

ULTIMATE WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

Courtesy of

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Photography



www.stephaniedupuisphotography.com

Nine Months or More Before



___ **Start a wedding Pinterest board.** Spend time browsing Pinterest and save images that appeal to you. Be sure to add a little note about why the image appeals.

___ **Determine your budget.** Determine how much you can comfortably spend on your wedding. Will your family be able to help?

___ **Pick your wedding party.** You want to give the people in your wedding party as much advance notice as possible to make sure they can be available. Besides, everyone is going to be wondering who will be in the wedding party.

___ **Hire a wedding planner, if desired.** A wedding planner will have relationships with and insight about vendors. There are a lot of moving parts in a wedding, a professional planner can help keep the stress under control.

___ **Reserve your date and venue.** Venues book up quickly. If you have your heart set on a certain venue be sure to book them early. If you are planning an outdoor wedding, make sure you know what the backup plan is in case of rain. Likewise, if there is a specific flower or fresh fruit you want at your wedding keep in mind when they are in season as you choose your date. Here is an article about things to consider when choosing a venue.

<https://stephaniedupuisphotography.com/5-things-to-consider-when-choosing-your-wedding-venue/>

___ **Find your minister or officiant.** Just like the venue, booking your minister or officiant should be done as soon as the date is finalized.

___ **Research your other vendors.** Now is the time to research photographers, bands, DJs, florists, caterers, bakeries, etc. Make a binder to keep track of the vendors you speak with.

Eight Months Before



___ **Hire the photographer and the videographer.** Review the photographer and videographer's gallery to make sure their work matches your taste. Be sure to have a meeting either in person or over the phone to make sure your personalities mesh. Also make sure the photographer will help with timeline planning to make sure your wedding day goes smoothly.

___ **Book the entertainment.** Attend gigs or watch videos of potential entertainment to see how they perform in front of an audience and then book your favorite.

___ **Meet caterers.** If your wedding venue doesn't offer its own catering look for one now. Be sure to check references and ask for a tasting. Plan to book the caterer this month or early next.

___ **Determine if you want alcohol.** If you are going to want alcohol served determine if the venue or caterer will handle this. If not, then begin to look for an outside vendor but be sure to check with the venue first about their requirements. While you are considering alcohol decide if you want an open bar or a cash bar.

___ **Finalize your dress choice.** You'll need to schedule time for at least three fittings. Choosing the perfect dress should never be left to the last minute.

___ **Reserve a block of rooms for out of town guests.** Out of town guests will appreciate your guidance in where to stay. Grouping guests in a block at a hotel allows the party to continue.. even after the reception ends.

___ **Register.** Guests are going to be wondering what to get you for your wedding. Do themselves and you a favor by registering at a minimum of three retailers. Remember to try to give guests a wide range of ideas.

Six to Seven Months Before



___ **Select and purchase invitations.** Hire a calligrapher if desired. Couples are often surprised by the cost of invitations so be sure to budget correctly. Invitations are a great opportunity to let your style shine through.

___ **Launch a wedding website.** Create your personal page through a free provider such as <https://www.theknot.com/gs/wedding-websites>. Note the date of the wedding, travel information and accommodations. Then send the link to invitees.

___ **Start planning a honeymoon.** Make sure your passports are up to date. Remember, booking airline tickets early will often result in a cost savings. If leaving the country be sure to get any immunizations you need.

___ **Shop for bridesmaids' dresses.** Allow at least six months for dresses to be ordered and sized. Consider making a day of it with the girls – dress shopping, lunch and a drink to wrap it all up.

___ **Meet with your minister or officiant.** Map out the ceremony and make sure that you have all the necessary documents and licenses. The requirements can vary by county and by religion.

___ **Send save-the-date cards.** Consider ordering your save-the-date cards from your wedding photographer. They can use one of your engagement photographs to personalize the card. Photographers often have access to more design options and better-quality cards than can be found online.

___ **Book a florist.** Florists can serve multiple clients on one day which is why you can wait a little longer to book one. Plus, at this point you'll be firm on your color palette. Again, make sure you ask for reviews from previous clients.

___ **Arrange transportation.** Consider and arrange transportation for the bridal party. Will you use a limo or maybe you have some friends or relatives with fancy cars? Either way you want to make sure transportation is all set.

___ **Begin to work on your timeline.** If you are not using a wedding planner turn to your wedding photographer for timeline planning help. They have the experience to help you make sure your wedding flows smoothly.

Four to Five Months Before



___ **Book the rehearsal and rehearsal-dinner venues.** Consider how many guests you will have at the rehearsal dinner (bridal party, parents, minister, other siblings). Also consider the type of meal you would like to have. Will it be a full sit-down dinner or is a buffet more your style?

