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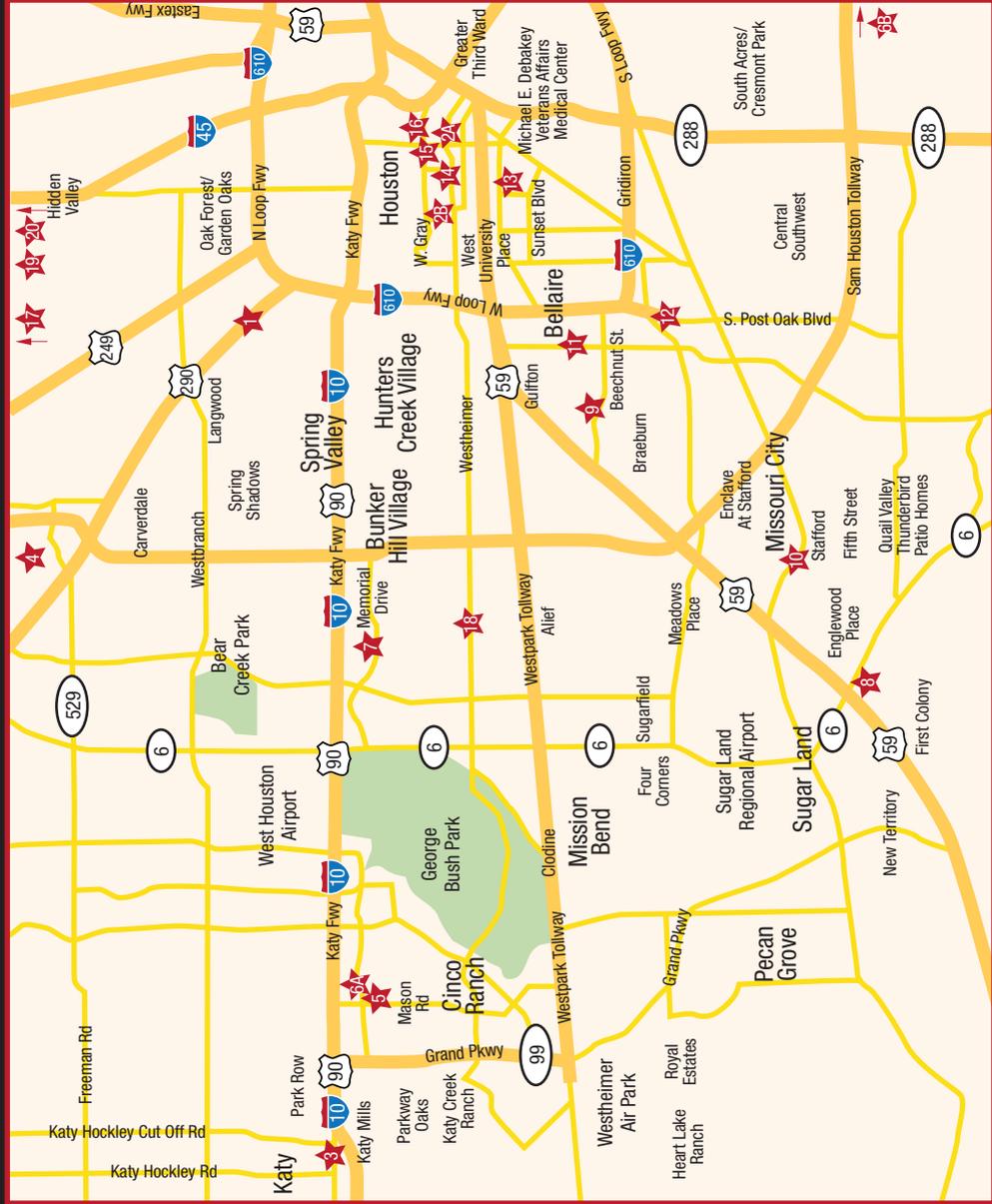
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# Top 10 Tips for Saving on Wedding Attire

## Bridal Gowns and Accessories on a Budget

Wedding attire and accessories are a huge part of the wedding industry, often accounting for a large segment of the total wedding cost. With magazines and TV shows focusing heavily on designer looks, it can be overwhelming to find "the perfect dress" on a budget.

Enter bridal attire expert Kelly Staton of The Eclectic Frog in Conroe, TX! Kelly offers the following tips for brides looking to make the most of their wedding attire budget.

### 1. It costs how much for a piece of tulle on a comb?

Study up on what your ideal style costs; then, set a budget and stick to it. Allow room in your budget for jewelry, shoes, veil, undergarments, and alterations. Only you know what you are willing to sacrifice if needed. Always overestimate and leave yourself a cushion.

### 2. Bridal can be an expensive word.

An item can more than double its price with the addition of the word "bridal." That's not to say there aren't reasonably priced bridal items, but generally they are priced higher, so think outside the bridal box to find big savings. Fascinators can be found in shops with other hair accessories and costume jewelry, which is a huge money saver. My top three stops when styling a photo shoot are online auctions, discount stores, and resale stores.

