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Thinking Outside the Wedding Gift Box

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[Jul 20, 2012](#) Posted by [Meredith Deliso](#)

The Honeyfund website banner features the Honeyfund logo and tagline "the free honeymoon registry" on the left. On the right, there's a search bar with the text "Giving a Gift is Easy!" and a "Go" button, and a "Sign in here" button for existing members. Below this, a large image shows a couple cycling on a grassy hill. To the right of the image, the text "Make your dream happen" is followed by three bullet points: "FREE honeymoon registry", "FREE cash gift registry", and "NO setup fees. NO transaction fees!". Below these points is a "How it Works" button. At the bottom of the banner, there are two buttons: "Register Now" (with the subtext "Create your free gift registry.") and "Give a Gift" (with the subtext "Giving a gift is easy."). Below the main banner, there's a section titled "Real Couples" featuring a photo of a smiling couple and a testimonial: "A honeyfund allowed us to travel in a 'once-in-a-lifetime' kind of way. We went to Costa Rica with an extra \$5,000."

Registering for Honeymoons, Down

Payments, and Even Luxury Pet Beds Becoming the New Normal

When Jane and Jarrad Matthews were getting married last summer, they didn't need expensive china or fancy kitchen appliances—they had everything they could want and need for their home. So instead of registering at Macy's or Bed Bath & Beyond, they set up an account with Honeyfund.com, a nontraditional wedding gift registry where they could put cash gifts towards their European honeymoon.

“We didn't really see a reason to ask our friends and family to help us set up a home that we were already capable of filling ourselves with the housewares we had accumulated before we got married,” said Jane. “When we thought about what we really wanted, setting up a Honeyfund registry to allow us to have an amazing honeymoon was spot on.”

Thanks to their customized registry—and the generosity of their friends and family—the newlyweds drove from Paris to San Sebastian, Spain, where they were able to upgrade their hotel, ride horses, and enjoy nice dinners and champagne toasts.

“We were able to do things that otherwise would not have been in our budget,” said Jane. “Building memories was way more important to us than a new set of pots and pans.”

Jane and Jarrad are not alone. Nontraditional wedding registries like a “honeyfund” are becoming increasingly popular for the couple who doesn't need or want a Cuisinart or high-end chinaware.

“With 75% of engaged couples today already living together, many of them already have the typical things you'd find on a traditional registry,” said Dana Ostomel, founder of Deposit a Gift, a cash wedding registry site that lets Jack and Jill customize their cash gifts, whether it's for a honeymoon or home down payment.

Since weddings are as much about etiquette as saying “I do,” asking for cash flat-out instead of gifts is still a big no-no. So for the couple that really does just want money, sites like Honeyfund.com and Deposit a Gift are sneaky ways of asking for cash without actually explicitly asking for it. It's also becoming increasingly acceptable for couples to register for nontraditional wedding items, like camping gear and pet beds instead of blenders and toasters.

“There are so many options today that couples are really personalizing their registries just like their weddings,” said Kristin Koch, senior editor at WeddingChannel.com, an online wedding guide. “The cool thing, I think, is that you can register for just about anything.”

The Flexibility of Cash Gift Registry Services

There's an increasing number of secure websites that allow you to customize a cash gift registry. Through online registries like Deposit a Gift and Honeyfund.com, as well as Bowl of Cherries and GiftSimple, to name a few, you can designate money for a down payment on a house, a favorite charity, or hotel upgrades, dinners, and amenities on a honeymoon, which is becoming an increasingly popular option among modern couples—and fun choice for gift-givers, too.

“People love doing it because they know they're contributing to a really happy time,” said Koch. “It's

not, ‘Oh, I’m sending a few plates, I hope they use them.’ It’s a fun, cool gift.”

When Dorie Ellis married her husband, Stephen, last year, they were looking for something more than gifts to receive at their wedding.

“We wanted to make memories on our honeymoon with the gifts people had given us,” said Ellis. “We didn’t need plates, forks, Cuisinarts, wine glasses. All of those are just ‘things.’ Our memories are irreplaceable.”

Through Honeyfund.com, Ellis was able to have friends and family help fund parts of their honeymoon to Italy, from hotel stays to dinners. But since it was, in the end, just cash, they still had some flexibility. When their camera broke, for instance, they were able to buy a new one. They also used their fund to pay for a spontaneous trip to Sienna and Monteriggioni.

