

40 Day Guide To Planning Your Wedding

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1

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Planning your wedding in 40 days, it may take you a bit longer than that to figure out what you want to serve at your wedding reception! This guide will help you through the entire process of planning your wedding, no matter if you do it in 40 days or it takes you a bit longer.

This guide has a design to be used in order, but your situation may be different. For example, you may have already found that perfect wedding dress or you may not need to worry about the cake for the wedding. Your goal should be to know what you need to do how to get it done and when to get it done to ensure that the entire process goes smoothly.

This step-by-step planning guide for your wedding should provide you with everything you need to know to plan your wedding. Check off the chapters as you work through them. Take notes in the sides of each page to ensure that you are noting where you stand on each topic. The good news is that the process is easy to do and it does allow you to get it all under control in just four days.

This step-by-step guide gives you plenty of room for getting everything done, from telling your parents about the wedding itself to walking down the aisle. Be sure to include your family members in the planning, if you would like to. They too can offer suggestions, tips and perhaps even help you to pick the best accessories to complete your wedding.

At the end of each chapter is a section where you can jot down what you did, what you still need to do and to make other notes as you need to. Create a to-do list for yourself, if you would like to. You may also want to use this guide, and step by step set up to help you to remember every detail of this very special day. Since you have everything you need right here, the only thing stopping you from getting started is turning the page!

2

DAY 1 TO DAY 5: YOU ARE GETTING MARRIED!

No matter if you have been planning on this day for months or years, or dreaming of it since the day you could walk, you are now finally getting married. After the excitement of this very special day wears off, it is now time to start considering the plans for your special day.

STEP 1: TALKING ABOUT GOALS

In this chapter, your goal is to come together and talk about the upcoming marriage. You will need to talk about what you each hope to accomplish in this very special event. Although, many men do not play a specific role in planning each aspect of the wedding more men than ever are getting involved. They do have the right to make this their special day too, of course. So, step one of your plan should be to talk about what your goals are.

What to talk about:

- What do you imagine your wedding to be like?
- What does your soon to be spouse believe is the perfect wedding?
- Do you want a large wedding or a private, small wedding?
- Do you plan to have a lavish event or a simple celebration?
- What are weddings like in your family, and his?
- What things do you really hope are not part of your wedding?

Talk about these areas with your significant other. Find out what their opinions are and start talking about the special day. Do not make any firm decisions, but do talk about what your hopes and dreams are for this very special occasion.

STEP 2: TELLING MOM

Hold on...telling your parents about your wedding is a good thing, so why is this such a big deal? It could be some parents want to immediately step in

and take over the planning. It could be that your parents are not sure you are ready, either.

Telling both sets of parents can be a lot of fun, if you present it in the right way. Keep yourself positive and motivated. In some families and religions, it is still proper for the man to approach the father of the soon to be bride and ask for her hand in marriage. If this is something that would be the expectation, go for it.

Some ideas:

- Keep it private and quiet. Most people want time to celebrate, not sit quietly in a restaurant.
- Be sure to give yourself and your parents enough time to soak in what you are saying. Do not expect an immediate reaction.
- Do keep them in the loop. Even if you will be doing the work of planning the wedding yourself, you want to be sure they know what is happening.

Telling Mom and Dad may be one of the easiest assignments for you thus far. On the other hand, it may be a challenge. Do not wait, though. If you wait to tell them for several weeks, chances are good they will be more frustrated later.

STEP 3: THE INITIAL BUDGET

Now that everyone is happily celebrating your soon to be wedding, the next step is to set the initial budget. There is no way for you to know how much the dress will cost, how much the reception hall will be or what amount to set aside for flowers. Yet, you may need to cap the wedding at some level right now. For most couples this is the amount of money available to them.

Here are some things to think about:

- The average American wedding can range from \$10,000 to \$25,000.
- You can cut costs along the way to have a glamorous wedding for less.
- Do not assume that your parents are paying for the wedding. Many parents simply cannot afford the cost of a wedding in these difficult times.
- Set a budget at the low end. Know what the high end is, too.

Going into debt is something that many couples end up doing right from the start. The problem is, if you max out your credit cards on your wedding planning, there is little for a down payment on a home or that fabulous

honeymoon you are thinking. Therefore, keep the short-term goals of wedding on your mind, while still realizing the important of long-term financial goals.

Tip: Consider seeking out financial planning classes for you both, now. That way, you can start your married life one-step ahead of the game.

STEP 4: WHO IS PAYING FOR WHAT?

The final element of this chapter is knowing who is paying for the wedding. Do talk to your parents about it. Talk to your soon to be in laws, too. Find out if they plan to contribute in any way, in a nice manner, of course! If your parents simply cannot afford to do so, they may be able to offer their home for the reception site or they may be willing to contribute in another way. Allow them this privilege.

DAYS 1 THROUGH 5 PERSONAL GOALS:

(Use this section throughout the book to make specific notations for yourself)

3

DAY 6 TO DAY 10: FORMULATING IDEAS

In this chapter of planning your wedding, it is up to you to come up with some ideas. You are getting the process of planning your wedding started, which is no easy task. Before you can make big decisions though, you need to work together to come up with a number of different things, especially knowing what your both are hoping for.

STEP 1: WHO IS HELPING YOU PLAN?

