

DRESSED,
STYLED, *and*
DOWN *the* AISLE

Becoming a Stylish Bride

CHAPTER 08

THE SHINE TEST

brought to you by

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Trying on wedding dresses can be one of the most exciting parts of the wedding planning journey, especially if it is something you've been dreaming about for a while. But with so many options and opinions, it can be difficult to know when you have found *the one*. Fortunately, I have created something I call **THE SHINE TEST**, a no-fail formula that has been helping brides choose their dream dress for decades, and today, I am going to share it with you.

Before we begin, a word of caution: **This is a test that's all about you — your style, your comfort and your emotive responses.** Therefore, I don't recommend that you include family and friends in this exercise. It's important that you know how *you* feel about a dress or accessory before you ask for someone else's opinion, especially if you are someone who isn't a confident decision-maker. **Decide for yourself because you are the one wearing it, and your opinion is the only one that matters.**



FIRST THINGS FIRST: IT'S NORMAL TO LOVE MORE THAN ONE DRESS

In the movies, brides usually book an appointment in a single boutique and find their perfect dress in less than an hour. That's just not how things work in the real world. In reality, there are thousands of beautiful dresses available and it's perfectly normal to find yourself torn between two or more designs. I often hear my clients tell me that they were worried they wouldn't find anything they liked, and now they have too many to choose from! It's a good problem to have, but it can also be difficult to navigate. The key is to find the shape and silhouette you like most, then narrow your choices down and do a side-by-side comparison on a collage app like PicStitch or in Photoshop. Once you feel you have found the one, it's time to do The Shine Test.

VISUALIZE YOURSELF IN THE DRESS

Go into a quiet space, close your eyes and imagine yourself in the dress. You're standing there, behind the door with whoever is about to walk you down the aisle and as the doors open, you see the venue, the aisle and all of your guests dressed according to your dress code. Consider the length of the aisle. Is the train too long? Is the dress appropriate for the venue? Do the silhouette, style and overall look fit with the vibe of your wedding? What about the natural elements? Is the dress a good fit for the weather and terrain? If yes, move to step two.

ARE YOU COMFORTABLE?

Making an effort is important, especially on your wedding day, but suffering for fashion goes completely against my ethos. **How can any woman feel beautiful if she's focused on how tight the bodice is or how bad her feet hurt?** While it's fine to wear shapewear (if that's your thing) and have the dress feel a little snug (it will grow throughout the night), it's important that the dress you choose allows you to move and breathe freely. It always surprises brides when I remind them that they will be wearing this dress for 8 hours or more so the thing you casually notice in the first 30 minutes will be the thing that's driving you crazy after hour number three.



THE FUNCTIONALITY TEST

There is a very big difference between trying on a dress in a store, and wearing it on your wedding day. So pay special attention to things like the size and weight of the dress. Is there anything about the dress that gives you pause? Is it heavy? How does it look when bustled? Does it allow you to move around the room? Can you dance the night away without feeling hindered? Another big consideration is do you like how it looks bustled? Brides rarely consider (and consultant's rarely point out) that the dress is bustled for a majority of the night, so you better like how it looks. Finally, consider if you are okay with the required undergarments, if there are any. If you hate wearing Spanx but know you won't feel good in the dress unless you wear them, then it's not your dress. This is an important question, as some brides find wearing shapewear to be uncomfortable. Also, your wedding day should not be the first time you venture into shapewear!

HOW DO YOU FEEL WEARING THE DRESS?

I am not just talking about comfort, but authenticity. **It does not matter how gorgeous a dress is — or how beautiful you look in it — if you don't feel like yourself wearing it.** You will only wind up feeling awkward and self-conscious, which will not only show up in photos but also when face-to-face with your guests. Worse, you will relive these feelings when you look at your wedding album and think about your wedding day. It's just not worth it. My advice is to stay as close to your core style as possible and only move forward with a purchase if you feel like the most beautiful, confident version of yourself in it.

FINALLY, "DOUBT MEANS DON'T"

This is one of my favorite quotes from Oprah and I have seen it save many a brides from making expensive and stressful mistakes. If you're having reservations or feel as though you will need to do a lot to it or make compromises to make it work, keep looking. **I always say to my clients that we want to find "a dress with no buts."** Meaning, if you love the dress, but you find yourself saying: "I love it but I wish it..." then it's not your dress. That said, it's important to note that not having a big emotional Hollywood reaction to the dress doesn't mean it's not right for you. Having worked with so many different personality types, I can assure you there is no one-size-fits-all reaction to a dress. Some brides will cry, some won't, some will try it on over and over and some will question if it's *the one* no matter how much they love it. **At the end of the day, your body will tell you how you feel about the dress; listen to it.**



HERE ARE THE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- 1) When you close your eyes and think about your walk down the aisle, can you visualize yourself wearing this dress?

 - 2) Will the dress be comfortable to wear at your venue during the time of year?

 - 3) Do you feel like your most confident and beautiful self in it?

 - 4) Are there any "buts"?
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