

So he's popped the question and you've said yes—now it's time to get organized. Set your deadlines for the tasks at hand

12 or more months ahead

- Arrange for your families to meet (if they haven't already).
- Do a little early planning. Determine the kind of wedding you want: location, formality, time of day, number of guests, etc.
- Set the date. Have backup dates in mind in case the site, caterer, or officiant is already booked.
- Create a preliminary guest list.

Nine months or more ahead

- Announce your engagement.
- Buy a calendar and note all important activities: showers, luncheons, parties, get-togethers, etc.
- Set an initial budget and determine how expenses will be shared.
- Hire a professional wedding consultant.
- Consolidate all guest lists (bride's, groom's, bride's family, groom's family) and organize as follows: those who must be invited; those who should be invited; those who it would be nice to invite.
- Decide if you want to include children among guests.
- Determine your color scheme.
- Reserve wedding and reception sites.
- Reserve officiant.
- Reserve photographer.
- Reserve caterer.
- Select and order your bridal gown and accessories, including headpiece, gloves, and shoes.
- Select attendants' gowns. Let both mothers know about the color selection so that they can plan their attire accordingly.
- If ceremony or reception is at home, arrange for home or garden improvements as needed.
- Order passport, visa, or birth certificate (if needed) for your honeymoon and marriage license.
- Select maid or matron of honor, best man, bridesmaids, and ushers.
- Reserve blocks of hotel rooms for out-of-town guests.
- Reserve a band or DJ and select music.

- Make appointments with florists to review their work.
- Create a bridal and/or engagement registry.

Six to nine months ahead

- Reserve a florist and choose arrangements. Order bouquets and boutonnieres for the wedding party and corsages for the mothers.
- Make appointments with cake designers to review their work and sample their cakes.
- Select and book videographer.
- Choose flower girl and ring bearer.
- Schedule gown fittings and attire delivery dates for yourself, attendants, flower girl, and ring bearer.
- Plan and book honeymoon.
- Order the save-the-date cards, invitations, stationery, and thank you cards. Order maps to the ceremony and reception for guests.
- Arrange for transportation to the ceremony and the reception.
- Book stylists for hair and makeup.
- The parents of the groom should begin to arrange the location and details of the rehearsal dinner.

Four to six months ahead

- Reserve any rental equipment, such as tables, chairs, tents, etc.
- Order wedding cake.
- Purchase or reserve groom's attire.
- Make sure all the men's attire has been ordered.
- Purchase wedding rings.
- Choose favors. If you're making something or wrapping the favors, start as soon as possible.
- Book hotel room for your wedding night.
- Make appointments for physical exams.
- Finalize guest list.
- Address invitations or hire a calligrapher.
- Select and book all miscellaneous services, i.e. gift attendant, valet parking, etc.

Two to four months ahead

- Mail save-the-date cards (especially for out-of-town

- guests who need to make travel arrangements).
- Confirm details of menu and décor with caterer—and get all confirmations in writing.
- Check in with bridal salon, florist, photographer, musicians, and other vendors to confirm arrangements.
- Discuss service with officiant.
- Buy stockings and any special undergarments your dress requires.
- Choose readings for ceremony. Give copies to those whom you've asked to read so they'll have time to practice.
- If you're writing your own vows, do so now.
- Schedule rehearsal time and rehearsal dinner.
- Plan the bridesmaids' luncheon and any other wedding weekend activities.
- Determine your resources for designing and printing the program for the ceremony.
- Select and book transportation for wedding day.
- Purchase gifts for groom and wedding attendants.
- Begin to break in your shoes at home.

Six to eight weeks ahead of time

- Mail invitations for wedding and rehearsal dinner. Include accommodation choices and a map to assist guests in finding the ceremony and reception sites.
- Have programs printed.
- Send wedding announcements and photograph to local newspapers.
- If you're going to change your name, complete proper documents. Change name and address on driver's license, social security card, insurance policies, bank and credit card accounts, subscriptions, memberships, etc.
- If you're moving after the wedding, send change-of-address information to post office.
- Schedule to have your hair, makeup, and nails done for the day of the wedding.
- Have your hair stylist do a trial run of your chosen hairstyle with the headpiece.
- Have makeup artists do a trial run.
- Maintain a record of RSVPs and all gifts received.
- Write thank you notes as you receive gifts.

