

EVERY WEDDING CHECKLIST YOU NEED



A Practical
WEDDING

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A man with a beard and long hair is wearing a white wedding dress and a long, flowing veil. He is standing in a large, industrial-style building with a high ceiling and a grid of windows. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows on the floor. The text "AND SO THE ADVENTURE BEGINS" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, centered on the image. Two horizontal pink lines are positioned above and below the text.

AND SO
THE
ADVENTURE
BEGINS

12 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

The Go To List

WHEN YOU'RE NEWLY ENGAGED

- ☐ You're engaged! Have some bubbly and bliss out
- ☐ Tell people the big news
- ☐ Avoid jumping right into planning if you can possibly avoid it: just enjoy this time for a bit.
- ☐ Pick up a copy of the [APW Book](#) and the [APW Planner](#) (but don't start yet!)
- ☐ Sit down and figure out what your wedding priorities are
- ☐ Come up with a [wedding mission statement](#)
- ☐ Have an engagement party, or a super casual engagement toast
- ☐ Decide if you want to elope, and ditch the rest of this list (really!)

12 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ☐ Launch your master plan binder, notebook, or Google Doc
- ☐ Check out the [APW Wedding Planning Spreadsheets](#) and start customizing them
- ☐ Sit down and have your first (of many) guest lists chats (and don't forget to ask your parents for their list)
- ☐ Figure out your target wedding budget
- ☐ Narrow your venue search (ceremony and reception) to your favorite options
- ☐ If you want (and can afford) a wedding planner, [find one](#) that you share your wedding values

11 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ☐ Begin touring your preferred reception and ceremony venues (ask questions!)
- ☐ Book a venue
- ☐ Begin your wedding photographer search: set-up meetings, and book

12 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

10 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Start shopping for wedding attire. Make appointments at bridal and clothing shops as needed. Remember traditional wedding dress shops will have long lead times on ordering dresses
- Research what kind of food you want to have, and begin to interview and book caterers
- If you don't want a caterer, start to look into self-catering or having a potluck wedding
- Once you've booked your wedding photographer, shoot engagement photos (especially if you're using them for save the dates)
- Finalize your guest list before sending Save the Dates. Hot tip: our [spreadsheets](#) can help you do this
- Create a basic version of your [wedding website](#), especially if you want to include it in your Save the Dates
- Design and order your Save the Dates

9 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Send your Save the Dates
- Research wedding invitations and associated paper goods
- If you want to DIY your wedding invitations, come up with a plan now
- If you can afford a Day of Coordinator, [hire one](#). If you can't, ask a friend to be your [wedding stage manager](#)

8 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Check out local florists and make appointments
- Decide what kind of music you want to have. Do you need a DJ? A band? A DIY music plan? (Psst: check our [APW's wedding playlists](#))
- Begin thinking about your officiant: who will it be?
- Daydream about wedding cakes, and discuss what kind you'd like
- If you want wedding showers or parties, peruse these ideas, and ask a friend if they'll plan it for you

12 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

7 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- ☐ Book a florist, if you're using one ([Here are tips!](#))
- ☐ If you've decided on a band or DJ, book one now
- ☐ If you want a videographer, book one now
- ☐ Research hair and make-up artists if needed
- ☐ Begin researching honeymoon destinations (because you KNOW you need a break)

6 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ☐ Think about rehearsal dinner options
- ☐ Start to plan any extra events associated with the wedding (after party, brunch, welcome party)
- ☐ Finalize your guest list (we have [spreadsheets](#) for that!)
- ☐ Set up a meeting with your officiant to discuss the ceremony and start marital counseling (if relevant)
- ☐ Start thinking about your [vows](#) and [ceremony](#) plan
- ☐ If you're having a friend officiate your wedding, now is a good time to ask them about doing so
- ☐ If you're not having a friend officiate your wedding, make sure you've booked someone (or the church/ synagogue / mosque / temple)
- ☐ Set up your wedding registry
- ☐ Have a meeting with everyone who is helping (or start sharing those Google Docs!) and make sure they all understand what is expected
- ☐ Find a baker for your wedding cake, and if you can schedule cake tastings, do so

5 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ☐ Book that honeymoon!
- ☐ If someone in your wedding is wearing suits, start figuring out if you want to rent or buy

12 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

- Check out wedding rings and decide what you want
- Decide if you need party rentals, and figure out what you need and put together an order (adjustments can be made later, so book now!)
- If you need a wedding tent, research and reserve one
- Schedule your hair and make-up trials, if you're hiring a stylist (also make sure you coordinate with your wedding parties or friends)
- Reserve hotel blocks for your wedding
- Make wedding night reservations as needed

