

Moms, Maids, and More: Everything You Need to Know

By Jenny Flack

Choosing the right dresses for the bridal party can seem like an act of telepathy: A bride can imagine the perfect strappy, merlot tea-length dress, but each bridesmaid might have their own idea about what dress looks best on them and it may or may not have straps or end below the knee. Mothers of the bride might have already spent so much energy helping the bride find her dress that they're too overwhelmed to think about their own gown. For these reasons (and more), **Erin Green** decided to put the needs of the bridal party front-and-center at her Bellevue-based bridal boutique, [Moms, Maids, and More](#). She's been pairing the bride's supporting cast with great gowns and accessories since 2004, and here she offers her expertise on finding the best dress for every girl and how to have the best time finding it—no mind reading required.



Erin Green, owner of Moms, Maids, and More in Bellevue

Seattle Bride: *How did you start a boutique specializing in bridesmaid and mother-of-the-bride dresses?*

Erin Green: I was working as a certified public accountant because I have a business side that loves crunching numbers, but I really wanted to start my own business, so I began looking for interesting industries in Seattle. My own wedding taught me how tricky it is to find good mother-of-the-bride dresses or to even know what moms are supposed to wear, so I spoke with Merry Beth Turpin of Aisle of a View and Wendy Wojcik of Weddings with Wendy to see if I could fill that niche in Seattle's wedding market. They were both so supportive, and Moms, Maids, and More evolved from the needs they described and opened in 2004.

SB: *When should a bride begin looking for bridesmaid dresses?*

EG: We recommend that bridesmaids as well as moms shop five months before the wedding. Some vendors take as much as three and a half months to come in, so even if we need to ship dresses to bridesmaids all over the country, everyone will still have more than a month for alterations. Some vendors can ship dresses as quick as five weeks for a rush fee of \$20 to \$50 per dress, but it narrows the selection of dresses you can order.

SB: *What's the most important thing moms should know about shopping for a dress?*

EG: Moms need to shop early just like bridesmaids. They tend to wait for a variety of reasons: some are trying to lose weight or want to see if new colors come out, and others just don't want another decision to make while sorting out other wedding details. While putting off dress shopping might reduce stress in the short-term, it actually makes things more difficult later because rush orders can mean fewer choices. Not all designers can even ship rush orders, and as wedding season peaks, the designers' inventory is depleted. Our designers make their full color palette available year-round and gowns can always be altered if moms change weight, so there's no reason not to make that purchase.

SB: *What's the average price range for bridesmaid dresses?*

EG: Designers like Expressions, Mori Lee, and Alfred Sung are less expensive, running \$150 or less. Then there are the higher-end designers that begin at \$200, like Jim Helm and Waters. The bulk range from \$160 to \$220, such as Belsoie, Wtoo, Jordan, and Dessy After Six. We know that everyone has different budgets and we try to satisfy them all. We do offer quantity discounts, as do other stores, but we try to price our dresses fairly and competitively so that bridesmaids can focus on the fun of the day and not bargaining.



Pretty 'maids dresses, lined up in a row.



Moms, Maids, and More sells great shoes your bridal party can wear again and again.

SB: Do you recommend a bride shop for dresses in-person with her bridesmaids?

EG: Brides who have the most fun come shopping alone first, or with only one other bridesmaid. It's important for a bride to begin with a vision that's important to them, and it's hard to formulate that vision when you're trying to please six girls at once. Begin by choosing one designer to work within, or twelve dresses that you'll narrow down with help from the bridesmaids. Everyone is going to have opinions, so start by setting some parameters.

SB: What advice would you give brides trying to coordinate all her bridesmaids' schedules?

EG: Lots of brides really wrestle with this. It is great when all the girls can come in to buy dresses or have alterations together, but it's important to realize that it can't always work, and that's okay. Shops are used to meeting girls in groups or even one at a time. We keep thorough notes on what the bride wants so we can steer the bridesmaids correctly even if the bride can't be there herself.

SB: How does an out-of-state bridesmaid get her dress?

EG: Shipping dresses to bridesmaids in other locations seems insurmountable, but it's actually easy. We teach each girl how to take her own measurements, and we ask them questions about their dress size to hone in as close as we can on her correct size. Then bridesmaids fill out an online form indicating their measurements and the dress style the bride wants. As for alterations, girls can use tailors in their areas.

