

To Do



List

To plan the perfect celebration, use this comprehensive checklist, with a timeline based on a 16-month engagement.

16 - 9 months before

- Start a wedding binder.** Begin leafing through bridal, lifestyle, fashion, gardening, design, and food magazines for inspiration.
- Work out your budget.** Determine how much you have to spend, based on your families' contributions and your own.
- Pick your wedding party.** As soon as you're engaged, people will start wondering who's in.
- Start the guest list.** Make a head count spreadsheet, with columns for contact info, RSVPs, gifts, and any other relevant information.
- Hire a planner, if desired.** A planner will have relationships with—and insights about—vendors.
- Reserve your date and venues.** Decide whether to have separate locations for the ceremony & reception. Factor in travel time between them.
- Book your officiant.**
- Research photographers, bands, florists, and caterers.** Keep their contact information in your binder.
- Throw an engagement party, if you wish.** But remember that your invitees should be on your wedding guest list as well.

Eight Months Before

- Hire the photographer and the videographer.** No need to talk specifics yet, but be sure they are open to doing the shots that you want.
- Book the entertainment.** Attend gigs of potential acts to see how they perform in front of audiences, then reserve your favorite.
- Meet caterers.** If your wedding venue doesn't offer its own catering service, look for one now and hire the service this month or early next.
- Purchase a dress.** You'll need to schedule time for at least three fittings. Veil shopping can be postponed for another two to three months.
- Reserve a block of hotel rooms for out-of-town guests.** Pick three hotels at different price points close to the reception venue.
- Register.** Sign up at a minimum of three retailers.
- Launch a wedding website.** Create your personal page through a free provider such as weddingchannel.com.

Seven to Six Months Before

- Select and purchase invitations.** Hire a calligrapher, if desired. Addressing cards is time-consuming, so you need to budget accordingly.
- Start planning a honeymoon.** Make sure that your passports are up-to-date & schedule doctors' appointments for any shots you may need.
- Shop for bridesmaids' dresses.** Allow at least six months for the dresses to be ordered and sized.
- Meet with the officiant.** Map out the ceremony and confirm that you have all the official documents for the wedding.
- Send save-the-date cards.**
- Reserve structural and electrical necessities.** Book portable toilets for outdoor events, extra chairs if needed, lighting components, etc.
- Book a florist.** Florists can serve multiple clients on one day, so you can wait a little longer to engage one.
- Arrange transportation.** Consider limos, minibuses, trolleys, and town cars.
- Start composing a day-of timeline.** Draw up a schedule of the event and slot in each component (the cake-cutting, the first dance).

Five to Four Months Before

- Book the rehearsal and rehearsal-dinner venues.** Negotiate the cost & menu. If you're hosting a day-after brunch for guests, book that too.
- Check on the wedding invitations.** Ask the stationer for samples of the finished invitations and revise them to suit your needs.
- Select and order the cake.** Some bakers require a long lead time. Attend several tastings before committing to any baker.
- Send your guest list to the host of your shower.** Provided you, ahem, know about the shower.
- Purchase wedding shoes and start dress fittings.** Bring the shoes to your first fitting so the tailor can choose the appropriate gown length.
- Schedule hair and makeup artists.** Make a few appts with local experts to try them out. Snap a photo at each so you can compare results.
- Choose your music.** What should be playing when the wedding party is announced? During dinner? Keep a running list of what to play.

Three Months Before

- Finalize the menu and flowers.** You'll want to wait until now to see what will be available, since food and flowers are affected by season.
- Order favors, if desired.** If you're planning to have welcome baskets for out-of-town guests, plan those now too.
- Make a list of the people giving toasts.** Which loved ones would you like to have speak at the reception? Ask them now.
- Finalize the readings.** Determine what you would like to have read at the ceremony—and whom you wish to do the readings.
- Purchase your undergarments.** And schedule your second fitting.
- Finalize the order of the ceremony and the reception.**
- Print menu cards & programs, if you like.** No need to go to a printer, if that's not in your budget: You can easily create these on your computer.
- Purchase the rings.** This will give you time for resizing and engraving.
- Send your event schedule to the vendors.** Giving them a first draft now allows ample time for tweaks and feedback.

Two Months Before

- Touch base again with all the vendors.** Make sure any questions you or they had on your first draft have been answered.
- Meet with the photographer.** Discuss specific shots, and walk through the locations to note spots that appeal to you.
- Review the playlist with the band or deejay.** Though you probably won't be able to dictate every song played, come with your wish list.
- Send out the invitations.** Rule of thumb: Mail invites 6-8 weeks before the ceremony, set RSVP cutoff at 3 weeks after the postmark date.
- Enjoy a bachelorette party.** If your maid of honor hasn't mentioned one to you by now, feel free to ask if a celebration is in the works.

One Month Before

- Enter RSVPs into your guest-list database.** Phone people who have not yet responded.
- Get your marriage license.** This can take up to 6 days, but give yourself some leeway. If you are changing your name, order several copies.
- Mail the rehearsal-dinner invitations.**
- Visit the dressmaker for (with luck!) your last dress fitting.** For peace of mind, you may want to schedule a fitting the week of the wedding.
- Stock the bar.** Now that you have a firm head count you can order accordingly.
- Send out as many final payments as you can.**
- Confirm times for hair and makeup and all vendors.**
- E-mail and print directions for drivers of transport vehicles.** This gives the chauffeurs ample time to navigate a route.
- Assign seating.** Draw out table shapes on a layout of the room. Write the names of female guests on pink sticky notes and male guests on blue sticky notes so you can move people about without resketching the entire setting.
- Purchase bridesmaids' gifts.** You'll present them at the rehearsal dinner.
- Write vows,** if necessary.
- Get your hair cut and colored,** if desired.

Week of the Wedding

- Reconfirm arrival times with vendors.**
- Delegate small wedding-day tasks.** Choose someone to bustle your dress, someone to carry your things, someone to be in charge of gifts (especially the enveloped sort), someone to hand out tips, and someone to be the point person for each vendor.
- Send a timeline to the bridal party.** Include every member's contact info & who you've asked to deal with the vendors, if problems arise.
- Pick up your dress.** Or make arrangements for a delivery.
- Check in one last time with the photographer.** Supply him or her with a list of moments you want captured on film.
- Set aside checks for the vendors.** And put tips in envelopes to be handed out at the event.
- Book a spa treatment.** Make an appointment for a manicure and a pedicure the day before the wedding. (Maybe a massage too!)
- Send the final guest list to caterer & all venues hosting your wedding-related events.** Companies usually close their lists 72 hrs in advance.
- Break in your shoes.**
- Assemble and distribute the welcome baskets.**
- Pack for your honeymoon.**