4 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Finalize rehearsal dinner and book anything you might need to still book
- Buy your wedding rings
- Order wedding invitations and stationery (tip: check out our post on wedding invitation wording)
- Make sure your passport is up to date if you're leaving the country for your honeymoon
- Book wedding transportation
- Create a spreadsheet for RSVPs and guest list addresses
- Talk to whoever is planning your bachelorette party and/or any wedding showers, send them to APW for tips

3 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Address and mail your wedding invitations (double check the postage!)
- Think about what ceremony extras you might need (a chuppah, aisle runners, etc) and buy or rent them
- Start planning out your wedding ceremony script
- If you're DIYing anything for your wedding, start now or cross it off your list
- Schedule dress fittings as needed
- Make wedding night reservations as needed
- Research your local marriage license, civil union, and domestic partnership rules

12 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

2 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ☐ Begin working on your wedding vows
- ☐ Make sure everyone in your wedding parties have bought what they're wearing
- ☐ Figure out what you're wearing to your rehearsal dinner
- ☐ Put together a list of what you want to pack for your honeymoon, if you're taking one

SIX WEEKS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ☐ Start wearing your shoes around the house as needed
- ☐ Make sure you're updating your gift registry and spreadsheets as gifts arrive, and send thank you notes now if you can
- ☐ Confirm that out of town guests are set up at hotels and lodging
- ☐ Figure out if you want a guest book, and make it happen if so (also: test your pens!)
- ☐ Write thank you notes for your shower gifts
- ☐ Finalize your vows
- ☐ Make sure your wedding outfits are still on point
- ☐ Finalizing your menu with your caterer
- ☐ Finalize your wedding ceremony

1 MONTH BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ☐ Put together your seating chart
- ☐ Create your escort cards
- ☐ Finalize your ceremony outline
- ☐ Create a wedding timeline
- ☐ Make any necessary nail and spa appointments
- ☐ Confirm all vendor payments (and tip amounts)
- ☐ Create your wedding playlist, if you're doing the DIY DJ route

12 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

- Make sure your wedding party knows any critical information as it pertains to the rehearsal dinner or wedding day
- Give your DOC a copy of the vendor contract information, delivery schedule, and set up times (or work with them to gather that information)
- Schedule a final dress fitting
- Print wedding programs if you're having them
- Confirm all rentals and/or adjust your rental order
- Sit down with your wedding stage manager or DOC and walk through all the details for your wedding day
- Get a marriage license

TWO WEEKS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Check with guests who haven't RSVPed
- Confirm head counts, menus, vendor meal requests, and delivery with your caterers and bakers
- Confirm your photo requests, required family, and timeline with your photographer
- Make sure that everyone who is delivering something to the wedding (rentals, flowers, etc) has a confirmed, final timeline
- Send a transportation schedule to transport providers
- Make sure any clothing you want cleaned or pressed is taken care of
- Ensure that there is a plan for wedding venue set up and breakdown

ONE WEEK BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Pack an overnight bag, and include: your toothbrush, birth control/condoms, something to sleep in, an outfit for the next day, honeymoon luggage, and your passport
- Get your wedding manicure/pedicure (if it's happening at all)
- Make sure a copy of your honeymoon plans is left with family and friends
- Put your final payments + tips for vendors in labeled envelopes and give this to your DOC or someone else to manage

12 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

- Get your wedding day “oh shit kit” put together (aspirin, make-up, safety pins, mints, snacks, etc)
- Pick up your dress (if it wasn’t delivered to you)
- Try on your entire wedding ensemble
- Give all of your vendors an emergency number to call, just in case (note: not yours!)
- Assign a family member to be the photographer’s point of contact
- Hand over all of your planning docs (including a copy of the vendor delivery schedule, set up times, and phone numbers) to your wedding stage manager or day of coordinator and take a step back to enjoy this thing!

1 DAY BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Rehearse your ceremony with your officiant and wedding party
- Confirm your honeymoon transportation, airport drop-off, etc
- Set your alarm (and a back-up)
- Print out your vows (or memorize them)
- Drop off your favors, menus, table plans, and place cards with your caterer or venue

ON YOUR WEDDING DAY

- Make sure you pause and appreciate your family, friends, and each other
- Take a few minutes every so often to breathe and focus. Smile at your friends, give hugs, be in the moment
- GET MARRIED!

AFTER THE WEDDING

- Send out your thank you notes (to people who helped with the wedding and for gifts)
- Make sure your vendors have been paid in full
- Follow-up and make sure you know when you’ll get your wedding photos back
- Ensure that rentals, clothing, and accessories have been returned (as needed)
- Toast your marriage! You did it! Now the good stuff starts for real.

