



# The 12-Month Wedding Planning *Checklist*

Every task, in the right order, at the right time — so you always know exactly what to do next. No panic, no 2 a.m. "did we forget the...?" moments.

## HOW TO USE THIS

Work phase by phase, not all at once. Each phase covers a window of your countdown — finish the current phase before worrying about the next. Tick the boxes as you go; momentum is the whole point.

## PLANNING WITH A PARTNER

Print two copies or share one. Every task here is written for a couple, not a solo planner — divide the list by who cares most about each item, and revisit the split monthly.

★ **Short engagement?** If your date is under 6 months away, do the starred items first, in order — they're the bookings that disappear fastest.

**Adapt freely.** Eloping, skipping a wedding party, no favors? Cross it out. This is a map, not a rulebook — the only required item is showing up.

01	<b>The Foundation</b>	12+ months out
02	<b>Lock the Big Five</b>	9–11 months out
03	<b>Build the Day</b>	6–8 months out
04	<b>The Details</b>	4–5 months out
05	<b>Make It Official</b>	2–3 months out
06	<b>The Final Stretch</b>	The last month
07	<b>Week Of, Day Of &amp; After</b>	Showtime

## The Foundation

Three decisions drive everything else: budget, guest count, venue. Make these first and every later choice gets easier.

- Celebrate. You're engaged — take two weeks before planning anything
- ★ Set your total budget and agree who's contributing what
- ★ Draft a rough guest count — it drives nearly every cost
- Pick your top three priorities as a couple (food? photos? party?)
- Choose a season, or two to three candidate dates
- Set up one planning system — app or spreadsheet, not sticky notes
- Create a dedicated wedding email for all vendor contact
- ★ Research and tour venues — popular ones book 12–18 months out
- ★ Book your venue and lock in your date
- Decide on a planner or day-of coordinator, and hire if using
- Start a private inspiration board — define your style and palette
- Consider wedding insurance once deposits start going out

**Budget reality:** venue + catering typically consume 40–50% of your total budget. Set those numbers before you fall in love with anything else.

**Guest count before venue.** Touring venues before you know your headcount is how couples end up paying for 60 empty seats — or cutting cousins in month nine.

## Lock the Big Five

Photographer, caterer, entertainment, officiant, attire. The best vendors book a year out — this phase is a booking sprint.

- ★ Book your photographer (and videographer, if having one)
- ★ Book your caterer, if not included with the venue
- ★ Book entertainment — band, DJ, or both
- Book your officiant and discuss the ceremony you want
- Choose your wedding party and actually ask them
- ★ Start attire shopping — gowns take 6–9 months with alterations
- Launch your wedding website and collect guest addresses digitally
- Block hotel rooms for out-of-town guests
- Send save-the-dates (8–10 months out; earlier for destination)
- Book an engagement shoot — it doubles as a photographer trial run

**Read every contract twice.** Payment schedule, overtime rates, cancellation terms, and exactly who shows up on the day. "The team" is not a name.

**Budget reality:** photography + video usually run 10–15% of total. It's the only purchase that appreciates — the cake will be gone by 10 p.m.

## Build the Day

The big anchors are booked. Now you fill in everything guests will see, taste, ride in, and dance to.

- Book your florist and share your palette and inspiration board
- Book hair and makeup artists
- Order wedding attire and schedule fittings
- Choose and order wedding party attire
- Book transportation — for you, and guests if needed
- Book rentals: tables, chairs, linens, lighting, dance floor
- ★ Plan the honeymoon — check passports and book time off work
- Build your gift registry (yes, people genuinely want one)
- Order invitations and any custom stationery
- Shape the ceremony with your officiant — readings, rituals, vows
- Book the rehearsal dinner venue
- Schedule pre-wedding events — shower, parties, welcome drinks

**Passport check, today.** Renewals can take months, and the name on your ticket must match your passport — book honeymoon travel in your current legal name.

