

YOUTH

# How much does a wedding really cost?

## A guide for “soon to-be weds”

With wedding season in full swing, many of us find ourselves dreaming of a big, proper, grand, and dramatic celebration, just like the ones we grew up watching in Bollywood movies. We also come across photos and videos of such grand weddings on social media, so it's only natural to fill our Pinterest boards with inspiration.

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But how many of us really stop to consider the costs of turning those grand wedding dreams into reality?

The reality is that wedding costs can vary widely; there's no single fixed price. You have the venue, decor, food, photography, and then expenses like clothes, makeup, and countless smaller costs that slowly add up. No matter when you plan to get married, or how big or intimate the celebration may be, having a clear idea of these expenses can make the entire planning process far more manageable. And that's exactly what we'll do here: break down the costs you need to be aware of when planning a wedding. For simplicity, we'll divide them into two categories: essential event-related costs, such as the venue, food, decor, and photography, and other necessary but non-event expenses, like makeup artists, outfits, gifts, and more.

### Venues with no booking fee

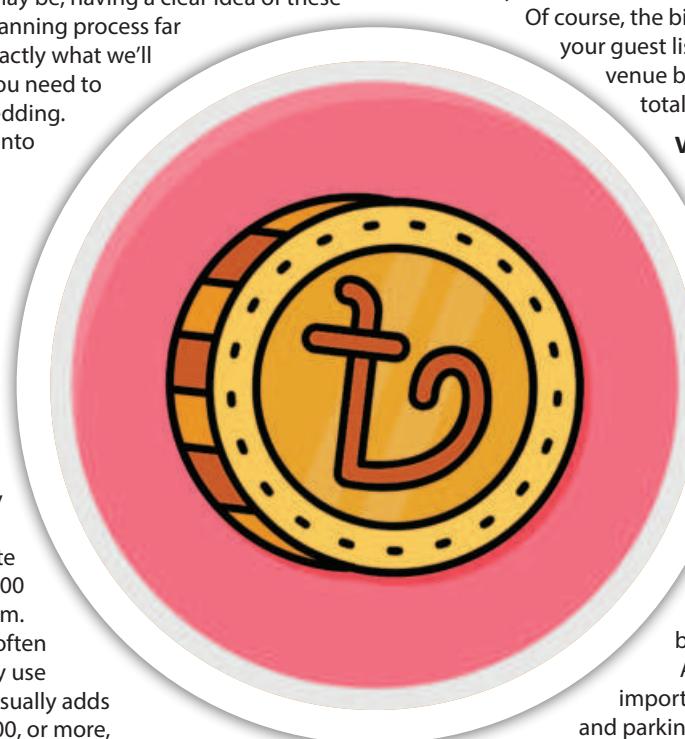
Several popular venues, like the InterContinental Dhaka, or Aloki Glasshouse, have no venue booking fee. This may sound cheaper but actually, they make that money back through the per-plate cost. These per-plate costs usually range from BDT 2,000 to BDT 3,000 per person minimum.

On top of that, these venues often have policies where you can only use their inhouse decorator, which usually adds another BDT 70,000 to BDT 80,000, or more, depending on the size of the venue, to your costs.

Hence, even though the venue looks “free” on paper, since you're not having to pay a booking fee, the overall cost is actually very high.

### Venues with outsourced decoration

You'll also come across venues that don't charge venue fees and operate on a high per-plate cost. The difference here is that you will be allowed to outsource your own decor, which gives you more flexibility. However, it also adds another task, since you'll



need to manage decorators separately and keep that budget in check as well.

### Hall size and guest list

Places like RAOWA Convention Hall, Aloki, Police Plaza, and International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) have multiple halls. Smaller halls usually fit around 100 to 150 guests while the bigger ones can accommodate up to a thousand people comfortably at times.

Of course, the bigger the hall, the higher the cost, so your guest list alone can completely change your venue budget – same place, different hall, totally different prices.

### Venues with only venue fee

Another important venue variation is that some places allow you to only pay the venue fee, and then you're completely free to outsource both food and decor on your own. This option gives you the most control and customisation freedom, because you can choose your own caterers, your own decorators, and manage each cost separately.

But, at the same time, it also means more stress, because now everything is your responsibility – timing, coordination, quality, and budget control.

Also, when looking for venues, it's important to remember that accessibility and parking space availability matter. These details become very important on the actual day, so site visits are always a good idea.

