



The Essential E-Book for Bridesmaid's



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 **AVALON**
PRE-MARRIAGE COURSES

Chapter One

You've got the floor-sweeping frock, a churchful of family and friends and a handsome man waiting at the altar. There's just one hitch – it's not you who's getting hitched.

Having weathered everything from break-ups to backpacking together, being asked to be a bridesmaid is the ultimate badge of honour when it comes to friendship.

Like Julia Roberts in *My Best Friend's Wedding* however, the responsibility can also turn out to be the ultimate test of that friendship too.

From endless dress fittings to hen party headaches – not to mention the expense, bridesmaid duty brings with it all the stress of organising a wedding but few of the perks. After months of tears, tantrums and taxiing, the very least a girl could expect at the end of it all is a husband!

Blending into the wallpaper on the big day, bridesmaids may wind up feeling more like runner-up than their best bud's right-hand woman agrees. Weddingstyle.ie relationship expert David Kavanagh.

“Being asked to be a bridesmaid should be considered an honour,” says David. “It's a symbol of a close friendship between you and the bride – that you're someone she's happy to immortalise in the wedding album.”

“For a lot of women however, that initial excitement can be tempered by the fact that they don't have the time, money or knowledge to put into the job of bridesmaid – and it is a job!”

“The bridesmaid is there to lend moral and practical support to the bride throughout the entire process. Between the expense and stress however, by the time the ceremony comes around, being bridesmaid may not feel like the honour it first seemed.”

Remember, as you wipe her snotty nose with a tissue or get dragged around the dance floor by her drunken uncle, that you too have a friend who's hopefully prepared to return the favour some day.

“It's a privilege for your friend to ask you to be her bridesmaid,” reckons recent bridesmaid Trisha (28). “In the months leading up to the wedding, you'll find out a lot about your best friend you didn't know before – so it can actually strengthen your friendship.

“Sure, it can be inconvenient at times,” she adds, “but I loved being part of my best friend's big day - and I look forward to the day when she does the same for me!”

From hen party to hubbie drama, here we reveal how to become the bridesmaid with the most.

Chapter Two

If you've just landed the gig of bridesmaid , congratulations – you're clearly a great mate!

But what if you're stoney broke, sporting a baby bump or barely know the bride and would prefer not be invited to her big day at all– let alone play a pivotal part in the wedding party. Is it OK to reject a bride who pops the question, or is it the kiss of death to pal-dom?

No more than the affianced couple themselves, would-be bridesmaids should think long and hard before making such a commitment advises David Kavanagh.

“If you're asked to be a bridesmaid, think about it,” he says, “don't automatically assume you have to say yes – you don't.”

“Saying 'No' to a bride is difficult – and you might not get an invite to the wedding afterwards , but it's better to be upfront.

“If you think you won't have time or energy to dedicate to the position, it's easier to say 'No' from the start than to let the bride down later. I've seen cases where someone has agreed to be bridesmaid but then been too busy to attend dress fittings or the hen party – it causes a nightmare.”
Dubliner Deborah (23) braved turning down her own sister.

“The main reason I said ' No' to being my sister's bridesmaid was because I was a really awkward teenager,” she tells. “ I was terrified of the thought of having to walk up the aisle in a big meringue dress and maybe tripping in the heels and ending up with my knickers on display!”

“It may sound selfish, but I didn't want to be on duty all day either. I wanted to enjoy the wedding. Deep down, I think my sister knew I'd say 'No' and only asked out of obligation – in fact, I think secretly she'd have been annoyed if I had said 'Yes' !”

Then there are the times when an invitation to precede the bride down the aisle is so bizarre or out of the blue that the only appropriate response is: 'Ye Wha'?
Beware the frenemy bride, warns relationship expert David.

“ It's not unheard of for brides to only ask friends who aren't as photogenic as they are to be their bridesmaid,” he says. “Turning the role of bridesmaid into some kind of vanity project cheapens the entire experience, so brides should make sure they're asking their friend for the right reasons. “On other occasions, bridesmaids may feel like they're only there to bump up the numbers – especially if they're not that close to the bride.”

“Another friend of mine said 'No' to being a bridesmaid because she wasn't even friends with the girl,” adds Deborah. “She reckons she got the sympathy vote because her mum had just died. In the end, she didn't even go to the wedding.”

Chapter Three

So apart from looking good (although not too good !) in the photos, what exactly is expected of you as a bridesmaid?

Depending on whether the star of the show is laid-back or a Bridezilla, the level of elbow grease in the run-up to the big day can vary wildly say these bride-flanking ladies.

“Every bride is different,” says Siobhán (28), who was her sister's bridesmaid abroad last year, “but inevitably there is a lot of travel, shopping, taking time off work and expense involved. You also have to listen to her talking non-stop about the wedding!”

“There is a lot of hard slog both before and after the wedding,” agrees Katie (30), who was also part of her sister's bridal party. “In our case, tasks involved included going to dress fittings and hair and make up trials, organising the hen party, flowers, cake and band, sending out the invites, making a seating plan and greeting guests.

“For me, organising the hen party was the most stressful part though – it starts off with 50 people going and suddenly when you have everything booked, only ten turn up.”

“The bride and bridesmaid can have vastly different ideas of what's expected of one another,” adds Katie. “In retrospect, I wish I'd had some kind of guidelines as to what exactly was expected of me as a bridesmaid. I ended up doing a lot of chores I would have thought were the responsibility of the bride herself – and got absolutely no thanks for it!”

