

Western Downs

Wedding

Guide 2025



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Welcome

YOUR head may still feel a little dizzy with excitement, as the reality of getting married sinks in.

Now that you've found love and become engaged, you have a wedding to plan!

Whether you're planning an intimate event or a big fanfare, it is your special day to celebrate love with family and friends.

With so much to consider - from the location of the ceremony, the wedding venue, its decoration and the food, to the size of your guestlist, the entertainment and your wedding cake, we've put together a magazine packed with ideas.

Will you organise the big day with the help of your guests of honour (aka bridesmaids and groomsmen), enlist the help of your families or call in a professional wedding planner?

Either way, the Western Downs Wedding Guide has you covered.

We've created a handy checklist that includes the basics from 12 months out from the big day right through to the week before to keep you on track.

There's also tips to help you whittle down your choices for photographers and videographers, what to look for in a



(Jack and May Films)

celebrant, what to consider when finding transport to get you to your wedding, and ideas about selecting those all-important floral bouquets and buttonholes.

My biggest tip? Take a deep breath and enjoy not only your wedding day, but the rest of your lives together.

- Jodie Powell

Counting down the days...

12 months before

- Break the news to your guests
- Book your venue, celebrant, and wedding planner
- Choose your guests of honour (bridesmaids, groomsmen)

9 months before

- Finalise your wedding's theme
- Shop for your dress and suit, and those of your guests of honour
- Book hair and makeup, catering, decoration, and accommodation (if needed)

6 months before

- Make your honeymoon plans, book time off work
- Book photographers, entertainment, flowers
- Try on and buy rings

3 months before

- Plan the day with your wedding celebrant, write vows, and lodge notice of intended marriage
- Post wedding invitations
- Organise pre-wedding events (buck's party, hen's night, bridal shower)

1 month before

- Book hair and makeup trial



(Treasure Pics)

- Finalise seating plan
- Write speeches, rehearse ceremony

1 week before

- Make your last preparations
- Make sure everything is booked and/or ready to go
- Don't stress, and have fun!

Engagement party to set the scene

PLANNING an engagement party is exciting and can be a great practice run for your wedding, especially if you're new to event planning.

It's a great chance to celebrate love with your friends and family before the big day.

The first thing to consider is your guest list, then you can start thinking about the size of the space you need and then from there, booking a date.

It's ideal to choose a date that is far away enough that people can plan for it and is most convenient - don't set it too close to your wedding either.

Choose the venue - you might want to think about the size of your event, cost, and theme for this one.

Some venue ideas might be a restaurant, bar, or even someone's backyard.

Think about themes as they can add a bit of fun and make it a more memorable event and consider activities to keep guests entertained.



Think about a theme for your engagement party - it can add a bit of fun and make it a more memorable event.

Think about the menu, and consider dietary requirements as well. Send the invitations at least four to six weeks ahead of your chosen date.

You might want to develop a schedule for your party, or you might just want to go with the flow- but if you do, have some games or icebreakers up your sleeves if things start to die down.

Make sure key moments such as speeches, toasts, and cake-cutting are celebrated.

Let's talk money

YOUR wedding day is the official start of your committed relationship together for your marriage.

With the current cost of living and tight household budgets, you want to ensure you don't overspend for your wedding day - remember it is just one day.

You're probably already saving up to buy a house or go on future holidays with your spouse, so it is important to keep this longer perspective in mind when budgeting for your wedding.

Decide early what you can comfortably afford to spend and stick to it.

MoneySmart offers a number of tips to stay on budget:

- Talk to your partner and both sets of parents early.
- The more you pay up-front, the less likely it is that you'll get into debt.
- Do your research and shop around for a better deal - always negotiate.
- Check if you can DIY or get a friend to help with flowers, photography or catering.
- Break down the costs and work out what you need to spend on each item. Then ask yourself: 'Do I need it? Will it make a difference to the day?'

