



This is an extract from **'The Wedding Planner'**, by **Antonia Swinson**, published by **Ryland Peters and Small**, which can be purchased from www.rylandpeters.com

Wedding planner checklist provided by Lake O'The Woods Plantation: An Unforgettable Venue For Your Wedding
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Countdown to the day It hardly needs saying that the earlier you make arrangements, the better chance you have of being able to reserve the best reception places, photographers, florists, and so on. However, engagements seem to be getting shorter, so many brides don't have much time to organize everything. Resist the urge to panic, and get going as soon as possible. You may have to be flexible, though, and have other dates and ideas ready in case venues and services are already booked. If some arrangements don't go as planned, don't let them overshadow what will still be a wonderful day.

Once you're engaged

- Set a date for the wedding. You will probably want to put an announcement in the newspaper.
- Set your budget and decide what your priorities are. Discuss who will organize and pay for what, and make sure everyone is clear about what has been decided.
- Arrange ahead for the ceremony—church, city hall, or other location—and have a meeting with the person who will officiate.
- Book your reception venue and caterer (remember to put everything in writing), and discuss food and drink.
- Book musicians for ceremony or reception.
- Draw up a guest list in consultation with both sets of parents.
- Order wedding stationery.

- Book a photographer and videographer (if you're marrying in church, make sure you're allowed to photograph or film inside).
- Arrange your wedding transportation. You may need cars from the wedding to the reception and for going away.
- Order your cake.
- Choose flower girls, flower girls, best man, ushers, and ring bearer.
- Start looking at wedding dresses and accessories, and outfits for your attendants. Remember that it can take several months for a dress to be made to measure.
- Order your flowers.
- Start to plan your honeymoon. If you're going in high season, reserve as early as possible.
- Investigate local accommodations for guests who are traveling long distances. Reserve rooms in good time and inform guests of this when you send out your invitations.

Three months before the day

- Register for wedding gifts.
- Buy your wedding rings.
- Run through the form of the wedding service. Choose your music and text (for a church ceremony, discuss with your minister; for a civil wedding, check with the authorities).
- Choose your going-away clothes if you're having them. (On the day, someone will need to make sure your dress and the groom's suit are taken home once you've left.)

- Arrange to rent formalwear for the male members of the wedding party.
- Make sure your honeymoon plans are finalized and that you've organized visas, inoculations, travel insurance, and foreign currency if necessary.
- Send invitations out at least six weeks before the day (eight or even 12 is safer) and, as replies come in, make a list of who is coming. Remember that an invitation should be sent to the groom's parents. It's also courteous to invite the person who will be officiating.
- Buy gifts for your helpers on the day, such as flower girls, best man, ushers, and both your mothers.
- Think about taking out wedding insurance.
- If you are changing your name on your passport, send it off in plenty of time. Others to inform include your employer, bank, insurance company, the Internal Revenue Services, the Department of Social Security, and your physician.
- Practice your makeup. See your hairdresser to try styles. Book your appointment for the day.
- Book your first-night hotel with a "guaranteed" reservation using your credit card.

One month before

- Give your ushers instructions for the day. It might be useful to provide brief written notes.
- Check that the best man knows what his duties for the day are.

- Confirm all arrangements for the reception, catering, entertainment, transportation, and so on and check the final number of guests.
- Make a seating plan for a sit-down dinner.
- As presents arrive, write thank-you letters.
- Have your final fittings for your dress if necessary, and try on the whole outfit, with underwear and accessories, before the day.
- Arrange bachelorette and bachelor parties.
- Arrange the wedding rehearsal and the rehearsal dinner. Make sure any bachelor party plans do not interfere.

One week before

- Make final confirmations with your reception hall and caterer, photographer, florist, cake maker, and so on, and with your travel agent or tour operator. Make sure that anyone who needs it has a contact number for you, and that they know exactly where to deliver goods.
- Pack for your honeymoon. Ask the best man to make sure that your luggage is put in your going-away car or is sent ahead to your hotel.
- Wear your wedding shoes around the house so they'll be comfortable on the day.
- Have a final try-on of your wedding clothes.
- Remind the best man to return rented formalwear straight after the wedding.
- Try to have the rehearsal and rehearsal dinner the night before the wedding so it serves as a dinner for your out-of-town guests to get to know each other and renew old acquaintances.