___ **Finalize the wedding invitations.** Ask to see samples of the stationer's finished work. Finalize any last-minute details and order the invitations. You want to be able to send out your invitation two months prior to your big day.

___ **Book a bakery.** Do you want a large cake or a smaller cutting cake with cupcakes? Now is the time to finalize your decisions around your wedding cake and order it. Most bakeries offer tastings to help you decide on the perfect flavor. Don't forget to talk to the bakery about a cake stand.

___ **Purchase your cake topper, cake knife, cake servers and toasting glasses.** These items are very much unique to each couple so be sure to allow time to find ones that appeal to you.

___ **Schedule your hair and makeup artists.** Try a few different local salons to determine which you like the best. Often salons will have photos of work they have done for other clients. Hint: Your engagement session or bridal boudoir session is a perfect time for a trial run with the salon you plan to use.

___ **Schedule your engagement photography session.** An engagement session is a great opportunity for some beautiful photographs that celebrate the beauty of your love story. Consider asking your photographer to create a guest signing book with your engagement photos or think about displaying one of your engagement photos at your wedding. Here is some information about engagement photos: <https://stephaniedupuisphotography.com/engagement-photography-misconceptions/>

___ **Schedule your bridal boudoir session.** Bridal boudoir photo sessions are the latest and hottest trend in wedding photography. Boudoir photography is meant to capture your sultry side. Present an album of your boudoir photos to your future husband the night before your wedding for a steamy groom's gift he will never forget. Schedule your bridal boudoir session when you schedule your engagement photography.

___ **Choose your music.** Be sure to consider music for during the ceremony as well as for the reception. If you are being married in a church check with the minister about any limitations the church may have. For the reception make sure you let your band or DJ know what you want played as well as what you don't.

Three Months Before



___ **Create your mood board.** If you haven't done so already now is the time to create a mood board on Pinterest and send it to your photographer. Your mood board should consist of 15 - 20 wedding images that you love as well as a couple words about why you love them. Mood boards provide a photographer insight into the style of photography that resonates with you.

___ **Finalize the menu.** By now you have had a tasting and have a good idea of what you want to serve your wedding guests. Work with the restaurant or caterer to finalize your menu. Remember to keep any dietary restrictions your guests may have in mind.

___ **Finalize the flowers.** Work with your florist to finalize your flower selection. Remember flowers for the church or wedding location, flowers for the reception hall, bridal bouquets, boutonnieres, and flowers for the mothers of the bride and groom.

___ **Order favors for your guests.** Who doesn't love getting a gift to remember a really awesome party? Now is the time to order favors for your wedding guests. Some of our favorites are these really cool maple favors from Fuller's Sugar House in Lancaster NH.

<https://fullerssugarhouse.com/maple-syrup-wedding-party-favors/>

___ **Finalize who will be giving toasts.** In addition to the obvious choice of the best man and the maid of honor what other loved ones would you like to speak at your wedding? Now is the time to ask them.

___ **Finalize your readings.** Work with your minister to finalize the readings for your ceremony. If a certain reading really resonates with you don't be afraid to ask the minister to use it. In addition, determine who will be doing the readings.

___ **Purchase the rings.** If you haven't already done so it is time to purchase your rings. Make sure the rings are sized properly as well. Using a ring bearer? Don't forget to consider how they will carry the rings

___ **Finalize your guest list.** Next month you will be sending out your invitations so be sure to finalize your guest list. Consider creating a spreadsheet in excel or google sheets to keep track of your guests, their rsvp's and their plus ones.

___ **Work on finalizing your time line.** A wedding is full of tiny details and mini events throughout the entire day. Just like a beautiful symphony these events must be carefully orchestrated. If you are working with a wedding planner, they will help you with your timeline. If not, we recommend speaking with your photographer. A professional wedding photographer is familiar with the flow of the entire day and can help in timeline planning.

___ **Share your timeline with your vendors.** It is ultra-important that you share your timeline with all of your vendors. Ask for some input from your key vendors to make sure they have the time needed to perform their tasks.

Two Months Before



___ **Schedule a timeline review with your photographer.** Make sure to schedule a timeline and mood board review with your photographer. The mood board review will help your photographer get on the same page regarding your taste in wedding photos. The timeline review with your photographer will insure your day goes smoothly with plenty of time for all the awesome photographs you want captured on your wedding day.

___ **Touch base again with all the vendors.** Call or meet with each of your vendors to answer any questions they or you may have. Review all your selections to make sure everything is exactly as you want it.