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Picking the perfect celebrant

EVERYONE is important at your wedding, but a marriage celebrant is the person who will ensure the legalities of your wedding ceremony - and they can do much more besides.

There is more to choosing a celebrant than just finding someone who can competently prepare the paperwork.

Each celebrant has their own style, life experience and skills, and they will have a huge hand in shaping how your ceremony will feel and flow.

Find someone you genuinely connect with and trust early in your planning.

In Australia, couples can choose either a civil or a religious celebrant to solemnise their marriage.

Celebrants will provide you with their fees, booking arrangements, refund policy, and the information needed to complete the legal paperwork.

They will also help design ceremony content such as including special wording during your vows.

Your celebrant helps to get your wedding day off to a cracking start and will be there from the time your guests arrive to when you finally say 'I do'!



Finding the right celebrant is crucial to getting your wedding day off to a cracking start. (Treasure Pics)

Location, location, location

YOUR wedding atmosphere starts with your chosen venue.

Create a list of venue priorities together - think about the environment of the venue, and what it'll be like depending on the season - especially if your ceremony will be held outside.

Consider which region you would like to have your wedding in - whether it is the bride or groom's hometown or a destination wedding.

The Western Downs region has an array of stunning, unique backdrops for a wedding - from rustic barns, to the grand Bunya Mountains to old churches, wineries or farms.

Ceremony

Are you after a traditional church ceremony or a garden wedding? Perhaps you envisioned a big marquee or want to be outside with a hilltop view or an iconic background.

A community or council hall, farming shed or a backyard could also be a fabulous option with the right decorations.

Sometimes, a simple venue can be a blank canvas to create the dream setting.

Traditionally the bride's parents will sit in the first row on the left side of the aisle, while the groom's family sits in the same position on the right side.

Reception

The reception is a chance to slow down, talk to your guests and really enjoy the party.

Does your venue serve alcohol and have a liquor licence? Do they have in-house catering, or will you need to outsource food? Is there enough room to have a sit-down meal and dance floor?

Choose from purpose-built spaces for receptions and functions, transform a community hall into the perfect venue or even hold the reception outside.

The venue's layout will determine the freedom you have with decorations. Remember: Many spaces require a huge effort from the bridal party and family the night before and after to ensure everything is set up and packed away smoothly.

What to consider for your wedding and reception venues

- Is the size appropriate for your guest list?
- Is it available for your desired dates and appropriate for your budget?
- Could you hold your ceremony and reception at the one venue?
- Are tables, chairs and other essentials provided? If not, these little things could stack up the overall cost and need to be organised separately.
- Is the venue easy to access for your guests and does it have sufficient parking?
- Is the distance between your ceremony and reception easy for guests to navigate? If you have guests of an advanced age or with mobility requirements, consider how they will access your chosen venues.
- Are there picturesque settings for wedding party photos at the ceremony or reception venues?



Veils are awesome accessories for photos.

Image: Treasure Pics

Unveil your perfect dress

Are you ready to find love at first fitting?

PICKING out the perfect wedding dress is the highlight of planning for many brides and will no doubt be an exciting and cherished part of your wedding journey.

Helen Chaseling, who owns Rendezvous Designs, says it should be an enjoyable process, guided by the bride.

"If you bring too many people, with too many opinions, that can be hard. It should be a fun and enjoyable process."

Make sure you book an appointment and try dresses on in the store.

"You might admire something in a book, but until you put it on yourself you don't know how you feel in a dress."

The silhouette is the important part; colours and embellishments are the icing on the cake.

"Simple things like that and where the skirt starts makes a huge difference," Helen says.

For an element of surprise, many brides are opting for detachable sleeves or removable skirts to change up their look from ceremony to dancing at the reception.

Consider:

- What sorts of brands, fabrics, colours and styles do you like?
- Keep photos of different gowns which catch your eye.
- Be open to dresses outside your 'vision'.
- Choose a cut that flatters the bride's shape.
- Is the dress suitable for the wedding venue?
- Will you go white, ivory, coloured or a dress with an



Finding the perfect wedding dress has been a childhood dream for many.

