

The Most Efficient Wedding Planning Checklist



Whether you have a year and a half or only six months to plan your wedding, this wedding planning checklist will help you organize and make decisions without all the unnecessary stress.

By Maria Waida

Here's how to start planning a wedding, with a checklist beginning 6 to 9 months out.

1. Decide on your wedding priorities.

Most brides prioritize their attire, but 78% of brides who participated in this wedding survey said that, in hindsight, they would've spent both more time and money on entertainment. Find out what is most important to you and your betrothed then go from there.

2. Create a wedding binder.

Etsy currently offers over 1,300 wedding binder templates you can purchase and print at home. You can also use wedding planning software and apps to organize.

3. Choose your color theme and style.

Experts say the most common wedding color mistakes include: forgetting to factor in your venue colors, waiting too long to choose, and picking bridesmaids colors that don't flatter your party.

4. Determine your budget.

Most newlyweds say they underestimated their budget by an average of 45%, so make sure you leave some wiggle room or get in a positive mindset about compromise.

5. Assemble your team.

The average couple spends \$1,000 – \$2,500 on a wedding planner for their big day. But if you're on a budget, friends and family work too!

6. Select your wedding party.

Newlywed statistics show that most bridal parties include roughly 10 people.

7. Start the guest list.

You can basically count on 83% of your guest list actually showing up at your wedding.

❑ 8. Pick a date.

If you want to avoid getting married on the most popular wedding day of the year, choose any date other than the Saturday of Columbus day weekend.

❑ 9. Reserve your venues.

According to wedding cost statistics, hosting both the ceremony and the reception at the same location will save you an average of \$11,600.

❑ 10. Book an officiant.

Aside from any religious requirements you have for your ceremony, having a family member or friend get ordained to perform a wedding legally is actually quite simple.

❑ 11. Research choices for florists, caterers, bands, and photographers.

There are more than 300,000 wedding vendors operating in the United States which means you have plenty of options to choose from!

❑ 12. Throw an engagement party.

Engagements statistics say that roughly 50% of couples invite friends and family to celebrate them when they first get engaged. Of those 50%, half of couples include their loved ones in the actual proposal and the other half host a party about a month afterwards.

❑ 13. Purchase engagement ring insurance.

The best jewelry insurance is one that can be bundled with home insurance or a specialized engagement ring insurance that covers all risks (like floods and mysterious disappearances).

❑ 14. Consider wedding insurance.

Great wedding insurance should cover each of the following: property damage, guest injuries, and all expenses resulting from a cancelled (or postponed) wedding.

Now you're 6 to 8 months out from your wedding. Here's what to do next!

❑ 1. Finalize florists, caterers, bands, and photographers.

The latest wedding industry reports say that vendors are now forming strategic partnerships to boost their businesses. So for example, if you find a photographer you really love be sure to ask them for referrals for bartenders, transport companies, or any other major wedding need.

❑ 2. Set up meetings and put down deposits.

Be sure to read the fine print on their deposit clauses, just in case the worst case scenario actually happens.

❑ 3. Buy a wedding dress.

Surprisingly, 68% of today's brides spend \$1,000 or less on their wedding dress!

❑ 4. Reserve hotel rooms.

Experts say to start by renting a small hotel room block and only expand later on if needed.

❑ 5. Create a registry.

The average wedding registry has 125 items and totals around \$4,853.

❑ 6. Make your wedding website.

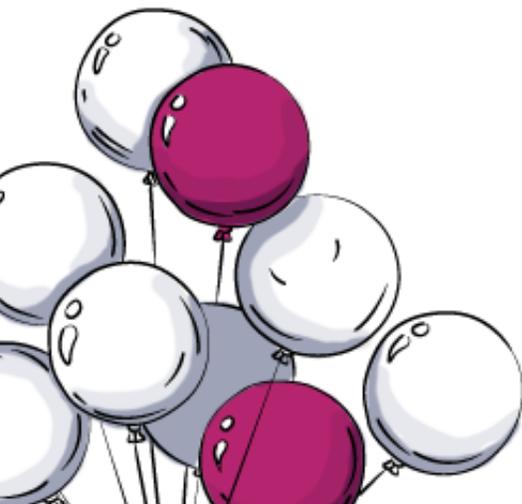
Due to increasing popularity among DIY brides, Squarespace and Wix have expanded their wedding website template selections and features.

❑ 7. Ensure your passports are up to date if you're planning an international honeymoon.

If you're unable to renew one now and you're a U.S. citizen, you have some options for renewing in a hurry.

❑ 8. Take your engagement photos.

There are lots of reasons why people want engagement photo shoots but the most popular reasons include a lack of professional photos and additional family portrait options that won't be as rushed as the wedding day.



