

# A Family

# Affair

How children can  
bring magic to  
your special day

By Lisa Evans

“**F**irst comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby carriage.” For many couples, the sequence of this popular lyric is a thing of the past. Whether you’re a blended family or a couple who reversed the traditional marriage then baby rhyme, incorporating kids into your wedding is a beautiful way to celebrate your new family.

### Blending families

For many parents with children from previous relationships, their wedding day is just as much about celebrating the union of two families as it is about rejoicing in the couple’s love. With four children between them ranging from ages 15 to 19, Jackie and Rich Halliday held a sand ceremony to commemorate the blending of their two families. “We wanted [the kids] to feel just as significant in the ceremony as the two of us,” says Jackie. Each family member added a different colour of sand into a glass vase, creating a symbol of unity. “The grains of sand can never be separated,” she says.

Cynthia Laplante had two children from a previous marriage, 20-year-old Andrew and 17-year-old Heather, and six-year-old Samantha from her current union. Instead of the traditional bride and groom cake topper, Cynthia had all five family members’ names etched in glass. “[The wedding] wasn’t to be just about the bride and groom. It was about all of us coming together.”

### Wedding preparations

While giving children the role of flower girl, ring bearer, bridesmaid or best man can help make them feel included in the event, wedding planner Wendy Leung says involving children in the planning stages is also important. “It gets them excited,” says Wendy. Allowing kids to voice their input on flowers, colours, dresses and tuxes and even song choices makes the event just as much about them as the bride and groom.

Tami and Greg MacSween’s seven-year-old son, Aiden, was thrilled his parents were finally getting married, but wasn’t so pleased about his mom’s plans for the grand entrance. “I wanted everyone to come in dancing instead of just waving and smiling,” says Tami. Aiden refused to dance until Tami allowed him to pick his own song; but when he selected WWE wrestler Randy Orton’s theme song, *Sexy Boy*, Tami regretted giving him control. Family members convinced her to give him the song and Aiden entered the hall shaking his hips and with a big smile on his face. “He really, really enjoyed it, so I’m happy that I allowed him to do it,” laughs Tami.

### The ceremony

Young children make the cutest flower girls and ring bearers, but be sure to go over the details of these roles ahead of time. Allowing children to have a say in the execution of their duties can go a long way towards alleviating any anxieties about participating. When Tami asked her son to be the couple’s ring bearer, his reaction wasn’t what she expected. “He was really scared everyone was going to laugh at him. He said ‘I don’t want to walk down the aisle dressed as a bear,’” she recalls. After seeing



Photo: Anna Jones Photography

a photo of a real ring bearer, Aiden accepted the idea, but didn’t want to carry the rings on a pillow. “He thought they looked like a girl’s pillows,” says Tami, who instead made him a wooden sign that read “here comes the bride” and allowed him to hold the rings in his pocket.

### Photos

Taking photos of young children is always a challenge, but can be even more so after a long day. “The younger they are, the less attention they have,” says Wendy. To speed up the process, Wendy recommends deciding upon the must-have family photos ahead of time and taking those right away, then have an assistant who can whisk kids away to the hotel for a nap so they’re fresh for the reception. Giving kids a say in the photos they want to participate in is another way to hold their interest, and their smiles. Tami’s son chose a photo of the groomsmen holding him upside down by the ankles and the bridal party pretending to play football, so those were must-haves in the shoot.

### The reception

Deciding to have a kid-friendly reception changes the tone of the affair, but Wendy says replacing traditional reception games with child-friendly ones can make the evening more fun – for both children and adults. Rather than a traditional garter toss, Wendy has organized a balloon toss where the garter is hidden in one balloon and everyone charges the dance floor to pop the balloons and find the one with the garter. “It can make for some very amusing photos,” she says.

The hula hoop kissing game can also add some laughs to the reception. Rather than the traditional glass-clanging, guests have to swing the hula hoop around their hips three times to win a kiss from the couple.

While incorporating kids into your reception can be entertaining for all, Wendy recommends couples plan the evening to retire kids to bed early, allowing for some adult-only time. Consider hiring a babysitter to whisk the kids off to bed, leaving Mom and Dad with their moment in the spotlight. *W*



Allowing kids to choose which photos they want to be a part of will help keep their attention and ensure big smiles. Photo: Melanie Shields



The Laplantes included their children's names on their cake topper. Photo: Kathi Robertson Weddings and Mike Lupine Photography



Cynthia Laplante preparing for her big day with daughters Heather, 17 and Samantha, 6. Photo: Kathi Robertson Weddings and Mike Lupine Photography



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## Don't Lose the Spotlight!

Weddings are traditionally elaborate affairs with the bride and groom as the centre of attention. While incorporating kids into your wedding plans can create some special family memories, here's how to avoid the glitz and glam of matrimony being lost to kids in tow.

### 1. Encourage good behaviour

Talk to kids about the wedding being a special day and encourage them to be on their best behaviour.

### 2. Hire a helper

Having a babysitter dedicated to taking care of the children will help ensure their needs are taken care of so they don't feel the need to interrupt Mom and Dad on their special day.

### 3. Provide snacks

As excited as kids may be about their parent's upcoming nuptials, no amount of enthusiasm can prepare their stomachs for the long day. Giving kids snacks before and after the ceremony will ensure their stomachs are full and their behaviour pleasant.

### 4. Kid-friendly reception

Set up a kid's table at the reception and provide all children with a wedding goodie-bag filled with a wedding-theme colouring book, crayons and toy rings to ensure kids stay entertained while adults enjoy the party.

### 5. Discuss dinner arrangements

Talk about seating arrangements, how Mom and Dad will be eating at a different table, and assign a designated person your children can go to if they have any problems instead of running to Mom and Dad.

### 6. Set an appropriate bedtime

Decide on an appropriate bedtime and ask your helper to take kids to the hotel room or home so the bride and groom can enjoy the rest of the night without worrying about their children falling asleep at the table.

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