

# All about the details

BY SHAWN JENKINS  
Hearst Michigan Newspapers

Bridal gown trends for 2006 may be straightforward, but attention is focused on small details. One of the most popular is embroideries — and these small touches are a perfect way for a traditional bride to add a bit of color. Delicate embroideries with a hint of pink are still being seen, however, lilac and burgundy are emerging as the next strong fashion trend.

The cut of choice for dress design is a classic A-line silhouette. Halters, strapless, and dresses with a peek-a-boo front (split front opening) are the common variations of the season. Of course, with this A-line cut, comes the corset. Many have been designed to lace up the back and are very waist minimizing. A lot of gowns with the corset give the illusion of a two-piece look but are actually one piece. Other bridal gown designers have added pockets to some of their fashions. Today's bride will have the option to keep a tissue in their pocket as opposed to carrying a small, matching handbag.

In many designs, the corset is incorporating the princess line in front and is a very figure flattering,



Shawn Jenkins/Hearst Michigan Newspapers

### Corset with lace up back and sequin and bead embellishments.

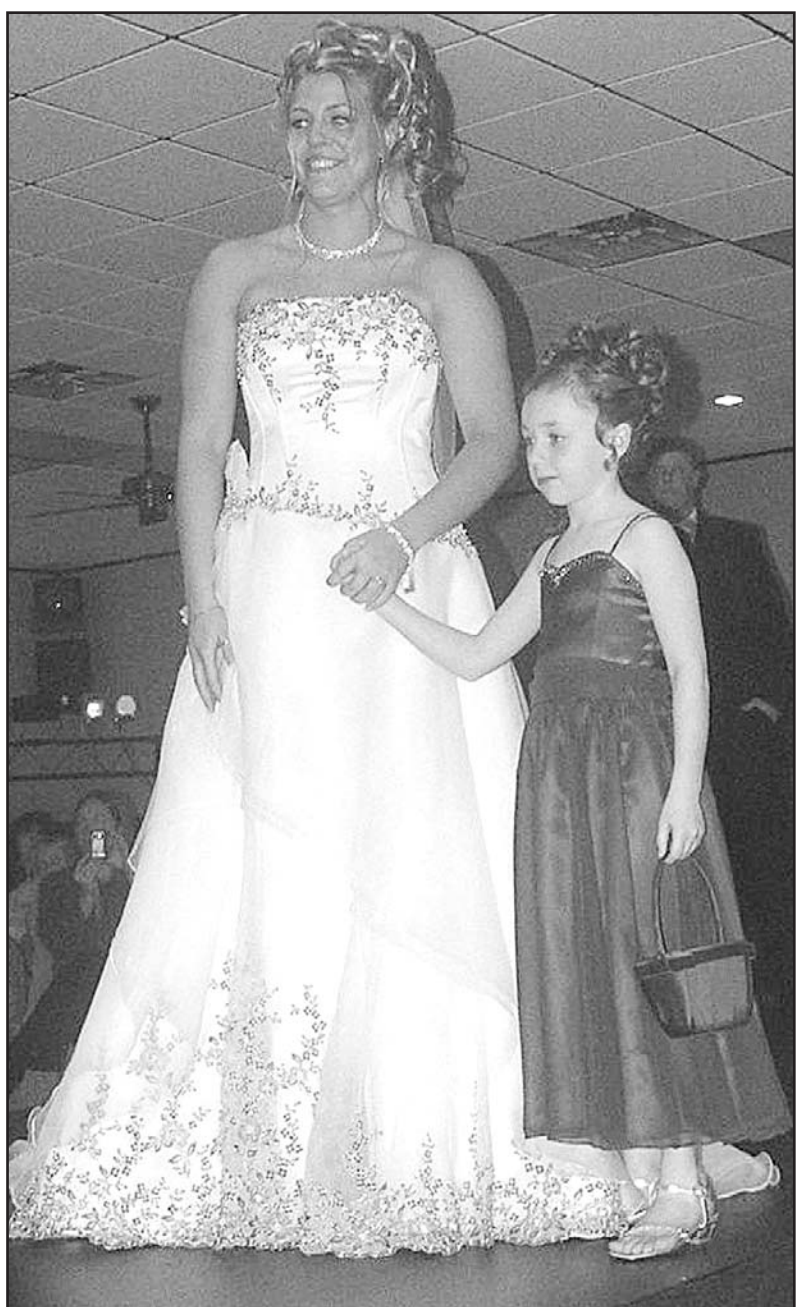
bustier style. Elegant sheath dresses that shimmer also are getting attention from brides-to-be. Matte satin, organza, tulle and chiffon are the fabrics in vogue. Silk is the fabric of the season for brides who want to be different and new.

