

6 questions you need to ask...

- **Delivery** – do they deliver and, if so, is there any extra charge to either you or your guests?
- **When does the list close and the gifts/funds become available?** If you're having a traditional gift list and need to be back from honeymoon to receive them, will they hold your gifts until then?
- **Discounts and other perks** – lots of wedding list services offer you discounts on items left over after the wedding, or even on future purchases.
- **A gift list advisor** – will you have a contact that you can liaise with if any problems arise?
- **Unavailable items policy** – what happens if something's out of stock when it comes to delivery? Will they choose the replacement? Or give you vouchers automatically instead, or the option of choosing an alternative?
- **Timing** – if you've asked for contributions to your honeymoon, can you access presses while you're away or do you have to pay for things in advance?

Choose gifts that last

Your wedding list is there to make sure you get what you want, but it's still easy to get carried away. Don't, in two years' time, wonder why you ever chose that £500 tea set when you've yet to throw a tea party, or a scuba diving course on your honeymoon when you hate getting your hair wet. Instead, draw up a pre-wedding list 'list' with your h2b and weed out the whims from the must-haves.

Your tastes will change over the course of your marriage so think classic rather than fashion-forward. Will that bright green mixer really still go with your kitchen when you've moved house and redecorated several times?

Even if you're having a traditional department store list, it's worth putting some quirkier one-offs on there for guests who want to buy something

special, rather than just the generic pots, pans and plates. Decorative pieces, like these Silver Photo Frames from Heal's (right), from £18, are ideal.

It's also worth thinking about what you'd like to replace. Now's your chance to upgrade threadbare bath towels for something more luxurious, like this cashmere set (right) from The White Company (from £5 for a face towel, thewhitecompany.com).

Calculate your grand total

It's worth having a rough figure in mind in terms of how much your guests are likely to spend on you, and then adding a little more to your list so that your guests have plenty to choose from. The average guest spends around £30, according to the latest You & Your Wedding survey and the number of gifts you receive will usually be around two-thirds the number of your guest list, i.e. because couples like to buy together, you're likely to receive 66 gifts from 100 guests. This gives you an estimated total budget of £2000. Remember, though, that you need something for every budget: your student brother may have less cash to flash than Great Aunt Doris, for instance so include a few cheaper items like wine coolers or cushions under £20, too.

Also, bear in mind, if you're expecting everyone to travel to Italy for the weekend you might need some smaller items so they don't feel pressured to spend even more!

If there's something large you've got your eye on, certain groups of guests, like your work friends or his footie mates, are usually happy to club together to buy you a new bed, for example, or a plasma-screen TV, if that's what you really want. But if you've asked for vouchers explain in your thank-you letter exactly what you bought with their contribution. And remember to give him a say: too: you're the bride, but he's the groom – the wedding list is for both of you!



Cashmere towels (above), from £5. The White Company. Silver photo frames, from £18, Heal's

YOUR GUIDE TO GIFT SPEAK

Canteen – nope, not a room, a full set of cutlery, usually silver.

China – a catch-all term for tableware; not necessarily made of china, divided into 'formal', or 'fine', and 'everyday'. Formal is heavier, sturdier and should last longer.

Free list – no, this doesn't mean the gifts are free, sadly... Some lists charge a fee, or a percentage of your list spend, while others don't so are 'free'. Always check in advance.

Linen – another generic term, this time for bedding, bath and table linen etc, though, again, not necessarily made of linen.

Solid/sterling silver – with a guaranteed minimum silver content, usually stamped with a hallmark.

Silver plate – where silver, usually sterling, covers a cheaper base metal.

Stoneware – nope, nothing to do with plants, it's glasses (as in wine, not spectacles).

Thread count – refers to the softness of 'finen' (usually sheets). Referred to by a number (from 80 to 700 although usually between 180 and 320), the higher the thread count, the softer the feel. Higher thread counts are normally more expensive, although they don't necessarily last longer. Most experts will tell you that a thread count over 380 isn't practical because the material becomes too thin to last.



Silver cutlery. Arthur Price, from £135 for a 44-piece six-person set, arthurprice.com



Recycled glassware, from £10, from Biome Lifestyle

Splash out on fine wines from Berry Bros (fbr.com)



For more gifts he'll love (and you will, too!) see p222 and check out our great gifts under £30 on p216