

Happily Ever After

Tara and Colton
May 11, 2019



By Kim Wegener
Family Living Editor

HARLAN -- Christmas Day 2018 in Denmark has special memories for newlyweds Colton and Tara (Knudson) Clack as that was the day Colton asked Tara to be his wife. The mar-

riage proposal came after more than two years of dating. Tara was living in Finland completing her student teaching assignment when Colton made the trip abroad for a holiday visit.

"We stayed in Finland for a couple days then went to Copenhagen, Denmark. On Christmas Day, we went to Tivoli Gardens, and surprisingly, we found a secluded place, and he proposed there. The park was all lit up with Christmas lights, and it was very beautiful," said Tara.

Colton said he knew Tara was the one he wanted to spend the rest of his life with after they had been dating for about a year.

"After she studied abroad in Argentina for

four months, I knew for sure she was the one because of the amount of effort we both had to put in during that time apart," said Colton.

He chose the proposal location because he thought it would be really special to have all the Christmas lights around them. Only his very close friends knew he was going to propose to Tara, but he told no one when and where the proposal would take place.

The couple had met as students at Northwest Missouri State University while both were at their campus jobs. Tara grew up in Harlan while Colton is from Hillsboro, MO.

"We were in the same office space, so we had seen each other around, but hadn't spoken," said Tara. "In the summer of 2016, my office moved locations. He came over and was interested in studying abroad. I helped him since I was working the front desk. He came in two more times, and on the third time, he asked me out for coffee! He didn't end up studying abroad."

Spring wedding at bride's home church

Tara knew she wanted a May wedding because everything is fresh and new in spring and it's not super hot outside.

"I also didn't want a long engagement, so we only had about five months to get everything done," said Tara. "My mom helped so much getting everything ready especially since we were in St. Louis. Everything came together and we really didn't have to stress about anything."

Tara selected her wedding dress on a shopping trip with her mom at the first place they looked after she had tried on about 15 dresses.

"The dress I chose was different than the dress I thought I wanted, but I'm so happy I picked it. It even had pockets!" said Tara.

The couple exchanged marriage vows on May 11, 2019 in front of approximately 100 guests at Tara's home church, Altamont Baptist Church in rural Harlan. The reception and dance were held at the Corley Community Club. Both the wedding and reception locations hold special memories for the bride.

"I have gone to Altamont Baptist my whole life and all of my family attends there as well. It was really special to get married in the church I have been a part of for so long," said Tara.

Tara's attendants included college friend Megan Fickler as matron of honor and Brittany Leinen as bridesmaid. Tara and Brittany have been friends since middle school. Megan and Brittany wore mulberry colored dresses. Yellow, white, and pink gerbera daisies were used in the bouquets, corsages, and boutonnieres.

Tara's accessories included a pearl necklace belonging to her mom. The shoes she wore had May 11, 2019 stitched on the back



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Ultimate Wedding Planning Checklist

To plan the perfect celebration, use this comprehensive wedding checklist, with a timeline based on the 16-month length of the average U.S. engagement.

Sixteen to Nine Months Before

- Start a wedding folder or binder. Begin leafing through bridal, lifestyle, fashion, gardening, design, and food publications for inspiration.
- Work out your budget. Determine how much you have to spend, based on your families' contributions and your own.
- Pick your wedding party. As soon as you're engaged, people will start wondering who's in.
- Start the guest list. Make a head count database to use throughout your planning process, with columns for contact info, RSVPs, gifts, and any other relevant information. (Want to keep costs low? It may be brutal, but the best way to do it is to reduce your guest list.)
- Hire a planner, if desired. A planner will have relationships with—and insights about—vendors.
- Reserve your date and venues. Decide whether to have separate locations for the ceremony and the reception, factoring in travel time between the two places.
- Book your officiant. Research photographers, bands, florists, and caterers. Keep their contact information in your binder.
- Throw an engagement party, if you wish. But remember that your invitees should be on your wedding guest list as well.

Eight Months Before

- Hire the photographer and the videographer. No need to talk specifics yet, but be sure that the people you hire are open to doing the shots that you want.
- Book the entertainment. Attend gigs of potential acts to see how they perform in front of audiences, then reserve your favorite.
- Meet caterers. If your wedding venue doesn't offer its own catering service, look for one now and hire the service this month or early next.
- Purchase a dress. You'll need to schedule time for at least three fittings. Veil shopping can be postponed for another two to three months.
- Reserve a block of hotel rooms for out-of-town guests. Pick three hotels at different price points close to the reception venue.
- Register. Sign up at a minimum of three retailers.
- Launch a wedding website. Create your personal page through a free provider such as weddingchannel.com. Note the date of the wedding, travel information, and accommodations. Then send the link to invitees.