Take a deep breath. You do not have to do this alone. Many more women and men are hiring wedding planners to help them to plan their wedding. You do not have to have an endless budget to hire these planners. Rather, they simple account for a portion of your budget. The rest is what they get to work with.

Second, you may have parents who can help you with the planning. You may not want them to do so, though. Your goal for this step, then, is to determine if you will hire a wedding planner, use friends and family, or go it alone. Keep in mind that there is a lot to do, especially if you are planning your wedding in just a few short weeks. In addition, if you work full time, have children or otherwise are limited by the amount of time you have, hiring a professional is a good idea.

STEP 2: WHO WILL YOU HIRE?

Let us assume you do hire a wedding planner in this step. The good news is that there are fantastic professionals out there to aid you in the process. The bad news is that there are some not so good professionals. Here are tips to help you with this decision.

1. Learn about the wedding planner, including what type of experience they have planning weddings.
2. Ask them about their ability to plan a wedding within your budget.

3. Ask for references from couples who have used their services and contact them.
4. Note that wedding planners do require a down payment, but you should not have to pay for all of their services up front.
5. Do sign a contract that outlines everything these professionals will do for you and will not do for you. Be sure to hold on to a copy for yourself, too.

STEP 3: GOING IT ALONE?

If you do plan to do the planning of your wedding on your own, you will need to take some specific considerations. You will need to call people, to interview people and to research anyone that you hire for any of the services you have at your wedding.

In the following chapters, you will be given ideas about each professional, but full research of these companies has to be done. Be sure you have invested a good deal of time in planning your wedding. It really cannot just be on weekends and lunch breaks!

Tips:

- Set aside time to review your plans thus far.
- Note that you will likely run into obstacles along the way. It is normal to do so.
- Realize you may have to reach out for help at some point and that should be okay.
- Keep in mind that you both can work on the wedding together.
- Give yourself time each weekend to get caught up on wedding planning tasks.

STEP 4: KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Now that you know who is doing the planning, the next step is to know what to plan. In the following pages, you will be given specific tasks to accomplish. Be sure that you are diving right in and making decisions. There is often plenty of decisions to be made, too. The good news is that you will not miss anything through this guide.

You will have to make decisions about what you want, though. Take note of what your goals are. Remember to make decisions and later, if you need to, you can come back and make changes to those goals if you need to.

STEP 5: GUEST LIST PLANNING

Finally, before moving on, it is time to work on your guest list. You will not have hard numbers right now, but your goal is to have an estimated number of people to plan for. At every other stage in the process, you will need to know about how many people will attend.

Tips:

- Work with your parents to get a guest list going.
- Do not forget the other side of the family, too.
- Talk about friends, family, relatives, neighbors, your parent's friends...anyone who may want to be there.
- Leave pairing down the wedding to later.
- Realize that your wedding can be as intimate as you would like it to be or as large as you want.

DAYS 6 THROUGH 10 PERSONAL GOALS:

4

DAY 11 TO 15: BIG STUFF FIRST

You have your decision tools in place. The next step is to start working on the largest projects. Some of the things you will do for your wedding will require you to spend more time. Each of the items listed in the next five days needs worked on soon and it should be something you focus on over the long haul.

Take your time setting up appointments to talk to several companies, providers, locations and professionals. Learn about those who will be providing service to you. Interview them. Then, come back and check off the project when it is complete and you have made a decision.

STEP 1: WHERE WILL YOUR WEDDING BE?

Where will your wedding be located? Most weddings have two primary locations: the ceremony site and the wedding reception site. Your goal in this step is to make decisions about where your wedding will happen.

1. Talk to wedding ceremony site locations, including your church, to determine if your wedding date is available. See the facility and determine if it is large enough and fits your tastes for the event.
2. Visit with several locations for the reception site. Keep size and style in mind.
3. Note if the reception site will provide food, if catering is necessary or if there is another option.
4. You can book both your ceremony and your reception in one location, if you would like to.
5. Set up times to visit each location. Make notes in the following blank space about what you thought about each one. Be sure to get pricing information and mark that down as well.

STEP 2: DRESS SHOPPING

In some families, the mother of the bride goes with her to pick out her dress. In others, friends and the bridesmaids do this together. The options are yours but chances are good you will need a decent amount of time to make decisions.

Keep in mind that dresses often require alterations, which can take several months to do. You also may need to order the dress, which can take a few weeks. Plan to get your dress underway sooner rather than later.

Here is what to keep in mind:

- Shop around! Don't limit yourself to just designer boutiques. Go for the small shops, the large ones and so on. You never know where your dress will be.
- Try on dresses and get a feeling for what you like; there may be a style you favor.
- When shopping online for a dress, try to learn as much as you can about the company prior to investing. Order early, too, to allow for extensive shipping time.
- Alterations should be scheduled throughout the next few weeks. Plan to have the last one at least two to three weeks prior to the wedding.
- Keep accessories like hair pieces, shoes, shawls and even jewelry in mind when purchase your dress.

Dress shopping can be stressful. Do not assume it is a fast decision to make!

STEP 3: WEDDING RINGS

You and your soon to be spouse should be shopping for wedding rings. You may have your engagement ring, but you likely need to purchase wedding bands. They may match, or they could be completely different. Your wedding band may already match your engagement ring.