**Budget reality:** flowers run 8-10% on average. In-season, locally grown stems can halve that without anyone noticing the difference.

## The Details

Tastings, fittings, and the small decisions that make the day feel like yours. This is the fun part — schedule it like it is.

- Do your menu tasting and finalize food and bar selections
- Order the cake — after a tasting, obviously
- Buy your wedding bands
- First attire fitting
- Finalize honeymoon bookings and travel insurance
- Confirm wedding party attire is ordered and on schedule
- Arrange childcare or kids' entertainment, if children are invited
- Decide on favors and welcome bags — or confidently skip them
- Start drafting vows and choose ceremony music
- Decide: phones-out celebration or unplugged ceremony?

**Permission to skip.** Favors, matching robes, champagne walls — if a task exists only because you saw it online, it's optional. Guests remember food, music, and how you looked at each other.

**Budget reality:** this phase is where "small" spends snowball. Track every deposit in one place — surprise overspend almost never comes from the big vendors.

## Make It Official

Invitations out, license sorted, run sheet drafted. The day starts becoming real on paper.

- ★ Send invitations 8-10 weeks out; set RSVPs due 4 weeks before
- ★ Apply for your marriage license — check your region's validity window
- Write your vows (start now; future-you will be busy)
- Hair and makeup trial — photograph the results in daylight
- Lock the reception playlist and the do-not-play list
- Draft the day-of run sheet with your venue, DJ, and photographer
- Give the photographer a short must-have shot list and key people
- Order signage, menus, and place cards
- Start the seating chart as RSVPs arrive — don't wait for the last one
- Confirm honeymoon documents, visas, and arrangements

**The seating chart is diplomacy, not decor.** Do it in drafts as RSVPs land. Doing it in one sitting the week before is how feuds get seated together.

**Budget reality:** build a buffer of 5-10% for the final month — last fittings, extra rentals, and gratuities always cost more than the plan says.

## The Final Stretch

Confirm everything, pay everyone, delegate ruthlessly. Your only day-of job is getting married.

- Chase missing RSVPs — you will have to, so plan for it
- ★ Give the final guest count to your caterer and venue
- Finalize the seating chart and print it
- Final fitting — and break in your shoes at home
- ★ Share one master timeline with every vendor and the wedding party
- Confirm vendor arrival times, meals, and parking
- Make final payments; prepare labeled gratuity envelopes
- Appoint a day-of point person who is not you or your partner
- Pack the emergency kit — sewing kit, stain pen, painkillers, snacks
- Write thank-you notes for gifts that have already arrived
- Confirm rehearsal time and dinner details with everyone involved
- Set aside cash for day-of incidentals

## Week Of, Day Of & After

Everything is decided. This week is logistics, sleep, and handing the plan to the people you hired to run it.

### THE WEEK OF

- Final venue walkthrough; confirm setup and floor plan
- Deliver décor, guest book, and signage to the venue
- Pick up attire and steam everything
- Rehearse the ceremony with the full wedding party
- Hand the marriage license to your officiant
- Sleep, hydrate, eat — boring advice that works

### THE DAY OF

- Eat a real breakfast — the day is long and dinner is late
- Build 30 minutes of buffer into every part of the morning
- Hand your phone to a member of the wedding party
- Take five minutes alone together as a couple — on purpose
- Let go of the plan. Whatever happens now is the wedding

### AFTER THE WEDDING

- Return rentals and retrieve anything left at the venue
- Review your vendors — it's how the good ones get found
- Preserve or clean your attire
- Send thank-you cards within three months
- Handle legal name changes, if either of you is changing
- Order your album while the photos still make you cry



FROM THE MAKERS OF THIS CHECKLIST

**Planning a wedding is ~300 decisions.**  
*WeddingFlow keeps every one in one place.*

Budget tracker, guest list, vendor manager, task timeline, seating chart, day-of schedule and more — 14 planning tools in one beautifully simple app. No subscriptions, no ads, yours forever.

[getplanmywedding.com](https://getplanmywedding.com)