Seven to Six Months Before

- Select and purchase invitations. Hire a calligrapher, if desired. Addressing cards is time-consuming, so you need to budget accordingly.
- Start planning a honeymoon. Make sure that your passports are up-to-date, and schedule doctors' appointments for any shots you may need.

- Shop for bridesmaids' dresses. Allow at least six months for the dresses to be ordered and sized.
- Meet with the officiant. Map out the ceremony and confirm that you have all the official documents for the wedding (these vary by county and religion).
- Send save-the-date cards. Reserve structural and electrical necessities. Book portable toilets for outdoor events, extra chairs if you need them, lighting components, and so on.
- Book a florist. Florists can serve multiple clients on one day, which is why you can wait a little longer to engage one. Plus, at this point, you'll be firm on what your wedding palette will be.
- Arrange transportation. Consider limos, minibuses, trolleys, and town cars. (But know that low-to-the-ground limos can make entries and exits dicey if you're wearing a fitted gown.)
- Start composing a day-of timeline. Draw up a schedule of the event and slot in each component (the cake-cutting, the first dance).

Five to Four Months Before

- Book the rehearsal and rehearsal-dinner venues. Negotiate the cost and the menu. If you're planning to host a day-after brunch for guests, book that place as well.
- Check on the wedding invitations. Ask the stationer for samples of the finished invitations and revise them to suit your needs.
- Select and order the cake. Some bakers require a long lead time. Attend several tastings before committing to any baker.
- Send your guest list to the host of your shower. Provided you, ahem, know about the shower.
- Purchase wedding shoes and start dress fittings. Bring the shoes along to your first fitting so the tailor can choose the appropriate length for your gown.
- Schedule hair and makeup artists. Make a few appointments with local experts to try them out. Snap a photo at each so you can compare results.
- Choose your music. What should be playing when the wedding party is announced? During dinner? To kick off the dancing? Keep a running list of what you want—and do not want—played.

Three Months Before

- Finalize the menu and flowers. You'll want to wait until now to see what will be available, since food and flowers are affected by season.
- Order favors, if desired. Some safe bets: monogrammed cookies or a treat that represents your city or region. If you're planning to have welcome baskets for out-of-town guests, plan those now too.
- Make a list of the people giving toasts. Which loved ones would you like to have speak at the reception? Ask them now.
- Finalize the readings. Determine what you would like to have read at the ceremony—and whom you wish to do the readings.

- Purchase your undergarments. And schedule your second fitting.
- Finalize the order of the ceremony and the reception.
- Print menu cards, if you like, as well as programs. No need to go to a printer, if that's not in your budget: You can easily create these on your computer.
- Purchase the rings. This will give you time for resizing and engraving.
- Send your event schedule to the vendors. Giving them a first draft now allows ample time for tweaks and feedback.

Two Months Before

- Touch base again with all the vendors. Make sure any questions you or they had on your first draft have been answered.
- Meet with the photographer. Discuss specific shots, and walk through the locations to note spots that appeal to you.
- Review the playlist with the band or deejay. Though you probably won't be able to dictate every single song played, you should come prepared with a wish list.
- Send out the invitations. The rule of thumb: Mail invitations six to eight weeks before the ceremony, setting the RSVP cutoff at three weeks after the postmark date.
- Submit a newspaper wedding announcement. If you're planning to include a photograph, check the publication's website: Some have strict rules about how the photo should look.
- Enjoy a bachelorette party. Arranging a night out with your girlfriends generally falls to the maid of honor. But if she hasn't mentioned one to you by now, feel free to ask—for scheduling purposes, of course!—if a celebration is in the works.

One Month Before

- Enter RSVPs into your guest-list database. Phone people who have not yet responded.
- Get your marriage license. The process can take up to six days, but it's good to give yourself some leeway. If you are changing your name, order several copies.
- Mail the rehearsal-dinner invitations.
- Visit the dressmaker for (with luck!) your last dress fitting. For peace of mind, you may want to schedule a fitting the week of your wedding. You can always cancel the appointment if you try on the dress then and it fits perfectly.

- Stock the bar. Now that you have a firm head count you can order accordingly.
- Send out as many final payments as you can.
- Confirm times for hair and makeup and all vendors.
- E-mail and print directions for drivers of transport vehicles. This gives the chauffeurs ample time to navigate a route.
- Assign seating. Draw out table shapes on a layout of the room to help plan place settings. Write the names of female guests on pink sticky notes and the names of male guests on blue sticky notes so you can move people about without resketching the entire setting.
- Purchase bridesmaids' gifts. You'll present them at the rehearsal dinner.
- Write vows, if necessary.
- Get your hair cut and colored, if desired.