Keep in mind:

1. Wedding rings should be ordered as soon as possible to allow for sizing.
2. Metal quality is essential, but you do not have to go for platinum unless you want to.

3. You may want to consider choosing family rings, which may be passed down.

STEP 4: THE CAKE

Unbelievably, the cake is one of the most important items to keep in mind at this early stage. The reason is this. You may want the cake decorator to design your cake for you, which can take a few weeks. You may need changes. You need to schedule a cake tasting. You may want to consider a wedding cake that needs specialized fountains that need ordered.

More to think about:

- When it comes to the cake, be sure to keep your tastes in mind and your guests.
- The design of your cake does not have to be elaborate if you do not want it to be.
- You can go with just one cake, or have a groom's cake on the side.

You may want to include members from each part of the family in the cake tasting, such as your mother and his mother. That way, you know what special accommodations may need to be met.

STEP 5: FLORAL NEEDS

You likely need flowers. Flowers can be a large portion of your budget depending on needs. Your floral needs may include the ceremony location, the wedding reception location (such as on the tables) and for the bride and bridesmaid's bouquets.

- If you have a color scheme or wedding theme, be sure that your floral choices correspond with it.
- You may need to book a florist several months in advance, especially for spring and summer weddings.
- Shop around. Prices range widely but even small florists do weddings at budget pricing if you need it.
- You can change your floral needs up to several weeks prior to the wedding, if need be.

Now you have plenty of things to think about and start making decisions on. Use the next page to write down a to do list on were everything stands so far.

TO DO LIST SO FAR:

5

DAY 16 TO 20: MORE DECISIONS

There are so many more decisions to think about! In this chapter, it is important to start finalizing any decisions you have yet to make. Tackle that to do list. Then, use this guide to help you work through some of the next big tasks you have.

STEP 1: PICK THE VENUES

Choose the location of your wedding reception. You have seen them and now it is time to make choices. When you do so, you will have to know about how many people will be attending. You will also need to keep in mind if the location offers catering or if you will need to have an outside service do this.

Now that you know where you will have your reception:

- Before you sign the contract, read it. What is the facility responsible for?
- Note if you need to do the decorating for the event or if they will do this for you.
- Down payments are usually required to hold the date.
- Know when final numbers are necessary for the reception hall. They will need to know this usually at least a week or two prior to the wedding.
- Know the restrictions they place on you ahead of time.

Contracts are usually signed well in advance of the wedding taking place. Be sure you have read it thoroughly.

STEP 2: CATERING AND FOOD

If outside catering service is necessary, you will need to find a company to work with. Even if the facility does do the catering for you, you still need to do the planning.

- Arrange time to taste dishes and make decisions on what will be served.
- Determine if alcohol will be served and who is required to provide it.
- Note the need for tableware, glassware and other utensils from the providing company.
- Take into consideration your guests, what types of food do they need to have or are there any with special limitations.
- Make final choices on food choices and style (buffet, table service) at least two weeks in advance.

It is often a good thing to have a family member from each side of the family to aid in the decisions on food choices, especially if there are many cultural differences.

STEP 3: WEDDING PARTY ATTIRE

Bridesmaid dresses may be selected at the time of selecting your wedding dress. If you have not yet done so, it is important to have these dresses picked out and ordered at this point. They too require alterations in most situations.

For the guys, visit the tux shop or have each of the guys measured for tuxes from specialized companies. It is essential to keep in mind that everyone from the best man to the ring bearer will need to be measured at least a month in advance.

You may find that the provider offers a discount on the groom's tux if the wedding party registers with them, too. The groom's tux should also be ordered, of course, which often requires some decisions. What color, style and cut do you prefer? All of these decisions are best made in person, where you can see the different options you have.

STEP 4: GET YOUR INVITATIONS DONE

Wedding invitations can be planned for in several ways. You can choose pre printed invitations for a less formal event. For a formal wedding, you will need to have them professionally printed. Give the printer at least two months to do so, prior to the time you will mail them out.

When it comes to wedding invitations, keep the following in mind:

- Choose your designs early so you have time to find the right poem or message to include.
- Have a test run done on the invitations to ensure the printing looks right.
- Mail invitations to guests about four weeks prior to the wedding and include the necessary RSVP information.
- Put someone else in charge of collecting the RSVP's for you. That way, you can focus on the wedding planning.

Have you thought about all of your options in printers? Local printers may work, but there are many printers offering fabulous options in printing styles online to consider, too.

JOT DOWN NOTES AND GOALS FOR THIS WEEK:

6

DAY 21 TO 25: FOCUS ON WEDDING

You are getting close to planning your wedding. At that halfway point, take a few minutes to review where you stand. Have you accomplished each of the items so far? Make a new to do list, now, one that focuses on what you have to do with the items already covered. Then, concentrate on the next bit: your wedding.

STEP 1: MEET RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENTS

In many religions, it is essential to meet wedding planning commitments prior to actually having the ceremony. You may need to go through Pre Cana, if you are Catholic, for example. If not, schedule some time to speak to the official who will do the ceremony for you. Even if this person is not religiously affiliated, you still need time to talk about the ceremony itself.

- In some cases, you may need to attend a full day event or several days of events for marriage preparation. This may only occur once every few months.
- Work with your official to ensure nothing stands in the way of getting married.
- Your official will help you to get your marriage license. Find out the process through them.
- Discuss the facilities you will use as well as what you would like them to provide.

