

Complete Wedding Planning Countdown

A step-by-step checklist from the first big decisions to the final wedding-day details.

Couple: _____	Wedding Date: _____
Venue: _____	Estimated Guest Count: _____

18-24 Months Before

- ☐ Discuss the type of wedding you want: formal, casual, traditional, modern, indoor, outdoor, destination, etc.
- ☐ Set a realistic overall wedding budget.
- ☐ Decide who will contribute financially and how expenses will be handled.
- ☐ Create a preliminary guest list.
- ☐ Choose your preferred wedding season and several possible dates.
- ☐ Research and tour wedding venues.
- ☐ Book the ceremony and reception venue.
- ☐ Decide whether to hire a wedding planner or coordinator.
- ☐ Begin researching high-priority vendors such as DJ / entertainment, photographer, videographer, caterer, and officiant.
- ☐ Create a wedding email address or planning folder to keep contracts, receipts, and correspondence organized.

Notes: _____

12-18 Months Before

- ☐ Book your DJ / MC or entertainment provider.
- ☐ Book your photographer.
- ☐ Book your videographer if desired.
- ☐ Book your wedding planner / coordinator if using one.
- ☐ Book your officiant.
- ☐ Book your caterer if not provided by the venue.
- ☐ Begin shopping for wedding attire.
- ☐ Choose your wedding party.
- ☐ Discuss color palette, style, and overall decor direction.
- ☐ Research florists, rental companies, and specialty decor.
- ☐ Research hotel blocks for out-of-town guests.
- ☐ Begin planning engagement photos if desired.

9-12 Months Before

- ☐ Order wedding attire early enough to allow for alterations.
- ☐ Book florist and major decor / rental items.
- ☐ Reserve photo booth, audio guest book, specialty lighting, or other entertainment enhancements if desired.
- ☐ Book transportation if needed.
- ☐ Reserve hotel room blocks.
- ☐ Create your wedding website.
- ☐ Send save-the-dates if appropriate.
- ☐ Create or update your gift registry.
- ☐ Discuss ceremony style, readings, and traditions.
- ☐ Begin thinking about first-dance and other important songs.
- ☐ Confirm whether the venue has sound, lighting, power, decor, or vendor restrictions.

6-9 Months Before

- ☐ Choose wedding party attire.
- ☐ Order invitations and stationery.
- ☐ Choose wedding cake or dessert provider.
- ☐ Book hair and makeup services.
- ☐ Finalize floral direction and major decor choices.
- ☐ Select ceremony musicians if separate from your DJ.
- ☐ Confirm rental needs such as linens, chairs, tables, lounge furniture, arches, or specialty items.
- ☐ Plan rehearsal dinner.
- ☐ Begin planning honeymoon travel.
- ☐ Review passport expiration dates if traveling internationally.
- ☐ Start building your wedding-day timeline with your key vendors.

4-6 Months Before

- ☐ Finalize invitation wording and guest-address list.
- ☐ Mail invitations according to your preferred RSVP timeline.
- ☐ Finalize ceremony outline with officiant.
- ☐ Select ceremony processional and recessional music.
- ☐ Choose first dance, parent dances, and other formal-moment songs.
- ☐ Create a must-play and do-not-play list for your DJ.
- ☐ Discuss grand entrance style and wedding-party introductions.
- ☐ Plan cake cutting, toasts, anniversary dance, bouquet toss, or other traditions you want.
- ☐ Schedule attire fittings.
- ☐ Purchase wedding shoes and accessories.
- ☐ Order wedding rings if not already purchased.
- ☐ Finalize transportation plan.

2-4 Months Before

- ☐ Review RSVPs and follow up with guests who have not responded.
- ☐ Finalize menu and bar selections.
- ☐ Finalize cake / dessert details.
- ☐ Complete hair and makeup trials if desired.
- ☐ Finalize floral selections and quantities.
- ☐ Prepare a photography family-shot list.
- ☐ Confirm ceremony readers and speakers.
- ☐ Review the reception timeline with DJ / MC, planner, photographer, and venue.
- ☐ Confirm special-effects rules for items such as low fog, cold sparks, candles, or specialty lighting.
- ☐ Begin seating-chart planning.
- ☐ Purchase wedding-party gifts, favors, and guest-book items.

