

never want to be a planner—they were all so grouchy and stressed! But one day, one of my good clients asked me to do his seventy-fifth birthday. I really didn't want to, but he insisted. It turned out to be a blast, and from there, I fell headfirst into party planning.

My mother always threw the most amazing parties, so I guess it's in my blood; my father was a lithographer, so lettering was something I grew up with too. One of my earliest party memories is sitting at the top of the staircase with my two sisters, eavesdropping on all the laughter and conversation emanating from downstairs—I still dream about those parties.

At my own bat mitzvah, the theme was “From Lollipops to Roses,” and there were lollipops and chocolate roses everywhere. My mother used *the* party planner in Los Angeles at that time, Marcia Lehr. She did the custom invites, the decorations, everything, at a time when there really wasn't a planning industry like there is now. (And now I do all my custom invitations through her daughter.)

I started working with celebrities almost by accident. Brooke Shields was my first star client, and after that things just took off. It has to do with the quality of service I offer, of course, but also with the fact that celebrities know one another and tend to hire one another's hairstylists, chefs, doctors, whatever. But although the press likes to call me the “celebrity wedding planner,” and it's certainly true that I do work with a lot of A-listers, that's not what this book is about.

This book is for every bride and groom—the ones who are planning a wedding with \$10,000 or ten or twenty times that, and the ones who are hiring a wedding planner and those who are not. Whether you're totally clueless about where to start or you've already mapped out your colors and tried on fifteen dresses, you'll find just what you're looking for. (Want to test your wedding IQ? Take the “What Kind of Bride Are You?” quiz that follows.)

So happy reading, happy planning, and don't forget to keep your eye on the prize—this is just the beginning of a wonderful journey. ♦

## Quiz: What Kind of Bride Are You?

Before you start figuring out whether you want a church wedding or a beach wedding, lilies, peonies, or tulips, it helps to determine your overall “bridal style.” As different as brides are, most tend to fall into one of four broad categories. Take this quiz and find out if you're a Dreamer, a Perfectionist, a Rookie, or a Nonconformist. Naturally, everyone exhibits some degree of overlap; even a hardcore Dreamer has a Nonconformist tendency or two. Think of each category as a different kind of shoe—each wonderful in its own way!

### 1. How long have you been thinking about your wedding?

- A. Since I was five.
- B. For two years (since I started going to so many friends' weddings).
- C. For two weeks (since the day I got engaged).
- D. I was never even really sure I'd have one!

### 2. What kind of organizational system will you use to manage the wedding?

- A. Excel spreadsheet on a portable electronic device.
- B. Paper files, organized by category, filled with pictures I like from magazines.
- C. Honestly? Little scraps of paper floating around my purse.
- D. Why would I need an organizational system? I'm planning a party, not a trip to outer space.

### 3. How many bridal magazines are in your home right now?

- A. 0
- B. 1-3
- C. 4-9
- D. 10 or more

**4. If you had the means, would you quit your job to plan your wedding?**

- A. It would be lovely!
- B. I've requested several weeks off and delegated my most involved projects, so it should be okay.
- C. Is it really going to be all that time-consuming? I'm getting kind of nervous.
- D. That's preposterous.

**5. The day after you got engaged, you:**

- A. Went about your regular routine.
- B. Hid under a blanket (it's all so overwhelming).
- C. Tried on gowns.
- D. Went to the health club and stocked up on celery.

**6. When shopping for a wedding gown, whom do you plan to bring with you?**

- A. My wedding planner.
- B. My mother and my best friend since childhood.
- C. My husband-to-be.
- D. The priest?

**7. What do you think your wedding dress will look like?**

- A. Fitted bodice, ballgown skirt, and a train—I've been picturing it since I was twelve.
- B. Something white or ivory with a poofy thing here or there?
- C. No white. I want to wear a happy, celebratory color.
- D. How can I possibly answer that until I've visited every bridal store within a fifty-mile radius?

**8. Your ideal shower would be:**

- A. I'd like three: A lingerie shower, a kitchen shower, and a couples shower.
- B. None—I think showers are a form of torture.
- C. Does that happen before or after the wedding?
- D. An afternoon get-together at a spa—there's nothing better than champagne with a mani-pedi.

**9. What dishes will be on your registry?**

- A. I already have dishes. I don't need new ones. Do I?
- B. I'm asking that people donate to charity rather than give me gifts.
- C. Three sets: Formal china, everyday dishes, and patterned accent plates to vary the look.
- D. The same pattern my mom registered for when she got married—I just love it.

**10. Which of the following comes closest to describing your ideal wedding cake?**

- A. Stacked tiers—perfectly coordinated to the color scheme, of course—in different flavors so everyone goes home happy.
- B. Yummy, pretty, and white. Did I mention yummy?
- C. White buttercream icing, clusters of colorful flowers, and a bride-and-groom cake topper. Swoon . . .
- D. An ice-cream sundae buffet! I'd rather have a sundae over cake any day.

**11. What kind of shoes will you be wearing under your wedding dress?**

- A. White satin, of course, carefully chosen to match the exact shade of the dress.
- B. Cream-colored, open-toed pumps for the ceremony and light gray skimmers for the reception.
- C. Don't they just come with the dress?!
- D. My favorite pair of hot-pink Converse—my wedding won't soon be forgotten.

**12. Do you have an idea of who your bridesmaids will be?**

- A. My three best friends since high school.
- B. My golden retriever.
- C. I haven't decided yet, but I'll take into account length of friendship, level of enthusiasm, and general responsibility.
- D. Please stop asking me questions I don't have the answers to!

## Scoring

Tally up your answers to each question.