It is not always necessary for you to do this step. Yet, it is important for you to meet with whoever will be hosting your ceremony to know what to expect.

STEP 2: MEET WITH ON SITE PLANNER

Most locations that are used for wedding ceremonies will have an onsite wedding planner, or someone who helps with using the facilities appropriately. Keep in mind the importance of doing this at least a month, if not more, in advance.

With these professionals, there are a large number of things to discuss.

1. Determine what services are provided. What facilities are provided?
2. Talk about the ceremony itself. Determine if you will hire an outside provider for music or if the facility provides this service for you.
3. Talk about flowers. Some locations have limitations.
4. Talk about the ceremony: what things are you hoping for? What do you want to have included?
5. Timing for the wedding ceremony should also be discussed. Often, facilities will have more than one ceremony in a day and therefore the timing of the event is essential.

In many instances, you will find that the professionals at these facilities have already pulled it all together for you. They will give you instructions on how the process works. If you have questions or concerns, ask them.

STEP 3: WEDDING DAY TIMELINE

By this time, you have a good amount of focus on what is happening and you should be pulling together your timeline. This is the time the wedding ceremony will start and the time that your wedding reception will. Having an idea of this now will help you with further preparations you have to make in the coming steps.

DAY 21 TO 25 NOTES:

7

DAY 26 TO 30: MORE PLANS

Before you can start finalizing your wedding plans there are a few more professionals you need to work with. These are a few more people you have to pull together to finish making the day just right.

As mentioned earlier, you do need to take the time to work with each of these professionals. Interview them and learn about them. You want to be sure that you know just whom you are working with. At the same time, keep in mind the importance of working with someone that you like, trust and are comfortable.

STEP 1: PHOTOGRAPHER

You likely want to remember your special day very much and you can do this in photograph form. Photographers do not just do pictures, but also video too. You can choose the medium that is right for your special occasion. One of the best ways to learn about the professionals you will work with is to visit their location and look at their photographs. Find out what they can offer.

Here are some things to think about:

- Is the photographer available on your wedding day for the entire day?
- How many locations will they shoot at?
- Is there a limit to how much film they will use?
- Can they do video for you, too?
- Ask questions regarding price and how it is calculated. What is included in the package?

Be sure you like the photographer. This person will be intimately involved with you on your wedding day.

STEP 2: MUSIC!

Music is nearly always something to add to a wedding celebration, usually in various ways. Music may be used at your wedding ceremony. It may be provided by your church, or something you have to pay for in addition to other costs. You may want music at your reception too. There are plenty of options from private bands to DJ's and everything in between. You can hire a violinist, a guitar player, a pianist or a variety of others to play for you.

Music is often a personal decision, but you both should enjoy it. Listen to the group perform. Ask questions of them about their experience playing at weddings. In most situations, you want the music professional to play a wide range of music so that they appeal to a wide range of people who will be at your reception.

Here are a few things to think about:

- Where do you need music at the Church, reception, and prior to reception?
- What type of music do you want to have?
- When meeting with professionals, find out how long they will perform for you. Does this fit your timeline?
- Determine your need for a master of ceremonies. Usually, band leader can lead your events by making announcements for you.
- How much time do they need for set up and tear down?
- Can you give them songs you would like them to play?

The most important thing to remember is that you have to love this performer so that you have assurance of their ability to make your night special.

STEP 3: GIFTS FOR WEDDING PARTY

In many families, it is a tradition for the bride and the groom to give a small gift to each of the members of their wedding party. This gift is a thank you gift or a special remembrance token for them. It does not have to be expensive, but it should be something that they will appreciate for years to come.

Purchase these items when you find them, but keep a few things in mind.

- Consider personalizing them. If you have enough time, this adds a very special remembrance for them.
- Be sure to say thank you. Being part of a wedding is never easy to do.
- Look for gifts that are personal in meaning rather than generic, for more meaning and a better result.

You do not have to provide this type of gift, but if you do, take the time to do it right.

STEP 4: ODDS AND ENDS

Before you move forward, do take a few minutes now to look at all of your needs. The following is a list of items you may have forgotten about but may need to pick up.

- Guest sign in book for the wedding reception.
- Announcement cards and hold the date cards for your special event.
- Cake cutting knife personalized as a special way to remember the day.
- A wedding candle for the church.
- Aisle runners for the church.
- Flower girl and ring bearer items.
- Bubbles for after the ceremony.
- Programs to hand to guests at the ceremony.
- Wedding favors, personalized with your wedding information for reception guests.
- Shoes: groom and bride shoes.
- Wedding hair accessories.

Now that you have all of these items in place, step back and take a deep breath. There is much more to prepare for on this very special day!

TO DO LIST AND PERSONAL NOTES:

8

DAY 30 TO 35: PULLING IT TOGETHER

In the next chapters, we will focus on some new things you have to do, but also on following up on tasks you should have completed to this point. The process is not easy as there is plenty that you should be focusing on. Yet, this simple, step-by-step guide does make it easy to know what needs to be done.

Be sure you have dedicated enough time to this final 10 days of activities. The reason is this. You will not always get your vendors and suppliers to answer you as fast as you would like them to. This is also the time when you are most likely to find problems. Take a deep breath. You can deal with most of them with no problems.

