

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE

A to Z

It's one of the most stressful yet rewarding journeys you'll ever undertake. How can you safeguard your sanity and make the most of this precious time with your son or daughter? Leave it to *Rosie Patrick*, who's got it all covered - the hat, the dress, the family politics, the lot - and in alphabetical order too...

Stockists on page 336

[Below] If prints are your passion in day-to-day life, why ditch them now? It's vital you feel like 'you'



38 PAGES OF
sensational
MOTHER-OF-THE-BRIDE STYLE
START HERE

Photo: canvasandpeach.co.uk

A

ACCESSORIES Although they're first on this list, chances are they'll be last on yours. The dress and hat should probably take precedence over, say, your clutch or heels, as these will very much depend on the fabrics and colours you've chosen for your main look. But jewellery is something you can start planning at any point. How to choose?

For Laings' Claire Ross, there's only

one thing for it: "Pearls exude elegance, and the beautiful lustre of the Mikimoto variety is undeniably unique and gorgeous. They add a touch of understated glamour, without taking the focus away from the bride or groom." FYI: pearls also



Elsie clutch, £75, Rainbow Club

complement any shade, and can inspire your other touches, like this iridescent clutch, above.

B

BESPOKE It's possible that, despite your best efforts, you won't find an off-the-peg dress that suits you. You're not done for -

you might just be better travelling down a different road. Have you thought about having an outfit made for you? Rather than being an indulgence, it can be a very practical solution to the problem. "A lot of women come to me, saying that they don't want to look like a 'typical' mother of the bride or groom," notes Glasgow couturier Joyce Young. "The image conjured up by 'typical' seems to be of a taffeta-clad lady, squeezed into a ruched dress with a bolero - a bit formal and uncomfortable. Having your outfit made might be a little more pricey, but it's an investment, something that's worth the cost for the confidence it gives you."



[Above] Circular sun ray pleated dress with French lace tunic, £90A, Joyce Young Design Studios

C

COLOUR Few areas of fashion come saddled with quite so many preconceptions and perceived limitations

as occasionwear: it's assumed that the only way to stand out, but not too much, is by wearing a modest shift with sleeves and a high neckline, always in a sugary pastel tone. Consider this your permission, should you need it, to break the mould, especially with colour. Why should you conform? If the 'classics' - pink, baby blue or mint - don't speak to you, don't wear them. Try a fresh spring green, a rich royal blue (such as Gill Harvey's style 5024, right), a lively tangerine... open your mind, and, provided it doesn't clash too heavily with the wedding scheme, anything goes.



[Above] French lace dress with hand-beaded embellishments and feathers, from £699, Gill Harvey



[Left] Embroidered lace dress with illusion back and sleeves (style 26802), from £630, John Charles

EMBELLISHMENT “This type of detailing can inject extra wow factor into an outfit,” believes Karen Charles of Patricia Forbes in Broughty Ferry. “We have some stunning styles with beads and sequins arriving for the new season.” Glitter can be a touchy subject in January, after we’ve been subjected to a month of excessive sparkle, but get used to shimmer and shine, because it’s 2020’s favourite trend. If you’re apprehensive, a scattering of sequins across a panel of lace is enough to subtly catch the light, and a few crystals across a collar or waistband gently creates definition without the need for a contrasting hue or fabric.

DRESS While we’re all about babes rocking jumpsuits and sleek cigarette pants on w-day, the dress is likely to remain the cornerstone of MOB/MOG fashion until the end of time. Why? Well, it’s feminine, flattering for nearly every shape and size, and an outfit in itself (no need to painstakingly piece together a puzzle of separates). For such a traditional option, though, the choice is unsurprisingly overwhelming, so trust the experts to steer you in the right direction. “Try a variety of styles of dress,” urges Louise Brown at Falkirk boutique Catwalk. “It’s the only way to discover what works with your personality, skin tone and hair colour, and, more importantly, what makes you feel your best.”



