

Everything You Need to Know About Planning a Zoom Wedding

First and foremost, you'll need to ensure that your socially distanced wedding is legal.

If you're thinking about tying the knot on Zoom or a similar video conferencing platform in order to abide by social distancing requirements imposed in light of the coronavirus pandemic, you may be wondering where to start with planning. We're here to help. We talked to Beth Helmstetter, creative director at Beth Helmstetter Events, and Kelley Ramer, director of event design and sponsorships at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Coral Gables, Florida, to understand all that goes into planning a Zoom wedding. And to hear how a real couple pulled off their own virtual nuptials, we asked newlyweds Tiffany and Wadih Pazos, who tied the knot at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and broadcast it loved ones via the video conferencing platform, to share their experience.

Although some details and logistics may vary from state to state, read on for advice on how to make your virtual wedding legal and just as special as an in-person celebration.

How to Make Sure Your Zoom Wedding Is Legal

The very first thing you'll need to do is make sure that a virtual wedding is legal in your county. If your government offices are closed to the public, check the county clerk's website to find out if a video wedding is legal, and whether or not you're able to apply for your marriage license online and meet with a county representative on Zoom. "In California and New York, you can apply online and meet with a country representative via video conference," Helmstetter says, "You and your fiancé have to be present with identification. The actual license will arrive by mail."

How to Get an Officiant for a Zoom Wedding

If you already have an officiant in mind, ask them if they're willing to officiate your Zoom wedding. If you don't, Ramer recommends looking for reviews from other couples and meeting with the officiant virtually. "There is a lot to be said for the energy exchanged through a great conversation," she says, "You will know very quickly who is a great fit and who is not."

If you want someone to be able to marry you in person, Helmstetter recommends asking a loved one to perform the ceremony. "Getting ordained as an officiant is typically a very simple process with a small fee associated," she says, "Again this varies state by state, but this is one way to make your wedding that much more special and legal at the same time."

How to Invite Guests to a Zoom Wedding

Tiffany and Wadih Pazos used Paperless Post, a digital invitation service, to invite their guests to their virtual wedding and direct them to their wedding website for more details. "The digital invitation made the process seamless because we were able to see who opened the email and who didn't and reached out to them individually," the couple explains. It's a good idea to send the digital invitation first, then send a follow up email to anyone who RSVPed "yes" with the Zoom code. Make sure to include a link with any necessary passwords along with easy step-by-step instructions on how to log into the platform for the ceremony.

How to Give Guests a Great Virtual Experience

Planning a virtual wedding has its own set of challenges, and the last thing you want is to be adjusting your computer moments before the ceremony begins or to lose connection in the middle of your vows. Depending on the number of guests who plan to watch your ceremony, you may need to upgrade your Zoom account to accommodate the number of participants. Be sure to note the maximum number of attendees for other video platforms, too, including Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Skype, and FaceTime. Double and triple check your internet connection prior to the wedding, and be sure to test out the placement of your computer to ensure that everyone will be able to see you. You might also want to consider getting an exterior mic that connects to your computer so your guests can hear your vows clearly. "If possible, having a person from your family present to ensure technology is working before the ceremony would be very helpful," Helmstetter says, "The last thing you want to be doing is fussing with a computer in your wedding gown, two minutes before you say your vows."

If you're working with a venue that offers virtual wedding packages, you can rely on the professionals to set everything up. That's exactly what couples expect from Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. "To ensure that there are no logistical hiccups, we schedule a test video call the day before so all invited guests can connect and make sure there are no technical difficulties," Ramer says. "We also give our cell phone numbers to the guests and welcome them to reach out prior to the celebration with any questions or concerns." The venue can also provide professional video and sound production so that every guest can hear your vows and see your facial expressions throughout the ceremony.

How to Keep Your Zoom Wedding Somewhat Traditional

When it comes to virtual weddings, you should still be able to keep as many traditions as you envisioned for your big day. Some traditions, like tossing your bouquet or doing the horah, may not work with a Zoom wedding, but you can still plan your first dance, ask your guests to join you virtually for dinner, and have loved ones share speeches. Tiffany and Wadih decided to change up the dress code for the group in attendance. "We skipped out on the traditional attire for Wadih and the children and went with a Cuban Guayabera to celebrate our heritage while keeping them cool in the Miami sun," Tiffany says. "We believe you should have a little cake and champagne ceremony just like we did as a little treat to celebrate your nuptials!"

How to Make Your Zoom Wedding Feel Special

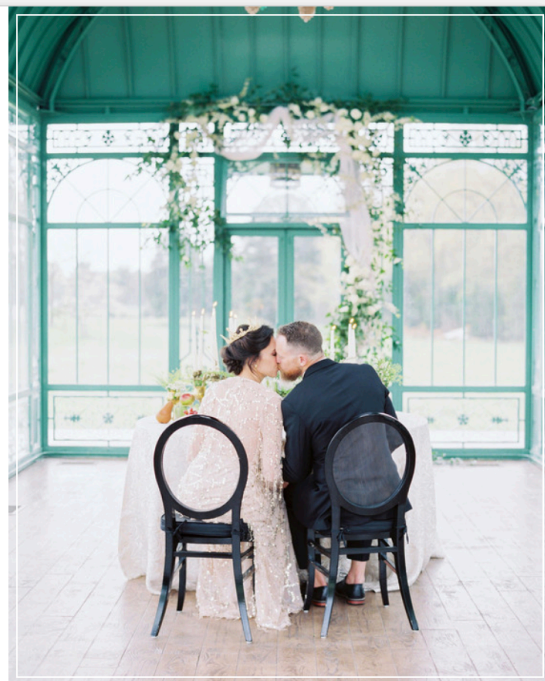
Given that you might spend a great deal of time on Zoom for work, you'll want to make sure that this video call feels like a special celebration for your wedding. Helmstetter suggests having a live musician that is able to stay socially distant if you can afford it. "If you want to go one step further, send celebration kits to your guests in advance. Think a split of champagne, perhaps confetti poppers, and some sweet treats so they can join you in celebrating," she says. If you've always envisioned a black-tie wedding, ask your guests to dress the part. "Ask guests to set up a mini photoshoot at their home and send you the pictures afterward so you can have memories of everyone who attended," Helmstetter suggests.

The team at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden has selected new ceremony sites on the property that haven't been available for prior weddings that have guests in attendance. "Some of the ways we help make their day special include handpicking greens and flowers from the garden itself for bouquets and boutonnieres and encouraging guests to actively participate in the wedding," Ramer says.

Six Details You Should Still Have at Your Elopement

Don't skip these important big-day elements.

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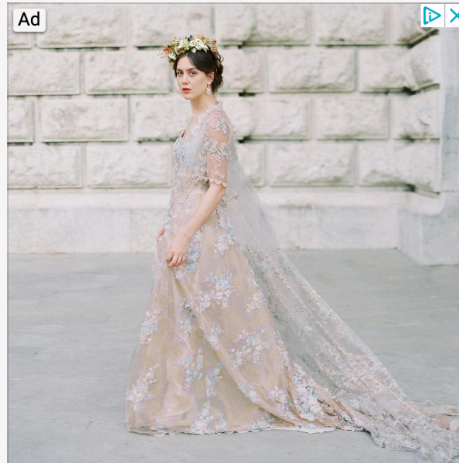


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