turns out, a lot. While the bride and groom are off having pictures taken, the guests are left to their own devices, chatting with other guests and wondering when the buffet will open.

In that light, it's worth at least considering some pre-reception options for keeping wedding guests entertained until the reception begins. Here are a few options, some tradition, some not so, but still fun.

First, you can do the traditional thing and provide guests with drinks and perhaps some light snacks. If the wedding is in the summertime, how about providing lemonade and iced tea? Or if it's the winter, coffee and hot tea or even hot cocoa depending on the style of your wedding. Providing a light snack isn't a bad idea, either, and that can be some appetizer-type food or just nuts, especially if the meal will be heavy.

Now, if you want to stray from tradition, there are many options. Some brides opt for entertaining the guests in the truest sense of the word. Clowns, anyone? How about live music?

If you want to venture into the fun and funky, consult the party planning pages of a local children's or parent's magazine. Here, you can find people who will entertain your children at their birthday parties, but many of them will happily take on wedding jobs. You can hire a clown to make balloon animals for the kids (and adults) in attendance, or to juggle a few things. Some clowns are true entertainers and will happily get the crowd involved by fetching items out of women's purses and juggling them.

Other non-traditional options for entertaining your guests include hiring a band to play music beforehand. If you plan to have classical music at your wedding, you can have a band come and play covers of current pop songs, or you can simply have your hired band arrive a bit early to entertain guests waiting for the full reception to begin.

If there are many children at the wedding, it's not too expensive to hire a children's band to sing and entertain the children for a bit. Then if the kids are a bit bored at the reception, they'll still have the memory of the earlier entertainment with them. In

addition, while the children are being entertained, the adults can have a chance to chat and they will surely thank the bride for thinking of them in that way.

Some other options for entertaining your restless crowd before the festivities begin are to include them in the reception before it begins. This is a great time to ask people to sign the guest book and write something meaningful, since they will have more time than they would usually have as they file into the reception hall.

If the reception and the wedding ceremony take place in the same location, but the bride and groom are off having pictures taken, it may not seem as if there's this dilemma of how to keep the guests entertained, but there in fact, is.

In this case, you can have servers circulate with appetizer trays or you can do something more elaborate, such as some of the suggestions above. One popular option doesn't involve entertaining the guests at all. Say the wedding is being held at a historic house or mansion. During the lull before the reception, guests can be given a tour of the property. If the wedding and reception are both being held at the couple's new home, a tour of the property might be in order (assuming the guest list is fairly small).

Pre Wedding Activities

Planning pre-wedding activities is a little something extra that's not required, but certainly fun and entertaining for the guests. If the bride and groom keep in mind the distance some guests have traveled and keep activities relevant to that level of fatigue, they're sure to hit on some winning activities.

As you go about planning activities for the wedding, keep in mind other factors as well. Do many people have children with them? Will you provide childcare or will the children be participants in the activities? If you have several guests who are older, perhaps activities can be tailored in a way they can participate as well.

Some of the more popular pre-wedding activities include things like a group manicure. All the women in the wedding party or who are close to the bride (and certainly this could include men if they like manicures and want to hang out with the ladies) head to a nail salon and get their nails done. This can be relaxing for many women and provide a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of the wedding weekend. The men might choose to golf or play a game of tennis while this is going on.

Many brides and grooms choose to provide structured activities for their guests prior to the wedding. If the wedding is on a Saturday night, for example, they might choose to provide a Friday activity, especially if most guests are local to the wedding. You might have a wedding luau. Many times pre-wedding activities center around bachelor and bachelorette parties, but what about a stag party that includes all the members of the brides and grooms families? You could plan some fun (and appropriate) games and head out to a restaurant for a night of fun and games. Be sure to limit the drinking and carousing as this might not sit well with some family members.

Here is a fun activity that can be done right before the wedding. Have someone begin a gift basket. The theme of the basket is "advice for the couple" and could be started by the best man or maid of honor. They take the basket to someone else's house, perhaps an aunt or cousin and leave it on the doorstep. That person adds an item (a book on how to end spousal arguments? Or a CD of romantic music?) and brings the basket to someone else's house. This activity can begin a week or two before the wedding and everyone should know it is coming around.

