

WEDDING

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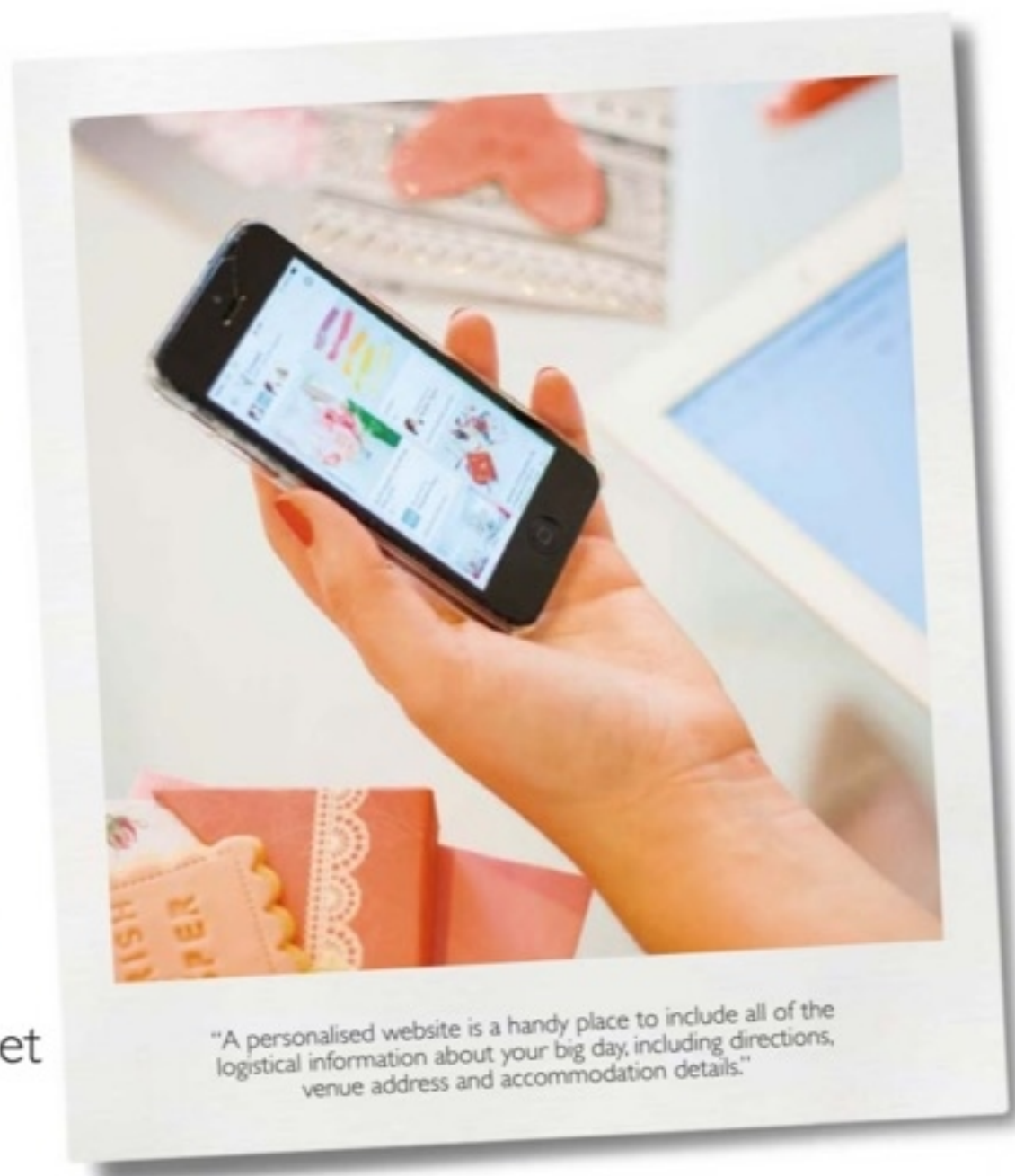
An Amanda
Wakeley gown
worth £2,095

ROLE CALL

Who does what
on the big day

BRIDE ONLINE

With more couples than ever using the internet to plan their big day, we outline the dos and don'ts of cyber planning



"A personalised website is a handy place to include all of the logistical information about your big day, including directions, venue address and accommodation details."

