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# **Being the Best Man**

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- Write and deliver a memorable speech
- Get the groom to the church on time
- Stick to wedding day etiquette

**Dominic Bliss**

*Author, editor and journalist*



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***Being the  
Best Man***  
FOR  
**DUMMIES®**  
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**by Dominic Bliss**

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**DUMMIES®**  
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# Introduction

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**I**n a previous existence, I was launch editor and feature writer for a men's wedding magazine called *Stag & Groom*. Among the articles we published, we had loads of no-nonsense advice on stag parties, speech content and wedding suits. Inevitably, whenever friends or colleagues got engaged or appointed best man, the first person they would call for advice was me. Every springtime, just as the wedding season was starting to hot up, I used to get at least a couple such calls a week, and the two topics they would be panicking about most were the stag party and the speech.

Those are the two topics I've allocated the most space to in this book. There are loads of other duties a best man needs to consider – and they're all covered in detail as well – but the stag do and the speech are the most important. They are the bench marks on which all best men are ultimately judged. Wear the wrong wedding suit, and you'll be forgiven. Forget to don your button-hole or do up your flies, and the chances are no one will notice except the bride. But mess up the stag do or the speech, and you'll be remembered for all time as the best man who got it wrong.

This book will make sure you get them right.

## About This Book

I can safely say I've been to more weddings in my life than I've had birthdays. Over the last few years, in particular, as I've waved reluctantly goodbye to my 30s, I've found myself dusting down my morning suit all too regularly.

As a result, I've sat through more best man's speeches than I care to remember. Some have been witty, some have been dull, some have been cheesy and some have been hilarious. One thing a lot of them have shared, though, is an opening line that goes a bit like this: 'Being appointed best man is a bit

like being asked to make love to the Queen. It's an honour, but it's something you'd really rather not do!

Now therein lies the problem. Being best man really *is* an honour. But, when it comes down to it, it's an honour that nearly all of us would rather not have. That's where this book comes in. Throughout I've tried to beef up the honour bit and play down the scary stuff. I've boiled down the many best man's duties to their basics, stripped away the complicated, confusing bits and revealed them for what they really are – simple, practical duties that are easy to fulfil.

## *What You're Not to Read*

As you dip in and out of this book (it's not written to be read in one sitting), you'll notice quite a few tips, warnings and things to remember. If you like, you can get away without reading a single one of them. It won't actually make you any less a best best man.

What I advise, however, is that you occasionally flick through the book and home in on those sections. They offer little nuggets of advice that will sit at the back of your mind and put you in good stead as you embark on your duties.

The blocked out sidebars are similar. Although they're not critical to the text or to your understanding of your duties, they provide interesting little asides.

## *Foolish Assumptions*

Forgive me, but to make things a lot easier I've made a few assumptions about you, the reader. I'm assuming that you

- ✔ **Are male.** Granted, nowadays you do very occasionally get female best men. But few of them buy books advising them on their duties. If you're the exception, then I'm sorry, but you'll have to get used to all the male pronouns.
- ✔ **Like a drink.** Stag dos and weddings tend to be well lubricated. Grooms know this. Best men know this. And a groom is unlikely to appoint a best man who's not willing to play along. Even just a little bit.

✓ **Are going to be best man at a church or a registry office.** In our multiracial society, people get married under many religions and beliefs, but to keep things simple, I've referred to Church of England or civil wedding conventions throughout.

## *How This Book Is Organized*

The book is split up into four stand-alone parts. It's entirely up to you which order you read them in. The first three parts cover the three main duties you're involved in: the stag do, the wedding ceremony and the speech. The fourth part then includes all the listy stuff that will get you thinking about the finer details of your job.

### *Part I: Getting Started with Being the Best Man*

Here you find out about all the diplomatic skills you're going to need in the months before the wedding: how to deal with the bride, her family and, most importantly, your groom – the man who appointed you. Then you'll be offered all the very best advice on how to organise and execute the stag do and give the groom a proper send-off he'll never forget. Or never remember, as the case may be.

### *Part II: Wedding Preparations and the Big Day*

Your prenuptial duties are a cinch compared to the bride and groom's, but there are still lots of key things you mustn't forget. Don't worry – they're all in here. As are all your duties on the morning of the wedding and during the actual ceremony and the reception afterwards.

### *Part III: The Speech*

The best man's speech can be a beast if you don't approach it properly. This section has all the advice you need to tame that beast. By the time the reception comes round, it'll be eating out of your hand. Hopefully, so will your audience.

