Holly and Steve are engaged! This is an exciting time, with many decisions to make. Because she and Steve plan to be married in the temple with only their families and close friends attending, Holly decides to hold a reception where everyone who is special in their lives can help celebrate their marriage.

Yet sometime between the day she decides that her bridesmaids’ dresses will be sea-foam green and the moment she chooses to tie her bouquet with lace matching her gown, Holly realizes that her budget will not meet her expectations.

Is it possible to create a memorable wedding celebration without overspending or overshadowing the importance of the temple ceremony and its covenants? Yes! Following are some ideas.

**Wedding Attire**

The bride’s gown is one of the major expenses of a wedding. One way to economize is to look for sales. Many wedding dresses from the previous season go on sale in winter or early spring, and it is possible to save up to 50 percent on these, as well as on other bridal items.

Another option is to buy a dress that can be worn again after the wedding. A white dress with a simple, classic design can be used as temple dress. Or it may be shortened, accessorized with colored sashes or belts, and worn for formal or semiformal occasions.

Borrowing or renting a wedding dress also saves money. Some shops “build” dresses by renting out a variety of sleeves, bodices, and skirts that can be assembled in any combination the bride chooses.

If a family member or friend is an experienced seamstress, sewing a dress is also an option. Many brides study dresses in stores, then find similar fabrics and patterns.

Accessories can cost less, too. Plain satin hats trimmed with flowers, lace, or beads; decorative combs; and satin bows can be worn in place of the traditional veil. White shoes worn at the wedding can be dyed afterward to match or complement other outfits.

Expenses on bridesmaids’ and mothers’ dresses can also be cut by following the above guidelines.
Men in the wedding party can save tuxedo rental costs by wearing dark suits.

**Alternatives to Receptions**

Two less-expensive alternatives to a traditional reception are an informal open house or a wedding dinner. Announcements declaring that the wedding has taken place can be sent to ward members and friends not included on the reception guest list. (Those who receive such announcements may consider gifts strictly voluntary.)

At an informal open house or wedding dinner, the bride and groom greet their guests at the door or mingle among them as they arrive. There need be no receiving line. The atmosphere at such events is often more intimate, and the bride and groom are able to visit with each guest.

In Europe, weddings are often celebrated with dinners that include family and close friends. One European custom that creates a warm atmosphere at wedding dinners is for the families of the bride and groom to write songs or tributes about humorous and interesting events in the couple’s growing-up years. These may be written on scrolls that are placed in colorful containers that become part of the table decorations.

**Traditional Receptions on a Budget**

Couples can economize by holding a traditional wedding reception at home as opposed to renting restaurant, country club, or reception center facilities.

Decorations such as plants, screens, or garden furniture can be rented or borrowed from friends. Daisies, daisy palms, and mums are examples of inexpensive flowers, as compared to more expensive orchids and roses. Fresh plants used as decorations can be planted in a backyard after the wedding or presented to the bridesmaids and ushers as gifts.

Silk flowers are especially practical decorations because they can be used again when a reception is held on a different date from that of the wedding. They can be arranged well in advance of the occasion and restructured as home interior decorations after the reception.

Refreshments need not be elaborate. Choose a simple menu to cut down on stress if you are making your own, or on labor fees if the refreshments are catered. Estimating the amount of food may be difficult for someone without previous catering experience, so ask for help in estimating amounts.

One group of mothers formed a “wedding co-op.” Whenever one of their daughters married, the other mothers prepared and served refreshments, leaving the mother of the bride free to enjoy the wedding. This saved paying a caterer’s labor fees. Such efforts could extend to other aspects of preparing for a wedding—sewing the dresses, addressing invitations, or decorating.

**Invitations**

Vellum paper is the most economical choice for invitations. Tri-fold invitations are not always less expensive than invitations with envelopes; comparison shopping is important here. Postage costs
should be incorporated into every wedding budget. They can be reduced by hand-delivering invitations within the bride’s and groom’s neighborhoods.

**Photography**

Photographing the festivities doesn’t have to be expensive, either. You could arrange for a friend to take pictures or videotape the wedding celebration events. Asking a nonprofessional to take your wedding pictures is a bit chancy, though, and some couples have been disappointed by the photos taken by a friend or relative. If having quality photos of your wedding is important to you, you will probably want to hire a professional or an amateur whose work you have seen and approved.

**Miscellaneous Money Savers**

Comparison shopping is an excellent way of saving money on bridal necessities. Check quality of goods or services by asking to see a sample—or at least a photograph—of goods sold or services performed.

In families where there are several daughters, some sisters wear the same dress and carry the same flowers their sisters used at their weddings. In one family with seven daughters, nearly everything is saved for the next bride.

The most important tip is to simplify. A simple reception gives Holly and Steve, and other engaged couples, fewer details to worry about and leaves them more time to enjoy the real reason for the celebration—their eternal union.

*Carolyn Campbell, “Cutting the Costs—along with the Cake,” Ensign, Mar. 1988, 67*