



wedding planning

timeline

from

wedding for
\$1000 

WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

The following timeline is a suggestion based on the average amount of time it takes to plan a wedding. If you have a much shorter planning timeline or a much longer engagement, you can feel free to change things around as you see fit!

AFTER GETTING ENGAGED

- Inform family and friends of the big news (duh, right?)
- Have an engagement party? Check out www.weddingfor1000.com/engagement for ideas. Remember that everyone you invite to the engagement party should be invited to the wedding also.
- Introduce your families if they haven't already met.
- Start checking out wedding websites and magazines for ideas, if you haven't already.
- Start your inspiration boards for wedding ideas you like. You may find that you lean toward one style fairly often, and this will help narrow down choices later.
- Start a file for all wedding-related paperwork and expenses.
- Determine your Total Wedding Budget. weddingfor1000.com/budget-calculator
- Figure out who is helping you plan the wedding. Is it family, friends or a wedding consultant?
- Think about who you would like to be in your bridal party.
- Start a registry (or two) and add a few gifts. Some people like to send engagement gifts, so having registries already set up is helpful.

TWELVE TO EIGHTEEN MONTHS BEFORE

- Pick several options for your wedding date and time. Check with family, potential venues, officiant and bridal party before committing!
- Decide if you're having a destination wedding or if you're going to stay local.
- Book your ceremony and reception venues. Consider distance and travel time between locations if you aren't having the ceremony and reception at the same site.

- Apply for passports if you plan to travel for the wedding and/or honeymoon. Yes, it's a little early, but you'll have lots to do later, so you might as well get it done now.
- Start your wedding website. Here's a few we suggest:
<http://www.weddingfor1000.com/wedding-website/>

TEN TO TWELVE MONTHS BEFORE

- Research wedding vendors you are interested in using. Keep their contact information in your wedding planning file.
- Ask bridesmaids and groomsmen to be part of your bridal party.
- Book your officiant.
- Discuss wedding size with your fiancé and create a preliminary guest list. A wedding website will be a great way to organize the guest list along with their contact information.
- Start thinking about wedding colors, theme and style only after you've booked a venue.

EIGHT TO TEN MONTHS BEFORE

- Take a break from logistics and look at the fun stuff: registering for gifts! Don't just grab a scanner and go crazy, though! Spend some time with your future spouse and figure out exactly what you need first, and then add on all of your wants. Try for at least three retailers and a variety of price points.
- Think about what you want to serve at your reception. We've got boatloads of information on that here in the book and on the website, but right now you should be making lists of what YOU would like to see at the reception, not what will impress everyone else.
- Start reviewing and interviewing caterers if there isn't a particular vendor the venue requires you to use.
- Start dress shopping. If you're going the traditional dress route, schedule time for fittings. For off the rack dresses, you can wait a couple more months. Bring a pair of shoes that are the approximate height you plan to wear on your wedding day.
- What kind of entertainment do you want at the wedding? Live band? String quartet? DJ? iPod? If you would like to have live entertainment, now is the time to book them.
- The photographer and videographer are vendors you should schedule as far out as possible.

- ❑ Reserve blocks of rooms at hotels near the reception venue. Two or three hotels at various price points would be considerate to your out of town guests.
- ❑ Give some thought to your floral needs. Do you plan to have floral arrangements on every table, or will you create non-floral centerpieces? Make a list of what floral arrangements you may need. Start contacting florists for bids.
- ❑ If you're having a destination wedding, save the dates should go out about six months before the wedding, so order them now.
- ❑ Will your venue require any rentals? Tents, chairs, tables, linens, bouncy castle – whatever you're into - it's time to book those.
- ❑ Protect yourself! Consider taking out a wedding insurance policy since you've probably put deposits down on the venues and some vendors.

SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS BEFORE

- ❑ Are you having a honeymoon immediately after the wedding? Start making those arrangements now!
- ❑ What are your bridesmaids and groomsmen going to wear? Make a decision on those so that they can prepare for the purchase.
- ❑ Book any vendors you haven't already gotten locked down.
- ❑ Select and purchase invitations. It may seem early, but addressing envelopes takes way more time than you think!
- ❑ If you're having a destination wedding, or your wedding will fall during vacation or holiday times, it's time to send out save the dates.
- ❑ If you're going with an off-the-rack dress, you should start shopping and schedule time for alterations.
- ❑ Discuss the order of ceremony with the officiant, and ask special guests if they will read or sing at your ceremony.
- ❑ Are you doing an engagement photo shoot? Now's a great time to schedule that and get comfortable with your wedding photographer!
- ❑ Are you having an outdoor wedding or a wedding in a non-traditional venue? Consider booking portable toilets, extra chairs, power supply, lighting, etc.
- ❑ If your ceremony and reception are at separate venues, arrange for transportation between locations for the bridal party and, if necessary, your guests. Arrange for your get-away vehicle if you are planning to have a special send-off from the reception.