EVERYONE HAS AN OPINION

and you don't have to listen to any of them



THE DON'T FORGET LIST

Print this, tape it to your door!

- ☐ Rings
- ☐ Vows
- ☐ Marriage license
- ☐ Dresses
- ☐ Suits
- ☐ Driver's license
- ☐ Wallet
- ☐ Cash
- ☐ Passport/ID
- ☐ Socks, underwear, bra
- ☐ Accessories
- ☐ Comfortable shoes
- ☐ Final vendor payments
- ☐ Tips for vendors
- ☐ Wedding playlist
- ☐ Umbrella
- ☐ Snacks and water
- ☐ Backup copies of ceremony
- ☐ Backup copies of wedding planning documents
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

NOTES



IT'S A SPECIAL
KIND OF
LOVE

6 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

The Double Time Version

WHEN YOU'RE NEWLY ENGAGED

- You're engaged! Have some bubbly and bliss out
- Tell people the big news
- Avoid jumping right into planning if you can possibly avoid it: just enjoy this time for a bit.
- Pick up a copy of the [APW Book](#) and the [APW Planner](#) (but don't start yet!)
- Sit down and figure out what your wedding priorities are
- Come up with a [wedding mission statement](#)
- Have an engagement party, or a super casual engagement toast
- Decide if you want to elope, and ditch the rest of this list (really!)

6 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Launch your master plan binder, notebook, or Google Doc
- Check out the [APW Wedding Planning Spreadsheets](#) and start customizing them
- Sit down and have your first (of many) guest lists chats (and don't forget to ask your parents for their list)
- Figure out your target wedding budget
- Narrow your venue search (ceremony and reception) to your favorite options
- If you want (and can afford) a wedding planner, [find one](#) that you share your wedding values
- Begin touring your preferred reception and ceremony venues (ask questions!)
- Book a venue
- Begin your wedding photographer search: set-up meetings, and book
- Start shopping for wedding attire. Make appointments at bridal and clothing shops as needed. Remember traditional wedding dress shops will have long lead times on ordering dresses. (on a six month timeline, you may need to shop 'off the rack')

6 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

- Research what kind of food you want to have, and begin to interview and book caterers
- If you don't want a caterer, start to look into self-catering or having a potluck wedding
- Once you've booked your wedding photographer, shoot engagement photos (especially if you're using them for save the dates)
- Finalize your guest list before sending Save the Dates. Hot tip: our [spreadsheets](#) can help you do this
- Create a basic version of your [wedding website](#), especially if you want to include it in your Save the Dates
- Design and order your Save the Dates (note: you can skip this step if your timeline feels too crunched, and send the invites a bit earlier)
- Send your Save the Dates
- Begin researching honeymoon destinations (because you KNOW you need a break)
- Make sure your passport is up to date if you're leaving the country for your honeymoon

5 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Research wedding invitations and associated paper goods
- If you want to DIY your wedding invitations, come up with a plan now
- If you can afford a Day of Coordinator, [hire one](#). If you can't, ask a friend to be your [wedding stage manager](#)
- Check out local florists and make appointments
- Decide what kind of music you want to have. Do you need a DJ? A band? A DIY music plan? (Psst: check our [APW's wedding playlists](#))
- Begin thinking about your officiant: who will it be?
- Daydream about wedding cakes, and discuss what kind you'd like
- If you want wedding showers or parties, peruse these ideas, and ask a friend if they'll plan it for you
- Book a florist, if you're using one ([Here are tips!](#))
- If you've decided on a band or DJ, book one now

6 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

- If you want a videographer, book one now
- Research hair and make-up artists if needed
- Find a baker for your wedding cake, and if you can schedule cake tastings, do so
- Book that honeymoon!
- If someone in your wedding is wearing suits, start figuring out if you want to rent or buy
- Check out wedding rings and decide what you want
- Decide if you need party rentals, and figure out what you need and put together an order (adjustments can be made later, so book now!)
- Reserve hotel blocks for your wedding
- Make wedding night reservations as needed
- Book wedding transportation

4 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Think about rehearsal dinner options
- Start to plan any extra events associated with the wedding (after party, brunch, welcome party)
- Set up a meeting with your officiant to discuss the ceremony and start marital counseling (if relevant)
- Start thinking about your vows and ceremony_plan
- If you're having a friend officiate your wedding, now is a good time to ask them about doing so
- If you're not having a friend officiate your wedding, make sure you've booked someone (or the church/ synagogue /mosque / temple)
- Set up your wedding registry
- Have a meeting with everyone who is helping (or start sharing those Google Docs!) and make sure they all understand what is expected
- If you need a wedding tent, research and reserve one
- Schedule your hair and make-up trials, if you're hiring stylist (also make sure you coordinate with your wedding parties or friends)

