

“Are there any holes, rips or stains? Does the seller have the original sales receipt?” If you’re buying sight-unseen, ask for full-length photos taken from every angle and get exact measurements (the dress has probably been altered).

**BUDGET FOR EXTRAS**

For nearly all brides, basic alterations are a must that aren’t included in the price of a dress. Do consider as you’re deciding on a dress how expensive the alterations might be. While it might cost \$30 to hem a plain sheath, the price could be double, triple or more to hem a voluminous skirt with intricate beading or lace, says Leah Crain of Leanna Studios in Cincinnati. A dress with a train will need a bustle, which costs up to \$100. (Another hidden expense for full-skirt gowns: the crinoline petticoat. You can save \$50 or more if you buy secondhand or borrow one.) Having your dress cleaned and preserved afterward adds \$180

or more, says Steve Boorstein, author of *The Ultimate Guide to Shopping & Caring for Clothing* (Boutique, \$19.95).

**RECOUN COSTS LATER**

Consider consigning your dress after the wedding, says Stacy Szklarski, a co-owner of the Chicago bridal-resale store White Chicago. Most consignment shops are fairly picky; at some, gowns must be from a known designer, no more than two years old, cleaned and in great condition. Such a gown might fetch a few hundred to a few thousand dollars, and the shop shares the proceeds with you. (At White Chicago the split is 50-50.) For \$15 the do-it-yourself consignment Web site [preownedweddingdresses.com](http://preownedweddingdresses.com) allows you to post photos and a lengthy description of your dress. Or simply donate your dress to a charity, such as the I Do Foundation ([ido.foundation.org](http://ido.foundation.org)), and take a tax deduction.



RENTABLE JEWEL  
Diamond brace  
\$1,500/day, neckla  
\$960/day, and earrir  
\$760/day; at Doyl  
Doyle, 212-677-95

jewelry

**LEASE YOUR BAUBLES**

Renting jewelry isn’t necessarily inexpensive. But the right piece can be so spectacular that you need no other adornment. Pair a simple silk bridal gown from J. Crew (from \$285; [jcrew.com](http://jcrew.com)) with a showstopping art deco diamond-and-ruby butterfly necklace from the N.Y.C. shop Doyle & Doyle and you’ll look like a star for less than you’d pay for a bridal-salon dress

and rhinestones. With this and similar services, such as Adorn Brides ([adornbrides.com](http://adornbrides.com)), rental fees are generally 10 to 30 percent of the piece’s retail price; the amount is reserved on your credit card and you will be charged the rental and shipping fees only after you return the jewelry. Both companies ship to anywhere in the United States. You can also ask local jewelers if they might consider renting; many will.

“By consigning you can make money and make another bride happy too.”

—Stacy Szklarski, co-owner, White Chicago