

THE AISLE SHORTLIST · FREE PRINTABLE

The 12-Month Wedding Planning Checklist

Every planning task in the order it needs to happen, from the first budget talk to the thank-you notes. Tick the boxes as you go.

Inside: budget and guest count worksheets · 12 to 10 months · 9 to 6 months · 5 to 3 months · 2 months to 1 week · day-of emergency kit · after the wedding

Budget and guest count

Almost every other decision depends on these two numbers. Settle them before you visit a single venue.

Budget worksheet

Category	Planned	Actual	Paid
Venue and rentals			
Catering and drinks			
Photo and video			
Attire, hair and makeup			
Music and entertainment			
Flowers and decor			
Stationery and postage			
Rings			
Officiant, license, fees			
Favors and gifts			
Transportation			
Cushion for surprises			
Total			

Guest count

Group	Must invite	Would like to invite
Partner 1 family		
Partner 2 family		
Friends		
Work and others		
Total		

Lock the big pieces

Venues and the most requested vendors book first. Sign nothing before you read the cancellation terms.

Decisions

- ☐ Agree on the total budget and who contributes
- ☐ Draft the guest list and a target count
- ☐ Pick a season and two or three possible dates
- ☐ Decide on the style: formal, relaxed, small, large
- ☐ Decide whether to hire a planner or coordinator

Bookings

- ☐ Visit venues and book one
- ☐ Book the photographer
- ☐ Book the caterer if the venue has none
- ☐ Book the officiant
- ☐ Book the band or DJ
- ☐ Book the videographer, if any

Admin

- ☐ Open a shared wedding spreadsheet or folder for contracts and receipts
- ☐ Note each deposit and its due date in one calendar
- ☐ Start a wedding website (date, location, travel, registry later)
- ☐ Choose the wedding party

Attire, registry, save the dates

Dresses can take several months to order and alter. Save the dates go out 6 to 8 months ahead (8 to 12 for a destination wedding).

Attire

- ☐ Shop for the dress or suit
- ☐ Order it and note the alteration schedule
- ☐ Choose wedding party attire and share the budget

Guests

- ☐ Finalize the guest list and collect addresses
- ☐ Order and mail save the dates
- ☐ Reserve hotel room blocks

Registry

- ☐ Choose one main registry
- ☐ Add items at every price range
- ☐ Add the registry link to the wedding website

Vendors

- ☐ Book the florist
- ☐ Book hair and makeup, with a trial date
- ☐ Book rentals (chairs, tables, linens, tent)
- ☐ Plan the honeymoon and check passports

Guides for this stage: wedding registry must-haves and the save the date timeline at aisleshortlist.com

Invitations, menu, rings

Order invitations now so printing, addressing and a proof round all fit before mailing day.

Stationery

- ☐ Order invitation samples, then the full run
- ☐ Order day-of paper: programs, menus, place cards
- ☐ Weigh a full invitation at the post office
- ☐ Buy stamps, including for RSVP envelopes

Food and cake

- ☐ Menu tasting with the caterer
- ☐ Choose the cake or dessert
- ☐ Confirm the bar plan and licenses

Details

- ☐ Buy the wedding rings and check sizes
- ☐ Order favors (allow several weeks)
- ☐ Book transportation
- ☐ Choose ceremony readings and music
- ☐ Start writing vows, if you write your own

Wedding party

- ☐ Plan the rehearsal dinner
- ☐ Buy gifts for the wedding party

RSVPs, seating, final payments

Mail invitations 6 to 8 weeks before. Set the RSVP deadline one week before your caterer needs the final count.

8 to 6 weeks

- ☐ Mail invitations
- ☐ Get the marriage license (check validity dates)
- ☐ First dress fitting
- ☐ Write the day-of timeline

4 to 2 weeks

- ☐ Chase missing RSVPs
- ☐ Give the final count to caterer and venue
- ☐ Make the seating chart
- ☐ Send the timeline to every vendor
- ☐ Final fitting

Final week

- ☐ Confirm every vendor by phone or email
- ☐ Put final payments and tips in labeled envelopes
- ☐ Pack the day-of emergency kit (next page)
- ☐ Give rings and license to one named person
- ☐ Pack for the honeymoon
- ☐ Rehearsal
- ☐ Sleep

Day-of emergency kit

Give it to one person who is not in the photos all day.

Attire

- ☐ Mini sewing kit, matching thread
- ☐ Safety pins, two sizes
- ☐ Fashion tape
- ☐ Stain remover pen, white chalk
- ☐ Lint roller
- ☐ Spare buttons, spare tights
- ☐ Small scissors
- ☐ Heel protectors for grass

Hair and makeup

- ☐ Bobby pins, clear elastics
- ☐ Hairspray, blotting papers
- ☐ The lipstick of the day
- ☐ Deodorant, breath mints

Health

- ☐ Blister bandages
- ☐ Pain reliever, antacid, allergy tablets
- ☐ Tissues, hand sanitizer
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Snacks and water
- ☐ Flat shoes for the reception

Ceremony and reception

- ☐ Marriage license and a pen
- ☐ Printed vows
- ☐ Vendor phone list, payment envelopes
- ☐ Phone charger
- ☐ Lighter, tape, zip ties
- ☐ Bags for gifts and cards

Wrap up

Most etiquette guides suggest sending thank-you notes within about three months.

- ☐ Return rentals and borrowed items
- ☐ Have the dress cleaned and stored
- ☐ Send the signed marriage license if the officiant did not
- ☐ Order certified copies of the marriage certificate
- ☐ Write thank-you notes, using the gift list kept on the day
- ☐ Leave reviews for the vendors you would recommend
- ☐ Use or check the registry completion discount before it expires
- ☐ Update names on ID, bank and insurance, if one of you changes names
- ☐ Back up the photos in two places

More short planning lists, updated every week: aisleshortlist.com. Registry guide, day-of kit, favors, invitation timeline and wedding party ideas.