STEP 1: TRANSPORTATION FOR THE WEDDING DAY

One area you may not have thought about yet is transportation. There are several things to think about here, actually. First, what type of transportation do you want to have? Look at how you will get from one appointment to the next. You have to move not only yourself, but your entire wedding party.

In this first portion, focus on who will be doing what and where people will meet. Answer these questions.

- How will you get to your initial appointments in the day, such as hair stylist?
- When do you want to meet your bridesmaids?
- Where will you meet your bridesmaids? Where will the groom meet up with his groomsmen?
- Where will the bride and groom meet?
- Where will vehicles park so that everyone can get home after the reception?

The second portion of the transportation process is determining if you want to have limo service. Between getting your hair done and the final reception, you may need to move around quite a bit. Some people want to visit several locations for photos. You may need to travel from your parent's home to the church to the reception. Figure out your travel plans and once you do, determine if you will be hiring a professional driver to move you from place to place.

You do not always have to have a limo driver. You can also invest in a nice vehicle and then have someone from the wedding party or someone who is not in the wedding party, do the chauffeuring. When considering rental transportation, keep the following in mind:

- Determine how many people will be traveling with you and accommodate for this in rental vehicles.
- Price out your options. You may want to ensure that the vehicle is the type, style, or even color that you want.
- Be sure that the person registering a rented vehicle is over the age of 25 for a lower cost.
- When hiring a limo service, research them and know what is included in the contract.
- Know the time limits for limo service as many restrict limo service by hour.

While it is traditionally the groom's job to make transportation arrangements, it is best both parties are involved!

STEP 2: PICK MUSIC

Earlier, you interviewed several providers of music service and you hopefully have made a decision on the needs you have and who will provide them. In this next step, you want to make some key decisions about the music you will enjoy on your special day.

- Pick out any special music selections for the wedding ceremony
- Choose the first dance song
- Choose any other special music for the wedding reception
- Be sure a wide selection of music is available for everyone at the event
- Make down payment for music service.
- Arrange set up times as needed

Music service should be just about set up at this point. Be sure to know where you stand on ceremony and reception music.

STEP 3: FINALIZE PLANS WITH RECEPTION

Next, give your reception facility a call. Be sure that they are ready to go for your wedding day. Know what they are providing for you. If there are final decisions to make, you will want to do that now. If you have questions, get them answered.

Know the answers to the following questions:

- Will you or they put your décor items in place?
- When do you have access to the hall to drop items off?
- Are food and beverage services ready to go?
- Is the facility ready to go?
- Did you make down payments as necessary?

You may need to provide a final count at this point, depending how many days in advance your wedding is. Focus on getting your RSVP's in at this time too. You need this information to provide to the reception hall and usually to the ceremony site, too.

STEP 4: FINALIZE CEREMONY SITE

Your ceremony site may be a church, a backyard or someplace else. At this point, you know where your ceremony will be held, but are you ready for all there is to do here? Depending on the location, you may need to make plans for the set up of the ceremony site. You may also need to take the time approve the layout design.

While most of the decisions are made now, there are some questions you should have answers to at this point.

- What time can guests start to arrive?
- Can you drop off items before hand, such as bubbles, programs and the aisle runner?
- Is there a place for you to wait prior to the wedding's start?
- Are there any restrictions or limitations in place?
- What is going on before and after your ceremony? If there is another wedding or another event, how long do you have before you have to leave?

With the ceremony site completely ready to go, you can rest assured that your wedding will go well. You should have a contact at this facility for any of your questions.

STEP 5: FLOWER LINE UP

Now that your wedding is fast approaching, you should be making final decisions regarding flowers. Flowers are often used at the ceremony site (though some churches do not allow this), at the reception on tables, bouquets for everyone involved and lapel pieces for special guests at the wedding such as parents and grandparents.

At this point, you should have made the decisions regarding flowers, but there are still some questions to keep in mind.

- When will the flowers be ready to go?
- When can they be picked up or will they deliver them?
- Will they set up the flowers at the facilities?

You should have answers to all of these questions so that you know how the flowers will look, where they will be located and how to get them in place.

STEP 6: PHOTOGRAPHY LINED UP

You have made your decision about whom you will hire to handle your photos for your special day. You may have selected a videographer, too. Now that you have these professionals in place, you need to ensure that all the special memories will be available to you.

One of the most important things to do at this point is to have a meeting with your photographer to point out all of the important people at your wedding. While you likely want everyone to be included in the photos, some individuals may be more important to you. In addition, you may want special poses to be done, such as generation pictures, family pictures and perhaps pictures of the wedding party in fun looks. Get an idea of what the photographer wants to do too. Approve the ideas you like.

Keep the following in mind when it comes to your photography needs:

- Know when the photographer will arrive and where he will arrive for the first pictures of the day.
- Ask questions about the locations you plan to visit for photos and backups if you need them.

- Find out if your photographer needs anything from you, such as names of the wedding party.
- Make the down payment as directed by the contract you have signed with your photographer.

Photographers do a lot of work with weddings so they can help you through this process step by step. What is essential, though, is that you make decisions based on what you hope to see in the finished product.

You should not have to make decisions about which prints to have done, though. This will be done later, after you see the proofs.

