

# The Best Man's Complete Guide

Everything You Need to Know About Being a Best Man (Without Embarrassing Anyone)

By Tony Winyard | Wedding Host & MC | 2,500+ Weddings

## The 3 AM Dread

It's 3 AM. You can't sleep.

Your best mate asked you to be his best man three months ago. You said yes without thinking. Now the wedding is six weeks away and your brain won't stop cycling through everything that could go wrong.

*The speech. What if I forget everything?*

*The ring. What if I lose it?*

*The stag do. What if someone ends up in A&E?*

*What if I'm the reason his wedding is a disaster?*

You're not alone. Every best man goes through this spiral. The responsibility sits heavier than you expected. Because being a best man isn't just standing next to your mate looking smart. It's being his backup. His support. His last line of defence against chaos.

I've watched over 2,500 best men do their thing. The ones who smashed it. The ones who survived. And the one who lost the rings during his speech because he'd hidden them in his pocket and forgot which pocket and then started pulling out receipts and a half-eaten mint while 200 people watched in horror.

Here's what I've learned: the difference between a best man who nails it and one who scraps through is not confidence. It's not charisma. It's not natural talent.

It's preparation.

This guide gives you everything. The timeline. The speech framework. The stag do secrets. The day-of checklist that keeps you from becoming the cautionary tale at future weddings.

Let's turn that 3 AM dread into quiet confidence.

## Part 1: What Being a Best Man Actually Means

### The Official Duties

Your job breaks down into five areas:

1. Stag do organiser (or co-organiser)
2. Pre-wedding support person for the groom
3. Day-of coordinator for the groom's side
4. Ring bearer (the most nerve-wracking 30 seconds of your life)
5. Speech giver (the most public 5 minutes of your life)

### The Unofficial Duties

What nobody tells you:

- Being the person he vents to when wedding planning drives him mad
- Managing his nerves on the morning of the wedding
- Keeping him fed, watered, and sober enough to function
- Knowing when to distract him and when to leave him alone
- Being the buffer between him and any family drama

### What You're NOT Responsible For

Clear boundaries:

- You don't have to pay for everything
- You don't have to be the groom's therapist
- You don't have to make everyone happy
- You're not expected to be perfect

Your job is to be reliable. That's it.

## Part 2: The Timeline

### 6-12 Months Before

Your first conversation with the groom:

Ask him directly:

- What does he actually want from the stag do?
- Does he want a wild weekend or something low-key?
- Who absolutely must be invited?
- Is there anyone who should NOT be invited?
- What's his budget comfort zone?

Write this down. You'll thank yourself later.

#### **Start a group chat:**

Create a stag do group (without the groom). Set ground rules:

- No screenshots leaving the group
- Everyone contributes fairly
- One person handles the money (ideally you)

#### **Initial speech prep:**

Don't write yet. Just start noticing things. When you remember a funny story, note it down. When his mum mentions something about his childhood, file it away. Building a collection now means you won't be staring at a blank page later.

### **3-6 Months Before**

#### **Stag do logistics:**

- Book accommodation
- Sort transport
- Confirm numbers
- Collect deposits
- Plan the itinerary (but stay flexible)

#### **Keep checking in:**

How's he doing? Wedding planning can be stressful. Sometimes your mate just needs someone to go for a pint with who won't ask about table arrangements.

#### **Speech gathering:**

- Text his family: "What's your favourite memory of [Groom]?"
- Look through old photos together
- Note down specific stories, not just vague memories

## **6-8 Weeks Before**

**Write your speech:**

First draft. Doesn't have to be good. Just get it down.

**Confirm stag do details:**

Send final itinerary to everyone. Chase payment from anyone who's been dodging.

**Check your outfit:**

Suits need time for alterations. Don't leave this until the week before.

## **2-4 Weeks Before**

**Polish the speech:**

Read it aloud. Time it. Cut anything that doesn't earn its place.

**Confirm rings situation:**

Where are they? When do you get them? Where will you keep them?

**Brief yourself on the day:**

Get the timeline from the couple. Know when you're needed and where.

## **Week Before**

**Final stag do:**

Execute. Stay safe. Get home.

**Light speech practice:**

Run through it once or twice. Don't over-rehearse.

**Pack everything:**

Suit, shoes, speech cards, rings (when you have them), emergency kit.

## **Day Before**

**Collect the rings:**

From the groom, from a family member, wherever they're stored. Put them somewhere secure. Tell someone where that is.

**Spend time with the groom:**

This might be his last night as a single man. Make it memorable for the right reasons.

## Wedding Day

See Part 5 for the full checklist.

## Part 3: The Stag Do

### Planning Principles

#### Know your audience:

The groom's mates might include childhood friends, work colleagues, university crew, and relatives. They don't all know each other. Some will want to party until 4 AM. Some will want to be in bed by 11.

