

Welcome!

HOW TO PLAN A SMALL WEDDING OR ELOPEMENT



© Andrea Flanagan Photography

Small Wedding — WORKSHOP —

AN EASY STEP-BY-STEP SYSTEM FOR PLANNING YOUR INTIMATE WEDDING OR ELOPEMENT

Disclaimer & Copyright

License to Use Product(s): This Product(s) is the intellectual property of and are owned by Custom Weddings of Colorado, Small Wedding Workshop and Wendee Vezzetti. This Product(s) is solely for Your individual, personal use, and which is not to include any reproduction, copying, or any other use of the product(s) for resale or distribution, provided that You: (1) abide by all copyright protections afforded to the Product(s), both as formally registered with the U.S. Copyright Office and as otherwise provided by law; (2) abide by all trademark protections afforded to the Product(s), both as formally registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, a state trademark authority, or as otherwise provided by common law; (3) do not use the Product(s) or otherwise offer them on any other website, through a networked computer environment, or otherwise offer them for distribution or sale or in any manner inconsistent with Permitted Use as provided by these Terms; and (4) do not modify the Product(s) in any way beyond edits and completions necessary to complete template forms and other Product(s) consistent with Permitted Use provided by these Terms.

If you violate this license by **giving** or **selling** a copy of the Product(s) to any third party, We reserve the right to invoice you for the licenses you have gifted to others, revoke your access to our Product permanently, and/or sue for any and all damages.

Such permission to modify Product(s) consistent with Permitted Use in no way expands the limited license provided herein, nor does grant You intellectual property ownership in, or provide a

NO WARRANTIES: Custom Weddings of Colorado LLC, and Small Wedding Workshop PRODUCT(S) ARE PROVIDED "AS IS". THE COMPANY OFFERS NO WARRANTY, EXPLICIT OR IMPLIED, REGARDING ANY DOCUMENTS OR TEMPLATES, THE ACCURACY OF ANY INFORMATION, OR ANY RIGHTS OR LICENSES UNDER THIS AGREEMENT INCLUDING, WITHOUT LIMITATION, ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. OBTAINING MATERIALS AVAILABLE THROUGH THESE SITES IS DONE AT YOUR OWN DISCRETION AND AT YOUR OWN RISK.

Custom Weddings of Colorado LLC and Small Wedding Workshop MAKES NO WARRANTY THAT THE SITES, PRODUCTS OR MATERIALS WILL BE ACCURATE AND RELIABLE IN ALL INSTANCES. ALL INSTANCES.



INTRODUCTION

© Kathryn Kim Photography



There are many reasons to plan a small wedding: simplified process, cost savings, enjoy time with your closest family & friends, a focus on marriage rather than “hoopla” of a big event.... And many, many more reasons. However, planning a micro-wedding or elopement *is* different and just because it is small in scale, doesn't mean you are immune from the overwhelm of planning a big wedding.

Our mission at Small Wedding Workshop is to get more couples to their “I Do's”, having an incredibly memorable day, while experiencing joy, excitement and confidence during the planning process.

This guide will provide you the basic steps in planning an elopement of two, a micro wedding of 15 or a small intimate wedding of 35. For more supports, please join our course, bookmark our website, and follow us on social. We have a strong by tiny network of vendors that can also provide you with helpful advice, and of course their services for your amazing wedding day - just the way you envision.

