

37 Free Ways to WOW Your Wedding Guests

(Originally from Stephanie & Jeff Padovani)

In This Article You Will Learn:

- How to use the **WOW** effect to engage your guests so that they have more fun at your wedding.
- The easiest, cheapest ways to make your wedding **totally you**.
- How to find your unique **WOW** factor to create a wedding that really represents you.
- 37 ways to **WOW** your guests with a unique, unforgettable wedding.

The WOW Effect

"When I was planning our wedding, I didn't need the most expensive dress or a huge elaborate floral centre pieces. I just wanted to have a fun day surrounded by our family and friends in a beautiful location that was totally us and that left our wedding guests saying 'wow, that was the best wedding ever'!

At first I didn't think that was possible on my budget, I thought it took lots of money to come up with something unique and memorable....fortunately for me....I was wrong.

What you don't know...and what the wedding industry doesn't tell you...is that you can have a day filled with personal, unique touches that really say something about you. And it doesn't have to cost a lot of money.

The secret is called the WOW Effect."

From Stephanie & Jeff Padovani www.besthudsonvalleyweddingever.com

Have you ever walked into a beautiful, historic building....or climbed to the top of a hill with a gorgeous view....or heard such powerful music that you are just lost for words for a minute? It's like you were so absolutely overwhelmed by what you saw, heard or felt, that it just blew you away.

That's the WOW effect!

WOW is that overwhelming moment of appreciation when you're so moved that you can't even express it.

When your guests experience the WOW effect at your wedding, they won't just be impressed....they will really 'get' who you are and why you chose this wedding day, this location and this man.

The WOW effect is like a magic trick that casts a spell over your guests - transporting them to another world.....your world...and make them part of it.

Your guests will be WOWED when your wedding is a totally unique expression of you!
One of Stephanie's brides explained it like this:

She and her fiancé poured a tremendous amount of energy into remodeling and redecorating their new house. They spent hours painting and picking out just the right furniture, lights and accessories. It was a labor of love.

When her parents came to visit, they took a long tour of the house and said "WOW this house is totally unique....totally you!"

After all the time, money and energy she then spent planning the wedding of her dreams.....that's exactly what she wanted to hear her guests to say. "WOW this wedding is totally unique....totally you"

That's the experience your guests will get when you WOW them.

It's vitally important to WOW your wedding guests so they experience your wedding as unique and totally unforgettable. The bonus is that when they 'get' who you are, they become connected and involved....which means they will have MORE FUN!

If you don't WOW your guests, they won't understand that your wedding is totally you, your wedding will be remembered as being like every other 'cookie cutter' type of wedding they have all attended before.

But when you WOW your guests, they will be impressed. You will see it on their faces and they will say things like "This is the best wedding I've ever been to!"

On the other hand, if you don't WOW your guests, they might end up leaving your reception early and telling people they had just an 'okay' time.

WOWING your guests gives you the power to create a wedding that really represents who you are. You can literally influence your guests to have a good time.

If you don't WOW your guests, not only does your wedding not represent you...but you are powerless to get your guests to have a good time.

The Engagement

The WOW effect happens in a group when you have people involved, connected and engaged in what is going on.

The key to the WOW effect is something called *engagement*.

I'm not talking about the kind of engagement that happened to you when your guy got down on one knee, popped the question and you said yes.

Engage means 'to occupy the attention of someone' or 'to attract and please'. It's what happens when you are really into what you are doing.

'This is the secret of life – to be completely engaged with what you are doing in the here and now. And instead of calling it work, we realize it is play' – Alan Watts

You've probably experienced this type of engagement....or lack of it....many times.

For example, can you remember a time when you were given a group assignment in school and you were just not into it? Your teacher probably assigned you a topic and forced you to follow the rules. It's likely that your group struggled through the assignment because you didn't want to get a bad grade....but nobody enjoyed it.

It was not fun because you were NOT engaged. The group wasn't involved or interested because the assignment had nothing to do with them.

Now if your teacher had gotten your group engaged, it could have looked like this:

'You get assigned to the same group. You're still not into it at first. But instead of telling you what to do, your teacher engages you by asking what you think. He asks you to come up with your own topic. Suddenly the whole group is interested and actively participating and you end up having a good time!'

So what happened? *Engagement.*

The same thing will happen at your wedding. When your guests are *engaged* and *involved* in the events of your wedding, they get active and interested. They have FUN...and so do YOU!

The more you involve your guests, the more it works and the more unique and fun your wedding becomes.

There are three levels on which you can engage your guests: PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY and EMOTIONALLY. And guess what? *None of them are expensive.*

1. Engage them in ACTION. You can do this by inviting them to participate in a reading, performance or a group activity.
2. Engage them in THOUGHT. Challenge their minds with a quiz or a game. Get them remembering and imagining.
3. Engage them in EMOTION. Get your guests involved and invested in the events of your wedding by touching their *feelings*. When they really 'get' the love between you and your fiancé, when they laugh or cry, they are emotionally engaged.