Love it or hate it, the internet can be a great tool for planning your wedding. From searching for ideas and inspiration, to buying products and booking suppliers, getting online can be a quick way to feel like you've made a dent in the wedmin. But it doesn't come without its dangers: from horror stories of counterfeit dresses to the annoyance of falling in love with something you just can't find, the pitfalls of shopping online range from minor inconveniences to serious money- or time-wasters. Wise up with our savvy bride's guide to planning online.

DO create a moodboard. An online moodboard, such as Pinterest, is a place to collate images and ideas from across the internet in one place. It is here you can make different boards for each aspect of your day, and pin pictures of flowers and favours to your heart's content. "If you like visual inspiration, you'll love Pinterest," says Nova Reid, editor of wedding blog Nu Bride (nubride.com). "It's a visual discovery tool, where you can create your very own e-catalogue of ideas, from colour palettes to DIY tips." It's a great way kick things off after the engagement: just pin things you love and see if a theme emerges.

DON'T do all of your planning online. We've all been there: so caught up in a pinning spree that you've lost sight of what's

essential, or even feasible, for your big day. "It's easy to get overwhelmed by all the pretty," admits Louise Beukes, editor of wedding blog b.loved (blovedblog.com). "Make a list of what's important and refer back to it when you feel you might be veering off in a new direction. Try to step away from the computer and look for inspiration around you, too. Think about your home décor, fashion icons or favourite holiday destination and let those influence the overall style of your day instead."

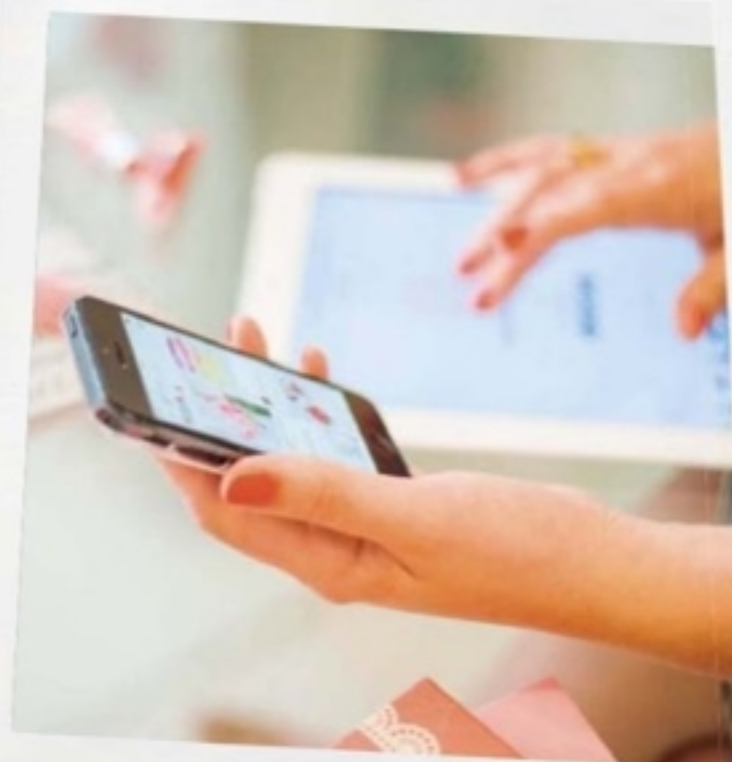
DO track inspiration back to the source. The main problem with search engines, or Pinterest, is uncredited images which don't link back to the source, leaving you with a picture of a dress you love, but can't buy. The safest bet is to use legitimate websites: reputable blogs and online magazines will credit each image and directly link to the seller. If you're really stuck, try searching Google Images with the picture in question, this will bring up all of the web pages featuring that image, which should also include its origin.