6 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

- Make sure everyone in your wedding parties have bought what they're wearing
- Finalize rehearsal dinner and book anything you might need to still book
- Buy your wedding rings
- Order wedding invitations and stationery (tip: check out our post on wedding invitation wording)
- Create a spreadsheet for RSVPs and guest list addresses
- Talk to whoever is planning your bachelorette party and/or any wedding showers, send them to APW for tips

3 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Address and mail your wedding invitations (double check the postage!) (8 weeks out, if you sent Save the Dates)
- Think about what ceremony extras you might need (a chuppah, aisle runners, etc) and buy or rent them
- Start planning out your wedding ceremony script
- If you're DIYing anything for your wedding, start now or cross it off your list
- Schedule dress fittings as needed
- Research your local marriage license, civil union, and domestic partnership rules
- Begin working on your wedding vows
- Figure out what you're wearing to your rehearsal dinner
- Put together a list of what you want to pack for your honeymoon, if you're taking one

2 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Start wearing your shoes around the house as needed
- Make sure you're updating your gift registry and spreadsheets as gifts arrive, and send thank you notes now if you can
- Confirm that out of town guests are set up at hotels and lodging

6 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

- ☐ Figure out if you want a guest book, and make it happen if so (also: test your pens!)
- ☐ Write thank you notes for your shower gifts
- ☐ Finalize your vows
- ☐ Make sure your wedding outfits are still on point
- ☐ Finalizing your menu with your caterer
- ☐ Finalize your wedding ceremony.

1 MONTH BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ☐ Put together your seating chart
- ☐ Create your escort cards
- ☐ Finalize your ceremony outline
- ☐ Create a wedding timeline
- ☐ Make any necessary nail and spa appointments
- ☐ Confirm all vendor payments (and tip amounts)
- ☐ Create your wedding playlist, if you're doing the DIY DJ route
- ☐ Make sure your wedding party knows any critical information as it pertains to the rehearsal dinner or wedding day
- ☐ Give your DOC a copy of the vendor contract information, delivery schedule, and set up times (or work with them to gather that information)
- ☐ Schedule a final dress fitting
- ☐ Print wedding programs if you're having them
- ☐ Confirm all rentals and/or adjust your rental order
- ☐ Sit down with your wedding stage manager or DOC and walk through all the details for your wedding day
- ☐ Get a marriage license

6 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

TWO WEEKS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Check with guests who haven't RSVPed
- Confirm head counts, menus, vendor meal requests, and delivery with your caterers and bakers
- Confirm your photo requests, required family, and timeline with your photographer
- Make sure that everyone who is delivering something to the wedding (rentals, flowers, etc) has a confirmed, final timeline
- Send a transportation schedule to transport providers
- Make sure any clothing you want cleaned or pressed is taken care of
- Ensure that there is a plan for wedding venue set up and breakdown

ONE WEEK BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- Pack an overnight bag, and include: your toothbrush, birth control/condoms, something to sleep in, an outfit for the next day, honeymoon luggage, and your passport
- Get your wedding manicure/pedicure (if it's happening at all)
- Make sure a copy of your honeymoon plans is left with family and friends
- Put your final payments + tips for vendors in labeled envelopes and give this to your DOC or someone else to manage
- Get your wedding day "oh shit kit" put together (aspirin, make-up, safety pins, mints, snacks, etc)
- Pick up your dress (if it wasn't delivered to you)
- Try on your entire wedding ensemble
- Give all of your vendors an emergency number to call, just in case (note: not yours!)
- Assign a family member to be the photographer's point of contact
- Hand over all of your planning docs (including a copy of the vendor delivery schedule, set up times, and phone numbers) to your wedding stage manager or day of coordinator and take a step back to enjoy this thing!

6 MONTH WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

1 DAY BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ☐ Rehearse your ceremony with your officiant and wedding party
- ☐ Confirm your honeymoon transportation, airport drop-off, etc
- ☐ Set your alarm (and a back-up)
- ☐ Print out your vows (or memorize them)
- ☐ Drop off your favors, menus, table plans, and place cards with your caterer or venue

ON YOUR WEDDING DAY

- ☐ Make sure you pause and appreciate your family, friends, and each other
- ☐ Take a few minutes every so often to breathe and focus. Smile at your friends, give hugs, be in the moment
- ☐ GET MARRIED!