All the best and after your wedding, please share with us your story! ~ Wendee



SHARE YOUR WEDDING

WENDEE VEZZETTI, M.Ed, MA

CUSTOM WEDDINGS OF COLORADO, Planner

SMALL WEDDING WORKSHOP, Teacher

PRIORITIES, VISION & BUDGET

© Andrea Flanagan Photography



- Establish Your Priorities:** One of the first things a couple must do is come together in an open exchange and identify each of your visions, needs and priorities. In this activity, grab your favorite beverage and sit down together. Think of everything that goes into planning a wedding. On a separate pieces of paper, without saying a word to each other, write down your top 3 priorities. When you are both finished, share your answers. If you agree, GREAT! If you don't, spend time listening and validating each other as to why they made their selections. This is not a time for persuasion or decision making - that can come later. This is a way in each of your voices can be acknowledged and it will help guide your future planning decisions!
- Establish Your Needs & Vision:** Now, we'll move on to your needs. Even though the wedding day should truly reflect the personality and desires of the couple, once you invite one guest, it is polite to consider their needs. With planning small weddings, you are more intimately familiar with their likes, financial situations and health. Visualizing your wedding can be valuable in clarifying your expectations and expressing them to your families and vendors. How would you describe your wedding? What are your favorite colors? What are your personalities like? .
- Date Considerations:** Do a little research on the average weather patterns for your destination. Some sites may not be available year-round due to accessibility. Also factor in these other elements when choosing a date: local events that may make lodging tough, any government holidays in which courthouses would be closed to get the marriage license, sensitive dates of family members (i.e. the anniversary of a loved one), and any friend/family commitments they may already have on the calendar.
- Establish Your budget:** It is essential to have a budget - no matter if it is \$1,000 or \$100,000 - to help guide your way through a multitude of decisions. Budgeting for small weddings are a little different from the larger typical wedding. You'll have fewer items - and that is a great thing! Wendee "chunks" wedding budgets into larger categories:
 - Travel:** this should include any lodging, flights, car rentals, actives, spending money
 - The Wedding:** site fees, vendor fees such as photography, cake, florals
 - The Celebration:** food and beverage
 - Regular Wedding Expenses:** attire, hair/makeup, rings, marriage license

EXAMPLE BUDGET TEMPLATE

Date: _____

Names: _____ Site: _____



© Photos by Andrea Flanagan Photography

Number of Guests	Beginning Budget	Additional Fees	Total Ending Budget

BUDGET

Description	BUDGET	ACTUAL	Notes
Ceremony Site Rental			
Rehearsal			
Seating			
Lodging			
Restaurant/Chef			
Photography			
(Optional) Videography			
Officiant			
Flowers: couple			
Other personal florals			
Additional decor			
Cake			
Topper, Florals, Stand			
Attire: dress/es, suit/s, etc.			
Hair and Makeup			
Planner Onsite Coordination			
Tipping			
Other services like transportation, invitations, etc.			
Add 5% cushion			
Budget Total			NET Total Budgeted =
			NET Total Actual =

Date	Tasks	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book Ceremony Site	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create agenda (edit throughout)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book lodging	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book restaurant; setup menu	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book photographer	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book hair & makeup	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Order florals and cake	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book onsite coordinator	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange attire	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send final confirmation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Notes	

Couple 1: _____

Couple 2: _____

Contact Info: _____

Contact Info: _____

Desired wedding date/s: _____

Approx. # Guests: _____

Optional date/s: _____

of BM/GM (if any): _____

.....
Priorities

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

.....
Our Style & Vision

.....
About Us

.....
Budgets

Overall: _____ Ceremony: _____ Officiant: _____

Photo/video: _____ Floral/Decor: _____ Cake: _____

Dinner: _____ Lodging: _____ H/MU: _____

Other: _____ Other: _____

Other: _____ Other: _____

Finding a Ceremony Site

- Know Weather Patterns:** If you are having a destination wedding, be sure to research local or state weather patterns as it may not be the same in your locale.

- Determine Your Site Needs & Considerations:**
 - Group Size: including yourselves, kids & vendors
 - Dogs: some National Parks and wildlife areas do not allow dogs
 - Seating: integrated into site (such as an amphitheater), or is seating allowed? Some public lands do not allow for seating
 - Parking: is there ample parking at the site. What is the walking distance from parking to the ceremony spot.
 - Restrooms: are there flush toilets, vaulted toilets or the great outdoors?

- Plan To Do Some Research:** Many sites that are conducive to elopements and small weddings are not often advertised the glossy magazines. Plan to do a little research on your own:
 - Google Maps:** various parks and shelters
 - Historical Societies:** great sources for unique venues such as mansions, mines & museums
 - All Trails:** it is worth a paid subscription!.... especially if you are an avid hiker, biker or nature lover
 - Ask around:** photographers and caterers are a great resource. I caution Facebook Groups with large memberships as you'll likely get bombarded with responses.