NOTES AND TO DO LIST FOR THIS WEEK:

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DAY 36: GET PREPARED

Now that there are only five more days of planning to go, the days need to be a bit more organized for you. Be sure you know what you have done to this point. Before you go any further, use the previous page to jot down anything you need to follow up on that has yet to be completed thus far in the book.

Keep in mind that your wedding planning may need other needs, too. You can add them in at any time.

STEP 1: GUEST LIST FINALIZATION

You are days away from having your wedding planned, but who is coming? If you have not yet done so, now is the right time to start working on finalizing your guest list.

If you have one guest list for the ceremony and another for the reception, keep these items separate by using separate invitations. Generally, it is proper etiquette that anyone who was invited to your bridal shower is invited to your wedding. However, since you are not planning your bridal shower (that is left to your bridesmaids or a friend...) you should only be focusing on who is on your list.

Here is what you need to do:

1. Get all RSVP'd guests organized.
2. Determine who has yet to let you know they are coming.
3. Check with your parents about any RSVP information they may have.
4. If a guest has not called, you or someone you put in charge (such as the bride or groom's parents) can give them a call. Since weddings are often charged by the plate, it is important to know who is coming.
5. Anyone that has yet to get back to you and is not responding to your calls is likely not coming. Determine if you will count them in the final tally or not.
6. Send your final numbers to your reception hall and the ceremony location if necessary.

Once you are done with your reception numbers, move on to the next step.

STEP 2: ARRANGE AND HAVE FINAL ALTERATIONS

Alterations can take some time. It is up to your dress maker or the person doing your alterations to let you know how many fittings you will need. At this point, you want to be making your final alterations.

This allows you to make sure that any weight you may have lost or gained has been accounted for and helps you to assure the dress fits you well. Here's what you need to do.

1. Contact the seamstress to ensure the dress is on time.
2. When trying the dress on, move around. Is it comfortable even for dancing?
3. Be sure you can move your arms well.
4. Make final arrangements to pick up the dress right before the wedding day. This ensures the dress remains in pristine condition right up until the wedding day.
5. Settle your bill.

STEP 3: SET UP TANNING

Many brides like to go to a few tanning sessions prior to the wedding. If you have never tanned before, your first tan should be months before the wedding to ensure there is no poor reaction. If you have tanned before, plan to get tanning done over a period of two weeks or so prior to the wedding. Your final tan can be the day or two before the wedding, but be sure you do not over tan at that time.

STEP 4: CHECK IN WITH RECEPTION AND WEDDING COORDINATORS

Check in with the wedding ceremony and reception coordinators at the facilities one final time. You need to be sure that there are no problems. Right up until the day before, there could be issues that have not surfaced until just before.

At this time, you may want to do any set up work you need to do, too. For example, some individuals will need to do the set up for the reception tables including centerpieces.

If you are providing your guests with favors, make sure they are taken care of at the reception location at this time, if possible.

STEP 5: FINALIZE PAYMENTS

Any of your providers who have yet to be paid down payments need to be at this time.

- Your reception hall
- Your ceremony site (flowers, musician, priest)
- Your flowers
- Your musicians for the reception
- Your photographer
- Your transportation

Once payments are made, you are one-step closer to the final days of planning your special day!

YOUR TO DO LIST:

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DAY 37:

FITTINGS AND MORE

There are just a few more steps to go for the complete planning of your wedding. Now that you have made it this far, the next step is to look at some of the fittings and other follow up calls you should be making.

STEP 1: GROOM FITTINGS

You have already taken care of your own wedding dress alterations, but you also need to follow up on the fittings for the groom. You may also need to consider groomsmen. Often times, they will come in late for fittings or they may not show up at all. At this point in the planning, you want to ensure that they are readily available to you if any last minute fittings need to be done.

For the groom, here are some questions to keep in mind:

1. Does the tuxedo fit well? Are there any final alterations needed?
2. Consider shoes, are they provided and do they fit?
3. Socks, cummerbunds, and even ties need to be ready to go and colors should match appropriately.
4. Follow up to be sure all groomsmen have received their final fitting and are ready to go.
5. Determine when the tuxedo will be picked up. Keep it at the facility as long as possible to ensure it remains in pristine condition.
6. If a rental, determine when the facility needs you to have it returned back.
7. Pay deposit as needed.

Many of the rental facilities do allow you to make last minute changes. Keep this in mind when looking at all of your options for the wedding attire.

STEP 2: BRIDESMAID FITTINGS

Next, meet with the bridesmaids. They should have had their dresses picked out and accessories all taken care of, but you also need to keep in mind, that final alterations may be necessary. Now is the best time to ensure that the dresses fit properly. Do not forget your flower girl, too!

- Find out if any dresses need to be altered and get a timeline in place for them.
- Meet with your bridesmaids to make sure that the dresses look great.
- Be sure that shoes have been handled.
- Do any of the women need accessories?
- Are there last minute questions or needs?

Bridesmaid's dresses are not as easy to change if needed. Be sure to allow enough time for alterations.

STEP 3: PICK UP WEDDING RINGS

You may need to have these altered too! If so, now is a good time to get them picked up. If there are any last minute needs such as a cleaning for the rings, be sure that this is done now.

- When will the rings be picked up?
- Who will be responsible for them making it to the ceremony?
- Is there a warranty on the rings and if so, have you obtained a written copy?
- Does the ring need to be cleaned prior to the wedding?
- Does the engagement ring need cleaning prior to the wedding?