This season conservative, minimalistic chic is out while sophisticated sensuality replaces it on the runway. The elegant strapless dress emits a hint of respectful sexuality. And brides aren't the only ones wishing to look a bit sexier this sea-

son by going strapless. Bridesmaids are also picking up on the trend and strapless, tea-length dresses can be used for another event after the wedding. The pastels of last season are being replaced by bright, bold hues of pinks and greens.

Some of the most popular embellishments for this year include: sequins, pearls, bugle beads and crystals. Metallic threads, both silver and gold, will continue to add sparkle to weddings, especially on brides with afternoon or evening ceremonies. These subtle details can be seen on the bodice of the gown, as well as on the train.

The embellishments don't stop with the gown. Brides are choosing to add these details to their veil and trimming it with a satin hem. The headpiece is then accented with a jeweled tiara, earrings, and necklace.



Shawn Jenkins/Hearst Michigan Newspapers

Above, Heidi Leppke of Ubyly and Laken Polega model some bridal fashions during the Town & Country Bridal show. The bridal gown shows the embroidered, beaded look accented with burgundy that is a trend for the 2006 season. At left, Jeanna Byers of Kingston models a bridesmaid dress.

**TIP:** Your hair is an accessory, too

DON'T compete with your gown. The lines and flow of your gown should be paralleled with the lines of your hairstyle. A simple, sheath gown works well with a tailored upswept chignon, while a princess gown with lots of tulle may work better with long, cascading waves.

Some tips for writing your own vows

# 'Short, sweet and from the heart'

BY JOHN LOFY  
For The Associated Press

Of the many important parts of a wedding — the perfect dress, good music, someone who wants to marry you — one stands apart: the vows. Reduce the ceremony to its essentials, and what do you have? A promise, a VOW, with witnesses.

You can dress that promise in expensive pageantry and glamour, or blurt it out in a Vegas drive-thru, but either way, you're hitched.

If you're like a lot of almost-marrieds, you're thinking about writing your own vows.

"Even in traditional ceremonies," says Kathleen Murray, senior editor of the wedding Web site The Knot, "most people are doing their own."

Some tweak old formulas (remember "love, honor, and obey"?) to suit modern tastes. Others compose vows that are entirely new.

Lauren Kingsley, a writer and artist from Dexter, Mich., says she and her husband, Jack Spack, Jr., wrote their own vows because they wanted to say something new that was not "a cliché, schmaltzy or stale."

Still, the prospect of writing and performing the vows was intimidating. Though Kingsley is a professional writer, she wasn't quite sure what the vows were actually supposed to do. As for Spack, who runs a septic company, he was afraid his wife's ease with words would make him look "like an idiot" by comparison.

They found themselves confronted by a common problem: Reducing your vows to the essentials is difficult, but it's worth the effort. It makes you figure out what's most important, and when you say those few crucial things, people — you included — will remember them better than you will a long list.

Other suggestions:  
• Figure out the core of what YOU have to say. Let tradition and other people's words inspire you, but make your vows your own. After all, that's the point of writing them yourself. Why do you want to

After agreeing to write your own vows, remember it requires patience and research. Work on them over time to ensure you capture everything you want to express — in the way you want to say it.

