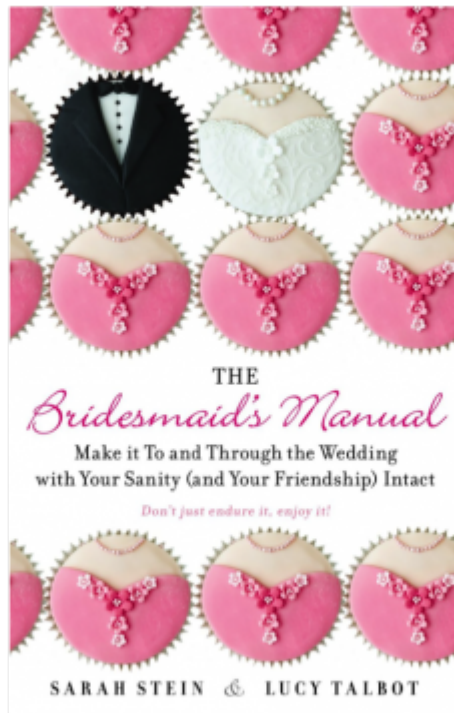


'The Bridesmaid's Manual': A Guide to Wedding Planning And Friendship



By Sarah Ribeiro

Sarah Stein and Lucy Talbot are seasoned bridesmaids, so they know a thing or two about surviving your friend's big day. Now, they're trying to help all women overcome the biggest test of friendship a girl can face: being a bridesmaid. *The Bridesmaid's Manual: Make It To and Through The Wedding with Your Sanity (and Friendship) Intact* covers everything from

dress shopping and planning the bachelorette party to bridesmaid etiquette and time (and budget) management. But, most importantly, the book focuses on the best part about being a bridesmaid: the relationships you create (or strengthen) while helping your friend with her special day. We spoke to co-author Sarah Stein about her inspiration for the book and her experience being a bridesmaid.

First, we'd love to know about your inspiration for the book!

Lucy and I used to live together, and during that time, we were both bridesmaids plenty of times. One night, I came home from an awful experience, just feeling soured and complaining. I was having a problem with the last of the bridesmaid duties and thought, "Why isn't there a book for bridesmaids?" We did a ton of research on it, and there was absolutely nothing out there. That inspired us to write our first book, *The Bridesmaid's Guerilla Handbook*. The old book is dated now, so we needed a book for the new generation. Weddings have changed, and the expectations for bridesmaids have changed; the Internet has a lot to do with that.

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What is the toughest thing to manage as a bridesmaid? And what's the best part?

The toughest thing is, without question, the different personalities of the wedding party. You are all so vested in this one event, and you're trying hard to not step on people's toes.

The best part is being able to see your friend, sister, cousin, someone who is so dear to you, travel through this process from singlehood to marriage. It really can stir you to your core; it's a beautiful thing to be a part of if it all goes well.

What has been your favorite experience? Your worst one?

There have been so many good moments and so many bad moments. My best friend from college took me dress shopping with her – it's not something that bridesmaids always get to do, but getting to help pick out my best friend's wedding dress was my favorite. It was such an intimate, beautiful and fun experience. I know there are shows like *Say Yes to the Dress* that make it look like hell, but it's really not like that.

My worst experience was the one that convinced me to write this book. A "friend" from college asked me to be in her wedding. Months went by, and I didn't even know if I was still in the wedding party anymore. As the wedding approached, I heard from other people that she'd picked out the dresses. She just dropped me from the party without saying anything! I e-mailed her and asked if I needed a dress, and she replied, "I didn't think you wanted to be a part of my wedding."

What are some ways to help the bride and fellow bridesmaids during the wedding-planning process?

First, know that all creative decisions go to the maid of honor and the bride. It's really important for people to understand that there's a hierarchy. Everyone has an idea of what they want, but it's not their day. It's the bride's day. Problems occur when very strong-willed members of the family or party decide that their idea is the one that will happen.

Second, be verbal about being able to help. Check-in with members of the party and ask what you can do. Being proactive is infinitely more helpful than waiting to be asked to do something.

Related Link: [Add a Little "Luck O the Irish" to Your Wedding Day](#)

What are some clear-cut ways for bridesmaids and brides alike to set boundaries with one another so they don't drive each other crazy?

There are some brides who actually do wedding contracts to set clear expectations. I think it's insane. That is one way for a bride to lay out expectations, but the only agreement that leads to success is one to be open with each other. If there's a problem, you should agree to listen to each other. If there's dissent in the bridal party, you need to work it out. The one thing that festers is when people harbor anger. That's when problems happen. You have to be willing to say what's on your mind; just be sure to do so in a way that isn't going to impose your point of view on the bride or hurt anyone's feelings.

You talk a lot about the strain planning a wedding can have on a friendship. How can you avoid this stress affecting relationships in your life?

You have to agree not to talk about the wedding. Come home and say to yourself, "I'm not going to think about it tonight." You have the right to take a moment to check in with yourself and unplug from all the wedding stuff. Do things that are not wedding-related, that are purely you. If you don't, all that stress can build up and lead to a tremendous amount of resentment. You're a bridesmaid! You're not an indentured servant.

The Bridesmaid's Manual *can be found on Amazon. You can also find Sarah and Lucy's first bridesmaid guide, The Bridesmaid's Guerilla Handbook, on Amazon.*