The basket can also be circulated the weekend of the wedding, but this will only work if everyone is local and if they know the basket is coming. In this case, it also might be helpful to have someone bring the basket to a house, collect the item and then take the basket to the next location, reducing the need to have each person take the basket to its next location. Once it's full, someone can be in charge of putting the basket items

together, wrapping it all up to make it look nice and bringing it to the bride and groom. It can be delivered right to the wedding as a gift in and of itself.

Whatever activities you choose, be sure to keep in mind the needs of your guests and the limitations of those guests. If you want to plan an activity that includes everyone, and you choose golf, but grandpa is in a wheelchair or uses a walker, that might not be the best activity to plan.

Seated Wedding Reception Games

Nothing is worse than having a wedding reception filled with seated guests who look tired and maybe a little bit bored. Maybe this wedding doesn't feature a DJ and rockin' music. Or maybe the crowd isn't into that whole dancing thing.

What to do? It's not that hard. There are a myriad of activities you can plan that will not only engage and entertain the guests, but also help them get to know each other and - most importantly - the bride and groom just a little bit better.

Here's one that's fun and might remind you just a little bit of a football game. Make a placard for each guest. On one side, letter "Bride" and on the other, "Groom". Someone, and if you have a DJ it can be him or her, or the best man or maid of honor, asks a series of questions. They might be simple, like "who was born in New York City"? Or they might be more complicated, such as "who, at 6, broke their leg when they were playing with their German shepherd puppy"?

Guests don't yell their answer, but rather show their placard, turning it to the "bride" side if they think the question pertains to the bride or to the "groom" side if it's the opposite. The guests' guesses can be revealing, but even more revealing, are the true answers. It's a great, fun way for everyone to get to know a little more about the bride and groom.

One word of caution about the above activity: Keep ex-boyfriends and ex-girlfriends out of the questions and don't ask anything that might be a little too revealing or too risqué. Remember, grandmothers and grandfathers and young children will likely be present!

If it's too much work to create signs for each person, you can create just two and create two teams - a team of men and a team of women. Grouped together, the teams can work together to decide on the answer and answer as a group. This "men versus women" concept is always popular and sure to be fun for everyone.

One silly game that's always a hit really puts the groom in the spotlight. How well does he know the feel and touch of his new wife? In this game, everyone finds out. You can do this several ways. You can enlist just the wedding party in this game, or as many of the wedding guests that want to participate.

Line each participant up and blindfold the groom. Put the bride somewhere in the mix, and send the groom on a hunt for his bride. The participants can either shake the groom's hand or give him a kiss on the cheek. In some versions, he might feel their hair or their leg. The details are up to you.

Depending on how far you want to take this game, you can add a fun element to it that is sometimes popular. You have the groom feel the leg of each participant. The best man, or other male member of the wedding party, rolls up his pant leg, puts on a garter and has the groom feel that. The groom has to kiss whoever he thinks is his bride, while still blindfolded. Often, he ends up kissing a man.

For an activity that allows the guests to be audience members instead of participants, consider the game of "feed me". In this game, the bride is seated and the groom is (again) blindfolded. He's given a piece of food and then spun around a few times so he's a little bit dizzy. Guided only by the helpful words of his new bride, he has to find her and get the piece of food into her mouth. Be sure to have the wedding party shadowing him so there are no accidents.

Once the groom has fed his new wife, the tables are turned and she is blindfolded and must find him.

A few notes about this activity: when feeding the bride, don't use wedding cake or a piece of bread with dip. In other words, don't use anything too messy. If the groom has a hard time finding her mouth, he might likely smear the food on the bride's face and that is something that won't make a bride - prettily made up just hours before - too happy.

Wedding Cake Activities

Upon arrival at the wedding reception, many guests head for the cake table so they can admire the cake. Some time later, the bride and groom come along for a picture opportunity and the grand cutting of the cake. Then everyone enjoys cake and it's gone. Believe it or not, there are many more activities that can make the wedding cake more about fun and less about tradition.

Of course, watching the bride and groom push cake into each other's mouths is a long-enjoyed tradition, but there are many more fun - and less messy - activities to consider as well.

One new option that's gaining popularity is to have cupcakes instead of a cake. This is a method that is usually more affordable than having a cake and it can be a lot of fun. Cupcakes are decorated in alignment with the wedding theme, just as a cake is, but the cupcakes are instead arranged on tiered cake plates and displayed on a cake table until it's time to eat them. The cupcakes can be simply handed out on plates to each wedding guest.