Your job: create an itinerary with something for everyone. That means a mix of activities, with natural exit points for those who want them.

#### Budget transparency:

Be upfront about costs from day one. Nothing kills stag do vibes faster than someone finding out the weekend costs twice what they expected.

Collect money in advance. Use a service like Splitwise to track who owes what.

#### The groom's wishes come first:

If he says no strippers, there are no strippers. If he says no pranks, there are no pranks. Full stop. Some best men think surprising the groom with things he explicitly didn't want is hilarious. It's not. It's a betrayal of trust right before his wedding.

### Activity Ideas

#### For the adventurous:

- Go-karting
- Paintball or laser tag
- Escape rooms
- Axe throwing
- White water rafting

#### For the sports fans:

- Golf day
- Football match

- Poker night
- Cycling route
- Fishing trip

#### For the foodies:

- Brewery tour
- Whisky tasting
- Cooking class
- BBQ masterclass
- Progressive dinner (starters at one place, mains at another, etc.)

#### For the low-key:

- Cottage weekend
- Cinema day
- Games night
- Beach day
- Comedy show

## Managing Different Personalities

The key insight: you don't have to keep everyone together all the time.

Structure the day with:

- A morning activity (optional participation)
- A main afternoon event (everyone attends)
- Dinner together (non-negotiable)
- Evening entertainment (natural exit point for early leavers)
- Late-night options for those who want them

This way, the 50-year-old uncle isn't forced to be at a club at 2 AM, and the 22-year-old cousin isn't bored at dinner by 8 PM.

## What to Avoid

- Anything that could end in arrest
- Anything that could end in hospital
- Anything that could end the friendship
- Pranks that humiliate the groom publicly

- Activities that exclude people physically or financially
- Surprises the groom has specifically said no to

## Part 4: The Speech

### The Framework That Works

Every great best man speech follows this structure:

#### 1. Opening hook (30 seconds)

Don't start with "Hi, I'm [Name], the best man."

Start with something that makes people want to listen.

#### 2. Your relationship (1 minute)

Who are you? How long have you known him? What's the nature of your friendship?

#### 3. Stories (3-4 minutes)

Two or three specific stories. Not lists of qualities. Actual moments.

#### 4. About the couple (1-1.5 minutes)

When did you first meet the partner? What did you notice about how your friend changed? Why are they perfect together?

#### 5. Sentiment (1 minute)

What does this person mean to you? Not generic statements. Real feeling.

#### 6. Toast (30 seconds)

Clear ending. Raise your glass.

### Openings That Work

Instead of "Hi, I'm [Name], the best man..."

Try:

**A question:** "Has anyone here ever tried to teach a grown man to tie a proper tie? Because that's what I've been doing for the last 15 years."

**A surprising fact:** "When [Bride] first told me she was dating [Groom], her exact words were 'He's a bit odd.' Clearly, she was sold."

A contrast: "If you'd told me ten years ago that [Groom] would be standing here, married, in a suit that fits, I'd have assumed you'd mixed him up with someone else."

## What Makes a Story Good

**Strong story:**

"I knew he was serious about [Bride] when he turned down tickets to the FA Cup Final—tickets he'd been trying to get for eight years—because it clashed with meeting her parents for the first time. That's when I thought: this one's different."

**Weak story:**

"They're really great together and clearly very happy."

The first is a moment. The second is a summary.

Moments stick. Summaries vanish.

## The 5-7 Minute Rule

The ideal speech length.

Shorter = you haven't said enough. Longer = you're testing patience.

At normal speaking pace, that's roughly 750-1,000 words.

Time yourself. If you're over 8 minutes, cut.

## What to Avoid

**Stag do stories:** What happened on the stag stays on the stag. Even hints.

**Ex-partners:** Never mention them. Ever.

**Inside jokes:** If only three people get it, it's not for a wedding speech.

**Anything you'd be embarrassed to say in a job interview:** Grandma is in the room. The bride's boss might be there. Keep it Disney-friendly.

**Drunken rambling:** The myth that you're funnier after a few drinks is a myth. Limit alcohol until after your speech.

## Delivery Tips

**Notes:** Index cards are better than A4 paper. Easier to hold, less obvious shaking, better eye contact.

**Microphone:** Hold it directly in front of your mouth. Not at your chest. Not at your chin. Directly in front of your mouth.