Image: Treasure Pics

underlay of colour?

- Shopping for your wedding dress six months before the wedding to give yourself enough time to breathe, allowing for plenty of time for orders to come in and alterations.
- If you'd like alterations or additions to make the dress 'extra special' - these could include straps, capped sleeves, lace motifs or bodices, gloves, or decorative cuts or a trim.
- Will you wear a veil for the full bridal look? There are different types, sizes, shapes and edgings with plain or lacey or embellished veils. Consider whether you'd like to include the traditional unveiling part of the ceremony. Veils are awesome accessories for photos.



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Styling the groom

Whether your vibe is more James Bond or John Wayne, as the groom you'll want to look fine on your wedding day.

Relish in the power of a well-fitted suit so you can feel comfortable, confident and excited about marrying the love of your life.

Make sure your groomsmen are looking dashing - decide whether their outfits should match yours in or complement it to make you stand out.

Perhaps you could be the only one with a jacket or go solo with your tie?

For a traditional and timeless look, try a black-tie suit paired with a bow tie and white collared shirt.

Suits, especially tuxedos, can be expensive so grooms may choose to hire an outfit rather than buy - but if you are hiring a suit, check all the elements are there and everything fits!

Remember, a tailored suit should fit you properly and there will be more formal occasions to wear it again.

Make sure the suit's not likely to split at the seams and the jacket allows you the freedom to move. Remember: not everyone has the same body shape and type, so if your groomsmen are getting the same outfits make sure they fit perfectly before deciding on the look for the group.

You may choose to mix ties and bow ties, wear cufflinks, or



(Treasure Pics)

match pocket flowers with the bridesmaids' bouquets. You can also incorporate any sentimental items, like heirloom tie pins or a dear relative's favourite flower.

Ensure dress socks match the outfit (or are a bit silly to suit the groom's personality).

Navy, charcoal grey and brown are popular suit colours besides the traditional black. Or consider earthy tones or a bold pop of colour for your outfit.

To look the part, you may consider adding in classy sunglasses for the boys or to wear an akubra for an outdoor wedding.

The right ring

Choosing the right ring can be a daunting task, which is why looking at rings together before or after the proposal can relieve some of the stress.

Traditional rings will have a diamond centerpiece and can have more on the shoulder of the ring.

Styles range from a solitaire, cluster, pave, halo, bezel, tension, cathedral and burnish settings.

Jewelers will often have a wedding band that will go with the engagement band as a set.

Classic designs are plain yellow or white gold wedding bands, but rose gold and platinum have risen in popularity.

Some people choose titanium tungsten rings as they aren't too flashy and are hardy.

Many brides choose to not wear their engagement ring during the ceremony, while others wear it on their right hand and switch it to their left after the ceremony.

A note on jewellery

Jewellery can make or break a bride's final look.

Consideration should be given to which jewellery to wear, as sometimes less is more. A few key pieces can complement



Choosing the right ring can be a daunting task, which is why looking at rings together before or after the proposal can relieve some of the stress.

the dress and complete the look,

Carefully consider the neckline of your dress - a necklace might be lovely for a dress with a lower neckline but not suit a higher cut dress.

Choose pieces which represent you - family heirlooms can also be a great touch.

Fabulous florals

FLOWERS can set the mood for your wedding, especially if they're seasonal.

Consider your budget first, as flowers aren't cheap, especially if they need to be imported. With the wedding bouquet the most photographed and visible arrangement of the event, it might be nice to splurge. The season is also important - for example, if you are holding a winter wedding, it'll be harder to get summer flowers like dahlias from Australia.

Think about what you want the flowers to say about you and your wedding. Colours should be carefully considered, so the flowers fit your wedding theme. Some couples select their flowers for very personal reasons - they may choose flowers their grandmother grew or include a thistle as a nod to Scottish heritage. If blooms need to be imported, bear in mind they'll likely be at least a week old and covered in chemicals for biosecurity at the border.