- Know any Permitting Regulations:** the permitting regulations can vary greatly between open spaces, State Parks, National Park, Wilderness Areas, National Forests, etc. And, even within the same agency, they can vary. ALWAYS check with the governing agency about permitting regulations. Communicate these regulations to your vendors. They may also need to obtain permits to work on public lands.

- A Note About Vacation Home Weddings:** If you are considering a vacation house wedding, please read the two articles below. Like permitting, we always recommend getting approval in writing from the vacation home owner or property management company that says they will allow a group function on your wedding date for "x" number of people. Also, check with the city in which you'd like to have a house party and know any kind of small event ordinances, like parking, tenting or noise. That way, you are covered on several aspects.
 - [What To Consider When Booking a Vacation Home for Your Wedding](#)
 - [AirBNB's Policy on Vacation Home Weddings \(Parties\)](#)



© Kathryn Kim Photography

TIMING & SEQUENCING

© Kathryn Kim Photography



BEFORE CREATING THE DAY-OF AGENDA	
Reservation Time Slots for the Ceremony Site	Make note of any setup times, clean up times and event times
Travel Times Between: Getting-ready site & ceremony site:	Ceremony site and celebration venue:
Sunrise Sun Transit Sunset	Will you have a first-look or not?

A small wedding timeline can vary depending on your logistics, the number of guests, and what kind of coverage you want to capture. The video to the right will visually give you examples of a micro-wedding order of events.

- Getting Ready
- First Look (optional)
- Convoy to the ceremony site
- Ceremony
- Group photos
- Couple-only photos
- Cake and cheers: at the ceremony site or at the restaurant
- Dances (optional): at the ceremony site or at the restaurant



Ten Common Mistakes to Avoid

1. Hiring (or receiving complimentary) services from friends or families - non professionals
2. Not getting agreements, prices, and promises in writing. Always secure a contract.
3. Forgetting to check dates so that they don't overlap with holidays and regional events
4. Signing contracts that lack specifics: a detailed contract is far better than a loose contract
5. Neglecting to check references, reviews or actual work portfolios
6. Forgetting to incorporate contingency plans in the chance that something does not go the way you arranged it
7. Trying to do too much yourself, and requesting your wedding party work too much with setup, errands, etc.
8. Trying to cut too many corners. Be careful about booking locations and vendors solely on price. It is true that you get what you pay for. Make sure you are confident about their reliability and quality.
9. Neglecting to appoint an onsite coordinator to handle the wedding attendants, vendors, setup, time management, general directing, and unexpected emergencies
10. Planning too many details too far out or making last-minute changes too close to your wedding date (can be costly)

Where to Start your Vendor Search

Finding Your Vendors: Contact local wedding coordinators, consultants and planners. They may charge a small fee for referrals, but be assured they will be of high quality and specific to your needs, budget and style. In addition, it will save you loads of time doing your own research. The customized referrals you receive narrows-down the hundreds of options, and frees up your time.

Observe & Attend. Keep your eyes open when attending friends or family members' weddings and parties. You can even find vendors when attending business events, meetings and community festivals.

Conducting Interviews: Arrange an interview (or phone, video message) with vendors before you sign a contract or service agreement. Pay attention to their professionalism. Consider important factors such as returning calls and emails in a timely manner. Take a day or two to reflect on your initial interview. Many times, vendors will hold your date for two-weeks on a first-option basis.

Develop a Working Relationship: There are many things that you can do during your planning to make the relationships work. The first thing to do is to make sure you have records of the service agreements in writing. Written contracts protect you as well as the vendor.

At minimum, these are what to look for in every contract:

- Services provided and the date/details: i.e. number of hours, what items are included
- Fees: terms of payment, reservations, retainers, including any rescheduling fees & terms, taxes
- Cancellation clauses: by both the client and the vendor
- Inclement weather clause
- Harassment clause and/or safe working environment
- Communication clause
- Force Majeure

Vendors will have many more clauses specific to their industry. Take your time to read through every contract and if you have any questions, contact the vendors for more clarification.

