

BRIDAL CORNER

Adding the charm of children to your wedding party can be risky business

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Special to The IFF

It's inevitable. Mention having children in your wedding, and someone groans. It's true. Children are not always reliable. Many a flower girl or ringbearer has walked down the aisle, only to become scared and race back to the safety of their parents' arms.

For many, children simply pose too much of a risk to include them in the ceremony. For others, however, the excitement and enthusiasm of children supersede the risk.

Unlike some adults in your wedding party who may dread the prospect of having to get dressed up and stand with you, the children you choose may look forward to it. Here are some positions you might fill with children.

Flower Girl

Age four and up, the flower girl precedes the bride and usually stands in front by the maid of honor for the duration of the ceremony. Traditionally flower girls scattered rose petals in the aisle as a symbol of the couple's love, but because the petals are slippery, many now carry a bouquet or a small basket of flowers. In ceremonies lasting longer than 15 minutes, the flower girl may sit upon a padded stool by the maid of honor or sit with her parents and the other guests.

Ringbearer

Age four and up, boys or girls may fulfill the role of ringbearer. Generally the ringbearer carries the rings upon a pillow up the aisle and stands in front with the wedding party. Depending upon their age and capability, the ringbearer may carry imitation rings and sit with their parents.

Junior Bridesmaids

Age eight to 15, junior bridesmaids lead the procession of bridal attendants. In many cases, junior bridesmaids are

children of the bride or groom.

Junior Ushers

Age eight to 14, junior ushers often perform several duties. They may hand out wedding programs, assist adult ushers with the seating of guests, run errands or carry gifts from arriving guests to the gift table. As with junior bridesmaids, they are often children of the bride or groom.

Pages

Age four to seven, boys or girls may fulfill the role of page. Usually appearing only in formal weddings, pages carry the bride's train.

Miniature Hostesses

Age three to eight, mini hostesses help with many of wedding details. They may pass out wedding programs if there is no junior usher, and hand out slices of the groom's cake and wedding favors at the reception.

Children can fulfill many positions in a wedding. Keep in mind, however, that some children are more restless than others and try to select a position that suits the child's temperament. To help the children in your wedding perform their best, follow these tips:

- Give children something to focus on as they walk up the aisle. That way, the aisle won't seem so long and scary. Taping the spot where they will stand may also help.
- Invite children to the rehearsal. Older children espe-

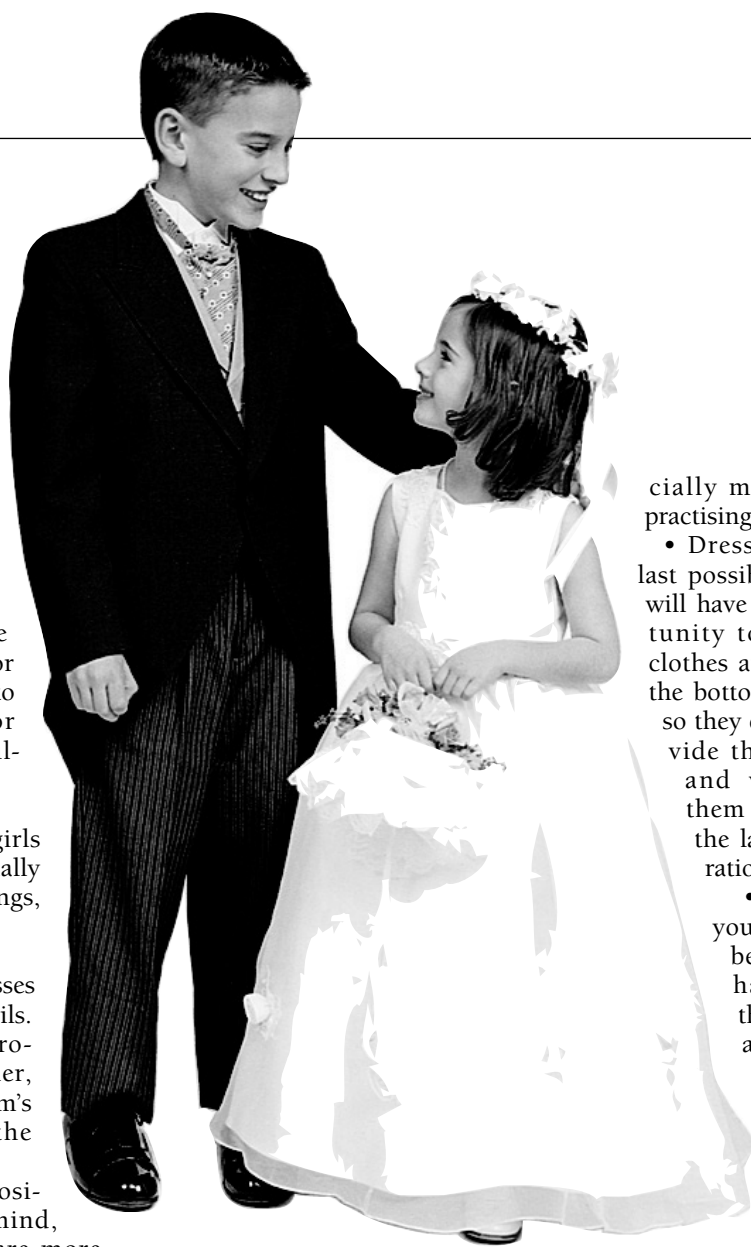
cially may benefit from practising.

- Dress children at the last possible minute. They will have less of an opportunity to mess up their clothes and hair. Scuff up the bottoms of their shoes so they don't fall and provide them with snacks and videos to keep them occupied during the last-minute preparations.

- Make sure young children have been fed and have had a nap before the ceremony. It is also a good idea to take them to the bathroom.

Like adults, children will benefit most from clear instructions.

However, even after you have told them what to do and have taken the necessary precautions, some children may not perform well. Keep that in mind and be prepared. If the flower girl drops her basket or the page throws a tantrum, try to make light of it. Who knows? The mishap could turn out to be the highlight of your wedding video.



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