(Always & Forever Wedding Photography & Film)

Sweet sensation

A delicious cake brings another sensational layer to a day of making memories.

Since wedding cake trends often change each year, couples are encouraged to do their research and get some ideas for their 'cake vision' prior to meeting with their wedding baker.

A truly traditional wedding cake is made of fruitcake and covered with marzipan and icing - a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages - but if cake is not your thing, why not break from tradition? Cheesecakes, doughnuts, cupcake towers or walls or even brownie towers are becoming more popular than ever.

If you want to keep it classic, though, cutting the cake together as a couple is a charming tradition captured in every wedding album. The cake cutting represents the first activity done as a married couple.

Another sweet tradition is when the couple feeds each other a small bite of cake, symbolising a commitment to provide for one another and a show of love and affection.



Cutting the cake together as a couple is a charming tradition. (Treasure Pics)



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Getting there and back again

If you're going to be nervous on your wedding day, chances are you're going to be especially nervous on the drive to the ceremony as it can be one of the most nerve-wracking parts of the day.

Whoever you're travelling with, you want them to be someone you're close to and preferably someone who can keep you calm.

The journey to the ceremony can be a special time to bond with your loved ones, especially the one who is giving you away.

It can be a great chance to share some last-minute advice and enjoy some quiet time before you say I do.

When thinking about your wedding transport, you need to think of three key components: comfort, style and reliability.

Reliability is the most important; if the car breaks down or the horse-and-buggy loses a wheel, you're in strife - so choose a means of transport that you can count on.

Comfort: If you're already feeling nervous butterflies in your stomach, you might not want a bouncy horse-and-buggy, or to be crammed into a limousine with all your bridal party.

Style is the least important of considerations, but it's still worth thinking about.



When you arrive and all eyes are on you, what message do you want to be sending with your transport? From glitzy to classy to fairytale, there is a perfect way to arrive and it's up to you to find it.

Wedding cars are the more popular choice with a range of vehicles from vintage classics or quirky Kombi vans to modern limousines to choose from.

Book transport options well in advance so you don't miss out on your dream wheels.

On accommodation

WHEN you pick your wedding venue, it's important to scout out accommodation options are nearby so everyone, including travelling guests, have somewhere to stay before and after your big day.

Consider where your out-of-town guests will be staying; include some options on your wedding invitations to suit different budgets and be prepared to help guests book their accommodation if needed. The bridal party will need somewhere to stay the night before the wedding and get ready in the morning near the wedding venue.

Factor in whether there is enough space for make-up artists and hairdressers to work their magic on the bride and bridesmaids.

As for the newlyweds, you might like to book a nearby hotel room or cosy cabin for your wedding night so you can enjoy each other's company with some peace and quiet.

Try and have an easy morning after such a big day and don't forget to factor in breakfast options.

If you will be drinking, consider how you will get to your chosen overnight stay - perhaps the venue offers pick-ups.



When choosing accommodation, consider whether there will be room for hair and make-up artists to work their magic. (Treasure Pics)

Prepare for wedding radiance

2-3 DAYS BEFORE...

WAXING OR HAIR REMOVAL

If you decide to wax before your big day book it in two or three days prior for ultimate results. The most important parts to remember are your brows, upper lip, underarms, legs and bikini area. If you are new to waxing, find a beautician you trust and try it out at least a month prior to the big day.

If waxing is out of your comfort zone there are other options for painless hair removal like shaving or hair removal cream.

TANNING

To avoid a 'fake tan disaster' book an appointment with a professional and avoid a DIY job.

Don't forget to wear something loose and flowy to your appointment (that you don't mind getting stained!) to protect your tan. Go for a natural, glowing and even tan that looks like you have just stepped off the beach - or embrace your natural skin tone!

1-2 DAYS BEFORE...

NAILS

A couple of days before your wedding is the perfect time to book a mani/pedi. Choose a style of nail you feel comfortable with. If you don't usually get long acrylic nails, go for a more natural look. A nail trial a few months prior is helpful.

