

Dressing Up in a Wedding Dress

As soon as you get engaged, you're suddenly expected to understand the world of bridal fashion and the myriad terms and rules it involves. In reality, many brides don't know what the different gown options are, and what they mean in terms of fit, flexibility in design and price. Here are some things you should know that will make the [wedding dress shopping](#) experience easier.

Made-to-measure; If you want something unique, a made-to-measure gown is the way to go. As the name suggests, this type of gown is made from scratch to your specifications. You will have the flexibility to design your own gown, or have a sample made to fit your exact measurements.

You will have a new pattern made for your measurements. This is sometimes the only way to go if your proportions are very different to a standard size - if you are much shorter than average, taller than average, or have really long or short legs for example.

A made-to-measure gown requires anything from four to eight fittings, depending on the dressmaker. You will need at least a measurement fitting; a toile fitting, where a mock-up version of your gown is created from a calico fabric; a first fitting, where you will be fitted into your gown and have the seams and hem pinned; and a final fitting, where you will try on your finished gown to make sure it fits perfectly. Any hand beading or embroidery is usually done just before the final fitting.

A made-to-measure gown is the most expensive option, as it requires the most amount of work.

Made-to-order; A made-to-order gown is when you choose a gown from a range of samples and pick the fabric and colour to have it made in your size. Not all designers offer this option, which is less expensive than a made-to-measure gown.

You will often still have a degree of flexibility in the design of the gown, depending on the dressmaker. You can alter the design of the gown as long as it doesn't change the pattern. As soon as the pattern is altered, the gown becomes a made-to-measure design. Design features you can usually change are beading, fabric, colour, train length, neckline, fullness and straps.

Made-to-order gowns require between two and four fittings. The fittings process should happen as close to the wedding as possible - usually about a month out.

Ready-to-wear; For the low-maintenance bride, a ready-to-wear dress, otherwise known as off-the-rack, is probably the best option.

This type of dress will save you money because you won't be charged as much for labour or fittings. The only downside is that you can't alter the design.

If you find the gown of your dreams off-the-rack but it doesn't fit perfectly, don't stress. Just take it to a reputable dressmaker to have it altered. Some designers provide an in-house alterations service for their clients.

Take your new bridal vocab out for a spin when you go gown shopping. Not only will it impress your friends but it will let the designer know you've done your research.

About the Author

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