





Bridesmaid Dress Tips

Step One: Style

Your bridesmaid dresses should complement the style of your gown. They don't need to be identical though. If your gown is an A-Line, you're not restricted to A-Line bridesmaid dresses. However, if your gown is a fairy-tale ballgown, you won't want your maids' dresses to be modern or high fashion. You want an overall theme and aesthetic flow.

The basic styles for bridesmaid dresses are A-Line, Empire or Sheath. There are a few ballgown styles. Most are floor length.

Maid Style	Flatters	Avoid
 <p data-bbox="240 863 477 890">A-Line or Princess</p>	<p data-bbox="558 564 1000 625">Almost every figure. Especially great when your maids range in size.</p>	<p data-bbox="1010 564 1349 625">Pregnant bridesmaids in 3rd trimester.</p>
 <p data-bbox="310 1207 407 1234">Empire</p>	<p data-bbox="558 909 976 1024">Good for most maids. Helps add height to petite maids. The loose fit waist is great for pregnant bridesmaids.</p>	<p data-bbox="1010 909 1235 936">Busty bridesmaids.</p>
 <p data-bbox="298 1554 431 1581">Ballgown</p>	<p data-bbox="558 1253 992 1402">Works best if all your maids are relatively close in size. Otherwise makes small maids look smaller and larger maids look larger. Great on busty brides.</p>	<p data-bbox="1010 1253 1422 1339">When you have a wide range of bridesmaid sizes, ie a size 4 and a size 40.</p>
 <p data-bbox="310 1898 402 1925">Sheath</p>	<p data-bbox="558 1598 932 1659">Works best if all your maids are relatively close in size.</p>	<p data-bbox="1010 1598 1422 1684">When you have a wide range of bridesmaid sizes, ie a size 4 and a size 40.</p>

Step Two: Color

Your bridesmaid dresses' color is usually the color for your wedding. You'll use touches to accent your decorations and help carry a unifying theme through your entire wedding and reception. For example, if you've decided you want Dark Purple, you might use dark purple and light purple flowers, purple ink on your invitations, purple bows on the chairs.

As you begin to choose the color, think about your wedding and reception site. If your church has dark red carpet, those pretty Peach dresses might clash. If your reception site is full of dark wood and burgundy carpet, then your burgundy bridesmaids and accents might all blend in.

Finally, think about your bridesmaids. Think about their coloring and what colors they look good in. Does Susy look great in red but horrid in grey? What about Joan? Here's a little list to help.

Hair / Skin	Great Colors	Good Colors	Bad Colors
Blonde / Fair	Pastels, Navy, Hunter, Orangy-Reds, Salmon, Turquoise, Dark Purple	Black, Jewel Tones, Browns, Burgundy, Blues, Cobalt	Some light to medium shades of grey, Silver
Asian	Jewel Tones, Reds, Ivory, Turquoise, Jade Green, Purple	Black, Navy, Hunter, Burgundy, Fuschia	Light Greys, Light Yellow, Mint, Mauve
African Medium	Navy, Jewel Tones, Reds, Silver, Gold, Salmon, Purple	Black, Hunter, Burgundy, Blues, Cobalt, Fuschia	Light Yellow, Mint, Taupe
African Dark	Jewel Tones, Reds, Silver, Gold, Salmon, Oranges, Fuschia, Lime	Black, Navy, Hunter, Burgundy, Blues, Ivory, Purple, Cobalt	Light Yellow, Mint, Lavender, White
Red-Head / Fair	Emerald Green, Navy, Ivory, Brown, Hunter Green, Peach, Purple	Black, Hunter, Blues, Mustard, Rust, Olive, Turquoise, Teal, Gold	Yellow, Blue-Reds, Mint, Mauve
Brunette / Olive	Red, Hunter Green, Navy, Brown, Cobalt	Fuschia, Charcoal, Burgundy, Peach	Aqua, Light Yellow
Brunette / Fair	Emerald Green, Red, Fuschia, Navy, Peach	Black, Hunter, Navy, Burgundy, Gold, Ivory	Light Yellow, Light Blue, Light Green

Your maids don't all have to wear the color. A wonderful Southern tradition is to have the Maid of Honor wear a different shade of the bridesmaid dresses or a totally different color. For example, if your maids are wearing Desert Blue, have your Maid of Honor wear Navy or Rose. This is wonderfully effective when you coordinate the Maid of Honor's dress color with the Best Man's vest and tie!

Another popular and pretty trend, especially for spring and summer weddings, is a "color run". That means that each bridesmaid wears a different color of the same dress. One example of a light color run might be Pink, Pale Yellow, Light Blue, Mint, Lavender. In dark colors, you might try Emerald Green, Royal Blue, Royal Purple, Red, Gold. Shades of a color also work well (red, medium pink, light pink), but you have to be very careful that the colors don't clash with each other!

You can also consider alternating colors. Half your maids in one color, half in another color. If your wedding will be near Valentine's Day you could put half in red and half in pink!

If you're going to use a color run or alternating colors, BEFORE you order the dresses for your maids, find out how tall each maid is! Your maids will walk into the ceremony, stand by your during the ceremony, exit the ceremony and be arranged in pictures based on their height. Make a list in order from shortest to tallest (leave your maid of honor off the list). Is your maid of honor at the taller end or shorter end, compared with everyone else? If she's at the tall end, then your tallest maid will be next to her and the maids will get shorter the further they stand from you. If your maid of honor is at the short end, then the shortest maid will stand next to her and the maids will get taller the further they stand from you.

Step Three: You're Ready to Shop!

Keep in mind the season of your wedding. You won't want your maids wearing satin and velvet in July. Likewise, chiffon dresses look out of place in a winter wedding.

You'll also want to decide if you want your maids to have sleeves. Most bridesmaid dresses today have straps with fewer having short sleeves and almost none with long sleeves. Now go shop

Sizing the Dresses

The sizing of bridesmaid dresses, like your gown, had nothing to do with your bridesmaids' regular clothing size. You will need to tell your maids to get measured and compare their measurements with the designer's actual size chart. You then order the size that will fit their largest measurement. So, if Susy's measurements work out to a size 10 for the bust, a size 14 for the waist and a size 12 for the hips, you'll need to order Susy the size 14 and she'll have to get it altered.

Because your maids will probably need to get their dresses altered, if they don't live near you, it's best to have the dresses shipped straight to them.

A Word on Dye-Lot

You do need to order all your bridesmaid dresses at the same time. Fabric dye-lots can vary. If you order the dresses one at a time, the dresses might not all be from the same dye-lot so they might not all be the exact same color. A lot of brides tell their bridesmaids to order dress #XYZ in a certain

Final Details

Even if you don't see it in the picture, most designers do offer shawls that can be purchased to match their dresses. You'll want to order the shawls at the same time you order the dresses so that they come from the same dye-lot.

In addition to shawls, you'll want to decide if you want your maids to wear gloves. The most common length of glove for maids is elbow length. Gloves are available to match every color by every designer.