DO factor in delivery costs. When sourcing online, you may fall in love with products and suppliers from around the globe, but trends emerging in the US may not be available through UK shops yet. "Many decorative items and linens are not always from UK suppliers," advises Sandy Moretta, director

of The UK Alliance of Wedding Planners. "If you find items internationally, consider extra charges such as shipping and handling, and allow yourself extra time for international delivery. You'll need enough time to allow for exchanges if any of your items are damaged in transit."

DON'T get disillusioned by other people's weddings. Looking at images from real weddings to adopt ideas for your own is great, but have a cut-off point. "Don't fall into the trap of looking at lots of other brides' weddings and feel you have to do the same, or become deflated if you can't afford the décor or flowers to recreate the look," says Sandy. Each wedding is as unique as the couple, so draw inspiration from others, but always adapt ideas to suit your own personalities and budget. She adds, "Your wedding should be entirely bespoke, so include ideas which make your guests smile and say 'this is so them!' to create a personal and memorable day."

DON'T order a replica dress. It may seem like the perfect budget option: find a copy of your favourite designer dress, or have it made for you overseas at a fraction of the price. Unfortunately, in the case of counterfeit dresses, success stories are a rarity and brides are often left with something unrecognisable to what they thought they would receive. "Be very careful when ordering a dress online,"



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cautions Sandy. "Lots of websites offer cheap copies of designer gowns, but when they arrive they're badly made, not in the luxurious fabrics advertised, and sometimes even in completely different colours."

DO be wary when shopping. Even a bride with the best of intentions should be vigilant to ensure she doesn't accidentally spend good money on a fake copy. "Counterfeiters are wising up and realising it can be more convincing the less the dress is reduced," advises Simon Whitehouse, senior director at online brand protection experts, MarkMointor (whose clients include Pronovias). "Search around the recommended retail price, and even if the dress has a small discount, such as 20%, it's worth checking other elements of the website to see if they stack up." Simon recommends looking at the 'About' or 'FAQ' sections, including delivery details and the returns and privacy policies. "Check the web address too," he adds. "Website impersonation and 'cyber-squatting' are on the rise, so the URL should be checked for spelling mistakes. If the address begins with 'https://' the 's' tells you it's a secure site."

DO meet vendors. Your florist, planner and photographer will all become important people in your pre-nuptial life. While technology makes it convenient to send a quick email or

text from your phone to speed up the planning process, it's also important to meet prospective suppliers and make sure you're on the same wavelength. The photographer and planner, amongst others, will even be there on the day of the wedding, and their personalities will have a big influence on how the event goes. Try to have at least one face-to-face consultation, whether it's going with your florist for a recce at the venue, meeting your photographer for an engagement shoot, or just sitting down to discuss plans over a cuppa.

DO create a wedding website. A personalised website is a handy place to include all of the logistical information about your big day, including directions, venue address and accommodation details. And the best part is, you don't need to be a techno-genius to set one up. "A wedding website is an easy, eco-friendly way to share information with friends and family," explains Ayesha Ahmad, COO of Appy Couple (appycouple.com). "This way, you aren't fielding the same questions from guests about the day. In the case of Appy Couple, you can even manage your guest list and RSVPs online, which come in via push notifications to your phone and are updated in real time."

DON'T use your personal or work email address. You'll be sending a lot of emails regarding your big day, from liaising

with suppliers, to filling out enquiry forms and buying from online marketplaces. Creating a new wedding-only email address is free and keeps all of your wedmin in one place. It also means your regular email account won't get clogged with wedding-related information and newsletters after the day has been and gone.

DO speak to other brides. The internet is a great way to meet and chat to other brides or newlyweds, either through social media, comment sections or dedicated forums. They create a useful support network and can give sound advice and recommendations. "Online forums are a great way to connect with other couples getting married, either to share tips or just common gripes!" agrees Nova. "No one understands some of the stresses that go with wedding planning quite like another couple."

DON'T forget the tactile aspects.

There are some parts of your wedding where seeing a picture online just isn't enough to base your decisions. You want to be able to feel the frothy tulle of your dress, taste the sweet flavour and soft sponge of your cake, and smell the heady garden roses in your bouquet. The physical elements of your day are so important when it comes to creating lasting memories, so arrange to see as much as you possibly can in person and use all of your senses to decide what you love most. **W**