



The Complete Wedding Planning Checklist

Twelve to Nine Months Before Your Wedding

- **Establish your budget and decide how expenses will be shared.**

It is very important to have a budget and to stick to it. Use free wedding budget software or plan your budget on a spread sheet. Figure out what you can afford do not go into debt over your wedding. There are ways to have a beautiful, but cheap, wedding without breaking your bank. As tempting as it may be, putting your reception and honey moon on credit cards is not a great way to start your new lives together. If you can't afford a big wedding, then keep it small and among family and your closest friends. I don't mean to sound harsh, but don't pay \$100 a plate for someone you barely know—isn't worth it.

- **Get a wedding planning notebook to organize your thoughts, notes, ideas, receipts and contracts.**

A three-ring binder is convenient because you can organize it with pocket folders, clear plastic sheet protectors and dividers. You will need a place to file magazine clippings, guest lists, receipts, contracts, reply cards, etc. Keep all of the information you collect in your binder.

- **Select your “approximate” wedding date and decide where you want to have your wedding and reception.**

Some popular wedding spots and dates are booked well over a year in advance. Start making phone calls to different locations and reception sites as early as possible. Depending on the time of year and where you live, even limo drivers can be hard to come by, especially during prom season. When checking on a venue for your reception, keep in mind that some restaurants have a special room for wedding receptions and parties. This may be a cost effective solution since the location and catering is all inclusive. Keep a list and compare available dates and prices.

- **Make your final decision and book your ceremony and reception locations.**
- **Book your minister, priest, rabbi or officiant.**
- **Start calling around to photographers, videographers, Djs or bands, florists, and caterers.**

This is where your biggest expenses come from, but is also the area where you can save the most money. Some quick money-saving tips: Ask around for people who are good at videography or video editing. Some high school and college students can be quite good at these tasks and you'll pay them a fraction of the cost of a professional. Get your friends and family involved in helping you with flowers and catering. There are fabulous do-it-yourself ideas and videos for creating beautiful wedding flower arrangements. Get creative with the menu and gather recipes that can be made in advance and assembled at the last minute. Have you considered a desert-only or a brunch reception?

- **Plan the style of your wedding.**

Decide whether you want casual, formal, glittery, floral, tropical, indoors or outdoors...What colors will you use? Take your binder to your favorite book store, grab a cup of coffee or tea and peruse magazines. Write down ideas

or buy the magazines you really like. The library also has a great collection of current and past magazines where you can photo copy pages.

- **Start your guest list.**

Create a document and make a table with columns for names and addresses, RSVPs, gifts and other. Enter the names and addresses of the guests you will invite and leave the other columns blank. Print it out and keep the document in your binder—it is a lot easier to simply check off RSVPs, and jot down wedding gifts or other info on the paper rather than get to a document stored on your computer.

- **Shop for your wedding dress.**

There are plenty of options for beautiful but cheap wedding dresses. The best place to find an inexpensive wedding dress is Ebay. A recent auction listed a beautiful, never-worn wedding dress from David's Bridal for \$150.00 Start looking now because you will most likely need to get it fitted or altered but you will still save a lot of money.

- **Decide where you will spend your honey moon and make reservations.**

If you will be traveling out of the country, get your passports now—don't put it off—you never know if there will be complications.

- **Decide what style of wedding invitation you would like.**

If you are making your own invitations, now is the time to get started. There are beautiful ideas for handmade wedding invitations that won't look handmade.

Nine to Six Months Before Your Wedding

- **Select your wedding party and meet with them to go over responsibilities.**

Make it fun. Go out for coffee or host a brunch in your home. It is okay to ask for help addressing envelopes, making favors, and other tasks.

- **Select and book ceremony musicians, if needed.**
- **Book your photographer, videographer, DJ or band.**
- **Meet with your caterers.**

If you are hiring caterers, now is the time to meet with them to select the menu. If you are getting friends and family to help with the food, schedule a time to meet with them to discuss menu options and duties.

- **Make room reservations for out-of-town guests.**
- **Select bridesmaids' dresses and your flower girl dress.**

If you are ordering dresses, allow enough time for them to arrive and to be sized. Decide on shoes and accessories (little feet grow quickly, so don't buy your flower girl shoes just yet.)

- **Coordinate with the mothers to let them know your colors and theme so they can select their dresses.**
- **Decide on whether you need to rent chairs, tents, lighting, etc and make reservations now.**
- **Start writing vows.**
- **Get ideas about how you want the ceremony to be structured.**
- **If you are getting married in a church, find out if you need to take a marriage prep-course.**
- **If you are hiring a florist, book now. If you are doing your own floral arrangements, start watching videos to get ideas.**

- **Make sure your transportation to the reception is lined up. Horse and carriage, limo, or friend.**
- **Shop for favors and centerpieces.**

If you will be making your favors and centerpieces, start looking for ideas. Plan a simple party with friend and family so that you can enlist their help.

- **Register for your wedding at the bridal registry of your favorite department store or online shop.**
- **Visit several bakers to get ideas for your wedding cake. Make sure they will be available for you date.**
- **Shop for your wedding cake topper.**

Six to Four Months Before Your Wedding

- **Purchase your wedding accessories such as shoes and undergarments.**

Buy comfortable shoes! This is one place where you may want to spend a little extra money and splurge on quality shoes that are somewhat comfortable. You will be on your feet for hours and the last thing you will want to put up with on your beautiful day are painful feet. Also, you may need your wedding shoes for the fitting of your wedding dress.