### 3. The best things in life are free!

Not only will you increase the sentimental value in your attire for the big day by wearing Grandma's pearls, your sister's veil, or your best friend's earrings but the savings can be applied towards the rest of your ensemble.

### 4. Savor the thrill of the hunt!

Shop sample sales, end of season sales after holidays and prom, and trunk shows. Some sample gowns look brand new and the price reductions are very generous. Holiday wear may be used to suit attendants depending on your theme. Prom gowns have not only doubled as bridal gowns but some also make excellent bridesmaid gowns. Trunk

shows offer up to the minute styles from your favorite designers. Many shops even offer an incentive to order a certain designer during the event.

### 5. If it doesn't fit, it's not a hit!

The three most important factors in picking the right wedding attire are fit, fit, and fit. While some girls are lucky enough to put on a gown and need no alterations whatsoever, that is not the norm. If you are petite a hem is to be expected. If the gown is too tight and bunching it won't be comfortable and will fail to show your figure in its best light. Normal alterations include shortening straps, adding a bustle, adding a bra cup to the bust and a hem. None of these have to be a huge expense but doing all of the above can easily bust a tight budget.

### 6. Buyers beware when ordering online!

The ease of online shopping can lull you into a false sense of security. Not only can shipping costs run very high, there is no opportunity to see and touch the item prior to ordering. When the item arrives, if there are any issues with it, you often lose money when returning the item in terms of shipping costs or restocking fees. Make sure the savings outweigh the risk, and that ultimately you are protected by your credit card company or bank just in case it happens to be a too-good-to-be-true situation.

### 7. Yes, dear, less really is more.

The dress is intended to accent your best attributes - and represent your personality. How does that apply to budget? Beads are tiny and take a lot to cover a small area, many special details must be done by hand, and fine lace is very intricate. Every detail added to a gown adds to the overall cost. A budget bride can get her designer of her choice by picking a simpler, elegant style, and then take it over the edge with the right accessories.

### 8. The dirty little secret.

Many dry cleaners send bridal gowns out for cleaning. I have found prices ranging from fifty dollars to three hundred dollars to clean a gown. If you purchased a sample gown, are planning to wear a borrowed

gown, or are planning to resell the gown after the wedding, you will need to have the gown cleaned. Gowns that are not full, have no train and/or are not extremely ornate can cost much less to clean and depending upon the Dry Cleaner, may cost less than twenty dollars. It pays to call around to different cleaners to compare prices.

### 9. Dress for success!

Decide on a venue before you pick the attire. Let the attire fit the occasion AND the surroundings. Stilettoes and a heavy satin ball gown really do not fit well with a beach front wedding in the sand. A sundress or simple bridesmaid or prom gown could double as a wedding gown, costs far less, and can be just as special if it suits you and the venue. Add a veil, tiara, fascinator, or maybe a vintage brooch to up the formality and add a bridal feel.

### 10. Budget savvy brides recoup some of the cost!

Save everything you purchased for the wedding including leftover craft & decor items, attire, undergarments such as petticoat and corset, shoes, flower girl dress,

and ring bearer items. Everything is resalable either online or at a consignment store. What you don't sell could be donated to charity to help make another bride's day as special as your own. Make sure you keep the tax receipt and consult your tax professional about the value of the donation for the next tax season.

Nobody wants to scrimp or be cheap when it comes to planning their big event. However, being aware of the costs, budgeting well, and being a little bit frugal could definitely lessen your stress, simplify the planning process, and make the entire experience a little more enjoyable.



*Kelly Staton of The Eclectic Frog, a consignment and resale shop offering bridal and formalwear in Conroe, Texas, offers her tips on saving money on your bridal attire and accessories.*



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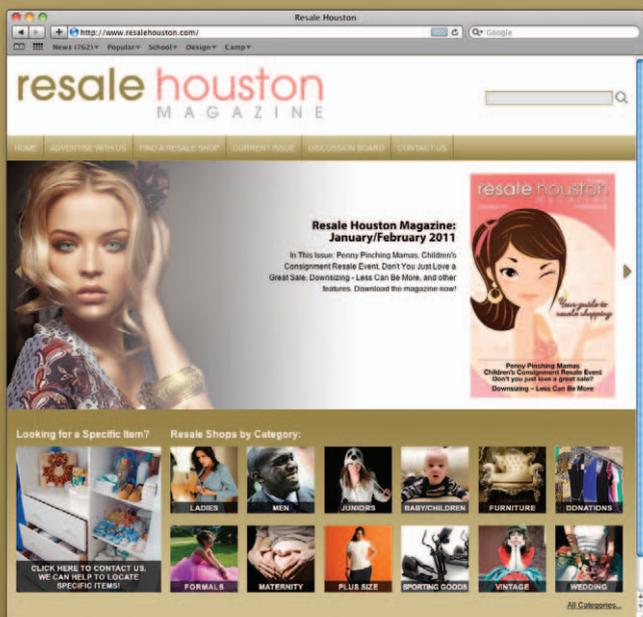
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