- Obtain marriage license.
- Finish shopping for wedding day accessories such as toasting glasses, ring pillow, guestbook, etc.
- Set up an area or a table in your home to display gifts as you receive them.
- Decide if you would like to have a guestbook attendant and where and when to have guests sign in.
- Find “something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue, and a sixpence (or shiny penny) for your shoe.”
- Finalize the reception menu and estimate the expected number of guests. Finalize the beverage and alcohol order.
- Arrange final fitting of your gown and headpiece. Have your formal wedding portrait taken.
- Purchase a going-away outfit.
- Pick up your wedding rings and check fit.
- Confirm florist details and delivery times.
- Plan the seating for the reception as well as other details for the ceremony and reception.

Two to six weeks ahead of time

- Confirm ceremony details with your officiant.
- Schedule final fitting of bridesmaids' dresses.
- Finalize rehearsal dinner plans. Arrange seating and start writing place cards.
- Choose the music for your ceremony, first dance, parent dances, and party and give information to band, DJ, or other musicians.
- Confirm details with all service providers.
- Make a detailed timeline for your wedding party.
- Make a detailed timeline for your service providers.
- Decide if you want to form a receiving line. If so, determine when and where to form the line.
- Contact guests who haven't responded.
- Meet with photographer and confirm any special photos you want.
- Meet with videographer and confirm special events or people you want videotaped.
- Continue writing thank you notes as gifts arrive.
- Remind bridesmaids of when and where to pick up their wedding attire.

- Purchase lipstick, nail polish, and any other accessories you want your bridesmaids to wear.
- Start packing for your honeymoon.
- Determine ceremony seating for special guests. Give a list to the ushers.
- Plan reception room layout and seating with your reception site manager or caterer. Write names on place cards for arranged seating.
- Write toasts for rehearsal dinner and reception.
- Continue breaking in wedding shoes at home.
- Delegate duties to friends and family for the wedding.

One to two weeks ahead

- Finish packing for honeymoon.
- Confirm travel arrangements. Pick up tickets and traveler's checks.
- Arrange for the post office or a neighbor to hold your mail while you're away on your honeymoon.
- Have facial or other beauty treatment.
- Make sure all wedding attire fits properly.
- Make sure all clothing and accessories—including makeup and jewelry—for the bridal party are ready.
- Do final guest count and notify your caterer or reception site manager.
- Gather everything you will need for the rehearsal and wedding day.
- Arrange for someone to drive the getaway car.
- Review the schedule of events and last minute arrangements with your service providers.
- Familiarize yourself with guests' names. It will help during the receiving line and reception.
- Make arrangements to have your wedding gifts moved to your new home.
- Reconfirm your guests' accommodations.
- Wrap the wedding party gifts.

One day before

- Relax with a manicure and massage.
- Assign different responsibilities, such as handing out corsages and boutonnieres, to members of bridal party.

- Arrange for someone to bring accessories such as flower basket, ring pillow, guestbook and pen, toasting glasses, cake knife, etc. to the ceremony and/or reception.
- Provide each member of your bridal party with the detailed timeline for the wedding day.
- Review list of things to bring to the rehearsal.
- Confirm limousines or other transportation.
- Put suitcases in getaway car.
- Review the schedule of events with your service providers.
- Give each member of the bridal party a gift along with a personal note if you haven't already done so.
- Give best man the officiant's fee and any other checks for service providers. Instruct him to deliver these checks the day of the wedding.
- Arrange for someone to mail announcements the day after the wedding.
- Arrange for someone to return rental items such as tuxedos and cake stand after the wedding.
- Rehearse ceremony and all other details with those who will participate in wedding.
- Hold rehearsal dinner.

Wedding Day

- Review list of things to bring to the ceremony.
- Give the groom's ring to the maid or matron of honor. Give the bride's ring to the best man.
- Follow your detailed schedule of events.
- Remind the best man and maid or matron of honor to sign the wedding certificate.
- Thank your parents and your guests.
- Take a deep breath, smile, and enjoy your day.