THREE TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE

- Have the groom get fitted for and order his formal wear.
- Taste some cake (or other desserts) and place your order.
- If you haven't already had a tasting with your caterer, do so and finalize the menu. If they're providing bar service, decide on what type of bar you are offering your guests along with any signature drinks.
- Shop for your wedding bands!
- Make sure bridesmaids have ordered their dresses, and groomsmen get fitted for and book what they are wearing.
- Start putting together a day-of timeline. A schedule of events should be drawn up and shared with the bridal party, parents, and involved vendors. Be sure to include any highlights you want to include such as the cake-cutting and the first dance.
- If you are using a Makeup Artist and/or a Hairstylist, book a trial run if necessary and schedule their services for the day of the wedding.
- Start working on the song list for the ceremony and reception. Make lists for what you want the DJ to play, and what you don't want to be played. Chicken Dance, anyone?
- Figure out if you need any additional small rental items for the wedding day and book them. Consider items like glassware, flatware, serving trays, etc.
- Finalize the guest list. Work on your seating arrangements.
- Do you need any vaccines or visas for your honeymoon? Research and schedule these.
- Have the Mother of the Bride and Mother of the Groom select their dresses.
- Are you planning to give the guests favors or give gifts to your bridal party? Start choosing those gifts now. If they're DIY projects, it's time to get started!
- Have you already purchased your wedding shoes, veil, and undergarments? Now is a perfect time to get those things.

TWO TO THREE MONTHS BEFORE

- Does your officiant require pre-wedding counseling? Start attending these sessions.
- Schedule the rehearsal and rehearsal dinner. If you're having a brunch the morning after, book that venue as well.
- If someone is hosting a shower, send a guest list to them with contact information.
- Are you giving each other a gift? Start shopping for that perfect item now!
- Purchase gifts for each set of parents.
- Research when the appropriate time in your location to apply for a marriage license. Put that on the calendar.
- Mail your wedding invitations between six and eight weeks before the wedding. WEIGH THEM FIRST. Make sure the postage is correct!
- Finalize the order of the ceremony and the reception timeline.
- Start your pre-wedding beauty routine. If you're DIY'ing your wedding makeup, start practicing your look now, so you have it down on the day of the wedding.
- Figure out your plans for a guest book. Traditional or unique?

ONE TO TWO MONTHS BEFORE

- Write your wedding vows if you are saying your own.
- Create a wedding program to hand out to guests.
- Finalize who is reading at the ceremony and who is giving toasts at the reception.
- Purchase your wedding rings and arrange for any engraving or resizing needed.
- Give your day-of timeline and event schedule to vendors. Make sure all of their questions are answered.
- Check with your bridesmaids to ensure their dresses have arrived – and that they fit!
- Make sure your dress fits, and that your Maid of Honor knows how to bustle it (if you have a bustle).
- Put together welcome baskets or bags if you plan to give them to out-of-town guests.
- Finalize ceremony and reception layouts with venues or whoever will be doing the setup. Sort out any ceremony décor at this time, such as what flower petals will be sprinkled or an aisle runner.

- Review the song lists with your band, DJ or brother-in-law who will be in charge of the iPod. What's your processional song? Recessional? Entrance to reception song? First dance song? Father-Daughter and Mother-Son dance songs?
- Meet with your photographer to view the locations of both the ceremony and reception and discuss any specific shots you require. Provide a list of important guests and names of anyone who should be in formal portraits. Decide when portraits should be taken along with any First Look or getting ready shots.
- Book a hotel room for your wedding night! King size bed, woo!

FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- Pick up wedding rings and double check the sizes and inscriptions.
- Write and send bridal shower thank you notes, along with a thank you note for any gifts received early.
- Break in your wedding day shoes – no blisters on the dance floor!
- Pay any outstanding vendor deposits.
- Now is an excellent time for a teeth cleaning or whitening service.
- Make a guest list for the rehearsal dinner and inform whoever needs to attend.
- Record all RSVPs and gifts received in a wedding app or a spreadsheet.
- Have you figured out your 'somethings'? "Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue."
- Try on your entire wedding day outfit, down to the knickers. Have you forgotten anything? Now is the time to get any last-minute items.
- Do you have a person who will serve as your Master of Ceremonies? If your DJ doesn't provide MC services or you don't have a DJ, decide on who you'd like to do the honors of introducing you as husband and wife and getting the party started.
- Fill out name-change paperwork.
- Get marriage license, along with extra copies you will need for any name change paperwork.
- Gather any needed paperwork for changing your name: social security card, driver's license, insurance and medical plans, bank accounts and credit cards.