**Pace:** You'll want to rush. Don't. Pause before important lines. Let moments land.

**Eye contact:** Find the friendly faces—the groom, his parents, your mates. Make eye contact with them.

**When you forget:** Smile. Say "What I meant to say was..." and continue. Being human makes you likeable.

## Part 5: The Wedding Day Checklist

### Morning

- Wake up on time (set multiple alarms)
- Eat breakfast (you need the energy)
- Check you have: rings, speech cards, phone charger, wallet
- Arrive at groom's getting-ready location on time
- Make sure the groom eats something
- Keep him calm and distracted
- Check his outfit (ties straight, pocket squares in place, no tags showing)
- Take some photos (his mum will thank you)

### Pre-Ceremony

- Double-check rings are secure (check again in 10 minutes)
- Ensure buttonholes are distributed to groomsmen and fathers
- Help welcome guests if needed
- Stay visible and calm
- Keep an eye on the time

### Ceremony

- Stand where the officiant directs you
- When asked for rings: don't fumble, don't panic, have them ready
- Hold bouquets or items if handed to you
- Sign as witness if required

## After Ceremony

- Congratulate the couple
- Make sure the groom has everything he needs
- Help coordinate group photos if asked
- Stay available but not hovering

## Reception

- Know when speeches are happening
- Have your speech cards ready
- Ensure your toasting glass is full before you speak
- Limit alcohol until after your speech
- Deliver speech when introduced
- Enjoy the rest of the evening—you've earned it

## Emergency Kit (Optional but Brilliant)

Keep in your pocket or a small bag:

- Mints
- Phone charger
- Tissues
- Safety pins
- Painkillers
- Cash
- Band-aids

## Part 6: Common Problems and Solutions

### "I'm not funny. My speech will be boring."

You don't need to be funny. You need to be sincere.

A heartfelt story about what your friend means to you will land better than a forced joke that falls flat. If humour isn't your thing, don't fake it. Warmth and honesty always win.

## "The groom's family don't like me."

Focus on being helpful and respectful. You don't need them to love you. You just need to get through the day without drama.

Avoid controversial topics. Be polite. Do your job well. That's enough.

## "I can't get everyone to agree on stag do plans."

You can't please everyone. Make the best decision for the groom and the majority, communicate clearly, and let people opt in or out.

The goal isn't unanimous approval. The goal is a good time for the groom.

## "I'm terrified of public speaking."

Join the club. Most best men are.

The secret: preparation reduces nerves. Practice your speech until you could do it in your sleep. Record yourself. Perform it to one trusted person. Each time it gets easier.

On the day: slow breathing, find friendly faces, and remember that everyone in that room wants you to succeed.

## "What if I lose the rings?"

Designate a secure pocket. Check they're there every 30 minutes. Tell someone where they are.

And if the worst happens: most venues have someone who can fetch them. The ceremony can pause. It's embarrassing but survivable. Weddings are remarkably resilient to small disasters.

## Speech Template

[OPENING - 30 seconds]

[Hook that makes people want to listen]

[YOUR RELATIONSHIP - 1 minute]

For those who don't know me, I'm [Name], and I've been [Groom's] best friend for [X] years. We met [where/when], and from the first moment I knew [observation about him].

[STORY 1 - 1.5 minutes]

The thing about [Groom] is [character trait]. Let me give you an

example. [Specific story that illustrates this trait].

[STORY 2 - 1 minute]

But here's what you might not know. Behind the [exterior trait], [Groom] is [deeper quality]. When [serious example showing this].

[ABOUT THE COUPLE - 1.5 minutes]

When [Groom] met [Partner], something changed. He became [positive change]. I first noticed it when [specific example]. And I thought: this is good for him.

[Partner], I want you to know: you're not just marrying my friend. You're [what they're gaining]. Thank you for making him so happy.

[SENTIMENT - 1 minute]

[Groom], you're not just my best friend. You're [what they mean to you]. Standing here today, I'm proud to be part of this.

[TOAST - 30 seconds]

Please raise your glasses. To [Groom] and [Partner].  
May your love be [genuine wish in your own words].

## Quick Reference Card

Print this. Keep it with you.

### Week Before

- Rings secured
- Speech practised
- Outfit ready
- Day-of timeline confirmed

### Morning Of

- Rings in secure pocket
- Speech cards in jacket
- Phone charged

- Emergency kit packed

## Before Speech

- Glass is full
- Notes are ready
- Opening line memorised
- Know who introduces you

## During Speech

- Mic in front of mouth
- Find friendly faces
- Slow down
- Pause for impact

## If Something Goes Wrong

- Smile
- "What I meant to say was..."
- Everyone wants you to succeed

## About Tony Winyard

2,500+ weddings. Over 7,500 speeches heard.

I've watched best men deliver perfect speeches and complete disasters. The difference isn't talent or confidence. It's preparation.

If you want personal guidance on your best man duties—from speech writing to managing the day—I offer coaching sessions.

Book a free 15-minute consultation: <https://www.winyard.com/contact>

You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be prepared.

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