30-60 Days Before

- ☐ Finalize guest count as closely as possible.
- ☐ Create the seating chart and table assignments.
- ☐ Confirm all vendor arrival and setup times.
- ☐ Finalize wedding-party entrance order and pronunciation of names.
- ☐ Finalize all music selections with your DJ / entertainment provider.
- ☐ Confirm speeches / toasts and who will be speaking.
- ☐ Finalize ceremony details and rehearsal time.
- ☐ Review venue floor plan and DJ / dance-floor placement.
- ☐ Confirm photo booth, audio guest book, lighting, and other enhancements.
- ☐ Prepare wedding-day emergency kit.
- ☐ Confirm who will take gifts, cards, decor, personal items, and leftovers home after the reception.
- ☐ Check current marriage-license requirements for the appropriate jurisdiction.

2-4 Weeks Before

- ☐ Apply for the marriage license within your local required timeframe.
- ☐ Give final guest count to the venue / caterer when required.
- ☐ Confirm final balances and payment deadlines with vendors.
- ☐ Prepare gratuity / payment envelopes if desired.
- ☐ Confirm wedding-day transportation.
- ☐ Confirm hotel reservations and room blocks.
- ☐ Confirm final attire fittings and pickup dates.
- ☐ Break in wedding shoes carefully.
- ☐ Review the complete wedding-day timeline with key vendors.
- ☐ Send final family-shot list to photographer.
- ☐ Confirm who is responsible for bringing the rings and marriage license.
- ☐ Prepare personal vows, ceremony readings, and printed copies as needed.

1 Week Before

- ☐ Confirm all vendor contact information.
- ☐ Check the weather forecast and review backup plans if needed.
- ☐ Pack wedding-day emergency kit.
- ☐ Pack attire, shoes, accessories, rings, and personal items.
- ☐ Confirm marriage license is valid for the wedding date.
- ☐ Confirm the officiant knows what must be signed and returned.
- ☐ Confirm the rehearsal schedule.
- ☐ Prepare tip / payment envelopes.
- ☐ Charge portable batteries and power banks.
- ☐ Confirm who will be the point person for vendor questions so the couple is not interrupted unnecessarily.
- ☐ Get adequate rest and avoid making major last-minute changes unless necessary.

The Day Before

- ☐ Attend the rehearsal if one is planned.
- ☐ Give the wedding party a concise timeline and arrival instructions.
- ☐ Deliver decor, favors, signage, guest book, and other approved items if the venue allows early drop-off.
- ☐ Confirm rings, marriage license, vows, and payment envelopes are packed together safely.
- ☐ Lay out or hang wedding attire and accessories.
- ☐ Charge phones and other personal devices.
- ☐ Eat normally, hydrate, and get rest.
- ☐ Assign one trusted person to hold the emergency kit and important documents.

Wedding Day

- ☐ Eat breakfast and drink water.
- ☐ Keep the rings and marriage license with the assigned trusted person.
- ☐ Keep phones, chargers, personal medication, and emergency kit accessible.
- ☐ Follow the timeline, but allow trusted professionals to adjust for real-world timing.
- ☐ Make sure the officiant receives the marriage license before the ceremony.
- ☐ Confirm required signatures are completed after the ceremony.
- ☐ Let the DJ / MC, planner, photographer, and venue coordinate reception formalities.
- ☐ Take a moment together during the reception to enjoy the room and your guests.
- ☐ Before leaving, confirm gifts, cards, documents, attire, personal items, and decor are accounted for.

The Day After

- ☐ Confirm the marriage license will be returned / filed by the responsible person.
- ☐ Return rental items according to contract deadlines.
- ☐ Collect leftover decor, flowers, signage, attire, and personal belongings.
- ☐ Check hotel rooms / venue storage areas for forgotten items.
- ☐ Store cards, gifts, documents, and keepsakes securely.
- ☐ Back up personal wedding photos and videos shared by guests.
- ☐ Begin thank-you notes when convenient.

Planning Tip: Use this countdown as a guide rather than a rigid rulebook. Every wedding is different, and some vendors or popular dates may need to be booked earlier. Always follow the deadlines in your venue and vendor contracts.