Week of the Wedding

- Reconfirm arrival times with vendors.
- Delegate small wedding-day tasks. Choose someone to bustle your dress, someone to carry your things, someone to be in charge of gifts (especially the enveloped sort), someone to hand out tips, and someone to be the point person for each vendor.
- Send a timeline to the bridal party. Include every member's contact information, along with the point people you've asked to deal with the vendors, if problems arise.
- Pick up your dress. Or make arrangements for a delivery.
- Check in one last time with the photographer. Supply him or her with a list of moments you want captured on film.
- Set aside checks for the vendors. And put tips in envelopes to be handed out at the event.
- Book a spa treatment. Make an appointment for a manicure and a pedicure the day before the wedding. (You might want to get a stress-relieving massage, too.)
- Send the final guest list to the caterer and all venues hosting your wedding-related events. Typically, companies close their lists 72 hours in advance.
- Break in your shoes.
- Assemble and distribute the welcome baskets.
- Pack for your honeymoon.



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Kim Wegener
Family Living Editor



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How to plan a wedding ceremony

Months of planning is par for the course for couples about to tie the knot. Much of that planning concerns the reception, and rightfully so. Receptions last longer than ceremonies, and couples are often involved in every reception detail, from picking the appetizers to serve during cocktail hour to choosing the final song before everyone calls it a night. But it's equally important that couples devote considerable attention to their wedding ceremonies.

A wedding ceremony might not last long, but it is the most crucial component of a couple's wedding day and can even set the tone for the rest of the festivities. From choosing readings to honoring loved ones to immersing oneself in his or her faith, these tips can help

couples plan their perfect ceremony.

- Give the ceremony equal footing with the reception. Spend time trying to put a personalized spin on the proceedings, whether that entails writing your own vows or choosing moving music that means something to you. When given ample attention, seemingly minor details can make for a special, memorable ceremony.

- Choose a ceremony location that is close to the reception site. If a ceremony will take place in a house of worship, try to choose a reception venue close to the ceremony site. This keeps guests, some of whom may be out-of-towners who have already traveled extensively, from spending too much time on the road during the day of the wedding.

- Get to know the officiant. The officiant should be someone with whom you both feel comfortable. This person should know you well enough that he or she can preside over the ceremony and add sentiments that come across as authentic and personalized.

- Do your best to avoid especially lengthy ceremonies. Couples will need to meet the religious requirements if they are getting married in the faith, and there may be some aspects of the ceremony that you cannot cut short or modify. But if you have wiggle room, try to keep the ceremony to around 30 minutes; otherwise, you run the risk of guests getting antsy, especially if children are in the audience.

- Decorate the ceremony space. While the altar and aisle are key places to draw attention, couples also can dress up the chairs/pews, ceiling (if allowed), and entrance to the space to make it welcoming and romantic.

Even wedding ceremonies that likely won't run long can benefit from some pre-wedding planning.

Factors to consider before choosing a wedding venue

Once couples become engaged and share the good news with their friends and families, the next step is to begin planning their weddings. While couples must make a myriad of decisions during the wedding planning process, perhaps none is more significant than where to tie the knot.

Couples should give ample consideration to a host of factors before choosing where to get married.

Size

Until they can agree on a guest list, couples might want to delay even looking for venues. However, some couples might want to first look at some venues so they can determine just how many guests they can afford to invite. Whether they're hosting small affairs or large parties, couples should choose venues that can comfortably accommodate all of their guests. If possible, look for venues with multiple reception areas, which might allow for some wiggle room if the guest list grows or dwindles during the planning process.

Availability

Some couples might have an ideal time of year they hope to get married. Some even know the exact date they hope to get married. While that can help with the planning, it can also limit couples with regard to their venue options. Some venues may be booked for as much as a year or more in advance during peak wedding season. The Real Weddings Study found that the most popular months to get married in 2016 were October and September. Couples who hope to follow in the footsteps of many 2016 brides and grooms may need to book their wedding venues

well in advance. Those who can be more flexible regarding their wedding dates may find it easier to book their dream venues.