FRILLS, FEATHERS AND FAUX FUR In other words, the fast track to *fabulousness*. Shrinking violets might not be pleased to hear that this year’s penchant is for drama – and heaps of it. “Feathers are not a conventional detail,” points out Candice Nicol at Catherines of Partick, “but they really lend a sense of individuality to an outfit, as well as a vintage feel, albeit with a modern twist.” If you’re up for playful experimentation, a feathered cuff is a fun addition to an otherwise minimal shift (Gill Harvey, opposite, is the master of this), as are frills, which have had a directional rebirth of late (Spain’s Fely Campo is your *señorita*), and faux fur (shop Joyce Young).

GROOM’S MUM The wedding industry (and society in general) has a great deal to answer for – an obsessive focus on the bride at the expense of the groom often means his mother can feel unfairly sidelined in the process. Thankfully, since same-sex nuptials were legalised and we’ve all become duly conscious of equality, this attitude is slowly shifting. Couples can help to move it along further by making sure both mothers feel involved and valued. You could invite them to an afternoon tea to chat all things wedding, organise a shopping trip, or make the mums your witnesses on the day. It’s two families becoming one, after all.



Photo: eilidhsutherland.com

HAT Unless you’re a regular at Ascot (lucky you), purchasing a headpiece isn’t exactly going to come naturally. In fact, it’s likely to be massively,

frighteningly out of your comfort zone. So seek guidance (our headwear advice on page 78 is a good place to start). “When choosing a hat of any style, you’ll need to think about your height, your body and face shape, the size of your head and the outfit and accessories that it will be enhancing,” says milliner Leanne Cairns. “How the hat finishes off the overall look is the most important thing. It’s the first accessory to be seen and, therefore, is essential to making an impression. Be open to suggestions.”

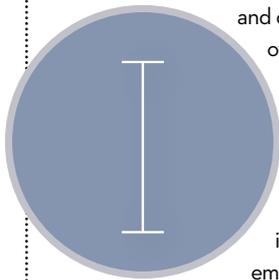


[Below] Feather and lace headpiece, EPOA, Leanne Cairns Millinery

Photo: derekdunlopphotography.com



ILLUSION LACE You'll hear this term repeatedly as you browse occasionwear, but what does it actually mean? "Illusion lace offers a sheer effect that is both soft and discreetly sexy, and is one of our favourite trends at the moment," Louise describes. "It's often featured as part of a neckline or back, and can be elevated with the introduction of decorative embroidery or a sprinkle of beading." While it's not overly racy, it's not completely demure either - it's the ideal compromise between the two, a flirty hint of seduction wrapped up in a more familiar silhouette of, say, a trusty shift dress. If you're self-conscious, this is the detail that will set you on a more fearless path.



JACQUARD Decadent and lavishly tactile, this highly textured fabric features a woven (usually floral) motif. It's a relatively heavy material, making it a Scottish mother of the bride or groom's best friend in this changeable climate of ours, particularly in the winter months. Pick a paler hue, such as taupe or a light pastel, to really show off the intricacies of the pattern, and team it with a furry stole and box clutch to emphasise its refined nature. And as for the designers who use it best, you're spoilt for choice: John Charles, Ispirato (right) and Veni Infantino have some exquisite options.



[Right] Shift dress with ¾-length sleeves in Celestial Sky (style ISE806), from £545. Ispirato

[Right] Chelsea satin court shoes, £345. Freya Rose London



KICKS By the time you're on the hunt for shoes, you're on the home straight. It's tempting, but don't buy the first nude pair you come across. Give your feet the thought they deserve. If you do opt for a neutral failsafe, aim for something special that can hold its own. These unusual satin numbers from Freya Rose London (above) are practically heirloom-quality, with their delicately bejewelled mosaic heels. Oh, and whatever you do end up with, remember to actually pack your shoes: a friend's mother forgot hers and, after frantically searching for them on the morning of the wedding, had to resign herself to sporting her battered Converse for the service, before begging, borrowing and stealing other female guests' footwear for the rest of the day. Not fun.

LENGTH You don't need to confine yourself to a knee-length hemline if that's not your style. Longer, more free-flowing dresses and palazzo pants have been reigning supreme lately (check out our fashion story, *The Long and Short of It*, on page 39, for proof). Whether that's thanks to a rise in casual destination weddings or super-smart black-tie dress codes, we're not quite sure, but there has been a definite influx of fluid chiffon, skimming the ground gracefully. The key is to strike a balance between concealing and revealing - a floor-length skirt or toe-touching trouser will, for example, partner up well with an inviting off-the-shoulder neckline.



