

# The wedding planning checklist

73 tasks across 9 phases, from twelve months out to the day itself.

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## 12+ months

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- Set the overall budget and agree who is contributing what.  
*The most common source of friction later — settle it before you fall for a venue.*
- Draft the guest list to the nearest ten.  
*Guest count drives every other cost; you cannot price a venue without it.*
- Choose a target season and two or three workable dates.
- Decide the setting — hometown, a city you both know, or somewhere guests will travel to.
- Tour venues, then hold your date with a signed contract and deposit.  
*Popular venues book 12–18 months out for peak-season Saturdays.*
- Book the photographer.  
*The good ones take one wedding a day and book out as far as venues do.*
- Decide whether you want a planner or a month-of coordinator, and hire them.
- Take out wedding insurance once the first deposits are paid.
- Start one spreadsheet or folder that holds every contract, quote, and receipt.  
*Eighteen months of decisions in one place — future you will be grateful.*

## 10–12 months

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- Book the caterer if the venue does not provide food, and ask for the all-in per-head figure.
- Book the band or DJ for the reception.  
*One wedding a night — peak Saturdays go first here too.*
- Choose the wedding party and ask them properly.
- Start shopping for the dress or suit.  
*Made-to-order gowns take 6–9 months including alterations.*
- Book the videographer.
- Set up your wedding website and start collecting guest mailing addresses.
- Reserve hotel room blocks for out-of-town guests.  
*Blocks are usually free to hold and release unsold rooms — there is no reason to wait.*
- Engage a florist and share reference photos alongside the number you can spend.

## 8–10 months

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- Book the officiant and confirm any pre-marriage requirements.  
*Some churches and officiants require counseling sessions or paperwork months in advance.*
- Send save-the-dates.  
*Eight months out for a local wedding; earlier if most guests will travel.*
- Book hair and makeup artists for the day.
- Order the dress or suit and put the fitting dates in the calendar.
- Book transport — the getaway car and any guest shuttles.
- Build the registry across two or three price ranges.  
*Guests start buying the moment save-the-dates land, not when invitations do.*
- Plan the honeymoon and book flights if you are going far.
- Book rentals — tables, chairs, linens, lighting, anything the venue does not include.

## 6–8 months

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- Order invitations and the day-of stationery in the same print run.  
*Programs, menus, and place cards cost less alongside the invitations than as a rush job later.*
- Choose wedding-party attire and get everyone measured.
- Do the cake tasting and place the order.
- Book the rehearsal dinner venue.
- Book ceremony musicians if they are separate from the reception band.
- Sit the menu tasting and set the bar package.  
*Taste the actual menu at the actual portion size — then decide.*
- Buy the wedding rings.  
*Allow 4–6 weeks for resizing and engraving.*
- Draft the ceremony with your officiant — readings, music, and how vows will work.

## 4–6 months

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- Finalize the menu, bar package, and service style with the caterer in writing.
- Schedule dress or suit fittings — the first around three months out.
- Arrange envelope addressing — a calligrapher, printed labels, or a long evening with good pens.
- Design and order signage: welcome sign, seating chart board, bar menu.
- Plan for children — childcare, a kids' table, or a clear adults-only line on the invitation.  
*Decide now, before invitations print — this is the hardest thing to walk back.*
- Confirm the honeymoon itinerary and check both passports have six months' validity past the return date.  
*Passport renewals can take 8+ weeks — check today, not the month before.*
- Choose and order favors, welcome bags, or neither — neither is allowed.
- Start writing your vows if you are writing your own.  
*Months early feels absurd until the final month arrives fully booked.*
- Apply for any permits — beach or park ceremony, amplified sound, sparkler send-off.

## 2–4 months

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- Mail the invitations eight weeks before the date, with the RSVP deadline four weeks before.  
*Weigh one fully stuffed envelope at the post office before buying 150 stamps.*
- Track RSVPs weekly and chase stragglers by phone, not text.
- Do the hair and makeup trial, and photograph it in daylight.  
*The trial exists to change your mind now, cheaply.*
- Buy gifts for the wedding party and both sets of parents.
- Give the band or DJ the must-play and do-not-play lists.
- Write the ceremony order and send it to everyone with a role — readers, musicians, ring bearer's handler.
- Check your state's marriage license rules — the waiting period and the expiry window.  
*Some licenses expire in 30 days, some states make you wait 3 — check both dates.*
- Break in the wedding shoes at home.  
*An hour an evening for a week beats twelve hours of blisters.*
- Confirm final delivery and setup details with the florist and rental company.

## 1–2 months

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- Get the marriage license inside your state's window.
- Send the final headcount to the caterer and venue.  
*Usually due 10–14 days out — after this you pay for no-shows.*

- Build the seating chart once RSVPs close, not before.  
*Every chart built early gets rebuilt — wait for real numbers.*
- Do the final fitting with the actual shoes and undergarments.
- Confirm arrival times, load-in details, and day-of contacts with every vendor.
- Finish your vows and practice them out loud, standing up.
- Prepare final payments and tip envelopes, labeled by vendor, and assign one person to hand them out.  
*Most balances are due on or before the day — you should not be the one carrying cash.*
- Send the day-of timeline to the wedding party, both families, and every vendor.

## The final two weeks

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- Reconfirm every vendor — arrival time, location, and who they call on the day.  
*The call is two minutes; the no-show it prevents is unrecoverable.*
- Delegate the day-of jobs: who holds the rings, who wrangles vendors, who takes gifts and cards home.  
*If there is no coordinator, name one person who is not in the wedding party.*
- Proofread the seating chart and place cards against the final RSVP list.
- Pack an emergency kit — sewing kit, stain pen, pain relief, blister plasters, phone chargers.
- Steam or press the attire and confirm every suit pickup.
- Pick up the rings and read the engraving before you leave the shop.
- Walk the venue one last time with your coordinator or point person.
- Get haircuts and grooming no later than a week out — never the day before.

## The day itself

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- Eat a real breakfast, and put one person in charge of snacks and water all day.  
*The most-skipped task on this list, and the one you feel by 3.00pm.*
- Hand the rings, license, and vow cards to their assigned keepers before hair and makeup begin.
- Give the tip envelopes and final payments to your designated hander-outer.
- Hand your phone to a member of the wedding party until the send-off.
- Sign the marriage license with your officiant and witnesses before everyone scatters.  
*The most-forgotten legal step of the day — unsigned means unmarried.*
- Take ten minutes alone together — schedule it, or it will not happen.