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. A-1; B-2; C-3; D-4 | 7. A-1; B-3; C-4; D-2  |
| 2. A-2; B-1; C-3; D-4 | 8. A-2; B-4; C-3; D-1  |
| 3. A-4; B-3; C-1; D-2 | 9. A-3; B-4; C-2; D-1  |
| 4. A-1; B-2; C-3; D-4 | 10. A-2; B-3; C-1; D-4 |
| 5. A-4; B-3; C-1; D-2 | 11. A-1; B-2; C-3; D-4 |
| 6. A-2; B-1; C-4; D-3 | 12. A-1; B-4; C-2; D-3 |

### If you scored 12–20 points, you're a Dreamer.

**DID YOU DRESS YOUR BARBIE DOLLS** in white satin and tulle and marry off Barbie and Ken on a daily basis? Have you been planning your wedding since you were five? You're a Dreamer.

You're likely to come into one of our meetings carrying a bulging folder of pictures ripped out from bridal magazines—and there's nothing wrong with that. You're incredibly excited about the wedding planning process, and you've already done some research. Just be careful about getting too attached to any part of your vision, or you might be in for a letdown when your dreams clash with reality. It's wonderful that you're so impassioned about it all, but you're going to have to fight a tendency toward getting hung up on details. The name of the game is flexibility.

Fine-tune your ideas. Tastes evolve or change, so if you really have been clipping photos for years, you'll need to scrutinize that ten-year-old shot to see if it still speaks to you. I tell all my brides this, but Dreamers especially need to prioritize what's most

important to them. This will help them as they go along in their planning.

Don't forget about your work! I've seen many a Dreamer get so wrapped up in her wedding that she lets her job slide. Designate specific times for wedding planning and take care not to ruin your reputation with colleagues and superiors. And in that same vein, don't let the wedding planning consume you. Your happiness shouldn't depend on finding the perfect antique lace overlays—remember, above all, that you're formalizing your union with the person you love.

### If you scored 21–29 points, you're a Perfectionist.

**HAVE YOU ATTENDED SO MANY WEDDINGS** you've become a self-proclaimed expert? Do you sample five ice-cream flavors before you order your cone? You're a Perfectionist.

You need to see a lot of choices and might find it hard to make decisions. Ideally, you should have at least six months of planning time, preferably a year. Keep notes along the way, or you're liable to forget which sauce you liked best at the first tasting.

Though there will be bumps in the road, in the end you're likely to get the wedding you really want, so try not to focus on the negative. In the initial stages, let the ideas flow freely without worrying about how they fit together. Pick out photos of what you like, not what you abhor. Then listen to the professionals you hire to execute your wedding. If you're told that peonies can't be had in September, don't waste your time second-guessing your florist. Everyone truly does have your best interests at heart. Remember that you'll have to make the inevitable compromise.

And try to have some fun. The Perfectionist's worst enemy is stress. Go on walks, drink lots of water,

and don't forget to exercise. Remember, we're talking about just one day of your life.

### **If you scored 30–39 points, consider yourself a Rookie.**

**CAN YOU BARELY TELL A ROSE** from a hydrangea? Are you already feeling overwhelmed by a process that's barely gotten underway? You're a Rookie.

If it seems like all of a sudden everyone around you has started speaking in tongues, don't worry: You're not alone. Not everyone is a wedding pro. That's why I wrote this book! You'll find everything in here you need in order to become educated about your choices—and, who knows, you might even have some fun along the way.

You may be tempted to lean on someone else for advice, but you'll need to overcome that instinct in order not to feel out of place on your own wedding day. You don't need to be a professional planner to pull off a lovely wedding, but, should you have the means to hire one, it might be a good idea.

I often find that the most bewildered brides are the most delightful to work with. They're open to anything, listen carefully to what I have to say, and make decisions quickly—no wallowing in the details. But the flip side of that is that you need to make sure you're not going along with something that isn't to your taste just because you don't have the confidence to have a voice in the process. Your opinion counts! Practice saying “That isn't quite what I was thinking of” in front of the mirror until you're comfortable saying it to one of your vendors.

Clip photos of things you do or don't like—even if they have nothing to do with weddings. An English garden or the sleek line of an Art Deco-inspired toaster might be the perfect way to communicate your

tastes to your vendors. Think about other weddings you've attended and make a list of things you found appealing or unappealing. Visit websites of top-notch wedding planners, florists, and wedding photographers to identify styles that speak to you.

### **If you scored 40–48 points, you're a Nonconformist.**

**DOES THE NOTION OF A WHITE SATIN GOWN** and a bevy of bridesmaids make your skin crawl? Do you question tradition and revel in doing things your own way? You're a Nonconformist.

You're not necessarily opposed to ritual—if a tradition has meaning for you, you'll embrace it while finding a way to add a personal twist. But if the idea of a wedding is making you nervous and you're thinking of throwing in the towel and eloping, rest assured that the proceedings can be as untraditional as you want. If you hate showers, you don't have to have one (but you might want to consider a co-ed bowling party).

In my experience, Nonconformist brides are more likely than others to have a firm grasp on their budget limitations; no going into debt on a twelve-piece band for you, and I commend you for that. Follow your instincts and funnel your funds into the aspects of the wedding that are most important to you. You might prefer to have plain wood tables rather than bad satin cloths, or you might choose a simple dress over a wedding gown.

A gentle reminder: Try not to make a statement at the expense of your guests' comfort. Some of the invitees might not be as spry as you and the groom; they may not be inclined to take three puddle jumpers and a hovercraft to reach a remote island, or may require more than the primitive bathroom facilities at your beloved summer camp.