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This DC-based duo has planned weddings with budgets from \$25,000 to \$250,000.

Where to Splurge and Where to Save

with **NAR HOVNANIAN** and **SUGAR TAYLOR**,
Planning & Creative Directors,
Taylor + Hov, taylorandhov.com

CUT COSTS WHERE YOUR GUESTS WON'T NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE.

➔ Get a small cake to cut and have sheet cakes in the back to feed guests. Don't print menus and programs for everyone; you can display one program creatively for all to see using a large frame, and either skip menus entirely or print just one per table. Save money on food by opting for a buffet meal or hosting a brunch wedding.

AVOID PINTEREST ENVY.

➔ It's easy to see something on Pinterest and say *I want that!* Executing it for 150 people, on the other hand, can cost a lot more than you think. Start planning your design early enough to have wiggle room. A good event designer can look at a Pinterest board and tell you approximately how much that design will cost for your guest count.

NEVER SKIMP ON YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER OR FLOWERS.

➔ Pictures are so important—make sure you pay for quality! Choose a photographer whose work you are excited about. Please don't try to do flowers yourself. It's an added stress that you won't want to think about the week before your wedding. Instead, save money by shopping for local and in-season blooms.

TRIM YOUR GUEST LIST.

➔ The more guests you have, the larger the budget. If you don't want to spend much on your wedding, keep it intimate.

Personalizing Your Ceremony

with **REVEREND LAURA C. CANNON**

OWNER, Ceremony Officiants, ceremonyofficiants.com

Ordained in 2003, this Columbia native has performed more than 1,000 ceremonies.

Find an officiant you feel comfortable with.

➔ Ceremony Officiants has a team of more than 20 nondenominational officiants, so my first step is to match each couple with the right officiant. The factors we consider are the style of the ceremony, the couple's religious or cultural preferences, and the personalities of the couple and the officiant. It's important that each couple feels that their officiant "gets them" and will be able to create and deliver exactly the kind of ceremony that's right for them.



Share your stories.

➔ Most couples want to strike a balance between reverence and levity, so I encourage couples to include things that are both sentimental and humorous about their relationship. One of my favorite things to ask for is a "Top Five" list of the things they love the most about one another. It's a great way to give guests a window into the relationship, and often leads to both laughter and tears for everyone in attendance.

Aim for the sweet spot between familiar and traditional.

➔ A balance needs to be struck between the two. The ceremony should be a reflection of what the couple wants to say, but it should also feel sufficiently "ceremonial." Many couples who try to write it themselves make the mistake of including too much personality and not enough structure. Experienced professionals can take a traditional ceremony and write it so it doesn't come across like a stodgy, cookie-cutter script.

Remember: It's all about the vows.

➔ The couple's vows are the entire reason for having a wedding in the first place. They lay the foundation for a marriage. Writing custom vows is a way to put some conscious intention into creating the type of marriage they want, and to agree upon the things their relationship means to both of them.