Now, what's fun about using cupcakes instead of a whole wedding cake is you can save money, certainly, as many reception halls and caterers charge a per slice fee to cut and serve the wedding cake, but you can also build activities into the cupcake presentation. For example, the cupcakes that are for the bride and groom can have a different decoration than the ones for the guests.

As an extra touch, you can have the baker include a special prize in one or several cupcakes. A small charm or tiny toy can be baked into the cupcake. Whoever gets the charm wins a special prize. These prizes can range from a gift basket or gift certificate to a restaurant to a dance with the bride or groom.

Some brides like to use a Southern tradition and have charms baked into the wedding cake. Similar to the idea above for cupcakes, this involves baking small charms or tiny toys (but usually charms) into the cake. Those who get one of the charms are said to have good luck. You might even consider having charm bracelet charms baked into the cake, which are then made into a charm bracelet for the bride.

Not everyone enjoys cake. How about an activity for those who won't be eating cake? They can be required to do the "Macarena" or the chicken dance during the time when everyone else is eating cake. If they manage to do the dance continuously while the other guests enjoy cake, they win a prize. Or they simply get to sit down, as now they are tired!

In keeping with the dance during cake theme, how about a requirement that in order to get cake, a guest must perform an impromptu dance first? Or there could be trivia questions about the bride and groom or about popular culture. Guests must correctly answer the questions before getting their cake. There could be competitions among tables or individuals for most questions answered correctly.

Many people believe that once the cake is cut, they are free to leave if they wish. Since cake cutting usually comes after the meal and after dancing and other traditional celebration activities, many people take the opportunity to leave the party after the cake is cut and enjoyed.

If the bride and groom want their guests to stay after the cake is eaten, it is worth some extra effort to build some activities into the cake-cutting event so people will stick around longer. This can be as simple as telling people not to leave, or can be more subtle and fun.

For example, each person could receive a slip of paper with his or her cake. These slips of paper could be prepared ahead and provided to the catering company with instructions that one folded strip of paper be placed on each plate with the cake. The paper might give an agenda for the rest of the evening or might ask its recipient to perform a little dance, to head over to give the groom or bride a kiss, or might ask them to take the flower girl out on the dance floor for a spin. The unknown will keep all the guests guessing and provide some entertainment as the instructions are carried out.

Wedding Guest Book Activities

Traditional brides don't have to have traditional guest books. Certainly you can purchase a standard guest book and ask your guests to sign it, but there are so many more guest book-like activities that are more unique.

Let's move from the popular to the less well known. One very popular option allows guests to sign a picture of the bride and groom. Simply take a picture of the bride and groom and have it matted in a mat several inches larger than the photo itself. Place a frame around this, but don't include the glass or Plexiglas frame. You'll add this later. Some people prefer to use "bulldog" clips to keep the mat together instead of putting the picture in the frame. The picture can be framed after the wedding.

Most couples choose a nice photo of themselves for this picture/guestbook option, although if there's a formal engagement photo, this is an excellent way to preserve that photo and show it off to friends and family. If photos are taken before the wedding with the bride and groom in their wedding attire, you can certainly use this photo. Many couples opt to either leave the mat empty or they place a temporary picture in the mat and add a wedding picture later.

Be sure to have a nice Sharpie marker handy and place the picture on either a sturdy easel or on a table where guests are sure to see it.

Another option is instead of providing a picture of the bride and groom to sign, the guests are provided with a picture of themselves! Simply provide a Polaroid camera and assign someone the job of taking pictures of the guests as they arrive at the reception. Once the picture is dry, provide a Sharpie and they can sign the picture, make a note to the bride and groom or hand draw a silly picture. It can be whatever the guest wants it to be. This is a unique, and personal, way for guests to "sign in" at the wedding.

Whoever handles the taking of the pictures should also handle putting them in an album of some sort. A scrap booker might provide a special memory book with the Polaroid pictures in it, or the pictures can simply be placed in a nice album and presented later to the bride and groom.

Many guests don't give a great deal of thought to the guest book. They whiz by the guest book table more concerned with getting their cocktail and hitting the dance floor. If this is a concern, provide a "traveling" guest book. Send each guest something either to sign or decorate before the wedding.

In this "traveling" guest book scenario, there are several options. One of the easiest is to send each guest a small piece of paper and ask them to write something meaningful or thoughtful for the bride and groom on it. The pieces of paper are returned prior to the wedding (to ensure a better response, provide a self-addressed stamped envelope with the paper) and can be compiled in some meaningful way for the bride and groom and presented to them on their wedding day.

