

Sitting pretty: Reception seating made simple

Your wedding is about a month away. You've settled on a reception hall, menu and table decorations. Now it's time to sit down and decide where your guests will be seated on the big day. If you are having a small wedding or a buffet, specific seats may not be necessary. But if you are having a larger wedding and a seated meal, your guests will be happy knowing they won't have to fight for a seat. And assigned seating lets them enjoy the wedding as much as you are enjoying your first hours as newlyweds.

Overwhelmed about where to start? Make a seating chart. Get a big sheet of paper and draw big circles to represent the tables, dance floor, musical entertainment and entrances. Then list everyone's name on an index card or sticky note so you can play "musi-

cal chairs."

In general, place people in spots that suit them. Your friends will want to be near the music, but Grandma and Grandpa will be unhappy with the stereo sound blasting in their ears. Family and friends should be closest to you. Acquaintances and your parents' friends should be placed farther away.

A traditional head table is long and straight and faces the other reception tables. There are a few different seating options here. The bride and groom traditionally sit front and center, with the maid of honor on the groom's left and the best man on the bride's right. The other attendants are seated boy-girl. But you can stray from tradition. You can have the wedding party and their dates sit at one table, while you and your new

spouse have your own small table at the front of the room. You can also sit at a table with only the maid of honor, best man and their dates. Or you can sit at a table with your parents. Do whatever fits your style and makes you most comfortable.

Parent seating is flexible, too. Both the bride's and groom's parents generally sit together near the newlyweds. Siblings not in the wedding, grandparents and other relatives may also sit there. But if your parents are divorced or some relatives don't get along, feel free to separate them. Your mother and her guests can sit at one table and your father can have his own table on the other side of the room. If you're unsure how to seat them, consult both your parents and in-laws to see what would make them most comfortable.



WHEN PLANNING A WEDDING, there are a variety of ways you can seat your guests at the reception.

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