MONEY Don't get us wrong - a big-day outfit *can* be expensive, but it doesn't have to be. Not if you're smart about where you shop (and, let's be real, we're all on a budget here). "If you're looking for a designer outfit without the designer price tag, head to The Dressing Rooms in Grangemouth," recommends Louise Brown at sister boutique Catwalk. "You'll find a great range of past-season outfits, eveningwear and casual separates, all at a fraction of the original cost. There's also a selection of headpieces, shoes and bags." Yaaas!



[Right] Outfit in Jonquil and Navy by Condici (style 70971), was £759, now £499. The Dressing Rooms

N

NAMES TO KNOW

The second you become a future mother

of the bride or groom, you enter a new frontier of fashion, populated by a host of designers you've never heard of. Where to begin? Our advice is to get to grips with the groups, one of which is Veromia. This behemoth produces no fewer than four individual labels - its mainstay Dress Code, plus-sized offering Dressed Up (more on this below), and the fashion-led Irresistible (right) and Occasions by Veromia. Then there are sister brands Condici and Ispirato, both steadfast taste-makers who have dominated the market for decades, with good reason. And there are designers who operate alongside bridal labels, such as John Charles (Ellis Bridals) and the retro-flavoured Gill Harvey (Eliza Jane Howell).



[Above] Stretch full dress with beaded trim (style IR3029S20), from £835, Irresistible by Veromia

O

THE ONE Much the same as shopping for a bridal gown, the pressure is on to find the 'perfect' dress or outfit, the look that screams 'you'. It can be daunting to say the least. Nonetheless, The One might not jump out at you right away, you might be torn between two dresses, or there may only be elements you like about a certain piece. It doesn't always come together neatly. Whatever your view on the equivalent conundrum in love, in fashion it's entirely possible to have several sartorial 'soulmates'. Guard against wondering if the grass is greener at yet another store and tune into your gut feeling. Do you feel happy in the outfit? If so, it's The One.

Q

QUESTIONS Don't be afraid to grill the stylist - they're there to answer all your queries. Do they have sample sales? What can be achieved in the alterations stage? Is there a payment plan? How do you care for an outfit? No question is too big or too small. "Clients also sometimes ask how to wear a sleeveless dress after they've removed the jacket," adds Shona Thorpe at Sheila Conn Ladies Fashions. "The answer? We can offer a filmy chiffon wrap or bolero, which won't take away from the dress."

P

PLUS SIZE "It's only when the wedding is announced that,

perhaps for the first time in many years, women evaluate themselves critically in the mirror and don't like what they see," says Joyce. "Most of us in our fifties and sixties are not the size 8 we often were when we got married. That's life! Be kind to yourself and choose a designer who'll understand you." Rather than hide away, celebrate your curves with a made-to-measure piece that'll flaunt them (*à la* Joyce) or shop brands that specifically cater to fuller figures, like Dressed Up by Veromia.



[Left] Knee-length dress with lace sleeves and bow detail (style DU348), from £360, Dressed Up by Veromia

Photo: rickybaillie.com

[Below] No matter how independent your daughter is, she'll still need you by her side, even if it's to unhook her skirt from her heel.

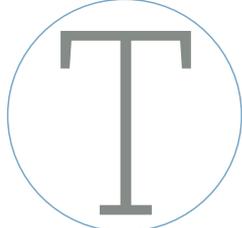
R

YOUR ROLE "The mother's role has changed over the years," admits Karen. "Traditionally, the bride's parents paid for the wedding, and were actually the hosts for the day, inviting their family and friends to see their daughter get married. Now, it's the couple's day, and mothers tend to be confidantes. They can make

suggestions, but brides and grooms will have their own ideas. Just relax and enjoy the fun of shopping and planning with your offspring." →



SLEEVES “The occasionwear sector has seen major changes in my time – it’s much more directional that it was even 20 years ago,” observes Bear Necessities’ Maggie Robin. “It’s exciting. More recently, I’ve noticed many outfits with sleeves – something that many retailers have been requesting for a while. It wasn’t until the Duchess of Cambridge joined the royal family that designers finally took note of the merits of pretty dresses with sleeves.” What should you keep your eyes peeled for? “Lace!” Maggie says. “Lace sleeves were the first big step forward, but now there are all sorts of fabrics, textures and styles. There are different lengths too – bracelet or elbow are both very flattering.”