THE CEREMONY



© Andrea Flanagan Photography

Elopement-Styled Ceremonies

Whether you have guests or not, elopement-styled ceremonies are usually much more casual and simplified than the traditional ceremony. However, even if it's just the two of you, you can make entrances into the ceremony special. Some general guidelines

- **Walk-ins:** Keep the walk-ins simple. Even if you have bridesmaids/men & groomsmen/women this can be done by placing the (typically) the groom/men/women at the ceremony site with the officiant. Then, the other side will walk-in and take their spots.
 - If you want more walk-ins, then consider a rehearsal the morning prior to the wedding.
 - There are lots of creative ways you can walk-in for ceremonies, especially for same-sex couples. Ideas: each of you walk-in with an escort, you could walk-in together, and you can walk-in independently without an escort, one person can walk in (with an escort or not) and wait at the end of the "aisle" for the other person - then, the two of you walk-in together.
- **Vows.** Many couples choose to write their own vows. The officiant can present them during that portion of the ceremony. If you choose not to write your own vows, that is okay too and the officiant can simply do "repeat after me" for you.
- **Standing ceremony:** some sites, especially the more "rogue" site that are off-the-beaten path, don't allow for seating. If you want an entrance, don't let this stop you as you can still have one, even with standing ceremonies. Often times, the standing ceremonies are very intimate as everyone will stand in a semi-circle surrounding the couple (but not too close) - everyone gets front-row view.
- **Self-Solemnizing.** In some states, you can also self-solemnize, meaning perform your own ceremony and/or have a friend/officiant perform it. There are simply some semantics around it - like a friend/relative can't say "By the power vested in me, I pronounce you....", but they can say something like, "The couple has made promises to each other which constitutes a life long bond. May I be the first to introduce you to the newly married couple,...."
- **Non-denominational.** Many officiants are non-denomination ministers. Sometimes people get confused with that term. It means you can still have a religious ceremony (or not) - they just don't affiliate with a particular religion. Thus, you can often have a secular, nonsecular, or a combined ceremony with various religious symbolisms involved. Be sure to ask any officiant before you hire them how they feel about reading any particular religious verse before hiring them.

THE CELEBRATION

© Andrea Flanagan Photography







Couples and their guests will often want to do a little celebrating after the ceremony. There are a couple of options:

- **Restaurant:** either a private room at a restaurant or in a semi-private area of the restaurant. We like restaurants vs. banquet halls because (1) its easy!, (2) its already a beautiful environment that you don't have to decorate extensively with linens, huge florals, etc. (3) they already have equipment that you don't have to rent, and (4) their rental fees or service fees (if any at all; sometimes you'll encounter cake-cutting fees) or minimum F&B requirements are often way less than renting the typical wedding banquet venue.
- **At a vacation house (or at home).** When couples have booked an AirBNB or VRBO, Wendee likes to make recommendations to personal chef (vs. catering company) who will come to your vacation house and cook. Many of them will not have menus on their websites because their service is so personalized. They work with you on a food service that would be good for your group. This is a more expensive option - not necessarily for the chef, but for the vacation home rental. Plus, with a larger-small group, you'll likely have to rent items and definitely get approval in writing from the home owners or property management company before booking the house and making plans.
- Other ideas for celebration formats:
 - **Park Shelters:** make sure that you have adequate help for setup of items such as food service ware and a few decor items. Check for electrical outlets, parking and nearby restrooms. Also, many parks won't allow for open-flame candles (it can be windy too), so be sure you pack ones that are battery operated. And, check on their alcohol consumption regulations.
 - **Breweries** (our personal favorite): sometimes breweries will have private or semi-private areas that you can reserve. Since they typically don't serve food, you can order take-out from a local restaurant and bring it in. Just make sure to have a cousin or friend of a best friend lined up to do the pick-up and deliveries after the ceremony and while the two of out are taking photos.

Tipping

Although tipping is not mandatory, it is an expression of gratitude toward the vendor, especially since weddings by nature require extra attention to details and consideration. Additionally, since many vendors operate small businesses, tips offer instant feedback while many times providing needed income. An alternative to tipping is a rave, detailed 5-star review, if the vendor has earned it. Positive reviews are like GOLD in the wedding industry. You put your trust in us, and please let others know about your journey, story and experiences with wedding planning. The most common sites are Google, TheKnot.com and WeddingWire.com. Of course, there are areas in which the vendor can improve, please share that directly with the vendor in a kind, constructive manner and avoid blasting it out into the world. If you violate this license by **giving** or **selling** a copy of the Product(s) to any third party, We reserve the right to invoice you for the licenses you have gifted to others, revoke your access to our Product permanently, and/or sue for any and all damages

