

Best in Class

What Seattle wedding experts want you to know

How long have you been helping the bridal party look its best on the big day? For four years. After planning my own wedding in 1999, I realized how challenging it was to find non-dowdy attire for mothers of the bride and groom. Merry Beth Turpin at Aisle of View and Wendy Wojcik of Weddings with Wendy helped me determine what types of things couples were looking for but couldn't find.

What do you want couples to know about bridal wear? Color can be challenging, and I would love for couples to be open-minded about it. Guests are not going to compare the color

on the save-the-date cards with the color of the bridesmaids' gowns. Having a color theme is great, but people shouldn't drive themselves crazy trying to get everything to match exactly. That said, be conscious of the skin tones of the bridesmaids. A color might look great on a centerpiece, but does it look good on a person? Some colors are best used for accent—perhaps on the sash of a gown. Above all, don't be afraid of color! Keep in mind that photographs get more interesting when there are contrasting hues. If you're set on having the girls wear neutral colors, be sure to punch out some color in their bouquets.

What should couples know about the timing and planning of bridal party dress selection? Some designs can take up to three and a half months to arrive after they've been ordered, and I recommend ordering five months in advance so that there is ample time for alterations. Of course, our shop has designers who can get things to us in less than a week if need be, but planning ahead affords the greatest variety of styles and colors from which to choose.

Does etiquette require that the couple help the bridal party pay for its wedding-day attire? Typically, bridesmaids pay for their own gowns and alterations, the parents of the flower girls pay for the flower girls' gowns, and each of the moms pays for her own gown. For younger bridesmaids who haven't yet entered the workforce, the bride's family often subsidizes this

purchase in some way. If the bride selects gowns that cost more than what she wants her bridesmaids to spend, she often pays for a portion of each of them. Many of our brides also purchase their brides-

maids' jewelry for them; we do a lot of work with Brandy Thilbault, of Abaloria, who can customize bridesmaids' pieces to coordinate with the gowns.

When it comes to shopping for dresses, what should couples be thinking about in terms of being environmentally friendly? I really like it when brides just specify color and give their bridesmaids the flexibility to select their own dress styles. Giving a bridesmaid that choice increases the likelihood that she'll use her gown again. I also encourage brides and bridesmaids to save any extra material from their alterations. Fabric from the gowns can be used to wrap bouquets or can be incorporated into table decorations or favors.



ERIN GREEN

Owner, Moms, Maids, and More