

Headcount and Guest List



Now, we want to emphasize that we don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves on narrowing down your entire guest list! You don't need your final list ready for a while, so no need to start choosing between your second cousins right now. Most experts recommend sending out your save-the-dates 6-8 months ahead of time, so that's kind of the unofficial "deadline" for having your final guest list. This step of the process is more about getting a general headcount, and you can worry about the details later.

You need a headcount for two reasons.

- 1. You need to understand how your desired headcount will work with your budget and adjust accordingly.**
- 2. So you can keep your approximate guest count in mind and choose an appropriate venue.**

More guests means more money and a bigger venue, of course! It may seem like a lot to think about at once, but we'll walk you through it step-by-step.

BASICALLY WE'RE JUST LOOKING FOR A BALLPARK FIGURE THAT WILL:



01. Fit your budget



02. Allow you to invite all your nearest and dearest



03. Give you something to keep in mind when evaluating what venues might work for you

THINGS TO CONSIDER:



Is there a general vibe you're trying to establish for your wedding?

And, if so, do you see it being a jam-packed party or more of an intimate affair? In other words, how might your desired vibe impact how many people you foresee attending?



Where will you likely be hosting your wedding?

Not necessarily a specific venue yet, but will it be nearby? A far-off destination? And, more importantly, where will potential guests be expected to travel from/to? A distant wedding may lead to fewer guests being able to attend.



Guest list and budget really go hand in hand, so how many people can you afford? And what does that mean for your per-person costs?

The primary consideration for per-person costs is good and beverages—with a little extra sprinkled on top for favors or other personal details. *Most couples spend about 30% of their budget on food and drinks.*

$$\frac{\text{Your Budget}}{3} = \text{Your Approximate Food \& Beverage Budget}$$

That said, major foodies may want to up that number! Or if you're not that big on getting fancy with the food, you can shrink it a bit. But folks still need to be fed at the end of the day, don't forget that.

To figure out a per-person cost you're comfortable with, we're going to have to pull out the calculator (app)! You don't need to settle on a super specific number right now, but we recommend playing around with different figures until you find your sweet spot. Take your approximate food and drink budget and start dividing it by different potential guest counts—25, 50, 75, 100, 125—to see what that will get you “per plate.” From there, you'll have a lot more perspective on what you're working with.

Keep in mind, that you can make almost any budget work for almost any guest count, but it will absolutely impact the celebrations. You can have a massive budget and feed 25 guests a 6-course gourmet fête. Or you can keep things budget-friendly with a 100 guests and get a taco truck or a bunch of pizzas. (Both options sound like totally awesome weddings to us!)

It's not about finding what's “right,” it's about finding what's right for you.

ESTABLISHING THE BARE NECESSITIES:

Okay, so we said you wouldn't have to be picking between your cousins at this stage but...we kinda lied. Hear us out! At this point, we only want to think about your absolutely must-have, could-never-ever-in-a-million-years-get-married -without-them guests. We recommend picking between 10–25 people each for both you and your partner that you absolutely cannot not invite. The goal isn't to start splitting hairs at this stage, we're just trying to form a baseline! Later on down the line you can create your B (strong maybes) and C (maybe maybes) lists of potential guests, but this is the ideal starting point so you know the bare minimum of space you'll need in a venue.

YOUR MUST-HAVE GUESTS

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YOUR PARTNER'S MUST-HAVE GUESTS

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