

Tasteful Tipping

Brides may believe they have accounted for every imaginable wedding expense, but one fee has slipped through the cracks for many: the tip.

“I was like a deer caught in headlights when our ceremony was over and the minister kept hanging around,” says my friend. “He clearly was waiting for something and, after a hard nudge from my cousin who had recently married, I realized we needed to ‘thank him’ for driving an hour outside of the city to marry us.”

Tipping fees can be significant and should be taken into consideration when planning a wedding. The tricky part is figuring out whom to tip, how much to pay and when to offer it. Here are some guidelines:

- **Bartenders:** 10 % of total liquor bill (to be split among them)
- **Bathroom attendants:** \$1 - \$2 per guest
- **Catering manager:** \$200+ or personal gift
- **Chef:** \$100+
- **Coat check attendants:** \$1 - \$2 per guest
- **Hairstylist:** 15% - 20%
- **Hotel chambermaids:** \$2 - \$5 per room; \$10 - \$15 for suites used as dressing rooms
- **Limo or bus drivers:** 15%
- **Head waiter:** 1% - 3% of food and beverage fees
- **Musicians:** 15% of fee for ceremony musicians; \$25 - \$50 per reception musician
- **Photographer/videographer:** \$100 if paying a flat fee with no overtime
- **Valet or parking attendants:** \$1 - \$2 per car; 15% for valet parking
- **Waiters:** \$20+ each (distributed by the catering manager or maitre d’)
- **Wedding planner:** 15% of fee or personal gift

In regards to officiants, typically a donation from \$100 to \$500 is expected. The more active a member is, the more they should give. Money can be given to the officiant unless they suggest making it part of a general church donation. Some ministers consider officiating weddings part of their calling and don't accept gratuity, so a thank-you card or homemade cookies is a nice gesture.

For nondenominational officiants already requiring a fee, tip between \$50 and \$100 unless they're a court clerk prohibited from accepting tips.

Check contracts as many gratuities are built into the price quotes. If gratuity is not included, couples might consider adding it in to avoid dealing with that stress during the wedding. Handling gratuity beforehand not only removes unnecessary stress, but also encourages vendors to exceed expectations.

Reward extra efforts made to ensure a successful experience. When someone goes out of their way, the baker making last-minute changes for the cake or the dj digging up that special old Partridge Family tune, consider thanking them with a gift certificate or tangible gift with the customary tip. Wedding planners that spend hours preparing and pull off a flawless wedding deserve a personal thank-you note and small gift in addition.

Each service carried out as expected deserves rewarding. While many in the industry are merely required to do their job, those who go the extra mile should be appreciated and taken wholeheartedly into consideration when it comes to budgeting.

Stoneleigh Event Consultant Meredith Thomas has many years of experience planning special events. Visit <http://www.stoneleighgolf.com/aisledish> for more Aisle Dish posts.