



7 STEPS TO THE ULTIMATE PROPOSAL

A long marriage is two people trying to dance a duet and two solos at the same time.

Anne Taylor Fleming

Wow, congratulations on making it this far. By now you have not only found the love of your life, but also asked her father for his permission to marry her, and finally chosen the ring. But wait, it isn't over yet. You still have to plan how you're going to do the proposal. There are a lot parallels between choosing the perfect ring and planning the perfect proposal, as follows:

- ◆ You need to know what she wants.
- ◆ You need to spend some time thinking about how to make it memorable.
- ◆ You need to plan and organise the proposal – also considering whether you do it yourself or get some help.
- ◆ You need to follow it through and make the big day memorable.

An important tip to keep in mind is that you need to rehearse what you're going to do and say. A survey by *Men's Health* and The Knot.com found that 68 per cent of women remember what was said during the proposal, so practise ahead of time.

In my experience, most women know that a proposal is coming – after all, you've probably been subtly picking her brain a bit about her ring preference. What is important, however, is not that she knew it was coming but that you make it memorable. When she is retelling the story later to all her girlfriends, I can guarantee you what she will be focusing on is how you made it magical.

If possible, it is a great idea to organise a photographer, to capture your special moment. Few people think to organise this, but it is something that you will be amazed at later. The raw emotion that emerges when being proposed to for the first time is truly beautiful to witness.

In this chapter, I take you through some aspects of the proposal to help you get your creative juice flowing.

WHAT SORT OF PROPOSAL WILL SHE LIKE?

A big part of planning a memorable proposal is thinking about the kind of proposal your partner would prefer. Consider the following options:

- ◆ *Beach*: If you both love spending time at the beach, a beach proposal is sure to be a hit. Plan a romantic walk along the beach, and perhaps arrange for a bottle of champagne on ice to be half buried in the sand, with a special message written on the beach, just for her.
- ◆ *City*: If she is a city girl, maybe she would prefer a romantic dinner, followed by a walk up to a scenic lookout over the city. Try to pick your spot beforehand – ideally somewhere not so crowded so you can have a bit more privacy. Unlike the movies, I find most ladies prefer the private intimate setting where they can take it all in.

The last thing you want is a distraction as you prepare to ask her to marry you.

- ◆ *Nature*: Does she like the outdoors and/or camping? A proposal in this sort of environment is perfect for the lady who loves going with you on nature walks or off the beaten track. But with this setting it's particularly important to plan with the weather in mind. If it doesn't come off the first time you plan it, don't stress and ruin the moment, just enjoy it and plan another day. Or, alternatively, if you have gone past the point of no return, do it anyway and have a laugh about it later.
- ◆ *Going away for a romantic weekend*: If your partner has been busy at work, maybe a weekend getaway might be just what the doctor ordered. Using the themes outlined in the preceding points, plan a special weekend away. If you plan it well enough, you may even be able to get the venue where you're staying to help with planning and facilitating the occasion. Whether it's rose petals on the bed as you arrive (or cleverly placed there while you're away at dinner), the little extra effort is sure to be a hit.
- ◆ *Travelling abroad*: If time and money permit, and your future fiancée loves travelling, this could be a great option. Again, think of a destination she would love to travel to, and think about where and when you are going to propose. If your partner hates the cold, for example, planning a ski trip is probably not going to produce the most memorable outcome. If you are thinking about an overseas holiday, just make sure you have the right overseas jewellery travel insurance – covered in chapter 12.

Another tip: try planning the proposal on your birthday instead of hers. That way she really won't see it coming.

Although you should try to plan an original proposal, it doesn't need to be a big Hollywood production. It can be something simple but really special – like using your 'best friend' house pet to bring in the ring at the right moment. Just a word of caution: you might want to rehearse this with a few doggie treats to make sure they don't run off and bury the ring in the garden.

Expert proposal-planning tips from Pitch & Woo

I chatted with Jonathan Krywicki, the founder of Pitch & Woo, a bespoke proposal-planning business. He provided me with some tips from their DIY marriage proposal kit that is helping men all around the world craft their own pitch-perfect proposal. The following is what Jonathan shared with me.

Courtship and the art of romancing have existed, in one form or another, since ancient times. Old-fashion chivalry included love letters, gifts, romantic songs and other tokens of admiration such as gloves and love spoons.

