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Counting the cost of a wedding

Shortly after announcing your engagement, your parents kindly offer to foot the bill.

Fantastic news – but only if you observe a few rules from the outset.

If the family is paying for a couple's big day, wedding professionals suggest the latter make a few compromises.

First and foremost, couples should get together with their families to discuss which party is willing to pay for what.

A clear discussion of available funds is important, and respectful to those funding the event, says Sonya Yeung, creative director of luxury destination wedding company Bliss Creations.

Discussing every element of the wedding is usually helpful as it helps the happy couple obtain confirmation of what is to be covered.

However, "it's likely that parents will

want to see the 'need' versus 'want' scenario", Yeung says.

"If [something] is a 'must have' and parents are unwilling to fund this, perhaps consideration should be made where the couple pays a part of it or in full for this item."

As costs will vary, depending on numbers and final items, a lump-sum figure is generally a good idea.

Setting the budget at the beginning also means that couples can start saving for extras such as the photographer, band, invitations or champagne, says bride-to-be Fionnuala Carolan.

"Then the parents can still take credit for hosting the day, but you can spend what you see fit on all the extras," Carolan says.

Although, in Chinese families, it is the groom's family who pay for the wedding, Western couples normally expect the bride's family to foot the bill.

In either case, compromise is the name of the game. "If your parents are very traditional, the way to show them respect is to observe the customs and traditions of a traditional wedding,"

says Evelyn Mills, the group creative director of Marriage Maestros. "Talking to your parents about what's important will really help."

Favoured traditions



If parents are footing the bill for your wedding, experts advise you must be willing to compromise to avoid stress and conflict.



range from holding a Chinese tea ceremony to the father giving his daughter away at the wedding.

Usually, parent-sponsored weddings tend to be rather more conservative and formal, Mills says.

As a result, compromise is a good thing. So, if the bride and groom fancy a more relaxed day, they can host additional events. "If you want the

evening to be entertaining for all generations, you can host a formal reception followed by an after-party, when possibly most of the older guests have left, and you can let your hair down," Mills says.

Other key areas for discussion are usually the theme and number of guests.

Most parents expect their own

friends to attend the event, Mills says. Other crunch points range from the number of tables to the likely cost of flowers and the number of bridesmaids.

However, if money becomes an impossible subject, there are ways out of the conundrum, Yeung says.

"A destination wedding is a great way to lower costs and reduce the number of guests."