

# HOT TOPIC: Keeping the guests happy

This issue our experts answer your queries on keeping loved ones smiling on the big day

Meet the experts



Claire Jones  
Florist



Nic Cleave  
Photographer



Ruth Hunter  
Wedding planner

## The perfect floral gift

**Q** We're going to have lots of gorgeous flower displays at our wedding and, as we're planning on spending quite a bit on them, we'd love to give them away in small bundles as thank you gifts at the end of the night. With this in mind, what sort of displays would work best? We haven't decided on a theme yet, so any suggestions would be appreciated.

**A** *Claire says:* Arrangements that work well for this are usually placed in an Oasis foam base, as they can be easily removed from the display. For example, you might want to choose blooms styled in a mirrored cube vase, or a tall Martini glass. The arrangement can be placed on top and lifted off at the end of the evening to give to guests. They can also be used as a nice table arrangement for family and friends at home, and if they continue to keep topping them up with water, they should last a while.

You have lots of options as to the style of your arrangements, but displays that don't work particularly well for this are floating flowers (for obvious reasons) or arrangements made in goldfish bowls as you will need to pick these out one by one to wrap them. Once you have chosen a theme or colour scheme, ask your florist for advice on choosing blooms to match.



Display by The Bee Orchid Bridal Florist

## The kids are alright

**Q** Our retro-themed wedding is planned for March next year. We've just finished the guest list and now realise we have quite a few children of all age ranges attending. How can we ensure we keep them entertained during the reception drinks and wedding breakfast?

**A** *Ruth says:* You have lots of options when it comes to keeping the children entertained, however, your budget will be the ultimate decider. If you have the money to do so, then a children's entertainer such as a Punch & Judy show would be great, and the set-up would work well with your retro theme. However, this will only keep the little ones entertained for a short period of time, such as during the drinks reception. If you wanted to give the parents the whole day off, then you could hire a crèche service which caters for all age ranges.

If you don't have the budget for such services, you could set up activities for the children instead. Dedicate an area of the venue to them and fill with beanbags, retro board and garden games, or computer consoles for the older children. You could also offer a retro-themed candy buffet, which adults are sure to appreciate too!



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## Going the distance

**Q** Our reception venue is a 45-minute drive away from the church but I'm slightly concerned this is too far a distance for people to drive and it might interrupt the flow of the day. I'm even beginning to panic that guests won't come just because of the distance! What can we do to make the journey as smooth and fun as possible?

**A** *Ruth says:* The most important thing to ensure is that guests won't get lost on the way to the reception. You can make sure this doesn't happen by providing them with good directions in the invitations.

If you want to add an element of fun to the journey, why not get everyone involved in a treasure hunt? You could place eye-catching signs en route to the venue with numbers, symbols or phrases on. Have a page prepared in your order-of-service for guests to write the numbers or symbols on, and then ask them to place their entries in the card postbox on arrival. You could reward the winner with a prize.

Alternatively, a great way of ensuring your guests arrive on time and all together is to hire a Routemaster bus, or coach. Vintage-inspired buses are great for adding a personal touch and look great in photographs. You could even arrange music or canapés to be served so guests don't get bored or hungry during the journey. The main thing is, your guests will be talking and laughing together the whole time, so when they arrive at the reception, the atmosphere will be just right and they'll be in the mood to celebrate.

## Will our guests get bored?

**Q** My fiancé and I have more than 150 guests attending our wedding this summer and I'm concerned about how long the formal photographs might take. Our photographer does wonderful reportage-style photography but we would also like some formal shots of our families too. What's the best way to approach this so our guests don't get hot and bothered?

**A** *Nic says:* Even a reportage photographer will expect to take some formal group shots on the day, so speak to him in advance about your concerns. Give him a clear idea of the photographs you require and he should be able to offer advice on how to get them without the process swallowing up the whole afternoon.

The key here is communication. You may want to nominate someone in the wedding party to coordinate the group photos, someone who knows your families far better than your photographer will. They can assist in getting the groups together just before they're needed for the next photograph. This should speed things up and ensure the atmosphere is kept informal and relaxed.

Don't forget, group photographs don't necessarily have to be formal or 'stuffy' these days. In fact, your guests will appreciate having fun in the pictures, rather than posing. There are many things your photographer can do here, for example, he could capture them in a huge confetti shot, or as the bride is throwing the bouquet. For shots with the bridal party, try some 'kinetic posing' whereby guests are encouraged to walk, run and move while the photos are being taken. This will ensure they have something other than a false smile to think about and their expressions will be far more natural.

## Contact our experts...

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