But if you've ever been out with friends and heard the married couples share their really ordinary proposal stories, you'll know that the tradition of wooing has waned in modern times. If you're used to being at the top of your game on a professional level, and are hoping to achieve this level of success in your personal life, investing some time and energy into a memorable proposal is a must. After all, one of the biggest questions you'll ever ask is 'Will you marry me?'

The stakes are too high for you to fail. So you need to step up to the challenge, lift your game and come up with a marriage proposal that's so mind-blowing it will leave your partner speechless.

At Pitch & Woo, we believe there are seven key steps that you need to focus on that will set you on the right path to creating

your own truly incredible marriage proposal moment. They are:

- 1 **Timing:** When to propose? How do you know the timing is right for you, for your partner and for your relationship?
- 2 **Expectations:** The fairytale moment – what would your partner expect from a proposal and how can you tune in to this and ensure your proposal does not disappoint her?
- 3 **Ideas:** Where do you start? Begin with the end in mind and work backwards to develop your central theme.
- 4 **Planning:** Bringing it all together. Where do you start with the planning? How do you build suspense and focus on the detail? What about engaging the various senses to create an as immersive proposal as possible?
- 5 **Assistance:** Co-ordinating the day. Depending on how involved your proposal is, you may need assistance on the day to bring all the various components together. Who can help you and how do you brief them on what to do?
- 6 **Ring:** Do you propose with a ring? (The rest of this book can help with this aspect!)
- 7 **Enjoy:** Enjoy the moment. Calm your nerves, have fun and be completely present throughout your proposal moment.

My final tip is to enjoy the journey and remember – a beautiful proposal is, indeed, a gift of a special lifelong memory. Life is too short to be boring.

Why winging it is usually not the best idea

A proposal involves so many variables that can go wrong, so planning is essential. Like the old saying, 'Failing to plan, is planning to fail'. With 68 per cent of women remembering what was said during the proposal, without a proper plan in place, you are likely to forget something. This is one of those times in your life where you don't want to look back with regrets.

Tom and Mary's story: Proposing!

Armed with the ring in his pocket, Tom sets out to plan a beautiful proposal for Mary – something that is unique and that they will both remember always. But what to do? Proposing at dinner has been done before. A proposal in front of the family? From previous discussions he knew she wouldn't like that. It had to be something special and private. Then it hit him – why not do it from a hot air balloon? After a few initial calls, it became clear to Tom that most hot air balloons carry up to nine passengers. That meant this still wasn't going to be the experience that Tom was after, so he kept looking. Then he managed to find a hot air balloon pilot who was willing to take just the two of them up. It would be completely private and special and romantic.

Preparing for the morning

In order to get the best balloon ride, Tom and Mary had to get ready at sunrise. (This is the perfect time for the balloons, because the air is still.) Every weather forecast pointed to a glorious day; however, upon arriving at the take-off site, the balloon pilot informed Tom that it was too windy to take off. Tom's heart sunk – all his preparation for a magic proposal wouldn't come off. Then a stroke of luck happened: the wind dropped down as quickly as it had picked up, and they were ready to take off.

Picking the exact moment to propose

Tom knew what he wanted to say and had even rehearsed it several times. But he hadn't really thought about at what moment during the balloon flight he would ask Mary to marry him. As the balloon rose up into the sky, the beautiful checkerboard pattern of the fields unfolded below them. The sun cresting over the horizon created a warm glow. Looking back Tom can remember the beautiful view, but not the ideal chit chat that they had made. While Tom was a fairly brave fellow, it still took him a little while to pluck up the courage. The suspense was killing him as the balloon flight neared its end – it was now or never.

Getting down on one knee, Tom started to notice all the holes in the bottom of the wicker basket. A moment of panic ensued. What if in the process of taking the ring out of his pocket and putting it on Mary's finger, the ring fell through one of those little holes? The ring would surely be lost forever. Needless to say that didn't happen.

Tom was now on one knee looking at Mary, who was eagerly awaiting what was to come. Everything was coming together as Tom had planned. He told Mary she was his best friend and soul mate, and that he couldn't wait to spend the rest of his life making her happy. Then ... drum roll ... he asked the big question: 'Will you marry me?' The words that Mary had been waiting almost four years to hear. Then came the words every proposing guy on his knees wants to hear: 'YES!' With the ring safely on Mary's finger, Tom could breathe a sigh of relief. He now had a fiancée.

After the balloon landed, Tom took Mary to a special breakfast he had organised at a local country house to celebrate. While having a relaxing champagne breakfast and soaking up the moment, Mary started to make some of the calls to inform the family of the wonderful development.