THREE WEEKS BEFORE

- Your RSVP date has probably come and gone. It's time to reach out and contact any guests who have not responded yet because there will be some.
- Make sure the gift registry still has plenty of options at all price points.
- Assemble any favors or programs that haven't been completed.
- Finalize the reception tables and room layout for a seated dinner and assign seats to guests. Fill out seating cards if you're using them.
- Determine ceremony seating for honored guests – generally in the first two rows.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- Give final head count to caterer and order bar stock accordingly. Make sure to account for any vendors who may need a meal as well.
- Send out as many final payments as possible.
- Email and print out any directions needed for drivers of guest and bridal party transportation.
- If you're cutting or coloring your hair, now is a really good time to get that done.

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Pick up your dress if you haven't already. Make sure it's pressed and ready to go.
- Pack for the honeymoon if you're leaving right away.
- Check with all vendors for any final questions and confirmations, make sure you have their requests for any equipment or space needed at venues. Confirm arrival times for all vendors for the day of the wedding.
- If you don't have a wedding planner or day-of coordinator, appoint someone who isn't part of the bridal party as the point of contact for all vendor and venue communication.
- Check with venue site manager(s) to ensure all vendors will have access to the sites as needed on the day of the wedding. Send a copy of the day-of schedule to the site managers as well. Copy them on all vendor requests.
- Provide site managers and all vendors with a list of contact information for other vendors, venues and your appointed point of contact person.

- Appoint a family member or friend to gather gifts at the end of the reception and deliver them to your home or selected location.
- Make sure the groom and groomsmen pick up their formalwear, try it on and get any necessary accouterments.
- Finalize the day-of timeline and send it to all of the bridal party and vendors. Communicate any day of assignments.

TWO TO THREE DAYS BEFORE

- Write and set aside any checks that will need to be handed over to vendors, and place any tips necessary in envelopes. Delegate distribution to the Maid of Honor or the Best Man.
- Assemble and distribute any wedding welcome bags or baskets.
- Final guest count is due to the baker and caterer/bar service.
- Request your mail be held while you're gone on honeymoon.
- Collect all of your special wedding items, such as cake knife and server, toasting flutes, guest book and pen, and keep them in one box. Appoint someone to be in charge of this box and to bring it to the reception.
- Handoff any seating cards, menus or place cards to the caterer or reception venue, whoever will be setting them out.
- Write final thank you cards for your bridal party or parents, if necessary.
- Pack clothes for your wedding night and the day after.
- Put together a wedding day emergency kit and give to one of the bridesmaids and ask her to keep track of it.
- Appoint someone who will be in charge of any rented items that must be returned after the wedding. This would also be a great person to follow up with groomsmen about returning rented formal wear.
- If you are sending out wedding announcements, have them addressed and ready to go. Delegate their mailing to someone who will do so the day after the wedding.

DAY BEFORE

- Drop off any ceremony décor and accessories at the ceremony site.
- Drop off favors, guest book and pen at the reception site.

- Determine the order of procession for bridesmaids and groomsmen, practice at the rehearsal and make sure everyone knows where they're to go.
- If you're leaving for your honeymoon immediately, put your suitcases in whatever car will be taking you to the airport.
- Ask a bridesmaid or someone who is getting ready with you to make sure you eat something in the morning and to encourage you to eat at least a little during the reception, especially if you plan to have a glass of champagne or other alcohol!
- Bring any ceremony-specific items to the rehearsal so you don't have to remember them the next day.
- Get a much-needed manicure and pedicure!
- Give the marriage license to the wedding officiant.
- Give the wedding rings to the Best Man.
- Make sure your wedding dress has a final steaming or pressing.
- Ask someone to ensure your dress gets dropped off at the dry cleaner and that the groom's rental tux gets returned.
- Have a lovely rehearsal dinner. Thank your parents and bridal party and give them any gifts you may have gotten for them.
- Get some sleep!

DAY OF THE WEDDING

- Eat breakfast and drink water!
- Wear a button down shirt for your hair and makeup styling.
- Make time for exchanging gifts and a kiss with your new spouse in between the ceremony and reception.
- Enjoy the day, remember to breathe and try to stay present. It goes by so fast!

AFTER THE WEDDING

- Send each vendor a hand-written thank you, if you were pleased with their work. If possible, send them a picture or two of their work.
- Personally thank each of your attendants for taking part in your wedding.
- Keep a list of received gifts and send out thank you notes as soon as possible.