If the guest list is a creative or particularly close group, there is one other option that is even more meaningful. Again, in a scrapbook fashion, send each guest a piece of paper to sign or decorate. The paper should be the size of a photo album, so it might be a 6 x 6 piece of paper, an 8 x 8 piece of paper, or even 12 x 12, if the guests are up to that larger size.

In a letter that arrives with the paper, the guests are instructed to create a memory page for the bride and groom. They might include photos, quotes, little anecdotal stories, or combine all of these with stickers or embellishments. It's thoughtful, meaningful and personal and it's an excellent way to include guests who might not be able to attend the wedding, but would still like to be a part of it.

Wedding Rehearsal Dinner Games

Wedding rehearsal dinners are a time to relax, calm down and enjoy a quiet evening before the big event the next day. But adding some fun and games into the rehearsal dinner isn't such a bad idea. It's a great way to help everyone let off some steam, calm down and enjoy each other.

If you're planning a sit-down formal dinner, fun games and activities can still be on the menu. In fact, if a formal dinner is part of the plans, having some interesting activities on the agenda is not only a good idea, but also an excellent one. There's been a lot of planning, and a lot of stress and the wedding party and close friends and family will welcome the opportunity to have a little fun.

The success or failure of any games or activities largely depends not just on the planning but your venue. If you're having a sit-down dinner in a restaurant, try to get a private room. Then a myriad of fun activities can be planned, such as "pin the veil on the bride", in which blindfolded guests spin around a few times, then try to pin the veil on a picture of the bride. Silly, yes, but also fun.

One fun activity sure to help everyone blow off some steam is charades. Whoever is up will act out a scene from the bride or groom's life, so it might be when graduating from college, or getting a huge promotion at work. The "it" person might choose to act out when the bride tripped and fell at another person's wedding or when the groom saved a dog from getting hit by a car. This is a little twist on charades that helps people get to know the bride and groom better, and adds intimacy to what is already an intimate event.

If the wedding rehearsal dinner is a bit less formal and held in someone's home, there are many more activities that can take place. For example, how about a night of playing board games? Who needs formal food? You can have that the next day at the formal wedding. At this rehearsal dinner party, the games are center stage.

Bring in some sandwiches and tell everyone to wear their comfortable clothes and settle in for a night of board games. You can set up games on different tables, divide people into groups of 4 or 5 and have everyone rotate tables at designated times. You can even instruct game players that when they move to another table, the game stays out the way it is. So, for example, dad might begin playing Monopoly where the bride was and he's stuck with only a little money in the bank and no houses on Boardwalk.

So, let's say the bride and groom are big into sports. If the wedding is to be held in the summer and the days are long, how about a game of touch football or baseball? You can play bride's family against groom's family, men against women, or for a twist, the bride

plays with the groom's family and the groom with the bride's family. Any combination works. The idea here is to have some fun, relax and enjoy each other's company.

Other outdoor activities can include anything that is physical and might help people blow off steam. Has the bride been more a "bridezilla" than anything? How about a game of tag where she's it? Or you can create two bridesmaid's dress-up trunks. Go to a thrift store, fill the trunks with old prom dresses and large-size shoes, and costume jewelry. Divide the guests into two different teams and have someone sit with a timer. The team who dresses one of the men (ideally, the groom and best man or perhaps the two dads) first wins. Be sure to have a camera at the rehearsal dinner/event, because this is one activity you'll want to have pictures of!

Wedding Toast Activities

Giving a toast is a responsibility that puts fear in the speaking hearts of most members of a wedding party. While it's not usually something that is particularly long or involved, it's public speaking (which doesn't sit well with many people) and really puts people on the spot.

If you are planning a wedding and know that most members of this wedding party are hams who won't mind the whole "public speaking" thing, then by all means keep the toasts traditional with dad, the best man and others taking their expected turns at the microphone.

But if you're looking for something different, either because you want to save putting people on the spot, or you simply want to do something different and fun, read on.

First, you can certainly take the whole toast thing off the agenda if you wish. There are no rules requiring a toast at any wedding. Weddings should be unique events and reflect the personalities of the bride and groom.