Congrats, you're 6 to 7 months out! Here are the next steps.

1. Consider premarital counseling.

Couples who underwent counseling before their wedding had a 30% higher marital success rate.

2. Choose wedding invitations.

Expect to pay a total of about \$3.20 for each invitation.

3. Plan your honeymoon.

Luxury honeymooners (which account for 15% of the market) spend on average \$9,954 and vacation for 11 days.

4. Shop for bridesmaid dresses.

63% of today's bridesmaids wear dresses that don't match.

5. Meet with the officiant to go over the ceremony and paperwork.

Marriage laws vary by state, so be sure to do a little research on the required documents ahead of time.

6. Mail your save-the-dates.

Save the date fridge magnets are very popular this year.

7. Make rental reservations for any lighting, portable toilets, set-up equipment, etc.

Couples typically spend between \$425 – \$1,000 on wedding rental reservations of all kinds.

8. Book your florist.

The average cost of wedding flowers vary greatly but they typically make up 10% of wedding budgets.

9. Arrange transportation.

Day-of wedding transportation providers usually have a time minimum (average 3 hours) and include 20% gratuity.

10. Draft your wedding planning timeline.

Use this guide for long-term event planning.

Here's what to do 4 or 5 months out.

1. Book your rehearsal and rehearsal-dinner venues.

In addition to sharing a meal with friends and family, couples use the rehearsal dinner to host informal toasts and play ice breaker games before the big day.

2. Approve your wedding invitations.

Wedding invitation trends for 2019 include details like wax seals and custom stamps as well as full photo cards.

3. Select and order your cake.

Wedding cakes have changed a lot over the last 100 years but the naked cake trend seems to still be a hit in the 2010s.

4. Send your guest list for the bridal shower to the host.

Or, as some wedding experts now recommend, skip the bridal shower all together!

5. Buy your wedding shoes and do a dress fitting.

The first wedding dress fitting will be your longest at about an hour. The second and third fittings will be shorter but wedding stylists stress that they are important!

6. Schedule hair and makeup artists.

Expect to pay at least \$100 for your makeup and \$119 for your hair on your wedding day.

7. Select your wedding playlist.

If you have no clue where to begin, check online.

8. Begin your wedding diagramming.

Request a PDF floor plan from your venue. Then, create a diagram using free 3D wedding diagramming software on socialtables.com. Upload your guest list to manage seating assignments. Use the online storage to hold contracts, photos, videos, and more. Plus, easily upload each new version of your guest list to consolidate the latest responses into a single, accurate list.

3 months out wedding checklist.

1. Purchase or assemble any extra ceremony decor (chair bows, chuppah, etc.).

Earthy decor elements like branches and leaves are popular in 2019 and can often be found in your own backyard.

2. Finalize your menu.

If you need cheap wedding reception food and drink ideas, make your reception BYOB or go vegetarian.

3. Select your flowers.

Consider what colors and types of blooms go well with your design. Remember that you can always match wedding flowers to your venue, limit to centerpieces, or display bridesmaids bouquets in vases after the ceremony.

4. Order favors.

Unique wedding favor ideas include mini homemade jars of apple butter, personalized tile coasters that double as seat markers, and champagne bottles.

5. Ask guests to make toasts.

If they're a little nervous or need inspiration, send them a list of great wedding toast quotes.

6. Finalize readings.

Your wedding readings don't have to be religious.

7. Buy undergarments and schedule a second dress fitting, if needed.

The lingerie you wear underneath your dress can make or break your look (and comfort).

8. Finalize the ceremony and reception schedule.

Usually your wedding planner will handle these details but if you're going solo, consider these wedding reception schedule tips.

9. Print programs, menu cards, and/or place cards.

Don't be afraid to have a little fun with your programs!

10. Purchase the rings.

Couples usually spend 3 and a half months searching for their dream wedding rings.

11. Send your event schedule to your vendors.

Make sure you read up on how to effectively communicate with wedding vendors if you haven't done so already!

12. Choose a wedding hashtag (preferably before any bachelor/bachelorette parties or showers).

Use a wedding hashtag generator.

Here's what to do when your wedding is two-months away.

1. Touch base with all your vendors.

Experts say the best way to work with wedding vendors is to trust them. But you should also follow up, just in case!

2. Choose something old, new, borrowed, and blue.

This popular wedding tradition started in 1883 and used to include "a silver sixpence in her shoe"!

3. Meet with your photographer.

Come prepared with sample images as well as a list of moments they absolutely must capture.

4. Review your playlist with the band or DJ.

The perfect wedding reception playlist is one that includes a mix of today's hits, is primarily made up of fast-paced songs, and doesn't allow for any silence.

5. Send out invitations.

Try eco-friendly options like email or plantable invitations.