Like Ellis, when Julie Kunz married her husband, Jack, this past June, she was looking for registries that were not the typical “sign me up for a gift that I don’t really need.” She found it in [Hatch My House](#), an online registry where couples can save towards a home in an interactive way by having their friends buy a part of their virtual house (for example, a window for \$75 or wine glasses for \$50).

“We already have a lot of household goods and are living in small apartment in New York City, we didn’t want to accumulate more things,” said Kunz. “Also, we felt it was a bit rude to just ask people for cash, so we needed a more implicit way to say, ‘We need to start saving for our future.’”

With the monetary gifts they received through Hatch My House, the couple is now already on their way towards saving money for a down payment on a house and furniture.

There are still more online registries that allow couples to customize their money, so to speak. Gift card registries like [CardAvenue.com](#) and [CardHub.com](#) allow couples to register for gift cards from retailers like Home Depot, Crate & Barrel, and hundreds more to then use as the need arises.

“It’s making it more specific instead of saying, ‘We’ll love cash,’ which is not OK to list,” said Koch. “That’s still the one exception to a registry.”

Going Beyond Chinaware

When couples do register for specific items on a registry, many are starting to think outside the Bed Bath & Beyond box and foregoing the traditional stemware and bedding. On Deposit A Gift, Ostomel has seen couples register for such varied items as improv comedy classes, a puppy, a moving van and boxes, Portuguese language courses, a Costco membership, and even adoption assistance.

“There’s a trend towards being a bit more practical,” said Ostomel. “So rather than getting more stuff, [couples] are more inclined to seek an alternative to focus on a dream or goal that matters more.”

There are more registries to choose from than ever before, too, beyond the usual suspects like Macy’s or Target. Chris Easter co-founded [TheManRegistry.com](#) in 2007 as a way for grooms to get in on the registry action.

“We tried to stay away from traditional wedding gifts and went more in a different direction than what

you might think of as traditional gifts like flatware and bath towels,” said Easter.

Think bar-related items, camping, garage, and barbecue-related gifts. Some of the most popular items on the registry include a [remote control cooler](#) and an [NCAA College Logo Grill Topper](#). Just try finding those on Williams-Sonoma.

“Our gifts are fun, but they’re also useful,” said Easter, who sees his online registry being one of several that couples may use for their wedding.

Wedding registries aren’t just for people anymore, either. Mungo & Maud, a luxury dog and cat outfitters based in London that recently launched in the U.S., has an [online gift registry](#) that people are using for wedding gifts. The store’s bestsellers are dog beds.

“I’d imagine that it’s the perfect gift for couples moving in to a new house after marriage, looking to furnish their house,” said Rebecca Irvine, spokesperson for Mungo & Maud.

Meeting Tradition Halfway

Forgoing the traditional route is becoming more commonplace among this generation of newlyweds, but the road isn’t always easy to forge. When Carri Summers Riley, who got married this past March, was planning her wedding, she and her husband decided to forgo gifts altogether and instead asked for a honeymoon donation, though they weren’t sure how people would respond.

“We knew exactly what we wanted, but received mixed reviews when we mentioned it to others,” said Riley. “There were lots of people out there that found it to be very tacky and rude, which led me to have some reservations at first. I felt a little embarrassed to go through with it.”

It wasn’t until she found positive reviews and unique ways to accomplish this online that she decided to go through with it. And, as it happened, her friends and family ultimately raved about their out-of-the-box thinking.

“I think people could appreciate that we didn’t ‘need’ anything, but would really love to take a honeymoon to celebrate our marriage and new life together,” said Riley.

Still, to make sure you’re not alarming the wedding etiquette police or unintentionally offending the more traditional wedding goers among your guests with your nontraditional wedding registry, Koch recommends registering for some more traditional items you’d like in addition to a main honeymoon, home down payment, or unconventional fare like sporting equipment.

“Just because you can register for skies doesn’t mean people can’t also do china or more traditional items,” said Koch. “It’s good to do a combination of your wild-card, nontraditional items and a few more traditional items to make your mom happy.”

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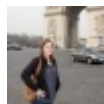
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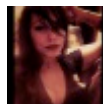
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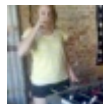
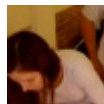
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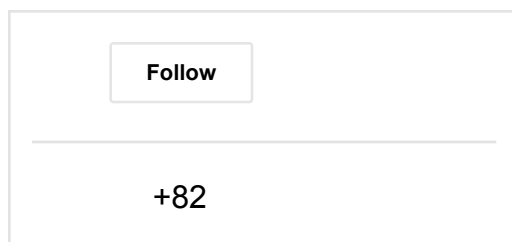
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