The most classic wedding nail colours to match the dress are nudes, light pink, white, silver and gold.

Nail artists are full of ideas, so consider incorporating some nail art to complete the look. Invest in gel polish so you can stress less knowing your nail colour won't chip before the big day.

Book in with your bridal party for a 'pre wedding' relaxation and have your nails done together.

Wedding glow: ON THE DAY... MAKE UP

It's easy to get swept up in the many details and forget about the finishing touches.

Brides often opt for a 'classic, simple' look for their wedding



Preparation before the big day is key to ensuring you and your bridal party are glowing. (Treasure Pics)

day - with dewy skin, a soft neutral eye shadow and nude lip colour. Choose styles which enhance your natural beauty and stay true to your usual style.

The most important part of your wedding day makeup is your skin and making sure the makeup reflects just as beautifully in photos as in real life. Remember makeup often needs to be a little heavier to last through the entire day. Don't shy away from the blush, a rosy cheek gives that fresh look and needs to be bright to really pop in photos. The best advice a bridal makeup artist shared was to use a long-lasting lipstick.

Be sure to schedule a trial with a makeup artist and don't be afraid to ask for what you want. It's your wedding day and you need to feel comfortable and confident.

HAIR

Creating the perfect hairstyle needs to factor in the veil, the neckline of the dress and any jewellery.

Having an outdoor wedding? Consider an 'up-do' to avoid the wind messing up your locks. On your wedding day bobby pins and hairspray will be your best friends, so keep them close! Something to consider a few months before the wedding is the length of your hair and whether it will work with your hairstyle.

For a glamorous look consider a statement hairpiece or incorporate some flowers from your wedding bouquet.



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Maid of Honour's Emergency Kit

As part of the bridal party, you need to be prepared for every possible scenario to ensure the bride and groom get through the day. Here's a list of things for your bridal emergency kit:

- Blister Band-aids
- Panadol
- Water
- Muesli Bars Or Snacks
- Safety Pins
- Needle And Thread
- White Ribbon
- Stain Remover Pen
- Nail Polish Remover
- Spare Flat Shoes
- Bobby Pins
- Hair Spray
- Hair Ties
- Makeup Wipes
- Concealer
- Lipstick/ Make-Up For Touch-Ups Before Reception
- Tissues

Photo: Treasure Pics Photography



After all the excitement of planning and the big day itself, your honeymoon is a chance to spend time alone together.

Honeymoon getaway

THE whirlwind of months of wedding planning, last-minute preparations and a huge wedding day are a guaranteed call for a chance to unwind as newlyweds.

A honeymoon getaway should be filled with fun, quality time together, to relax, and of course, romance!

Remember to organise a way to leave your reception - even if a friend brings your car to your wedding venue (be wary of possible 'Just Married' decorations).

Don't forget to have at least an overnight bag packed for your wedding night.

Research locations, honeymoon packages and reviews to find the best deal - consider a travel agent and start planning early.

If travelling overseas, don't forget to pack your passport!

Planning a winter wedding? ...picture a cabin with a fireplace.

Getting married in the spring? ...try ocean views.

Do you envision a bush retreat or a beach escape with your new husband or wife?

When it comes to planning activities on your honeymoon, don't go overboard as the most important part is time together and to allow romance to bloom.

However, do plan a special outing or two that will create memories to cherish.

Your honeymoon is a special experience, so it is OK to splurge, soak it all up and enjoy the break... but decide on a



Plan how you'll get from your wedding venue to your first night together as newlyweds. (Treasure Pics)

realistic budget and watch for hidden costs.

Don't be afraid to mention when you book your honeymoon adventure that you are newlyweds as there may be some generous gestures.

- Tip: Take into account the distance between your wedding venue and honeymoon spot. Stay a night or two near your wedding location, relax and recover from the wedding day - trust us, you'll be exhausted! Then, travel at your leisure to your honeymoon destination.

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