TAILORING Make no mistake: this isn’t workwear. Banish the boring boardroom associations – tailoring is a vital component of a flawlessly fitting outfit. “Soft tailoring is very complimentary to the female form,” argues Joyce. “Narrow shoulders, fuller busts and large hips can all be accentuated or minimised. When we make a bespoke outfit, the design will initially be made in a cotton toile, before the final fabric is cut into. An individually tailored garment will normally take at least three fittings to achieve the perfect fit and shape. It is well worth the time, as a uniquely made outfit speaks volumes.”



[Above] Spanx Power Series Power panties, £33, Figleaves

UNDERWEAR It’s like building a house. You wouldn’t construct a four-storey masterpiece without laying the proper foundations, would you? The metaphor may be clichéd, but that doesn’t make it untrue. Many an outfit has been ruined by a bulky bra strap or a cruel case of VPL. If you’ve invested in a killer crepe dress and chiffon coat, you owe it to yourself and your outfit to wear smooth, seamless underwear that won’t detract from the line and silhouette. Unattractive as they may be, skin-toned Spanx and strapless bras are the way to go.

VENUE Don’t get carried away. It’s tempting to fall

for a whimsical wisp of material, but if your son or daughter is tying the knot on a hillside, that’s one for the ‘no’ pile. “The venue should definitely influence your choice of outfit,” stresses Candice. “For example, for a wedding in a castle, you might want a more regal ensemble – like a long, structured gown, and a statement headpiece – while an informal farm or barn setting might put you off wearing anything full-length, due to the grass and mud. Either way, choose whatever makes you feel good.”

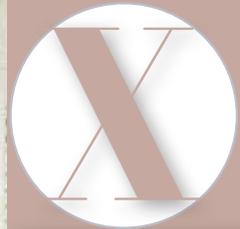


[Above] Bow collar coat and dress, £POA, Joyce Young Design Studios

WHEN TO SHOP At what point do you book into those boutiques and start the search for your w-day outfit? Is there a prime time? “The new autumn/winter collections arrive in store in May and June, and the spring/summer lines land from December to February,” says Louise. “Be sure to visit stores as early as you can, as we only stock one sample in each size and they can’t be re-ordered that season. Regular visits to our website and Facebook page will keep you updated on our latest styles as and when they arrive.”



[Above] Waffle-tweed dress with embellished neckline (style 991502) in light pink, from £550, Veni Infantino



EXTRAS Sadly, we can’t just throw on a dress and hit the aisle. You might need to consider adopting the concept of layering, an insurance policy against rain, wind, snow, sudden heat – you know, the average day’s weather in Bonnie Scotland. “I have designed outfits with removable jackets, stoles and chiffon coats, so you can add or take away as necessary,” says designer Veni Infantino. “My advice would be to try not to match fabrics and patterns perfectly. Sometimes a secondary hue is better.”

YOU There will be plenty of trials and tribulations. There will be mishaps with the table plan and invites. There will, most likely, be a couple of changing-room meltdowns. Throughout all of this, though, don’t lose touch with who *you* are. If you’re fixated on the fantasy of what you think a mother of the bride or groom should be or look like, you’ll miss out on the wonderful reality, warts and all. Write your own rules.

[Below] Advanced Night Repair Synchronized Recovery Complex 2, from £53, Estée Lauder



ZZZZZZ When answering panicked 2am calls from your little darling has become part of your job description and shut-eye is escaping you, relatives might tell you to ‘get your beauty sleep’. Cancel them, and rely instead on Estée Lauder’s Advanced Night Repair. Each heavenly droplet restores your angelic glow. Hallelujah. ♥