

The Countdown Checklist

Get to "I do" with your sanity intact, from 12 months and counting. You and your groom are in this together, so this checklist includes boxes for both of you. Yes, there's a lot to do, but it's a piece of (wedding) cake.

Bride
Groom

12 months before:

- Announce your engagement.
- Arrange for your two sets of parents to get together if they haven't already met.
- Decide on a date.
- Choose the kind of wedding you want - evening wedding with sit-down dinner, afternoon wedding with buffet, garden wedding, etc.
- Go over the budget (include both sets of parents if they'll be paying for any portion of the event).
- Pick the ceremony site and visit with the officiant.
- Work on guest list to get a rough guest count.
- Visit reception sites and reserve one.

6-9 months before:

- Interview wedding planners if you'll be using one.
- Choose your wedding party.
- Choose a caterer.
- Enroll in a bridal gift registry.
- Shop for a gown.
- Shop for bridal attendants' dresses.
- Choose a photographer and a videographer.
- Hire a florist.
- Book musicians and/or DJ.

4-6 months before:

- Order wedding invitations, envelopes, thank-you cards and any other stationary you might want.
- Order a wedding gown.
- Order tuxedos for groom and groomsmen.
- Shop for cake.
- Scout accommodations for out-of-towners to send your guests a list of nearby hotels in various price ranges.
- Meet with your caterer or banquet manager to discuss menus, service styles, wine lists, etc.
- Complete guest list. (Assume 20 percent of the invitees probably won't come.)
- Arrange your rehearsal dinner.

2-4 months before:

- Call county clerk's office to find out about requirements for marriage license.
- Get blood test, if needed for license in your state.
- Make honeymoon reservations. Compile all the necessary travel documents (passport, visas, etc.)
- Pick ceremony music. (Check with your ceremony site about any restrictions.)

Bride
Groom

- Pick reception music.
- Order wedding cake.
- Buy thank-you gifts for attendants.
- Shop for wedding bands.
- Complete honeymoon plans.

4-8 weeks before:

- Mail invitations eight weeks ahead of the date.
- Do a hair and makeup run-through (with headpiece).
- Have a final dress fitting.
- Look over insurance papers with your fiancé (car, life, medical, home) - you may need to make changes in the policy when you go from single to married.

2-4 weeks before:

- Puzzle time: do seating for the reception.
- Confirm details with caterer, florist, etc.
- Give your caterer a final head count.
- Make appointments with your favorite beauty pros to prepare you for that all-eyes-on-you moment.
- Send an engagement photograph with a wedding announcement to the newspapers.

1 week before:

- Host bridesmaids' party.
- Place fees in envelopes to be given to the organist, soloist, minister, etc., on the big day.
- Appoint a punctual pal to bring the cake knife, toasting glasses or other heirlooms to the wedding site early (and to be responsible for getting them home again.)
- Get a manicure, pedicure, facial, massage or other beauty treatments of your choice.
- Pack for the honeymoon (arrange for someone to bring your luggage and going-away outfits to the reception site if you're leaving from the reception).

1 week before:

- Greet out-of-town guests.
- Go to the gym, take a long walk, or do some other stress-reducing activity.
- Schedule time for beauty - a manicure touch-up, or a hairstyling appointment - before the rehearsal dinner.
- Attend the wedding rehearsal and dinner following.