

Planning Your Big Day—Month by Month

9 to 12 months prior

- Establish your wedding budget
- Decide on your wedding date
- Determine the number of guests and start working on your guest list
- Research and book your wedding and reception venues
- Choose your wedding theme and colors
- Determine and book the officiant for the ceremony
- Choose your bridal party and invite them to be a part of your special day
- Research, interview and book caterer
- Research, interview and book photographer and/or videographer
- Research, interview and book florist
- Research, interview and book a DJ or band for the reception
- Find the perfect dress, veil, accessories and shoes for the big day
- Select bridesmaids dresses (this is traditionally done with the help of the maid/matron of honor)
- Create your bridal registry
- Start planning your honeymoon

Have a budget for everything! Know what you want, but also know what you want to pay. Providing your caterer with this information will tell them everything they need to know to make your day exactly the way you envision it.

» **Carole Graves, Sweet Basil Café**

6 to 8 months prior

- Meet with your wedding coordinator
- Select and order your announcements, invitations and stationary
- Choose your wedding rings
- Arrange for engagement photos to be taken
- Announce your engagement to the world through the local newspaper
- Decide on and make accommodations for out-of-town attendants and guests
- Attend your first gown fitting with your maid of honor
- Select attire for your flower girl and ring bearer

Stationary rules are not etched in stone. Etiquette is based on common sense and courtesy. There are certain things you must include on your invites (time, date, location) but the purpose is to say it as graciously as possible while incorporating your own personal style and expressing your joy. There isn't a right or wrong way to complete the task. It all depends on what is best for the ceremony and the couple.

» **Beth Cox, Printers and Stationers**

Hire a professional! It's the most important day of your life. Look through fashion magazines for makeup trends, the same way you would look for your dress and hairstyles. The more ideas you bring to the table, the easier it is for the makeup artist to create your perfect look.

» **Natalie Faggioni, Professional Makeup Artist**

3 to 5 months prior

- Start pre-marital counseling
- Interview the bakeries or baker designing your cake. Don't forget to taste samples
- Finalize wedding details with the officiant
- Book honeymoon
- Address wedding invitations
- Schedule your trial run and wedding day hair /makeup with your salon
- Make reservations or start planning the rehearsal dinner (the grooms parents traditionally handle this task)
- Update your registry (be sure to register in hometowns of both the bride and groom)
- Create maps and accommodation lists for out-of-town guests
- Pay all deposits and confirm that all wedding vendor contracts have been signed
- The couple's mothers should select their dresses
- Make reservations for post-wedding brunch

The dress sets the tone for the entire wedding. If you decide on a satin dress, which is more formal, make sure the fabric for your bridesmaids' dresses is just as formal. Order your dress as soon as possible—it takes 12 weeks for your dress to arrive and another three weeks for alterations.

» **Krystina Bole, Cherry Tree Lane**

2 months prior

- Make sure groomsmen have been fitted for suiting (we recommend making the appointment for them)
- Start thinking about bridesmaids/groomsmen gifts
- Make reservations for the bridesmaids' luncheon
- Final gown fitting!
- Order stamps from the post office
- Attend your showers (the maid of honor should document gift/giver information for thank you notes)

Book a florist nine to twelve months prior to your big day.



Update your registry three to five months prior to the wedding day.



TEXT BY NATALIE FINLEY

6 weeks prior

- Mail invitations
- Mail thank you notes for shower gifts
- Purchase favors and other wedding accessories

Sample, sample, sample! Be sure to schedule an appointment for your cake tasting and order at least six months in advance for medium to large weddings and four months in advance for smaller, more intimate weddings. It is very important for you to be comfortable with the person or company you've entrusted to construct your cake.

» **Judy Oliver, Victorian Tea Room**

1 month prior

- Arrange for bridal portraits to be taken
- Make return arrangements for mens formal wear
- Make sure all wedding attendants know times for the rehearsal dinner and wedding
- Purchase your marriage license
- Finalize details with all vendors and venues
- Meet with your wedding planner to finalize plans for the rehearsal dinner and wedding
- Attend your mock wedding day hair and makeup appointment

When making a decision about event setup, an expandable tent is always the best choice. Bad weather and unexpected guests can't always be prevented, but you can definitely be prepared for both.

» **Jackie Hendrix, Party Pros**

2 weeks prior

- Confirm honeymoon reservations
- Confirm rehearsal dinner reservations
- Confirm final head count with the caterer
- Confirm dates for final vendor payments (most payments are due 2 weeks prior)

As soon as the date is set, start thinking about your hairstyle and book a consultation to discuss your ideas. Bring as much information about your day as possible. Decide how you want to look, natural or glamorous. Everything should complement everything else—from your hair and makeup to the flow of your gown.

» **Andy Cagle, Andy's The Professionals**

the final week

1 week prior

- Host bridesmaids' luncheon. (This is traditionally the occasion you give a gift to your bridesmaids.)
- Start packing for your honeymoon (sooner is always better than later)
- Give wedding planner all vendor payments in labeled and sealed envelopes for wedding day distribution



Choose your wedding rings six to eight months prior to your wedding.

the day before

- Finish packing for the honeymoon
- Don't forget to have an emergency kit packed for the ceremony (stain remover, safety pins, aspirin, etc.)
- Have fun at the rehearsal dinner
- Make sure the best man and the wedding coordinator have everything for the officiant and the wedding (marriage license)
- Stay with family and hit the sack early—you have a big day tomorrow!

the Wedding Day

- Eat breakfast
- Attend manicure and pedicure appointment
- Attend Hair/Makeup Appointment
- Make sure the maid of honor and best man have your rings
- Have fun!

After the wedding...

- Arrange for your gifts to be transported from the reception
- Make sure all legal documents are updated if you didn't do so before the wedding (name change forms)
- Mail all thank-you notes
- Have your gown preserved