Vendor	Suggested Tip	My Tip
Planner and/or onsite coordinator <i>Typically don't expect a tip.</i>  Rave reviews.	10-20% or \$50 to \$100+, or a raving 5-star review Planners will often spend hours on your behalf behind the scenes, such as making/receiving phone calls, reviewing your logistics, acting as a wedding fiduciary, answering emails and corresponding with your other vendors. Onsite coordinators are often gig-work vendors. They are skilled at handling multiple onsite situations (at one given moment), managing different types of personalities, and keeping cool under pressure	
Photographer <i>Typically don't expect a tip.</i>  Rave reviews.	10-20% or \$50 to \$100 Depending on the amount of pre-wedding consultations and efficiency of delivering photos	
Officiant	\$50 to \$100 +/- If your officiate is a clergy member, they may not accept a tip, or even charge you for their services. In that case, a donation to their congregation/church/synagogue is a nice gesture in the range of \$100 to \$1,000. If your officiant is a friend or family member, a nice gift or covering partial cost of any travel expenses is appreciated.	
Florists or decor specialists <i>Typically don't expect a tip.</i>  Rave reviews.	10-20% or \$25-\$75, or a nice gift, like a photo album with your details Depending on the amount of pre-wedding consultations and onsite deliveries, setup & tear-down. For our small intimate weddings, florists usually don't go onsite and we do your pickups/deliveries. So, often a heartfelt thank-you and 5-star review is more than appreciated.	
Cake baker or dessert supplier <i>Typically don't expect a tip.</i>  Rave reviews.	10-20% Depending on the amount of pre-wedding consultations, delivery and the time involved in setting up the cake. For our small intimate weddings, florists usually don't go onsite and we do your pickups/deliveries. So, often a heartfelt thank-you and 5-star review is more than appreciated.	
Hair & makeup artists, spa technicians	10-25% Depending on their level of service and if they are providing those services at their salon (less) or traveling off-site to your house/hotel/venue	
Musicians - ceremony	\$15 - \$50 per musician \$50 - \$75 if the musician is included in the church or venue fee	
Musicians - reception	\$50 to \$150 for Disk Jockeys/Emcees \$20 - \$50 per band member	
Private chef or banquet manager	\$50 to \$200, or 10-20% of the entire bill You could also do a set amount like \$5 per guest Depends on their level of service, number of planning meetings, customization of menu, etc.	
Catering or service staff Bartenders	15-20% if it is not already added to the final bill You may want to tip individuals if they do an excellent job Or, you could provide a bulk tip to be divided equally between all service staff at the end of the evening (for example: \$10-\$20 per staff)	
Transportation, drivers	\$5 to \$50+ Depending on the length of time, number of people transporting, size of vehicle, cost of overall service. Check your agreement and make sure that the gratuity isn't already included.	
Miscellaneous: bellman, valets	\$5 to \$20+ Depending on the amount of trips they are making to your room and the number of times they are fetching cars, etc.	

THE WEDDING DAY

© Andrea Flanagan Photography



Dear Couple,

We lightly touched on some of the approaches with planning a small intimate wedding or elopement. If at any time you start to feel overwhelmed, please join the course to save you time, and get my actual process in which I breakdown the lessons in bite-sized chunks. By the end of the course, you'll have your wedding planned with ease and confidence so that you end enjoy your day to the fullest.

Remember, wherever you are at in the journey to take time for yourselves - go on hike, hang wit h your fur-babies, cook & listen to music, do puzzles or video games, get out in the garden..... and, keep what is most important at the forefront: creating a fabulous day with those you love.

Ask a Question. *Also, if you have any questions along your journey, [please ask them on this link](#) and Wendee will drop Q&A sessions line and on her [YouTube channel](#) and/or social media links - so be sure to follow!*

Finally, remember to let us know how your wedding day goes! We'd love to see your photos and hear your story. All the best ~ Wendee



SHARE YOUR WEDDING

WENDEE VEZZETTI, M.Ed, MA

CUSTOM WEDDINGS OF COLORADO, Planner

SMALL WEDDING WORKSHOP, Teacher