### Full in-house venue packages

There are also venues that offer full in-house packages, meaning if you take their food and their decor together, they give you a complete set deal, maybe even at a slightly discounted price.

This is very convenient for families who don't want the stress of having to manage multiple vendors. The downside of this, however, is that the customisation options become limited and you usually



have to choose from their set menus and decor catalogues. It also requires an enormous amount of trust in the venue coordinator themselves.

### Decoration costs

Decoration depends a lot on the size of the venue. A very basic standard stage with chairs, lighting, and flowers can cost you between BDT 1,50,000 and BDT 2,00,000 easily. But if you want a beautiful custom setup, it's safer to keep BDT 5,00,000 and BDT 6,00,000 aside for each event. Also, if the hall size gets bigger, the decor costs will also go up, and if this happens, it can really leave a hole in your wallet.

### Food costs

Food is another major cost. Some venues require you to take their in-house food vendors only while others allow outside catering. If you outsource from places like Iqbal or Fakruddin, you're usually looking at around BDT 1,000 to 1,500 per plate, and they have many customisable packages that you can discuss. Expect to spend BDT 1,200 per plate on average, but again, it's bound to change if you're making a lot of customisations.

### Photographers' rates

Photography is outsourced almost all the time now. You can get a small team of three from BDT 70,000 to BDT 1,50,000. Can you go cheaper? Sure, but that's a bit risky. I have seen plenty of cases where people get unedited photos and low-quality videos. I have also seen people lose video footage of their programmes because of the videographer's poor backups.

Hence, it's always safer to go for a good, well-known team, even if it may not be a cheap option. If your wedding has over 200 guests, you should really take a team of at least five, such as three photographers and two videographers. Their rates are set according to the number of hours and space as well, for example, a package that takes place only inside the venue with no photoshoot outdoors is cheaper than a package that has photographers covering both outdoors and indoors.

### Makeup artist packages

Outside of venue, decor, and food, there are many non-events related costs, this is where people really underestimate things.

Consider makeup artist costs as an example. An average bridal package can cost you BDT 25,000, top tier ones go up to BDT 35,000, and some even charge BDT 40,000. Which one you should take depends on what kind of look you want – dewy pink bride, classic red bride, soft glam, bold glam, etc.

Understanding your vision and outfit is also important before booking the makeup artists. Some makeup artist packages include your hair while some charge extra. In some cases, the hair extensions you opt for might add to the cost.

Timing also matters a lot; brides usually book their makeup sessions at least six hours before the programme. Many brides also want to do photoshoots, so they need to get their makeup done accordingly.

### Attire costs approximation

Clothes are another important expense as designer bridal outfits easily go into lakhs. But at the same time, places like Anzara, Prem's Collection, and Benaroshi Polli sell beautiful gorgeous outfit between BDT 30,000 and BDT 60,000.

Your wedding dress really depends on you and your budget, so how much you might have to pay for it is something hard to estimate.

### Gift-related costs

Making wedding *dalas* at home is very cost effective. Get your preferred gift items at wholesale prices from Elephant Road

or New Market, and prepare the *dalas* at your home getting everyone around you, from your siblings and cousins to your uncles and aunts, involved in the process.

Of course, not everyone has the time or enough cousins to sit and do all that manual work. *Dala* assembly, when you outsource it, alone costs around BDT 2,000 to BDT 4,000 per piece. Usually, it's customary to send six or seven *dalas* but some families go even beyond that.

Some exceptional *dala* setups, which may include more expensive decor and a heavier *dala* base, can cost upwards of BDT 6,000 per piece.

### Invitation cards

Wedding or reception cards are available in Eskaton, Elephant Road, and New Market, and they usually cost BDT 600 per piece. Fancier ones with favours—small gifts that a married couple often give to their guests as a little thank you—inside can go upwards of BDT 1,500 per piece.

### Overall wedding budget range

In general, a simple wedding event, on average, can cost between BDT 4,00,000 and BDT 6,00,000. Add a bit of grandeur, and you can see the cost go up to BDT 8,00,000 or BDT 10,00,000. And if you're dreaming of a truly grand wedding, you're easily looking at BDT 10,00,000 per event.

At the end of the day, a wedding, no matter how grand or simple, is just one day meant to celebrate love, not stress. Budgets will fluctuate, costs will surprise you, and comparisons will always exist. But the value of such an event can never be measured by how much you spend. What truly matters are the moments you cherish and enjoy with your partner, family, and friends. So, celebrate it fully and remember to enjoy the day for what it is, not what it costs.

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