

Wedding Planning Checklist

To help you plan the perfect celebration, we have put together this comprehensive wedding checklist, with a timeline based on the 16-month length of the average U.S. engagement.

Sixteen to Nine Months Before

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | Start a wedding folder or binder. | Begin leafing through bridal, lifestyle, fashion, gardening, design, and food magazines for inspiration. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Work out your budget. | Determine how much you have to spend, based on your family's contributions and your own. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pick your wedding party. | As soon as you're engaged, people will start wondering who's in. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Start the guest list. | Make a head count database to use throughout your planning process, with columns for contact info, RSVPs, gifts, and any other relevant information. (Want to keep costs low? It may be brutal, but the best way to do it is to reduce your guest list.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hire a planner, if desired. | A planner will have relationships with-and insights about-vendors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Book your officiant. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Research photographers, bands, florist, and caterers. | Keep their contact information in your binder. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Throw an engagement party, if you wish. | But remember that your invitees should be on your wedding guest list as well. |
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Eight Months Before

<input type="checkbox"/>	Hire the photographer and the videographer.	No need to talk specifics yet, but be sure that the people you hire are open to doing the shots you want.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book the entertainment.	Attend gigs of potential acts to see how they perform in front of audiences, then reserve your favorite.
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Purchase a dress.	You'll need to schedule a time for at least three fittings. Veil shopping can be postponed for another two to three months.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reserve a block of hotel rooms for out-of-town guests.	Pick three hotels at different price points close to the reception venue.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Register.	Sign up at a minimum of three retailers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Launch a wedding website.	Create your personal page through a free provider such as weddingchannel.com . Note the date of the wedding, travel information, and accommodations. Then send the link to invitees.

Seven to Six Months Before

<input type="checkbox"/>	Select and purchase invitations.	Hire a calligrapher, if desired. Addressing cards is time-consuming, so you need to budget accordingly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Start planning a honeymoon.	Make sure that your passports are up-to-date, and schedule doctors' appointments for any shots you may need.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shop for bridesmaids' dresses.	Allow at least six months for the dresses to be ordered and sized.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meet with the officiant.	Map out the ceremony and confirm that you have all the official documents for the wedding (these vary by county and religion).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send save-the-date cards.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reserve structural and electrical necessities.	Book portable toilets for outdoor events, extra chairs if you need them, lighting components, and so on.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book a florist.	Florist can serve multiple clients on one day which is why you can wait a little longer to engage one. Plus, at this point, you'll be firm on what your wedding palette will be.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange transportation.	Consider limos, minibuses, trolleys, and town cars. (But know that low-to-the-ground limos can make entries and exits dicey if you're wearing a fitted gown.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	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

<input type="checkbox"/>	Book the rehearsal and rehearsal-dinner venues.	Negotiate the cost and the menu. If you're planning to host a day-after brunch for guests, book that place as well.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check on the wedding invitations.	Ask the stationer for samples of the finished invitations and revise them to suit your needs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Select and order the cake.	Some bakers require a long lead time. Attend several tastings before committing to any baker.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send your guest list to the host of your shower.	Provided you, ahem, know about the shower.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Purchase wedding shoes and start dress fittings.	Bring the shoes along to your first fitting so the tailor can choose the appropriate length for your gown.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule hair and makeup artists.	Make a few appointments with local experts to try them out. Snap a photo at each so you can compare results.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose your music.	What should be playing when the wedding party is announced? During dinner? To kick off the dancing? Keep a running list of what you want-and do not want-played.

Three Months Before

<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Order favors, if desired.	Some safe bets: monogrammed cookies or treats that represent your city or region. If you're planning to have welcome baskets for out-of-town guests, plan these now too.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make a list of the people giving toasts.	Which loved ones would you like to have speak at the reception? Ask them now.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Finalize the readings.	Determine what you would like to have read at the ceremony-and whom you wish to do the readings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Purchase your undergarments.	And schedule your second fitting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Finalize the order of the ceremony and the reception.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Print menu cards, if you like, as well as programs.	No need to go to the printer, if that's not in your budget: you can easily create these on your computer.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Purchase the rings.	This will give you time for resizing and engraving.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send your event schedule to the vendors.	Giving them a first draft now allows ample time for tweaks and feedback.

Two Months Before

<input type="checkbox"/>	Touch base again with all the vendors.	Make sure any questions you or they had on your first draft have been answered.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meet with the photographer.	Discuss specific shots, and walk through the location to note spots that appeal to you.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review the playlist with the band or deejay.	Though you probably won't be able to dictate every single song played, you should come prepared with a wish list.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send out the invitations.	The rule of thumb: Mail invitations six to eight weeks before the ceremony, setting the RSVP cutoff at three weeks after the postmark date.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submit a newspaper wedding announcement.	If you're planning to include a photographer, check the publication's website: Some have strict rules about how the photo should look.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enjoy a bachelorette party.	Arranging a night out with your girlfriends generally falls to the maid of honor. But if she hasn't mentioned one to you by now, feel free to ask-for scheduling purposes, of course!-if a celebration is in the works.

One Months Before

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

Week of the Wedding

<input type="checkbox"/>	Reconfirm arrival times with vendors.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send a timeline to the bridal party.	Include every member's contact information, along with the point people you've asked to deal with the vendors, if problems arise.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pick up your dress.	Or make arrangements for a delivery.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check in one last time with the photographer.	Supply him or her with a list of moments you want captured on film.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set aside checks for the vendors.	And put tips in envelopes to be handed out at the event.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Book a spa treatment.	Make an appointment for a manicure and a pedicure the day before the wedding. (You might want to get a stress-relieving massage, too.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send the final guest list to the caterer and all venues hosting your wedding-related events.	Typically, companies close their lists 72 hours in advance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Break in your shoes.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assemble and distribute the welcome baskets.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pack for your honeymoon.	