### DO

- ▶ Remember to keep it short. It's an important part of the ceremony, but only a part.
- ▶ Research terms you want to use. "Love" has many synonyms — some which you might not think of, but feel.
- ▶ Create a list of all the things you want to say, qualities you admire in your spouse, and make it as long as you want.
- ▶ Edit your list. Remove any similarities, then choose a few things you really think you want.
- ▶ Read aloud a few times. Use a friend to help you rephrase or make final changes.

### DON'T

- ▶ Force the funny stuff. Humor is hard. If it comes naturally, great. If not, stick to serious.
- ▶ Go on and on about every little thing you love about your fiancé. Save that for a wedding day letter and write all you want.
- ▶ Get too personal. Some things are private. Try to respect that.
- ▶ Rush through your vows. Take time and practice so your words are from your heart and not the page you may be holding.
- ▶ Forget to look at her or him. Hold a hand if they need it.



## Writing Vows

DO'S AND DON'TS

ter saying those things," says Murray.

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Other suggestions:  
• Figure out the core of what YOU have to say. Let tradition and other people's words inspire you, but make your vows your own. After all, that's the point of writing them yourself. Why do you want to

marry this person? What are you promising?

"Put your parents out of your mind, or anyone who wants you to say certain things, and say what you want to say," Kingsley advises. "This is purely a sacred thing between you and your beloved."

• Speak to your mate, but remember the audience. "Don't be cryptic," Murray says. Inside jokes and obscure references leave the audience out — and you did invite them to witness and approve your union.  
But what about that performance

anxiety? Kingsley answered her question about the function of the vows by studying books and Web sites for examples from different religions, cultures and eras. (The Knot's site has its own list.) "I mainly learned what I didn't want to say," she laughs, but the history lesson gave her confidence and direction.

Spack, who feared his vows wouldn't match up to his bride's, found that the writing wasn't so bad after all. "I just sat down and wrote from the heart," he said. To his surprise, writing allowed him to say more than he might have otherwise. "People say things to each other all the time, 'I love you' or whatever. But when you write something, you take it more seriously."

To make the writing go easier, Murray offers a few additional tips. "Don't wait until the last minute," she insists. "Sit down together with a glass of wine, well before the ceremony, and talk about what you want to say."

Do you both want to say the same words, or each come up with your own? Some people split the difference, starting and ending with a shared promise, and inserting their own material in between. For some, the vows consist only of the promise. Others add a statement of love, or a short explanation of why they've decided to marry.

Once you've written a draft, Murray advises, "Practice. Read it through to avoid tongue-twisters" and to check the length.

And finally, don't worry about perfection.

"If there is a glitch," Murray says, "it just humanizes the event."

What makes for bad vows? Murray, whose job requires that she be diplomatic, says there are no "worst vows," because all of them are meaningful. But, she sighs, with the tone of someone who's heard it all, "You don't want to give a baffling performance-art monologue."

Kingsley takes it a step further. "Get your ego out of there," she says. "This is your promise to your spouse. It's not to show off or get people thinking you're so funny or eloquent."

Be sure your vows "fit the vibe of the ceremony," Murray says. "In a very traditional Catholic High Mass, you probably don't want to tell embarrassing stories about your spouse."

In fact, even an informal ceremony should include "nothing embarrassing. It's not the time to roast your spouse."

Lastly, remember that writing fresh vows isn't for everyone. Murray herself, just married this fall, did not write her own. She preferred words "passed down from generation to generation. They spoke to me of the core value of the sacrament."

In the end, that's what matters most. New or old, the best vows are so powerful they can change your life. Being married is very different from living together, mainly because of the seriousness of a promise, spoken in front of family and friends.

"We'd been together eight years, and we thought we loved each other as much as we could," says Spack. "But saying those vows, saying what we felt and making that commitment, it deepened our love."



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### Top of the gift list

The majority of the newlyweds polled said the gifts that topped their list were the big-ticket items purchased by groups of guests, including the super-popular Dyson vacuum, complete sets of professional cookware and the KitchenAid stand mixer. Other favorite items include full sets of formal china and sterling.

Based on a survey of 15,000 brides-to-be and newlyweds conducted by The Knot (www.the-knot.com) and Kohl's Bridal Aisle (www.kohls.com)

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