

Wedding Planning timetable

The following is a timetable for wedding planning. I have drawn it from various sources intended for a U.S. audience, as well as my personal opinion. It may be helpful not only as a guideline for when things need to be done, but also to help you think of all the things you might need to do.

Please be aware that this is not intended as a list of "what you must do"; instead, read each item as "if you choose to do this thing, this is a rough idea of when you should do it."

Obviously, what needs to be done when varies depending on where you live (some things will require more lead time in a big city, and less in a small town) as well as your personal priorities.

This list assumes that you can figure out that once you start planning something, you may need to take further steps as you go along. For example, at some point after you order a wedding dress, the shop will receive it and you will need to go in for fittings. It is assumed that you and the shop will discuss this and figure out when to do it. Similarly, after arranging for a DJ for the reception, at some point you will need to provide a list of the music you would like to hear. It is assumed that you and the DJ can decide when to do this.

When you become engaged

- Tell your parents the happy news, if they do not already know.
- Buy or make a wedding organizer. Think about whether you will want to have it as a keepsake later on; if so, this may influence your decision about what kind of organizer to have. At a bare minimum, you should have an organized way to keep track of appointments/payments/etc., and a system for keeping track of invitations, gifts, and thank-you notes.
- Write to your close friends and relatives to let them know, unless you plan to have an engagement party.
- Have an engagement photo taken.
- Find out the policies of the newspapers where you and your fiance grew up, and where you now live, about engagement announcements. They may have specific guidelines about how far in advance of the wedding they will publish an announcement. Submit announcements to the papers at the appropriate time.
- Keep up with thank-you notes as you receive gifts. The best time to write a thank you note is immediately after opening the gift; Unless you receive hundreds of gifts in one day, it should never take more than 6 weeks to send a thank-you note (unless you are on your honeymoon, when you are not expected to be writing thank-you notes). If you do receive hundreds of gifts in one day, you may want to send gift acknowledgements to the givers, letting them know you have received their gifts and will send a personal note as soon as possible.

9 to 12 months in advance

- Determine what you and your families expect your wedding to be like. What religion, if any, will the service be performed in? How many guests do you want to have? Is it important to have dancing? A seated meal? Live music? An outdoor setting? Alcohol?

- Decide how the wedding will be financed. If parents are helping to pay for it, find out how they want to deal with this. The lowest-stress method for everyone is for the parents to commit a specific amount of money, which the bride & groom can supplement with their own money, or keep the extra if they spend less. However, many parents wish to retain greater control over the budget than this method allows. It may be helpful to do some research about wedding costs in your area before attempting to come up with a budget.
- Determine the style and time of day of the wedding. If money is an issue, you can often adjust the time of day so that the reception will be more economical. If you do not have the reception during a common meal time, for example, you will not need to serve a meal.
- Select a wedding date. This may need to be done in conjunction with selecting ceremony/reception sites.
- Select and reserve ceremony/reception sites.
- Find a wedding officiant, if one does not come with the wedding site. Speak with your officiant to determine if there are any requirements for them to marry you, and when these requirements need to be met. Discuss also when you should meet to discuss the ceremony.
- Select attendants. It is OK not to single one out as the honor attendant at this early stage.
- Secure a photographer/videographer for your chosen date.
- Secure catering arrangements for your reception site, if the site does not come with a caterer.
- Secure a florist.

6 to 9 months in advance

- Select and order the bridal gown and accessories, or arrange for a seamstress to make it.
- Make arrangements for music at your ceremony/reception.
- Select and order bridesmaids' dresses, or arrange for a seamstress to make them.
- Start working on guest lists. Typically, there are 4: The bride's family's list, the groom's family's list, the bride's list, and the groom's list.

4 to 6 months in advance

- Order invitations and any other stationery you will need (such as informal notes to use when writing thank-you's. Remember that informals engraved with your married name cannot be used until after you are married, so you will also need some stationery to use for gifts that arrive before you are married.)
- Consider birth-control options. If you plan to use a prescription method of birth control, visit your doctor to arrange this. You will want to start using it (or practice, in the case of a diaphragm or cervical cap) well in advance of the wedding, so that you have time to adjust to it, and can stop using it if you encounter problems.
- Plan the honeymoon. (Often arranged by the groom.)
- Help the mothers to select their dresses.
- Plan the rehearsal dinner. (Often given by the groom's family, so they may do most of the work.)
- Register for gifts.

2 to 4 months in advance

- Select attire for the men in the wedding party.
- Purchase wedding rings and have them engraved.
- Find out what the legal requirements are for marriage in your state; arrange for any necessary blood tests and decide when you will apply for the license.
- Obtain any immunizations you will need for the honeymoon.
- Make sure out-of-town guests will be appropriately lodged. You may want to reserve a block of rooms at a hotel; the hotel will usually give your guests a reduced rate.

6 to 8 weeks in advance

- Mail the invitations
- Consult relevant newspapers for requirements on wedding announcements.
- Have a formal portrait taken in wedding gown for newspaper announcement.
- Purchase gifts for each other.
- Purchase gifts for attendants.
- Purchase going-away outfit, trousseau.
- Consult hairstylist about wedding hairstyle.
- Consult makeup person about wedding-day makeup.

4 to 6 weeks in advance

- Investigate legal details, such as naming fiance as beneficiary in will and life insurance, obtaining insurance to cover joint property, consolidating auto insurance, opening joint bank accounts, etc.
- If you will be changing your names, make a list of where you need to do this and when.
- Decide on seating plan for reception.
- If you will need foreign money for the honeymoon, make arrangements to obtain it.
- Be sure attendants are kept informed of rehearsal plans, other commitments they have.

1-2 weeks in advance

- Make final checks on everything: catering, honeymoon, photographer, videographer, florist, musicians, officiant, rehearsal, etc.
- Make sure announcements are addressed, arrange for someone to mail them on wedding day.
- Think about what you are going to take on the honeymoon, decide when you will pack.
- Buy traveller's checks for honeymoon.

1-3 days in advance

- Make sure everyone arriving from out-of-town is met by someone, knows where everyone else is staying, etc.
- Pack an "emergency kit" containing things like spare hose, sewing supplies, aspirin, etc. to take with you to the wedding.

- Attend rehearsal and rehearsal dinner. You may choose to give gifts to attendants and each other at this event, or at a more private moment.