

Year-long wedding checklist

Your wedding is about six months to a year away. Do you know what to do and when to do it? Here is a timeline that specifies the approximate time tasks should be completed. Use this list as a guide.

Six to 12 months before

- Announce your engagement.
- Decide on what kind of wedding and the time of day. Are you prepared to feed your guests dinner or do you want a simple ceremony with cake and punch only? The time of day that you choose will dictate the food choices.
- Pick a date. Do this as soon as possible so that your bridal party and faraway family can begin making arrangements for motels and scheduling time away from their jobs.
- Choose a location. Remember to take into consideration what the weather could be like on your wedding day.
- Set a budget. This is so important. Discuss it carefully between the two of you and your respective families.
- Start planning the reception. Secure a hall, hotel or whatever suits you for your reception area.
- Secure the church and inquire about premarital counseling. Some churches require this for a marriage.
- Select the bridal party. It is important to do this as soon as possible so these special people can set aside time to fulfill their duties and roles in your wedding.
- Choose your colors. Your flowers, attire, linens and cake will reflect your choice. Since you have to shop for these items fairly far in advance, it's important that you are rock-solid on your color decision.
- Choose and order the bridal gown, bridesmaids' gowns and accessories. Choose wisely and stay within your budget.
- Start planning the honeymoon. The groom often takes the lead on this but it should be a spot you will both enjoy.
- Begin your bridal registry. Visit your favorite stores and choose items that you will need to start your life together.
- Select and order wedding invitations and announcements.
- Select the caterer, photographer, florist and musicians. Keep their phone numbers handy.
- Choose and order the wedding rings.

Three months before

- Complete the guest list.
- Plan to have both mothers select their dresses. The mother of the groom will often wait for the mother of the bride to select her dress.
- Make reservations for the honeymoon. Remember to tell them you will be newlyweds. You'll be surprised how many perks you will get.
- Confirm the dates and times with the florist, caterer, photographer, musicians and church.
- Discuss transportation to and from the wedding and reception sites.
- Order the wedding cake.
- Choose and order the tuxes.
- Schedule the bridesmaids' dress fittings. It is also a good time to choose and dye the shoes if necessary.
- Place engagement announcement in newspaper.

Two months before

- Prepare and mail invitations.
- Get the marriage license.
- Finalize the honeymoon plans.
- Make transportation arrangements.

One month before

- Reserve accommodations for the guests.
- Record gifts received and send thank-you notes. Many couples think that they have to wait to send those thank-you notes. Get them done as soon as the gifts begin to arrive.
- Plan the rehearsal and dinner. This is the responsibility of the groom and his family but all should work together on this.
- Purchase the gifts for the bridal party. Brides often buy inexpensive earrings or necklaces that the bridesmaids can wear to the wedding. Popular choices for the groomsmen are money clips, keychains or ball caps.
- Schedule the final fittings for bride and bridesmaids.
- Get wedding programs printed.
- Schedule appointments at beauty salons for attendants, if needed.
- Host the bridesmaids' luncheon.
- Purchase a guest book and decide where it will go. Some couples place the book just inside the door of the church or wedding area. Some prefer to display it at the reception. In either case, have someone stand nearby to invite guests to sign the book.

Two Weeks

- Arrange to have names changed on driver's license, social security card, etc.
- Finalize the number of guests with the caterer.

One Week

- Start packing for the honeymoon. Be sure to choose clothing that you won't need during this very busy week.
- Plan seating arrangements for the guests.
- Have a beautician practice fixing your hair. You may also want to practice your make-up or make an appointment at a department store to have it done for you.
- Make sure that wedding rings are picked up and fit.

The Wedding Day

- Relax and enjoy your very special day.
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