With rings in hand, you are getting nearer to the all important day. Traditionally, the groom's best man handles the rings, but this may not be the case if you are using a ring bearer in the wedding. Be sure that one person is responsible for making sure the rings get to the wedding itself!

STEP 4: VENDOR FOLLOW UP

Next, spend some time talking with vendors who you have not talked to in the last few weeks. This is your last chance to really iron out any problems, change your mind or otherwise monitor them. Even if you do not have any changes to be made, it is necessary to call on each of your vendors and find out if things are in order. This will rule out any potential problems well before they become problems for you.

1. Call your transportation provider to arrange pick up times, drop off times, and schedules.
2. Talk to your photographer to arrange start times and any special requests.
3. Contain your music providers to ensure they are able to set up in enough time, have the information they need and that they will be on time.
4. Flower providers should be checked on to make sure all flowers have made it successfully in.
5. Cake and caterers may need to be checked on to ensure there are no problems.
6. Give directions to any of the vendors who need it.
7. Determine if any need payments to be made and have this arranged now.

Talk to any of the other providers you have. Be sure that they are fully aware of the final plans for the wedding day, especially if there have been changes in the process.

TO DO LIST AND PERSONAL NOTES:

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DAY 38: SPA DAY

Prior to the wedding, you will be stressed, worried and often times paranoid over all that has to be done. If you have followed this guide, though, you already have everything in line for the ultimate in perfect days. The question you should have is, "when can I relax?" That is what this special spa day should be for.

Plan the spa day three or four days prior to the wedding. You can invite your bridesmaids or do it with just a close friend, sister or someone else. Men can also be part of relaxation days. The groom may want to spend a day away relaxing. The benefit here is that you have time to enjoy your friends before everything is going to happen.

Keep in mind that what you do on this special day is up to you. There are just a few recommendations to keep in mind. You do have to plan for this day to be successful though!

STEP 1: MAKE A SPA APPOINTMENT

Visit the local spa or head out for a daylong retreat with friends or the wedding party. Make an appointment that keeps you gone all day to relax with massages, saunas, and anything that you find appealing.

Your spa experience can be as elaborate that you would like, but try to refrain from doing anything you have not done in the past, especially skin treatments that you could have a reaction too.

STEP 2: NAIL APPOINTMENTS

Both men and women can have their nails done prior to the wedding. Unbelievably, your pictures will last your entire marriage and you probably want them to look as good as they can. Nail appointments can occur several days prior to the wedding, or even the day prior. It is a good idea for you to do this with your bridesmaids, if you like, to help you to have a great result for the wedding day.

Do use a trusted provider, someone you have used in the past. Also, be sure to book your appointment, especially if there are several of you, so you do not spend your entire day waiting for it.

STEP 3: TEETH APPOINTMENTS

One of the hottest trends is having your teeth cleaned prior to the wedding. Teeth whitening, as it is often called, is a fantastic way to keep your pearly whites shining in your pictures. You likely will need several visits to get the process done properly. Therefore, book your first appointment for several weeks prior to your wedding. Your last appointment can be as much as a week prior to your wedding day.

As with other vendors, always choose someone you trust for these procedures, especially if your wedding is just a few short days away. You want to ensure that you are going to get the best service possible. Both the bride and the groom can have this done. It is not traditional for the entire wedding party to do this, though!

STEP 4: HAIR APPOINTMENTS: LADIES FIRST

Your hair has to be just right for this special day. For the women, the initial hair stylist appointment should be made for at least two weeks prior to the wedding. You are doing this because you want time to explore your options. At this appointment, have your hair cut, if you would like it to be done. Then, work with the stylist to come up with the best look for your wedding. This process can take several hours. Before you leave, you should have a good idea of what your hair will look like on your wedding day.

Next, make an appointment about a week out from your wedding for any perms, hair coloring or touch ups. If you have not had a haircut, now is a good time to have it done. These things should not be done the day of your wedding because if something goes wrong, there is little that can be done at that point.

Finally, the final appointment is on your wedding day. If your entire group is coming in, be sure that this has been arranged ahead of time. You also should plan to get directions on how to care for your hair during the day to keep it looking great.

STEP 5: HAIR APPOINTMENTS: GUYS

For men, it is a faster process to getting their hair done. Most often, they do not need a wedding day hair styling either. If they do, follow the same timeline and schedule as above for women to make sure that everything is done appropriately. This will ensure that this day is organized properly for the entire wedding party.

For most men, a haircut can occur the day before or several days out from the wedding. Do consider having yourself professionally shaved and cleaned up prior to the wedding day, such as the day before. If you need hair coloring or other labor-intensive processes, these should be done about a week out from the day.

PERSONAL MESSAGES AND TO DO LIST:

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DAY 39:

THE REHEARSAL DINNER

The day before the wedding, you may be having a rehearsal dinner. This is a time when everyone who is part of the wedding will show up and practice together. Following the practicing of the wedding, the group will have a dinner together. Your rehearsal dinner can be as amazing or as simplistic as you would like it to be. This is often a personal decision, but one you do need to plan.