These three levels for engaging your guests can be combined for the greatest WOW effect. But by far the most powerful and best suited technique for a romantic, unforgettable event like your wedding is *emotional engagement*.

Who Are You?

The best way to WOW your guests and get them engaged at your wedding is to give them the emotional experience of a wedding that is totally you. The secret to having a wedding that really feels like 'you' is *weaving your personality* into your wedding day as much as possible.

In order to create a dream wedding filled with fresh, unique ideas that really represent you....you need to know *who you are*.

No, you won't need to provide your ID for this one!

You just need to think about your personality, the interests and hobbies of both yourself and your fiancé in order to find the inspiration for dozens of ways to make your wedding a totally unique.

These are your WOW factors.

Once you have a list of your unique WOW factors, it's easy to work them into your wedding.

For example....

If you and your fiancé share a love of travel, that might be your WOW factor. So you might choose to name your tables after the places you have visited together. You might create a scrapbook of your travels or have the DJ play songs from the countries that are special to you.

One of our couples WOW factor was their shared obsession for the New York Yankees. They named each table after New York Yankees players; they also had the New York Yankees insignia on their wedding cake and the bride's garter, and were introduced to their guests while the "The Yankee Mambo" played in the background.

Maybe you don't want to get that extreme, but I think you get my point. Sharing your WOW factor with your guests gets them *engaged*. Once they are *engaged* they start actively participating in your wedding which translates into FUN, FUN FUN!

Engaging your guests isn't complicated or expensive, but it does involve a little time and thought. Do this exercise to discover the WOW factor that will make your wedding totally you.

Dream Wedding Exercise #1

1. Print out the first attached worksheet at the end of this booklet and fill in the checklist about your interests and hobbies.
2. Pick out two of the interests, hobbies or activities (paying extra attention to the ones you drew a star or circle around) as WOW factors to work into your wedding day. Keep them in mind as you explore the ideas in this chapter.

Telling Your Story

My all time favorite way to get wedding guests engaged is to tell them your love story.

People always like a good story.

When your guests hear your story they will get emotionally engaged. They may laugh and tears might come to their eyes. It cues into the meaning and uniqueness of your special day.

How did you meet your fiancé? What was your first impression of him? Where was your first date?
How did you get engaged?

Many of your wedding guests won't know your story. They certainly don't know all the juicy details. If you work these unique details into your special day, it makes a lasting memory by involving them into your story.

On the other hand, if you choose NOT to share your story, you risk having disconnected, disinterested wedding guests.

You don't have to be a writer or a great speaker to tell your story. Here are some easy ways to have someone else do it for you:

- Have your officiant create a ceremony just for you. This may include vows you have written yourselves, or the details of how you met and what you mean to each other. If your officiant is open to the idea, they might share your love story with your guests as part of the ceremony.
- Ask your Master of Ceremonies or Best Man or Maid of Honor to tell your story at your wedding reception. It can be something you have written for each other or something they write for you based on what you tell them.

Stephanie writes: My husband and I invite couples to write a short love letter to each other before the wedding...and NOT to share it with each other. Then on the wedding day, they are read out aloud just before their First Dance.

The response is always *amazing*. Your written words can be romantic, funny or quirky..whatever fits your personalities. Your guests will be drawn in and engaged emotionally. They'll feel connected and primed for an unforgettable, fun time.

Here are some more ways to tell your story:

- If you feel comfortable making a speech, take the microphone and share your story yourself at the reception.
- Ask a parent or a talkative member of your bridal party to do it for you.
- If you are shy or prefer a low key way to tell your story, consider printing a brief love story in your ceremony program.
- A photo slide show playing during the cocktail or dinner hour can also tell your story in a more subtle way.

The object is to touch your guests *emotionally*. And that doesn't mean you have to be sappy and romantic..getting them to laugh works really well too.

The more your guests feel, the more involved they will be in your wedding day and the more fun everyone will have.

Dream Wedding Exercise #2

1. Print out the second attached worksheet at the end of this booklet and answer the questions about your story.
2. Select your favorite story and make a plan with your fiancé to share it on your wedding day in a way that fits your personalities.

Involve Your Talented Guests

This idea engages your guests both emotionally and physically.

Have your family and friends participate directly in your wedding day. This goes way beyond just inviting them to do a reading at your ceremony.

For example, if you have a professional singer or musician attending, ask them to perform for your ceremony or during the reception.

Our couples have included performances by guests who were jazz singers, guitarists, actors, comedians...even Irish step dancers who performed in *Lord Of The Dance*.