Insurance

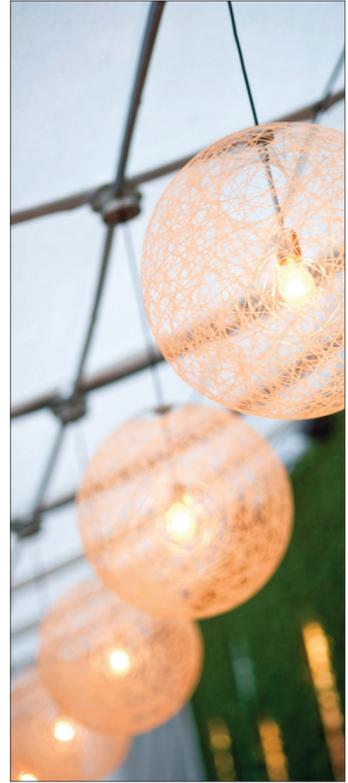
Ask about the venue's insurance policies, including the policies the venue has to protect itself. In addition, ask if the venue requires couples to have their own wedding liability insurance for protection in the event of injury, property damage or incidents related to alcohol. Couples may also want to make the investment in cancellation/postponement insurance, and some venues may even require it.

Financials

It's easy for couples to be focused on the bottom line when choosing wedding venues, but it's also important that they get a complete grasp of the financials before choosing a wedding venue. Ask about the amount of the initial deposit and if that deposit is refundable. In addition, ask when the

deposit is due and when each subsequent payment is due until the balance is paid in full. This can make budgeting easier and planning less stressful.

Couples should have fun choosing their wedding venues while recognizing that certain factors must be given ample consideration before signing any contracts.



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and her blue socks were her "something blue."

Colton's wedding party members were childhood friend and soccer teammate Cole Luby as best man and college roommate Cyrus Johnson as groomsman. The groom and his attendants wore gray suits with mulberry ties. Tara's brothers, Ethan Knudson and Kyle Knudson ushered the guests. Ethan and Kyle also served as the DJs for the reception and dance.

"The reception was held at the Corley Community Club. My parents had their wedding reception there, and it's close to our church. I had been to receptions there as a kid and remember dancing on the dance floor with all the lights. So it was cool to get to do that (dance) at my own wedding."

Tacos, burritos and nachos for reception

Tara said they wanted to keep the reception decorations simple with nothing too fancy or expensive.

"We kept the decorations simple with just some candles and beads strung out along the tables. We had a gray and white theme for the tables," said Tara.

The reception menu included tacos, burritos and nachos. The bride and her mom prepared the queso, rice and chicken. Tara and Colton's wedding cake was strawberry flavored. Marble cake was also served as well as the Danish cake, Kransekage, which the bride's mom had made. They also had an ice cream machine with different toppings like crushed Oreos® and M&Ms®.

When asked if there were any unexpected problems during the ceremony or reception, Tara said there were no problems except for a small issue pertaining to her veil.

"Nothing major happened, but when my dad hugged me after walking me down the aisle, my veil got caught and the veil came out. He felt bad, but it was okay because it was hurting my head anyway!" said Tara.

Couple happy with short engagement time frame

The groom's advice in the wedding planning process is to help out when you can and be supportive of the bride.

"Tara and I didn't wait a long time to get married, partly because we didn't want to be waiting a year or more before finally getting married, and partly because we knew what we wanted our wedding to be

like beforehand, and that was extremely helpful," said Colton.

"This allowed things to be less stressful and helped the wedding run smoothly. Having a short, small wedding was much more worthwhile too, because it felt more personal and allowed us to spend more time with everyone."

Tara echoed his comments.

"Honestly, it was nice to have a short engagement and not have to agonize or stress for a year or more. We kept it simple and to the point, and it was just what we wanted," said Tara.

"I am so thankful for all of the planning my mom did and for getting things done while I wasn't even in the state. We made a list of everything that needed to be done, and worked through it. I didn't feel stressed, and I don't think my mom really did either. When I told her in January that I wanted to get married that May, I think she was skeptical, but we started (planning) right away."

Tara and Colton traveled with Tara's family and members of the HCHS Foreign Language Club and the Spanish teachers to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands the month following the wedding.

"I guess that kind of counted (as a honeymoon), but we were with a big group and a lot of high schoolers. It was very memorable and incredible for our first trip as a married couple," concluded Tara.

The Clacks reside in St. Louis, MO. Tara is an administrative assistant for



Photo above: Matron of honor Megan Fickler, Tara, and bridesmaid Brittany Leinen.

Photo at right: The newlyweds pose at La Basilica del Voto Nacional in Quito, Ecuador in June 2019. (All photos contributed)

admissions at Lindenwood University. Colton is employed as a cartographer.

Colton is the son of Bri-

an and Diane Clack, Hillsboro, MO. Tara's parents are Rodney and Rhonda Knudson, Harlan.



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