AFTER THE WEDDING

- ☐ Send out your thank you notes (to people who helped with the wedding and for gifts)
- ☐ Make sure your vendors have been paid in full
- ☐ Follow-up and make sure you know when you'll get your wedding photos back
- ☐ Ensure that rentals, clothing, and accessories have been returned (as needed)
- ☐ Toast your marriage! You did it! Now the good stuff starts for real.



**TOGE
THER**

CH - CH - CH - CH - CHANGES

A Checklist For Uncertain Times

Determine your new priorities

In times of change, our priorities have to shift. When you first started planning, amazing flowers may have been top of your list (after ya know... getting married). Today, those needs and goals might look very different. Sit down with your person and figure out what it is that you want and need most. Do you need to get legally married ASAP to protect yourselves in a time of turmoil? Maybe a quick and dirty elopement is what you need. Is a big celebration whenever the heck that can happen most important? Then truly postponing is where it's at for you.

Read your contracts

You've probably already done this, but do it again. This time you'll have a critical eye and will be looking for words like 'cancellation,' 'changes,' 'postponement,' 'force majeure,' or 'acts of god.'

Reach out to your vendor team

Step one here is likely your venue. They are going to be a deciding factor in how you proceed. Then contact your other vendors one by one. Be kind, gracious, and understanding. Most of your vendors are small (very small) business owners and they can only do what they can do. No one is a magician.

Start making new plans

Now's the time. Are you moving the date out a year? Great. It'll be time to start actively revising those contracts, adjusting payments, and managing your plans from a new perspective. Are you moving the whole thing up to this Sunday so your sick family member can be present (at least virtually)? Then your to-do list is going to be jam packed, but you can do it. Depending on the plans you've decided on, you'll start to see how the plans that you had already made and been working on will adjust to the new timelines you're looking at.

Amend your contracts, pay your bills

Nothing is going to happen on a handshake or a text message. So, when chatting with your vendors, you'll need to get revised contracts and make sure your bills are paid as needed. Remember to read the contracts thoroughly before signing, and pay your bills so that your vendors can show up and support you when the (new) time is right.

CH - CH - CH - CH - CHANGES

Notify your family and friends

Make sure that the guests know what's up. Do they need to change travel plans, are they no longer going to be a part of your now small celebration? Whatever is going on, just make sure they know and have as much warning and information as possible.

Be gentle with yourself, each other, and your families

Change is hard for all of us. Especially unexpected changes. Be patient and kind to yourselves and each other in times of adjustment.

DRIVE IN

WEDDING
WINDOW
A SPECIAL MEMORY

**RUN
AWAY
WITH
ME**

F*CK IT, LET'S ELOPE

For When The Time Is Now

Nail down some basics:

- When?
- Where?
- Who will be there? (or will you be video conferencing folx in?)
- What's your budget?

Do you need or want to hire anyone?

The big reason you're eloping (especially right now) is to avoid health concerns and follow safety guidelines. Commendable. But if you'd like to have a photographer, or custom flowers, hair and makeup, or anything else, you'll want to make sure to get that all scheduled and booked. Keep in mind, depending on when exactly you're planning this, it may be friggin' hard to lock vendors down. But also, they're looking for work. A photographer could shoot with a longer lens, a florist could drop off on your porch. There may just be options for you!

If you decide to travel at all to elope, make sure all your travel plans are in place.

Flights or driving (and how the heck to stay safe during that, given current guidelines and regulations.)
Accommodations

Get a marriage license.

Research the specifics for your state/county (aka, the place where you'll be getting married!). There may be a waiting period. There is usually a window of time that says you must get it within X days of the wedding. Just be sure you know what you need to know. Make an appointment if you can, it'll make it easier. (And unfortunately, right now, in some places this may not be possible. Guess what, you can still have a ceremony! You do you.)

Don't forget about your outfits.

Whatever that means for you.

F*CK IT, LET'S ELOPE

Make sure you've got the legal stuff covered.

Need an officiant? (City Hall will cover that for you, if they're open. Friends can get ordained online and marry you from 6 feet away. CO, PA and WI don't require a third party officiant. Research the rules where you are.)

Need witnesses? (Gather whoever lives with you, or is closest and least at risk to act as a witness if needed.)

Will you exchange rings?

You don't have to, but if you want to, make sure you order them/buy them in enough time to have them in hand (wink) on the wedding day.

After the fact:

Send in that marriage license. Make it legal.

Celebrate however the heck you want.

Share the exciting news with the people you love. (social media, wedding announcements, a website with photos.)

**YOU'VE
GOT
THIS**