6. Enjoy a bachelorette party.

If your party is in Vegas, Chicago, or Atlantic City, you're in for a crazy time since these three cities are proven to be the wildest bachelorette party spots in the U.S.

7. Double check that your wedding party has all their outfits ready to go.

Make sure you have your getting ready outfits in the right sizes if you choose to participate in this new tradition.



So close! One-month wedding planning steps to take.

1. Follow up on RSVPs.

Most people don't feel comfortable turning you down for your big day, so be sure to double check, get a rough headcount, and consider adding more of your B list invites.

2. Get your marriage license.

Regardless of what state you're in, you'll want to have these marriage license basics with you when you do: birth certificates, photo ID cards, social security numbers, and proof of citizenship.

3. Send your photographer, readers, and speakers any last minute updates or requests.

Collaborate with and approve their final lists or text ahead of time with free collaborative programs like Google Docs, Dropbox, or Evernote.

4. Invite guests to your rehearsal dinner.

Proper rehearsal dinner etiquette says to include anyone who is part of the ceremony and any other VIPs, totaling around 10 to 25 guests.

5. Complete your final dress fitting.

If your dress has bustling or anything else you'll need help with, grab your Maid of Honor or whoever plans to help you with it and bring them to the final dress fitting so the seamstress can show them how to properly do everything.

6. Order alcohol if you plan to serve it.

Experts say that your venue can dictate what and how much wedding alcohol you offer your guests. Having a lavish affair in a banquet hall? Stick to wine and champagne as your primary items. DIY backyard celebration? You can probably get away with an open bar.

7. Send out final payments.

Martha Stewart warns you should never put your wedding payments on a credit card. Instead, opt for cash or debit transactions to avoid getting into debt.

8. Finalized your assigned seating and put your seating chart display or table markers together.

Read more on how to create a seating chart for a wedding on socialtables.com.

9. Write your vows.

Personalize your vows with favorite memories, religious traditions, and your favorite music, poems, or quotes.

10. Make sure you have a plan in place for venue set up and takedown.

Here's everything you need to know about how to set up and breakdown your wedding.

Week-of wedding.

☐ 1. Confirm vendor arrival times again.

Whether or not you opted for a wedding planner, you'll want to have a wedding day-of coordinator take a look at your vendor schedule to make sure everything works out.

☐ 2. Delegate small day-of tasks.

Don't worry fellow Type A's – there are plenty of ways to delegate wedding tasks without losing control.

☐ 3. Send your timeline to your bridal party.

As a wedding party member, their responsibilities include arriving on time, being dressed properly, and assisting you with day-of celebration related activities.

☐ 4. Pick up the dress.

Common wedding dress pick up questions include when to pick it up and who should go get it. Brides recommend checking with the store to see if they have strict rules. And it doesn't matter who picks it up, just make sure the tailors steam it for you and there aren't any major fit issues!

☐ 5. Check in one last time with your photographer.

And introduce them to their day-of point person, whose job it is to make sure they're following the shot list and keep things moving on schedule.

☐ 6. Set aside tip envelopes for vendors.

Properly thank your wedding vendors with handwritten notes, a generous cash tip, and a glowing online review.

☐ 7. Send a finalized guest list to the caterer and venues.

Take stock of how many people you originally invited, if your guest count is more or less than anticipated, and review which couples may or may not be together anymore (so you can adjust the seating chart accordingly) before you send out your final guest list.

☐ 8. Make and give out welcome baskets for travellers.

Fruit, alcohol, and hangover kits are just some of the fun items you can include in your wedding welcome bags.

☐ 9. Pack your honeymoon luggage and overnight bag for the night of the wedding.

Expert honeymoon packing tips say to double check for climate changes at your destination, don't forget your bathing suit, bring technology adapters for out of the country, and make sure your plants and/or animals are taken care of while you're away!

☐ 10. Get a manicure and/or pedicure.

The best wedding nails are the ones that fit you the best in all different kinds of lighting, which is why experimentation is highly encouraged.

☐ 11. Share your relevant planning documents with the day-of coordinator.

Then, once you've handed over the reigns, it's time to get excited and focus on your wedding day!

For more wedding planning help, find a top wedding planner to work with and check out the complete list of helpful wedding planning software and tools.



Planning the buffet, placing the mics, laying it all out — it's not easy making the little details come to life. So in 2011, we set out to change the way events are designed by introducing better collaboration between planners and properties.

Today, we've evolved that vision into an innovative platform offering the industry's leading solutions for event sales and services. All to help the world create the best face-to-face events.

Stay Connected

For the latest resources and industry news, connect with Social Tables, now part of Cvent, on your favorite social network.



Learn more:
www.socialtables.com