But if you want to do something a little different, there are options. You can go the video route, which asks people to essentially make a toast on camera and then the video is given to the bride and groom later. This isn't a particularly unique idea, but it does solve the issue of not wanting to put people on the spot and still gives everyone a chance to say something special to the bride and groom.

If your guest list includes many outgoing people then consider "pass the microphone". This can work in several ways. You can either be silly with it, or deadly serious. Most people like silly. Say dad takes the microphone first. His last name ends with T (so, let's say dad's last name is Smith). He must find someone whose first name begins with a T (Tom? Tony? Tina? Theresa?) and pass the microphone to that person, who then gives a toast.

This method of giving toasts does put people on the spot (certainly before the fun begins you can warn them so if they are really uncomfortable, they can escape to the restroom or bar) but it can also be a lot of fun. Getting people when they least expect it and then asking them to remember something funny or meaningful about the bride and groom can result in interesting, funny and truthful results.

You might also decide that one person at each table be required to give a toast. Number the tables and at various intervals, have the MC or DJ call a number, which will require guests at that table to decide amongst themselves who will give the toast at that table.

Certainly, more than one person can if they like, but there will likely be at least one ham at each table who will enjoy standing up and toasting the newlyweds.

Say you have plenty of public speakers in the group, and finding willing toast participants won't be a problem. But you think the subject matter might be. There's an easy solution to this problem. You can provide open-ended topics for the toast speakers. Say you are providing an "open mike" toast arrangement, where anyone can request the microphone and offer a toast. The DJ, MC or someone else in the wedding party (perhaps the maid of honor or best man) can offer the speaker a surprise topic, which might be pulled from a champagne flute or drawn out of the floral arrangement on the head table. There might be slips of paper to choose, or just one sheet of paper with several ideas.

The speaker might choose to finish this sentence, "I remember when (groom's name here) was a little boy, he always ..." or answer this question, "When was (insert bride's name here) at her silliest? Tell us the story". You might have to give each speaker a minute or two to collect their thoughts, but you're sure to have some interesting stories, some unique anecdotes and some different perspectives on the bride and groom.

Wedding Weekend Activities

Weekend weddings are becoming more popular, particularly as families are spread further apart. They usually begin on Friday night, continue with the wedding Saturday and conclude with a post-wedding breakfast on Sunday before everyone returns home.

Planning activities for these weekend-long celebrations doesn't have to be difficult; in fact, it can be quite a bit of fun if you keep everyone's needs in mind. First, consider the wedding. Will this be a formal wedding with a sit-down dinner at its center? If so, you might want to ban a formal rehearsal dinner and replace it instead with an informal barbecue dinner or picnic.

There are many activities to consider. Will the wedding be near a lake? How about planning a day at the lake on Saturday, filled with pre-wedding activities like swimming races and beach volleyball.

One popular pre-wedding activity is a scavenger hunt. Prior to the wedding weekend, a list of meaningful items should be drawn up, and guests placed in two teams. The list should include things like "get a brochure from the jewelry store where (groom) bought (bride)'s ring" or "take a picture of the group at the location where the couple got engaged". You will have to tailor the scavenger hunt list to the location of the wedding and the energy of the guests who will be participating.

You can even offer lavish prizes for the team that wins the scavenger hunt, such as gift certificates or gourmet food and wine baskets. It might seem an obvious choice to divide the teams into groups who know or are related to the bride and teams who know or are related to the groom, but it might be a little more fun to mix it up a bit. You can create teams of friends versus family, or men versus women (always a popular choice).

Another activity that's popular during wedding weekends is a competitive sport activity, such as baseball or flag football. Again, add a special twist. Offer prizes for performance (first home run gets a kiss from the bride) or make silly rules, like members of the bridal party have to wear tiaras while running bases or members of the groom's family should always have their shirts on backwards.

It's important that during the wedding weekend, planners keep in mind that the weekend itself might be expensive for some guests, particularly those who had to fly in for the occasion and many of the activities should be free, or inexpensive. If they are more expensive, and planned for the entire group, they should be paid for by either the bride and groom or their families.

But there are plenty of activities that don't have to be expensive, but can provide big bang for the little buck, such as the scavenger hunt suggested above. If the wedding weekend guests will mostly be family, you can schedule a home movie-viewing event, including home movies from both the bride and groom's families. For even more fun, consider an activity where the movies are mixed up and the guests have to guess which family's videos they are watching. This might sound easy, but depending on the contents, it could be hard, particularly if the bride and groom are babies in the photos.