## *Part IV: The Part of Tens*

Do you need some instant ideas on where to go on the stag do? Or what activities to get everyone involved in? Look no further than The Part of Tens.

### *Icons Used in This Book*

Stag parties and wedding days are all about planning ahead and then thinking on your feet when those plans go awry. Often, it's simply a case of damage limitation. To help you with this, I've scattered lots of icons at key stages throughout the book.



Soon after being appointed best man, you'll be glad of any advice offered to you. These little nuggets provide the most useful bits of advice.



There are so many things to remember when you're part of the wedding party. Add to this your duties as stag party organiser, and you can see why some best men crack under the pressure. These little icons serve as mini checklists or mental sticky notes.



The entire marriage process is a diplomatic minefield. What with the bride, the groom, their parents, the vicar, the chief bridesmaid, the ushers and all the stags to keep happy, you'll need some help to steer yourself clear of the mines.

### *Where to Go from Here*

A best man's duties can vary as much as different brides' tastes in napkin colours. Some are required to organise everything from stag do to suits to speeches, right down to the finest details. Others get away pretty much scot free.

You know what your groom and his bride expect of you. And you will have certain key areas you are most worried about. If you've only got three weeks until the stag do, then jump straight in at Chapter 2. If you're sweating over the speech already, then skip to Chapter 8. Or if you need a little overview of what your general duties are, then it's Chapter 1 you need.



## Part I

# Getting Started with Being the Best Man

getting started  
with

being the  
best man



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## ***In this part . . .***

- ✓ Know your key roles as best man.
- ✓ Gain all the personal and organisational skills you're going to need in the months before the wedding.
- ✓ Discover how to be cool and organised under pressure.
- ✓ Organize and execute the stag do so that it's one for the history books.
- ✓ Give the groom a proper send-off to his bachelor days he'll never forget.

# Chapter 1

## Best Man Basics

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding the best man's role in the wedding build-up
- ▶ Knowing what to do on the wedding day
- ▶ Grasping the qualities of a best man

**E**very member of the wedding party has a precise and well-defined role. The groom's job is to turn up on time and behave like a saint all day. The bride smiles, looks gorgeous and keeps one eye on the reception. The minister or registrar directs the ceremony. The ushers get everyone seated and organise the car parking. The bridesmaids fuss about the bride's dress. The bride's father worries about how much everything's cost him. And the bride's mother cries like a baby.

Interconnecting these roles in order to keep everyone happy and everything running smoothly is the linchpin of the wedding party. Yes, that's you, the best man. But don't worry: I'm here to help.

### *I'm the Best Man! What Am I Supposed to Do?*

Your role as best man is a multifaceted one. You have to get the groom to the ceremony on time. You have to ensure that the guests are seated correctly and make the journey to the reception. At the reception, your speech is the one

that everyone's waiting to hear. And as well as the bride and groom, how you perform on the big day is what everyone remembers after the wedding.

As best man, your *key* roles are these:

- ✓ **Organising the groom's stag do.** You can find plenty more details on how to have fun in Chapters 2 and 3.
- ✓ **Getting the groom to the ceremony.** Read Chapter 5 before kicking him out of bed on the big day.
- ✓ **Witnessing the wedding.** Finest pen and best handwriting at the ready, all is revealed in Chapter 6.
- ✓ **Organising people for the wedding photographs.** Get an idea of who's in the big picture by heading to Chapter 6.
- ✓ **Helping guests to the reception.** Help yourself to help the guests by reading Chapter 7.
- ✓ **Making a speech at the reception.** Find out what to say and what not to say by studying Chapters 8 and 9.

Fret not! You're not expected to do everything. Sure, you've got to plan ahead, be prepared, keep lists, run a tight ship and think on your feet. But lots of eager people are available to whom you can delegate tasks. The ushers are there to be at your beck and call, and you find that plenty of other guests are willing to lend a hand.



A wedding's like a supertanker. Making a slight alteration in course takes days. As long as you're aware of this and plan everything well in advance, you'll stay clear of the rocks.

Some weddings are well organised, and some are chaotic. As best man, you want to pray for the former but accept that you may get the latter. Whatever happens, keep your diary organised. With military planning and teamwork, being the best man can run smoothly. I've included a handy checklist of what to do and when to do it, as shown in Figure 1-1.