___ **Send out your invitations.** Now is the time to send your invitations out. Typically, invitations mail six to eight weeks prior to the ceremony. Ask that all guests RSVP at a minimum of one month before the wedding.

___ **Submit a newspaper wedding announcement.** Tell the whole town you are getting married! Submit your newspaper announcement along with a photograph if you choose.

___ **Enjoy a bachelorette party.** Typically planning a bachelorette party is a task for the Maid of Honor. If she hasn't mentioned a party and you have your heart set on one don't hesitate to ask.

___ **Finalize your honeymoon.** Finalize plans for your honeymoon. Purchase airline tickets if needed, book hotel rooms, double check your passport and consider beginning to make a list of the items you need to pack.

___ **Get a room already!** Seriously though – give some thought to where you will stay the wedding night. If your venue doesn't include rooms, consider booking a private room and keeping it a secret so you and your spouse can enjoy your first night together as husband and wife.

One Month Before



___ **Enter RSVPs into your guest list spreadsheet.** Keep track of who has responded and who hasn't. You will need to provide an accurate guest count to the venue, the caterer and the bakery. Now is the time to phone those folks you haven't heard back from.

___ **Get your marriage license.** Don't put this off until the last minute. We have heard stories of licenses getting delayed due to unexpected paperwork snags. It is better to take care of getting your license now.

___ **Final fitting.** Go for what will hopefully be your final wedding dress fitting. Make sure that the brides' maids have also had their final fitting. For peace of mind you may want to schedule one final, final fitting for a week before the wedding – you can always cancel it if you don't need it.

___ **Send out final payments.** Send out as many final vendor payments as you can. The last week or two before the wedding will be hectic so you won't want to worry about getting final payments together.

___ **Confirm times.** Confirm arrival and service times with all your vendors.

___ **Create your seating plan.** Map out the tables in your venue and work on seat assignments. Be sure to consider couples who have things in common. Also consider anyone who should never be seated together! Hint: Put your place cards in alphabetical order to make it easier for guests to find their name at the reception.

___ **Purchase bridal part gifts.** Get gifts for both the ladies and the guys. You will give them out at the rehearsal dinner.

___ **Get started on your vows.** Writing your own vows can be a great way to personalize your wedding. Consider getting started on writing them however don't worry too much, some of the best vows have been written the night before! Here is an article we put together to help with writing your vows: <https://stephaniedupuisphotography.com/wedding-vows-the-secret-to-writing-yours/>

___ **Book a tanning session.** If you plan to have a spray tan make sure you book your session at least two weeks prior to the wedding. If you don't regularly get spray tans, facial treatments, or eyebrow waxes, the week before your wedding is not the time to do so. All of these treatments have the potential to cause unsightly redness, bumps, or blotchiness, especially for first-timers.

Week of the Wedding



___ **Final check with all vendors.** Reconfirm arrival time with all of your vendors. Answer any last-minute questions they may have and make sure they have the most up to date guest count.

___ **Delegate small wedding day tasks.** Ideally find someone other than the bridal party to help with small day of tasks. You and your bridal party should be relaxing taking part in your day. Leave the small details to someone else, you will be glad you did!

___ **Send a timeline to the bridal party.** Send a finalized timeline to the wedding party so they have a clear picture of how the day will flow. Invite parents to the bridal prep time if you would like them to be a part of your bridal preparation pictures.

___ **Pick up your wedding dress.** Don't forget your veil and garter as well. Alternately ask if it can be delivered to you.

___ **Checks for vendors.** Complete any checks needed for vendors that you didn't pay in advance. Also put tips in envelopes and mark them for the day of.

___ **Book a spa treatment.** Make an appointment for a manicure and pedicure the day before the wedding. You may also want to book a stress relieving massage.

___ **Final guest list.** Make sure all your vendors have a copy of your final guest count. Most vendors want this count at least 72 hours in advance but be sure to check with your vendors to determine exactly what they need.

___ **Welcome Baskets.** If you are planning to ask the hotel to distribute welcome baskets to you guests now is the time to assemble them and deliver them to the hotel.

___ **Break in your shoes.** We all dislike breaking in new shoes. Be sure to break in your wedding day shoes (indoors) ahead of the ceremony. Your feet will thank you.

___ **Pack for your honeymoon.** If you are going on your honeymoon immediately after your wedding, you will want to make sure you are all packed. Be sure to remember any airline tickets, medication, passports and lingerie!

____ **Get enough sleep.** We know the week leading up to your wedding can be a whirlwind but try to make sure you get enough sleep. Try to get at least eight hours the night before your wedding so you feel rested and rejuvenated for your wedding day.

Whew! You made it. Now go and enjoy your wedding!