SB: Matchy-matchy bridesmaid dresses are becoming passé, but how do you get a unified look with different dress styles?

EG: First, make sure all the bridesmaids take the time to explore designers they're gravitating towards, whether online or in-store. Once everyone has agreed on one designer, focus on a type of fabric, and then a color. Most collections have a cohesive, underlying theme, so as long as you choose complementary fabrics and colors, there's a good chance anything you pick will look nice together. I've seen brides who don't even want all their bridesmaids in one color; they want to do monochromatic shades of green, or completely contrasting colors. Then it doesn't matter so much that they shop within the same designer. It comes down to finding dresses each girl will feel comfortable in. If a bridesmaid is feeling her best, she'll look the best, even if she's not matchy-matchy.



Jewels to make your maids sparkle.



Erin Green's inviting shop takes the stress out of bridesmaid dress shopping.

SB: Are there types of bridesmaid dresses that look best on every figure?

EG: Anything that incorporates ruching on the waist will be flattering on a wide variety of body types. Once you've defined a waist, the rest of the dress flows away from that point and accentuates the body's proportions nicely. I'm thankful that designers are beginning to make more gorgeous, fun styles in unique fabrics that are suited to every body type, just in case a bride does want her bridesmaids in matching dresses. Vendors are also starting to make more none-strapless options, which is great because many girls don't feel comfortable in strapless styles, whether out of personal preference or religious reasons.

SB: What, in your opinion, is the hardest part about being a bridesmaid?

EG: A bride may ask for your opinion on a bridesmaid dress because a part of her really wants to please you and give you the option of wearing that dress again, but your job as a good bridesmaid is to let her pick whatever makes her happy. If she absolutely adores a dress that you're not wild about, you should respond with, "It's your wedding, so I'll wear what you want." When a bride asks you to be her bridesmaid, she's not just asking you to show up at the ceremony looking pretty. She's asking for your support through the entire process, and if you don't have the time, energy, or enthusiasm to offer 100 percent of yourself, it's okay to say no. It's difficult to realize how serious a commitment it can be.

SB: What's the best part about being a bridesmaid?

EG: The girls who enjoy being bridesmaids the most understand and embrace that a wedding is above all a celebration. Just have fun with it. If they go into it being themselves, the bride will appreciate that and use their strengths to her advantage—she'll have the organized girl help her with all the planning aspects, and she'll use the really outgoing girl as the life of the party. It feels great when you can contribute your talents to make someone's day. Plus you get to wear a really cool dress!

SB: What's the best way for brides to avoid conflict with their maids and make their experience fun?

EG: If I could talk to every bride, I would tell them to pull themselves away from the initial engagement euphoria and draft a list of honest, reasonable expectations. Does it only matter that her bridesmaids look pretty and know how to throw a great bachelorette party, or does she want to involve them in the planning process start to finish? Maybe the bride's best friend is her right-hand woman and knows everything about the wedding, while a newer friend only has to help tie on chair covers. A lot of bridesmaids are confused about their roles and how opinionated they're allowed to be, but if the bride is clear and realistic with her expectations from the get-go, she can avoid drama. Ultimately, your planning experience will bear on the day of the wedding as much as the wedding itself, and everyone will enjoy that day more knowing they came to it on good terms.

SB: Tell us about the most memorable bridesmaids you've ever encountered.

EG: Honestly, I've been in this business so long that nothing much surprises me anymore! We did have a bridal party that was doing a choreographed routine to some Michael Jackson songs at the reception. They were so fun to work with because the girls practiced dancing while they were trying on bridesmaids' gowns to make sure they would be able to do all their moves in whatever type of bridesmaid dresses they picked.

SB: What new and exciting things are you planning?

EG: Designers B2 and Belsoie have selected our store to preview their entire Spring and Summer collections. We're the only store to have these lines until December when other stores will carry them, so come take a peek!

Moms, Maids, and More is located at 827 Bellevue Way NE, Suite 205. Contact Erin at 425.455.2202 or visit momsmajdsandmore.com.