



How to Plan a Bridal Shower

A bridal shower is an event typically hosted by the bride's BFFs or a few family members. It can be a co-ed wedding shower or ladies only and can take on just about any theme. As a friend of the bride, it's your job to throw her a stellar shower that she'll remember. Don't consider yourself a class A party planner? No worries, we've got you covered with bridal shower games, ideas and etiquette tips.

Here's everything you need to know about planning a bridal shower.

Set a budget

The first step in the party planning process is working out your bridal shower budget. Remember, this doesn't have to be a one-woman job - rally up a couple of bride-to-be's close friends and family members to put together an epic bash that won't break the bank. Keep in mind that some people have more or less than others, so make sure you're not pushing people beyond their means. Tip: keep all this info in a group chat or email thread so that you know what you're working with.

Decide on a date

The bridal shower is typically thrown about three months before the wedding date, so start planning ASAP. Make sure that all your desired attendees will be able to make it by calling or emailing them and offering up a few date options. Whichever date suits most people should be the one you go with.

Make your guest list

The next step is working out your guest list. Everyone who gets an invite to this soiree should be on the guestlist for the main event - so you'll want the bride to give it a once-over before you start addressing invitations. You may also want to ask her what type of shower she wants. Though you may dream of hosting a big co-ed bash, she may prefer an intimate dinner party with her closest girlfriends.

Choose your location

Once you know the budget, guest list and date you're working with you can move on to choosing your location. If you've got the funds to spare, a swanky restaurant or country club makes for nice, upscale options. If you'd rather be a bit more fiscally responsible, opt to host it at one of the host/hostess' houses - just dress it up with a few decorations and you'll be good to go!

Pick a theme

While themes aren't totally necessary for bridal showers, they do add a touch of personality. If nothing comes to mind, consider playing off the bride-to-be's favorite places or activities. Is she really into camping? Maybe host an outdoor event with beers and a barbecue. Does she have a strong love for Italian fare? Consider doing a DIY pizza party. Brainstorm with your co-hosts to come up with something truly amazing or check out creative ideas.

Send Invites

You'll want to give your guests about six to eight weeks' notice so that they can sort out their schedules in advance. Sending out an invitation in the mail is the most traditional and involved option. But, if you're trying to reduce costs,

an email will do just fine (remember to follow up, as it may end up in a spam folder). Be sure to include the couple's gift registry info - some retailers will provide registry notification cards to enclose with the invitation. Tip: you can keep everyone's addresses and emails logged using a guest list planner.

Choose your catering style

The size of your guest list will help determine how you structure your menu. If you're opting for an intimate affair, consider doing a full meal. On the other hand, if you're hosting a party with upwards of ten people, you may want to opt for cocktail style eats. It'll save money and won't leave you with mountains of dishes to wash.

Stock the bar

Having a healthy supply of champagne, cocktails, and mocktails on hand is essential. If you want to go that extra mile, craft a signature drink for the celebration featuring the bride's favorite flavors.

Get to decorating

Before your bash begins you'll want to decorate the space. You don't need to go crazy with your credit card, just buy a few bits and bobs to give it some character. If you're going with a theme, you'll want a few decor items that reflect it. Maybe you're hosting a French-themed affair? Dress the place up like a patisserie with pastel balloons and bunting. In the market for more of a boho vibe? Consider filling your venue with geodes, crystals and throw pillows for seating. Pro tip: set the mood by building an ultimate bridal shower playlist.

Plan games

Avoid dull moments and awkward silences by having a few fun games planned out. No, this does not mean you should bust out UNO, Operation or Monopoly - it means you should get creative. The newlywed game, bridal Pictionary, bridal bingo and vow mad libs should keep your guests thoroughly

entertained. This has the added benefit of working as an icebreaker for your guests.

Set up a gift area

Unlike engagement parties, bridal showers involve gifting. Have a designated table prepared for the presents to help keep the gifts from going missing or getting damaged during the bash. When the time comes for the bride to open them, keep a running list of all the presents and who they're from so that the bride knows who to send thank-you cards to.

Craft a ribbon bouquet

Once the bride has opened all her gifts collect the ribbons from the gifts and create a ribbon bouquet. This is traditionally used during the wedding rehearsal in lieu of a real bouquet. It's also a fun keepsake that'll help the bride remember her shower.

Prep a toast

Before your party wraps you'll want to give a brief toast to thank your guests for coming and to congratulate the bride on her impending nuptials. Don't feel the need to add in anecdotes or quotations, just keep things short and sweet.

Pass out your favors

What's a shower without party favors? You don't have to buy anything extravagant, just a little gift to commemorate the day. If you're particularly strapped for cash this is a great opportunity to show off your DIY skills. Bake homemade treats, make personalized jewelry or simply take the time to handwrite thank you cards for all your guests.