



Countdown to Your Wedding Day

THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL WEDDING away is to plan early. To help you get off to a good start, we've put together a checklist that covers all bases of your destination event, including when to order the wedding invitations, book a photographer and schedule the wedding dress fitting. *By Beverly Clark*

A Year to Six Months Before the Wedding

- Decide on a budget.
- Determine the style (formal, informal), size (wedding party, guests), and setting (church, garden, beach) for the ceremony.
- Target a wedding date.
- Select a destination—check the internet or contact a travel agent.
- Create a file for contracts, notes of conversations, and other wedding-related information.
- Research the marriage license requirements of your destination. If possible, request an application ahead of time from the foreign consulate, chamber of commerce, or tourism department.
- Call or send for information on wedding sites; wedding-package details from hotels, chapels, consulates, and tourism departments; and consultants who can assist in legal matters and coordinate the ceremony site, officiant, flowers, music, and other details.
- Evaluate wedding packages and select a wedding service or consultant who can assist you with long-distance arrangements.
- Choose a maid of honor, best man, and other attendants.

- Develop an invitation list, then send a save-the-date note.
- Select wedding attire.
- Sign up with a bridal registry and select gifts.

Four to Six Months Before

- Negotiate and finalize ceremony and reception details with your wedding service providers, independent consultant, or onsite coordinator, communicating any items that will personalize your wedding.
- Make sure to collect signed contracts that confirm the arrangements.
- Finalize your guest list.
- Order wedding invitations, announcements, and thank-you cards.
- Negotiate and arrange air, hotel, and ground transportation for the wedding party. Make additional arrangements for the honeymoon.
- Confirm your arrangements with the photographer and videographer.
- Buy wedding rings and have them engraved.

Two to Four Months Before

- Obtain necessary legal documents, including passports and/or visas if traveling to a foreign destination.
- Get any necessary inoculations.
- Choose gifts for the maid of honor, best man, and other attendants.
- Address and mail invitations.
- Begin composing your vows (if you want to write your own).

One to Two Months Before

- Have your final dress and headpiece fittings.
- Have a formal wedding portrait taken.
- Send a wedding announcement and picture to your hometown newspapers.
- Shop for your travel wardrobe.
- Consult with a professional shipper if you are shipping your wedding dress.

Two Weeks Before

- Contact necessary offices for name change forms (driver's license, social security, etc.).
- Confirm travel and wedding arrangements.

One Week Before

- Review final details with the hotel, photographer, videographer, florist, musicians, and others involved in the wedding.
- Arrange to meet with your officiant before the ceremony.
- Make sure everyone's wedding attire is in order.
- Plan guest seating if needed.

Upon Arrival

- Visit with your consultant and/or officiant.
- Apply for the marriage license.

The Wedding Day

- Focus on the important things—each other—and try to stay flexible about everything else.
- Have Fun!

For additional planning tools or to find out about local marriage laws at your chosen destination, please visit www.eliteweddingcollection.com.