We asked wedding guru David Kavanagh to clear up any confusion on the matter.

“Basically the bridesmaid's job is to offer support and advice to her friend as she prepares for her big day,” he says. “However, if the bride is feeling overwhelmed or finding things too stressful, it may also mean mucking in on a more practical level – such as negotiating with the florist or making sure all the paperwork is in order.

“In reality, it should be the groom who carries out most of the chores delegated to the bridesmaid. Unfortunately in Irish society, men tend to take a back seat during the wedding planning.”

Despite the title though, you are not in fact the bride's maid. From best friend to super-bitch, don't allow yourself to become the bride's general dogsbody urges David.

“It's a good idea to set yourself a limit on what you will tolerate from the bride,” he suggests.

“For instance, you might be willing to tolerate a tantrum or nasty phone call because she's stressed out. But if you wouldn't accept that in normal circumstances, then don't accept it in the run-up to the wedding either.

“TV shows like Bridezilla have almost given brides permission to behave badly ahead of their big day,” he adds.

“It's not going to make you feel good about yourself when you walk down the aisle, knowing that the person walking behind you has treated you like dirt for the past 12 months - so don't accept it.”



Chapter Four

Rom-com *27 Dresses* poked fun at the frequent awfulness of bridesmaid fashion. For real-life bridesmaids however, there's nothing funny about the prospect of being forced to wear an offensive frock in public.

From dire designs to stomach-churning shades, there's even a website called UglyDress.com dedicated to the world's worst bridesmaid dresses.

“That was another reason I didn't want to be my sister's bridesmaid,” jokes Deborah. “I had nightmares about the dress I'd have to wear - she's not known for her fashion sense!”

Whether hourglass or boyish, tall or petite, in the past bridesmaids could anticipate being stuffed like sausage meat into a 'One size fits all' gown seemingly tailor-made solely to make the bride look better.

Unless the bride is especially cruel though, attack of the clone-style bridesmaid dresses have been consigned to fashion infamy says Weddingstyle.ie Editor Paula Burns.

“For the most part, the tradition of the bride putting her bridesmaid into a hideous dress just to make herself look amazing is long gone,” she says. “After all, if the bridesmaids look horrendous, so will the photos!”

“Brides have come to realize that we're not all the same shape and while a halter neck may suit one bridesmaid, it's not going to suit everyone.

“Since Carrie's wedding in *Sex and the City: The Movie* when her gal pals wore clashing Zac Posen frocks, modern brides have seen that their bridesmaids don't have to wear matching dresses.

“Different styles in the same color can look stylish and classy,” continues Paula. “At Brian O'Driscoll and Amy Huberman's wedding earlier this year, the bridesmaids looked stunning in dusty pink dresses in varying styles including empire line and asymmetric.”

Don't surrender your own sense of style by saying 'I Do' to a dress you can't stand.

“Sit down and talk to the bride before going shopping for a bridesmaid dress,” advises Paula.

“You may have to tread carefully, but it's better to say something before the dress is bought.

If the bride still insists on putting you in something that can only be described as a bin bag, you're well within your rights to reconsider being a bridesmaid.

“If you're uncomfortable in a dress, then it's going to affect your mood and performance on the big day.”

Between hair, makeup, frock, heels, bag and bling – as well as extras like a gift and hen party pocket money, being a bridesmaid ain't cheap. And so to the prickly question of who pays.

“Quite frankly, I think it's downright cheeky for a bride to ask her bridesmaid to pay for their own dress and then try to dictate what they should wear,” reckons style expert Paula.

Not all brides agree though.

“Being bridesmaid for my sister cost me an absolute fortune,” says Katie, “I had to pay for everything myself.”

“I don't think that's fair,” says Weddingstyle.ie relationship pro David Kavanagh. “If you're going to ask someone to be your bridesmaid, the least you should do is cover their costs.

Otherwise, let them know from the outset that they'll have to pay for everything themselves – and don't be surprised if they turn down the gig!”



Chapter Five

Always the bridesmaid, never the bride?

It's an idiom that may be a bit too close to the bone for some single bridesmaids.

From jealousy to sadness and even anger, bridesmaids can experience a rollercoaster of emotions as they wave goodbye to their wing woman explains David Kavanagh.

“Jealousy is completely normal,” he says.

“But the bridesmaid can have all sorts of other feelings about her best friend getting married .

For instance, maybe she doesn't approve of the groom because he cheated on her friend before and is frustrated that Maybe it's the case that she doesn't approve of the groom or knows something about him that the bride doesn't know, and is frustrated that she's marrying him.

“Either way, by the time the big day arrives, the bridesmaid’s job is to support her friend as she embarks on married life.”

So after all those months of selflessness, surely the bridesmaid can look forward to letting her up-do down after the formalities? Not quite.

“A bridesmaid's work is never done,” adds David. “You're still on duty until the last guest leaves and the bride and groom go to bed. Then the morning after the wedding, she can heave a huge sigh of relief!”

“It was hard work,” concedes Trisha. “ But I loved being a bridesmaid and would do it all over again. And I picked up lots and do's and don'ts for my own wedding.”

“I'd definitely do the job again,” agrees Katie.

“ It's an honor to be asked to witness a couple becoming husband and wife and have your signature on their marriage certificate.

“Hopefully I'll be there to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary too!”

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