The parents of the groom can host the rehearsal dinner, if you are having a traditional event. This may be done at the groom's parent's home or at a restaurant, or even someplace else. The goal is to bring both sides of the family together for a formal get together. It may even be the first time some family members are meeting each other.

STEP 1: THE REHEARSAL

There are two stages to plan this rehearsal dinner. First, you need to focus on the actual rehearsal event, where you will head to the ceremony site and practice the wedding with the official or with the wedding ceremony coordinator.

For this event, here are some things to keep in mind:

1. What time will it be held and who should attend?
2. Can you drop off items for the location at this time for later set up?
3. How will everyone arrive at the facility, including parents, bridesmaids, groomsmen, and anyone who is participating in the event otherwise?
4. Should musicians come to the rehearsal? This is usually not necessary, but you may want to arrange this if the event is very special or unique in organization.

The rehearsal usually takes about an hour to go through. Be sure everyone knows what he or she should be doing throughout the event. If there are questions, now is the time to ask them.

STEP 2: THE DINNER

After everyone has had his or her questions answered, the next step is to head to dinner. Where will it be located and who is hosting the dinner? It is possible that this could fall on your shoulders, as the bride and groom. If so, make arrangements at a location large enough for the entire party. Also, keep in mind that the host usually covers the cost of the meal itself.

When it comes to planning this dinner, there are several things to keep in mind:

- What type of food will be served? It does not have to be elegant, so long as it is something everyone will enjoy.
- What time will it be served? If at someone's home, who will prepare food during the rehearsal?
- Who will attend? The wedding party is usually in attendance, as well as parents of the bride and groom. Siblings, grandparents, and other significant individuals may also be there.
- This may be a good time to present any type of gift you have purchased for the members of the wedding party.
- Is the seating arrangement important?

The rehearsal dinner may be a tense time, especially if you have many guests who do not know each other. Yet, do not stay out too late or get too tipsy since tomorrow is the big day. There is plenty to think about then!

THOUGHTS, IDEAS AND GAME PLAN:

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DAY 40:

THE FOLLOW UP

Just about everything is done. You are sitting back, just waiting for your wedding day to arrive, right?

It is likely you still have a lot to do. You may be overwhelmed by how many odds and ends you have. Are you unsure of if you can pull it all together in time? No worries: it will work out.

This chapter is a bit different. Instead of giving you step-by-step instructions, you have a follow up checklist to work through. This chapter covers everything so far included. Once you have made a decision regarding these items, note that. Note what stage you are at with any one project. This way, you have all of the information you need on any area of your wedding planning in one place.

WEDDING RECEPTION:

- Is the wedding reception in order?
- Who is setting up the facility?
- How is the food and beverages, including alcohol arriving at the location?
- Will you have a vehicle at the facility to leave in after the wedding?

WEDDING CEREMONY:

- Have you ensured each item you need is at the facility including the candles, the aisle runner, and the programs, bubbles, and flower girl flowers?
- Have you made arrangements for seating if necessary?
- Have you talked to your coordinator about any last minute needs?
- If appropriate, be sure to have a donation of thank you for the priest or rabbi.
- Have flowers arrived at the site?

WEDDING VENDORS:

- Has everything you need been delivered including party favors, special ordered items like shoes, and accessories?
- Have all vendors received at least a down payment or paid to the contract requirements?
- Have you confirmed delivery of items or service for your wedding day at least a week prior to your wedding?
- Has the photographer confirmed when he or she will arrive?
- Has the musician confirmed when he or she (or they) will arrive for set up and when they will perform?
- Has the videographer made arrangements and has noted when they will arrive for set up?
- Has the floral vendor made plans for arrival, set up and presenting the flowers to you and the bridesmaids?
- Has the bakery or cake provider schedule a delivery time for the cake?
- Is the transportation lined up? Do you know when and how the vehicles will be picked up if rented or when the limo will arrive?
- Are hair and makeup professionals in line for the wedding day?

WEDDING ATTIRE:

- Has the bride's dress arrived, been fitted and is ready to go?
- Are all accessories for hair and makeup ready to go?
- Are the bridesmaids' dresses ready, including accessories, shoes and hair accessories ready?
- Has the groom and groomsmen picked up their tuxedos and ensured their proper fit?
- Are the bride's shoes broken in and comfortable?
- Will the bride need a second, more comfortable shoe for the reception?
- Are the wedding rings ready, and with the person who will deliver them to the official on the wedding day?
- Have arrangements been made to take into consider the return of the groom's tuxedo, if a rental?

WEDDING DAY SCHEDULE:

- Is the wedding day schedule outlined?
- Does it include the time you will wake up and proceed to hair and makeup?
- Does it allow for enough time for pictures, hugs, tears and perhaps even found memories?

- Does the schedule include the arrival times of transportation, videographers and photographers?
- What time do you arrive at the wedding ceremony?
- When do you eat lunch, where?
- When do you arrive at the wedding reception?

As you take into consideration each of these very special items, realize that each one is not meant to be done at the same time. In other words, you can invest a lot of time in each one of these items over several days.

Plan to spend at least 40 days planning your wedding, but more if possible. This guide has helped you to see what needs to be done and when it needs to be done. It may take you a bit longer to pull it all together. You may even decide there is just too much work for you to do on your own and hire a wedding planner.

In either case, chances are good that you will have an amazing wedding, especially when all of these goals are accomplished in plenty of time.