In every case, the guests ate it up. They were engaged and it made a fun party inevitable.

Of course, don't guilt trip your friends into performing if they aren't comfortable with it. You don't want any drama queens.

But if your talented guests would like to share, it really adds something special for you and your guests.

Music Makes the Memories

Have you ever heard a song and immediately started laughing as you relived a funny memory? Or a song that brings you back to the time when you feel in love?

Music is an incredibly powerful way to engage your guests. It engages both emotionally and physically: your guests *feel* the music as they dance to it.

If you don't take advantage of the powerful effect music has on engaging your guests, you miss out on an easy way to make your wedding totally you. But if you do use music to involve your guests, it will make your dream wedding unforgettable.

Here are some great places to include those special songs in your wedding day:

- Your processional march down the aisle. Unless you have a strict church ceremony, you aren't limited to "The Wedding March" or the "Canon in D". Any love song or instrumental can take the emotions to the next level.
- Your parent dances. If there is a song your father always sang to you, use it for your father-daughter dance. You don't have to use a "traditional" Father-Daughter song. A personal choice makes it extra special for both you and your guests...especially if you have your master of ceremonies or DJ explain the meaning behind it.
- Your introduction music. Your introduction music can be anything from Metallica's "Enter Sandman" to James Brown's "I Feel Good". Pick a song that makes a statement about your personality and makes you feel awesome, setting the tone for your whole reception.
- If you have eclectic taste in music, ask your DJ to help you find a place for your favorite songs on your wedding day.

Active Involvement

Another way to engage your guests is to get them involved *physically*.

Do you remember back in gym class at school when you had to play dodge ball?

Personally I hated that.

I dreaded being picked (or Not picked) for a team. I hated the idea of having to play.

But then we started to MOVE. And something would always happen.

I got involved....*engaged*.

Physical movement engages your guests and gets them actively having fun. Entertainers and DJ's have known this secret for years, that's why so many of them rely on the Electric Slide or the Macarena to get the party started. For an older generation a progressive waltz commencing with the Bridal waltz also works too. Once your guests are up and moving, everything gets fun.

You don't have to use these types of participation methods. There are a whole range of techniques from highly interactive to subtle approaches.

But if you don't get your guests *moving* somehow, they will sit like lumps on a log all night and end up leaving early.

Michael and Sharon were total foodies who served their guests a five course meal with wine pairings at the Culinary Institute of America. They decided that they wanted the food to be the focus, so they requested that no dance music be played until after dinner.

Of course, their guests were thrilled with the meal. But after the plates of food and glasses of wine, they were more than a little weighed down. The guests were so tired and full after dinner that most of them left instead of dancing. Oops!

It is important to get your guests up and moving as soon as possible, so they will be engaged and actively having fun.

Here are some ways to physically engage your guests:

- Participation Dances – Electric Slide, YMCA, Cha-Cha Slide, The Chicken Dance, Macarena etc
- Ice Breaker Games, - A centerpiece give away, musical chairs, the newlywed game etc
- Inviting Guests To Dance – An easy way to subtly get things moving is to simply ask your guests to join you on the dance floor. They *have* to get up....because it is your wedding day, and the dancing continues from here.

Also ask you DJ for his or her favorite ideas to get your guests moving. They can come up with some great ideas to physically *engage* your guests.

Remember Your Guests

Your wedding day should be special and unique. But part of making it special for you is making it special for your guests. To do that you need to *engage* and *include* them

If your guests don't feel included in your wedding day, they won't be engaged and they won't have fun. Your wedding day will be a big dud.

On the other hand, if you include your guests they will be actively involved and having a great time.....and so will you.

Take a moment to think about the people coming to your wedding. What songs and artists might *they* want? What activities do *they* enjoy?

If you want your guests to have the best time possible, it might be a good idea to include a few of their favorite songs.

One of our brides hated YMCA. She just couldn't stand it. But her Uncle Harry got so excited every time he heard the YMCA played, that she asked us to play it, just for him.

Her Uncle Harry got up and jumped around, waving his arms as he (mis)spelled the words. The bride and her guests were hysterical, it ended up being one of the highlights of the party.

I'm not suggesting that you must play the Chicken Dance just because your guests want it, but take a moment to consider what your guests like and throw them a bone now and then.

Another way to remember your guests is to announce any birthdays or anniversaries coming up. You might make a special dedication or take the opportunity to embarrass a friend by reminding them about the time you sang together in a karaoke bar.

A final, sure way to include your guests in the celebration of your special day is to thank them. You can do this in a speech or with a dance, like a friendship circle. This is a great way to end the party.

Have your MC or DJ announce that the newlyweds would like to thank everyone for coming by sharing the last dance of the night, forming a circle around them. Playing the song like Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York" or "That's What Friends Are For" while you dance with your guests creates an unforgettable finale for your dream wedding.

