​12 Tips on How to Include Your Dog in Your Wedding. Say YES to the Pet!

**Safety has to be the main priority, dogs as well as peoples**

**On the big day,** it’s natural to want to be surrounded by friends and loved ones, and who’s more beloved than your dog? These days, when over **22 million dogs in the UK** are the largest segment of pet owners, many couples want to include the dog in their wedding. After all, when you promise to share your life together, you’re already sharing your life with a four-legged partner.

**There are lots of ways to include your dog in your wedding,** from giving him an **important role** to letting him **make a cameo** **appearance,** or celebrating him in photos on your invites, save-the-date, and other wedding communications. So, before you say the “I do’s,” be prepared with all of the to do’s to make your pet a memorable part of your special day.

Start with **honestly** considering your dog’s **temperament and personality.** Is he happy to meet and greet anyone and everyone? Does he have at least a few commands nailed down, especially important ones **like “sit,” “stay,” and “down”?** Does the sight of a crowd have him whirling in a frenzy? Or is he **shyer, more reserved, or frightened** around strangers? It’s important to know what your dog will or will not enjoy. Dogs with **anxiety or socialization issues** should probably RSVP “no.”

We offer a training program for pets at weddings, teaching the dog to Sit stay. Lie down on command, Stay. Walk to heel. I’m sure if anyone who wishes to take their dogs on there big day, **if you contact a local dog training school they be happy to help.**

Decide the dog’s role. Depending on his obedience level and personality, you have lots of options.

**Pup of Honour** — He can walk down the aisle with the wedding party and then sit alongside them for the ceremony. It may be best to keep him on a leash; get creative and decorate the leash to fit your wedding theme.

**Flower Dog** — She can carry a basket of flowers in her mouth, as the flower girl spreads the petals. Be sure the flowers are safe and nontoxic for dogs, in case she decides to sneak a taste.

**Ring Bearer** — Naturally, your dog doesn’t have opposable thumbs or pockets, but you can tie the rings to his collar with a ribbon or find a custom-made ring holder.

**Honoured Guest** — If your dog is better suited to a calmer, more restrained role, give him pride of place in the front row, sitting with someone he’s familiar with.

Decide whether he’ll also attend the **reception.** All of the activity, food, music, and noise may be too much for him, and he might be better off going home. The food may be too great a temptation; he might sneak the filet off the table, or guests may be tempted to feed him treats, including some, such as chocolate, that are harmful to dogs.

**Check with the venue.** If you’re having the ceremony at a church or synagogue, **dogs may not be allowed.** If it’s an event venue, especially outdoors, many are amenable to a canine guest. Also, make sure any **vendors — caterers, the band or DJ, florists, etc.** — are aware of your plans.

**Let your guests and wedding party know** a dog will be present, so that those with **allergies or a fear of dogs** can plan accordingly.

**Arrange for a dog sitter or handler**, **lots of people have dog walkers,** involve the dog walker it’s probably one of your dog’s best friends. **Professional dog walkers will keep your pet safe.** Or you might prefer someone your dog is comfortable with. **You will be pretty busy getting married,** and your dog needs someone to help keep him calm, engaged, and out of trouble. The sitter can also take him somewhere quiet after his starring role and provide water, food, and potty breaks. After all, wedding etiquette is not usually part of obedience school.

Choose your dog’s wedding attire. If yours is used to being dressed up, go ahead and **choose a wedding-themed outfit**. Make sure it’s comfortable and that she can go about her business in it. If your dog prefers to be au naturel, consider **decorating his collar with a bow tie, ribbons, or (nontoxic) flowers.**

**Bring your dog to the venue before the wedding day** to let him explore, sniff, and pee on everything at his leisure. He’ll be more comfortable on the big day, if he’s familiar with the terrain.

**Rehearse your dog’s role,** **both at home and at the venue,** as much as you can. You’ve wisely chosen a role that your dog can handle, right? Include him (and his sitter) in the rehearsal, so everyone knows the who, what, when, and where.

**Include your dog in photos** (as if you’d leave her out!). Make sure the **photographer you choose has experience photographing animals** and that he knows what you expect.

**Prepare a go-bag for your dog, with treats, a water bottle, toys, food, and anything else you think she’ll need.**

If your dog won’t be attending the wedding, there are lots of opportunities to show how important he is to you.

Include him in a photo on your save-the-date card, invitation, and website.

Find a wedding-cake topper that displays a dog, along with the happy couple.

Use dog-themed accessories, like place cards, photo holders, or paw-print confetti.

Send thank-you notes from all three of you, with a family photo.

Wear a piece of jewellery celebrating your dog’s breed.

**Expect the unexpected. In your perfect wedding scenario,** your canine BFF is beautifully groomed, decked out, well behaved, and adored by all. Now let’s get real. The tips here are meant to make it easier to include your dog in this meaningful day. But dogs are dogs. Maybe yours bolts instead of making it down the aisle. Or needs a pee just before getting to the altar. Or jumps on you with less than immaculate paws. Take a deep breath, and then take it in stride with a sense of humour. **If nothing else, it will be a source of great stories for years to come.**