



Weddings can bring out the best and the worst in families and friends. Arguments over unsupportive parents, rivalry between the in-laws, money issues, jealous friends or siblings, guest list dramas... the list goes on, but here's our handy guide to avoiding them all!

# Beware wedding relationship wreckers!

FEATURE JULIE FERRY

Planning a wedding is certainly no picnic. Although the preparations are bound to provide you with some of the most memorable and special moments of your life, they can also bring you some of the most stressful. Often at the heart of any problem is the minefield of relationships you have to deal with when organising your big day. Weddings can bring out the best and the worst in families and friends, with a mixture of excitement, emotion and just wanting everything to be perfect, often bubbling over into disagreements. However there is no need to panic as many of these arguments can be avoided completely. Our top wedding experts

reveal the most common relationship wreckers and how to avoid them.

## Don't rain on my parade

It is generally accepted that whatever you do you will never get the balance right when it comes to involving your parents in your big day.

In most cases your parents will be just as caught up in the excitement as you are and will be bursting with ideas of how they think the wedding should be organised. Put in this situation some brides will be longing for parents who just let their children get on with it.

However, parents who don't show an interest in the wedding can contribute just as much stress and upset to your preparations as their over-

zealous counterparts. You can be left feeling like they just don't care enough to be involved.

"Unsupportive parents have often had a bad experience with marriage themselves," says Relationship expert Denise Knowles. "If you have parents who are unenthusiastic about the commitment you are about to make, first try and see it from their point of view and then talk to them about it. Explaining to them that their lack of excitement is putting a dampener on your day will help clear the air. Tell them you want them to be on board and that you need them to be supportive of your decision, no matter what they might have lurking in their past. The chances are they won't have realised how their behaviour has been affecting you."



piggy in the middle.

However, as Denise Knowles explains, keeping in mind the overall aim of the wedding is the most important thing. "Recognise that you are marrying one another and not the two families. Don't worry about whether they will all get along or not, in most cases people will put any differences aside for the day."

Sarah Ivens suggests giving each set of parents specific tasks to do so that everyone feels part of the plans. While events planner Anna Cussen of Clifton Events ([www.cliftoevents.co.uk](http://www.cliftoevents.co.uk)) recommends talking to any stepparents separately before the wedding to find out how much involvement they would like.

"With non-traditional families you need to be flexible," says Anna. "There are no hard and fast rules so if you think it would work better having different sets of parents hosting their own table do it."

### The big decision

When deciding on who you want as your bridesmaids and groomsmen you usually have a pretty good idea. After all, you've been picturing the day and its main players for a while now. However, there is just one hitch, how do you get

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### Always the bridesmaid

One of the best bits about getting married is sharing the excitement with your closest friends. All those long days shopping for the perfect dress and pampering sessions at your favourite spa are bound to bring you closer together, or are they?

In some instances brides can find that getting married can affect their female friendships negatively, with the green-eyed monster making more than one appearance. "When you get engaged it can be a huge wake-up call to your friends, especially if they are long way off walking down the aisle themselves," says Sarah Ivens, author of *A Modern Girl's Guide to Getting Hitched*, £6.99, Piatkus Books. "As much as you may want to rush off into smugsville or couples land, you have to remember that you have known your friends for years so they won't appreciate you suddenly changing.

If you used to go swimming with them once a week, don't, in the run up to your wedding, cancel because you haven't got time. Get them involved in the wedding and ask their advice."

"However if you get to a point where they are ruining your preparations, call them on it. Be understanding to a degree but don't let their behaviour jeopardise your happiness."

### A question of in-laws

"Always remember that it's your day but both your families are very excited for you even though that may come across as demanding sometimes," says wedding planner Kathryn Lloyd ([www.kathrynllloyd.co.uk](http://www.kathrynllloyd.co.uk))

One of the hazards of getting married is managing to keep everyone happy. Dealing with two families who often have very different ideas and dynamics can leave some brides feeling like

out of having your fiancé's second cousin twice removed who you don't really get on with as your bridesmaid?

"First you should ask your partner if they really want that person as an attendant, as men don't usually care about that kind of thing as much as we think they do," says Sarah Ivens. "Get creative and think of other roles they could be given, like being a witness or doing a reading."

Being a bridesmaid can often be very full on and involve spending lots of time together whereas other roles in the wedding can make them feel special and involved but are generally low maintenance. If you do decide to make them your attendant balance it out by having lots of your friends as bridesmaids too. This way you won't have to spend lots of time together alone and your friends will have the majority vote over any decisions."