37 Ways to WOW Your Guests

I'm pulling out all the stops with as many ways as I can think of to WOW your guests and make your wedding totally you.

These ideas are just the tip of the iceberg. Use your creativity, imagination and WOW factors to find even more ways that fit your personality.

To use the 3 secrets to WOW your guests **remember the 3 letters W O W**

W - Weave in your personality using your WOW factors.

O - Others involvement. Get others involved.

W - Why. Explain your choices to your guests so that they understand the significance.

37 Ways to WOW

1. A list of trivia questions about you two at each table for your guests to answer.
2. Favors that relate to your hobby or special interest.
3. Childhood photographs of you and your fiancé displayed in an album on a table.
4. Your parents and grandparents wedding photos.
5. Pictures of your pets.
6. Decoration your sweetheart table with momentos or collectables.
7. Put together a collage of your love letters from your long distance romance.
8. A groom's cake in honor of your fiancé's hobby or interest.
9. Choosing your favorite flower for the centerpieces.
10. Playing your favorite sports teams theme song.
11. Doing the silly line dance you and your friends learnt in college.
12. Cardboard cutouts of the friend who introduced you two but could be at the wedding.
13. Performances by your musician, singer or dancer guests.
14. Sharing your love story during your ceremony or reception.
15. Giving your guests "table tasks" to do throughout the reception.
16. Playing the 'Newly Wed' game.
17. A special thank you friendship dance with all of your guests.
18. Play or dedicate a song to friend as an inside joke.
19. Wear an item of clothing or jewelry from a close family member or close guest.
20. Name your tables to represent one of your favorite WOW factors.
21. Choose your favorite poems as a non-traditional ceremony reading.
22. Leave a gag gift, like a clown nose or fake moustache, at each place setting and photograph all your guests wearing them.
23. A scavenger hunt using disposable cameras to "hunt" for images.
24. Announce birthdays, anniversaries or engagements.
25. Give a dance lesson at your reception.
26. Hold a "ring warming" during your ceremony where your ring passes to each guest before you exchange vows.
27. Write special vows that unite your family and friends.

28. Include special ethnic traditions and dances.
29. Play a song or speech together.
30. Make a donation to your favorite charity.
31. Treat your guests to your favorite wine or dessert and tell them about it.
32. Play your guests wedding songs.
33. Include in your signature animal, team, hobby or activity in your wedding theme.
34. Take Polaroid photos of your guests for your guest book.
35. Have your guests write thoughts and wishes for a "time Capsule" you'll open on your 10th wedding anniversary.
36. Serve your special homemade brownies at the wedding and give your guests the recipe.
37. Surprise your guests by sharing your secret talent or skill.

Okay....now I am thoroughly exhausted.

Wowing your guests is about more than discovering fresh, unique ideas and working them into your wedding....though that can certainly inspire you.

It's about expressing yourself through the look and the feel, as well as the people you're surrounded by, on your wedding day. That's what makes your day unique....not just doing things no one else has seen but allowing you to really shine through every element of your wedding.

Do this exercise to put together all of the pieces you need to make your wedding day truly unique.

Dream Wedding Exercise #3

1. Print out the third attached worksheet at the end of this booklet and answer the questions about your guests.
2. Pick out at least one of your WOW factors, one story, one song and one way to include your guests that fits your Dream Wedding.
3. Come up with a plan for using them at your wedding and schedule the first step of your calendar.

ABOVE ALL ELSE HAVE FUN AS YOU 'WOW' YOUR GUESTS AT YOUR DREAM WEDDING!

YOUR DREAM WEDDING

Worksheet #1

Your WOW Factor

Use this checklist to identify possible interests, hobbies and details about you to include as ways to WOW your guests.

1. Her Hobbies, Interests & favorite Activities

O/X		Her choices.
	Hobbies?	
	Sports fan to?	
	Sports you play?	
	Group member?	
	Pets – favorite?	
	Books - Authors?	
	Music – songs?	
	Crafts	
	Art	
	Cooking	
	Travel	
	Movies	
	Television shows	
	Theatre	
	Work	
	School	
	Other stuff	

2. Her ethnic background and traditions.

3. His Hobbies, Interests & favorite Activities

O/X		His choices.
	Hobbies?	
	Sports fan to?	
	Sports you play?	
	Group member?	
	Pets – favorite?	
	Books - Authors?	
	Music – songs?	
	Crafts	
	Art	
	Cooking	
	Travel	
	Movies	
	Television shows	
	Theatre	
	Work	
	School	
	Other stuff	

4. His ethnic background and traditions.

- Put O by any of the Hobbies, Interests & Activities you have in common.
- Put X by any Hobbies, Interests & Activities where you are different. For example, any "rivalries" or areas where you are total opposites.