- **Schedule fittings for your dress.**
- **Order your wedding invitations if you are not making them.**

Start addressing your invitations as soon as they are ready.

- **Decide where you want to hold your rehearsal dinner and make reservations.**

Line up entertainment or speeches. Have someone create a slide show of you and your fiancé with pictures of each of you from when you were babies to where you are now.

- **Decide on where you want to stay for your wedding night and book your room/suite.**
- **Plan your honeymoon and make reservations.**
- **Shop for gifts for your wedding party or start planning on what you want to make.**

You will give the gifts during the rehearsal dinner.

- **If you haven't already, select and order your wedding rings.**
- **If you will be going to a salon for hair and makeup, checking around for styles and rates and book the date.**
- **Choose your music and order-of-events for the reception.**

Have a list of music for the arrival of the wedding party, what you will listen to during dinner, dance music and other events. Make sure you include music you do not want to listen to.

Four to Two Months Before Your Wedding

- **Finalize your flower arrangements and decorations.**
- **Finalize your menu.**
- **Make your wedding cake decision and place your order.**

- Order favors now or start making your own.
- If you are having out of town guests and you wish to make a welcome basket, do those now too.
- Select ceremony readers, guest book attendant, ushers, your MC (you could use your DJ) and the people who will be giving the toasts.
- Print programs and menus, if needed.
- Resize and engrave rings if you wish.

Eight to six Weeks Before your Wedding

- **Finish addressing invitations and send them out.**

Set your RSVP date for three weeks after the post marked date. Be sure to keep your RSVP's organized in your notebook. (Use the document you created at the beginning of your wedding planning.)

- **Get your marriage license.**

It may take up to six days to get your marriage license. Also, check on when it expires. Order more than one copy.

- **Purchase the accessories for the wedding ceremony and reception.**

Guest book, ring pillow, aisle runner, flower basket, wedding candles, toasting flutes, garter, napkins, cake knife.

- **Select tuxedos, socks and shoes for the gentlemen.**
- **Plan a brunch or lunch for your bridesmaids.**
- **Submit your wedding announcement in the newspaper.**

Six to Two Weeks Before Your Wedding

- **Finalize honeymoon plans.**

Shop for new clothes or anything special you would like to have on your trip.

- **Send out invitations for the rehearsal dinner.**
- **Make an appointment to get your hair cut/colored.**
- **Make arrangements for your final fittings for yourself and bridesmaids.**
- **Finalize the order of events for the ceremony and your vows.**

You may need to meet with your officiant.

- **Finalize reception details and send the schedule to your wedding party and your vendors.**
- **Finalize all food and beverages for your wedding.**
- **Finalize all rehearsal dinner arrangements.**
- **Finalize all floral arrangements.**

- **Touch base with your vendors and go over any unanswered questions and tasks.**

Meet with your photographer and videographer to discuss specific shots. Review your play list with your DJ or band.

- **Decide the order of your receiving line if you will be having one.**
- **Contact guest who haven't RSVP'd.**
- **Decide on the head table setting and reception seating plan.**
- **Design your place setting cards.**
- **Make sure your wedding rings are ready.**
- **Arrange for your attendants to pick up their attire.**
- **Assign small tasks to help you on your wedding day.**

You will need ask friends and family to help you. You'll need someone to stand at the guest book before the wedding ceremony, someone to bustle your dress, someone to carry your things, and someone to be in charge of gifts. You should also assign a point person for each vendor in case there are any problems or questions.

One Week Before Your Wedding

- **Give the final tally of guests to your caterer or reception venue.**
- **Reconfirm arrival times with your vendors.**
- **Wrap gifts for your wedding party.**
- **Pack for your honeymoon.**
- **Shop for your rehearsal dinner outfit.**
- **Make sure everything is ready for the rehearsal dinner.**
- **Be sure your dress is ready and all accessories are in one place.**

Shoes, hair piece, makeup, garter, something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue. Break in your shoes if you need to.

- **Write checks for your vendors and put tips in envelopes to be handed out at the ceremony and reception.**
Ask your point person to hand these out to the appropriate people.

The Day Before Your Wedding

- **Drop all wedding accessories and decor off at ceremony and reception locations.**
- **Pack your over-night bag for your wedding night suite.**
- **Make sure wedding party has their itinerary.**
- **Go to the church for your rehearsal.**
- **Review VIP seating with ushers at ceremony location.**
- **Get ready for your your rehearsal dinner. Make sure you bring all gifts that will be handed out at dinner.**
- **Get a good night's sleep.**

Your Wedding Day

The day you have been planning for and working so hard for is finally here. The most important thing you need to remember is to relax and have fun and enjoy the glow. You are about to embark on a wonderful journey with your new husband and it is a day to be celebrated. Brides and grooms tend to be frazzled and harried before the wedding day is over. I hope that with all of your preparation and planning, your beautiful wedding will go smoothly. However, no matter how hard you try, some of the best laid plans inevitably go wrong. But try not to worry about it. If something doesn't go according to plan, shrug it off and tell yourself that it is okay. Remember, this is your day and the memories you make won't include any little hiccups.

- Eat a good breakfast to keep up your strength.
- Make sure your maid of honor has groom's ring and best man has bride's ring.
- Check to see that you have your marriage license and any other documents.
- Wear your engagement ring on your right hand.
- Don't forget to enjoy the food at your own reception!

Congratulations, have fun and may God bless your new family!

