

## 12 months or more

- What's your wedding-day vision? Start deciding now on the formality, style and theme (if you're having one).
- Set wedding priorities -- make a list of the elements most important to you. This will help you decide on a date, budget your expenses and delegate tasks.
- Get organized! Find a system that works for you (binder, folder, book, etc.) to keep notes, brochures, checklists, menus and other printed material.
- The B-word already? Yes, it's time to talk budgets. Talk about it together first, then if your parents (or other generous souls) wish to contribute, discuss with them who's paying for what.
- Think of two possible wedding dates. In the next month or so, you should determine who your most important vendor will be and okay the date with them -- and with the members of your wedding party -- before confirming one.
- Ask around for recommended ceremony and reception spaces and service providers, including officiants.
- Consider hiring a wedding consultant; also start thinking about how your friends, family and wedding party can help out. If people offer their services, don't be afraid to delegate, *nicely*.
- If your parents haven't met yet, plan to get them together for the first time.

## 11 months

- Start interviewing vendors:
  - Officiant
  - Photographers
  - Florists
  - Bands or DJs and ceremony performers
  - Caterers
- If you see a great reception or ceremony site that's available on your chosen date and within your budget, book it now. (If any one vendor is a higher priority for you than the site, make sure he or she is free before reserving a location.)

## 10 months

- Ask your chosen attendants to honor you by being in your wedding party (including any children you wish to include). Make sure everyone involved is aware of your expectations.
- Draw up preliminary a guest list with input from both sides. Think of it as a wish list, then narrow it down to a close idea of final number, based on your budget.
- Let the engagement partying begin!
- Look through books, magazines and Websites for wedding gown ideas.

## 9 months

- Start shopping for a gown.
- If there's an engagement party coming up soon, register now.
- Announce your engagement to the world (that is, your local or hometown newspaper).
- If you picked an outdoor site, reserve tents and speak to the caterer about his outdoor tent needs.
- Hire these vendors (make sure you use a contract):
  - Wedding consultant
  - Caterer
  - Florist
  - Photographer
  - Band or DJ

## 6 months

- Narrow down your gown choices and make a final decision.
- Choose attire for bridesmaids, flower girls and ring bearers.

- Shop for wedding rings.
- Meet with officiant to plan ceremony and to find out about any required pre-marriage counseling.
- Doing the pre-nup thing? Take care of it now.
- Make sure plans for the rehearsal dinner have begun. Provide the host with contact information for your attendants and other guests.

#### 4 months

- If you don't have a wedding consultant, ask a friend or relative (but not your parents) to be "supervisor" (the person to see about problems) on your wedding day. If you don't have someone in mind, consider hiring a wedding-day organizer.
- Hire these vendors (make sure you use a contract):
  - Baker
  - Ceremony performers
- Order your invitations.
- Register for your wedding gifts, and don't forget to include some appropriate items (consider your friends' budgets) for upcoming bridal showers or engagement parties.
- Send save-the-date cards, if necessary.
- Start looking for or thinking about wedding favors.
- Decide what style of formalwear the groom will wear.
- Want a new hair color for the big day? Do a trial run of any new hair color or highlights now.
- Start planning honeymoon.
- Traveling abroad? Get passports or visa, if necessary.
- Find out about inoculations for some overseas travel.
- Arrange accommodations for out-of-town wedding guests (do this sooner if your wedding falls on a holiday).
- Meet with officiant again to go over ceremony.
- Pick out or design a ketubah or other marriage contract required by your religion (you can also do this simply because you like it).

#### 3 months

- Check on rehearsal dinner plans.
- Make honeymoon travel reservations.
- Make sure your attendants have bought their dresses and accessories.
- Buy your accessories:
  - Shoes
  - Hosiery
  - Jewelry
- Any special lingerie required for first gown fittings
- Make sure the groomsmen have the information they need to buy or reserve their attire.
- Groom and male members of wedding party choose and buy any accessories they need: shoes, shirt stays, cufflinks and a pocket square.
- Finalize guest list (double-check name spellings and addresses).
- Start addressing invitations or drop them off with the calligrapher (you should mail them eight weeks before the wedding).
- Start writing vows, if you're writing them yourselves.
- Study up on any ethnic customs or traditions you might want to include and make a note if you'll need any special supplies (or practice) to incorporate into your ceremony or reception.

#### 10 weeks

- Call dress shop to check on arrival date of wedding gown and bridesmaids' dresses, make your first fitting appointment, and schedule one for bridesmaids, too.
- Buy, order or start making wedding favors (serve party food and invite some friends to help).
- Stuff and stamp wedding invitations.
- For Jewish wedding, order yarmulkes.

- Start buying (or borrowing) all the extras: guest book, ring pillow, unity candle, garter, cake knife, toasting glasses, wine cups for ceremony.

### 8 weeks

- Have first dress fitting. If you haven't ordered your headpiece and veil, do it now.
- Buy or reserve men's formalwear.
- Mail wedding invitations.
- Begin writing ceremony program, if you are having one.
- Start writing thank-you notes for any engagement party, shower or wedding gifts already received.
- Check to make sure you have all the paperwork you need to get married (baptismal certificate, proof of divorce and so on).
- Buy wedding rings (and have them engraved, if desired).
- Meet with (or call) vendors to finalize arrangements (caterer, florists, musical performers and so on).
- Meet with officiant to finalize ceremony details.
- Call marriage license bureau to find out requirements for obtaining marriage license (get blood tests, if necessary).
- Plan bridesmaids' "tea" and bachelor "dinner" (these can be any meal you want, or cocktails; the idea is to thank everyone for their friendship and support).
- Arrange wedding-day transportation and parking.
- Reserve room for your wedding night.
- Do trial run of wedding-day hair and makeup.
- Select special readings, poems or prayers for ceremony and send copies to friends who will be participating.

### 6 weeks

- Mail rehearsal dinner invitations.
- Shop for your "trousseau" (even if it's just one new nightgown).
- Make hair, makeup and manicure appointments for your wedding day (do this even earlier if you're getting married during a busy month).
- Start breaking in those nuptial shoes -- wear them only around the house, so they don't get dirty.
- Arrange for a baby-sitter for reception, if necessary.
- Pre-wedding parties begin (bachelor and bachelorette party).
- Buy gifts:
  - Bride buys for maid of honor and bridesmaids
  - Groom buys for best man, groomsmen and ushers
  - Bride and groom may buy a gift for each other
- Start thinking about a first-dance song.

### 4 weeks

- Pick up wedding rings.
- Finish and print ceremony programs.
- Finalize vows.
- Get formal bridal portrait taken.
- Buy or create welcome gifts for out-of-towners (to be waiting for them in their hotel rooms).
- Call newspaper regarding wedding announcement (send it according to their deadline requirements).
- Apply for marriage license, if you haven't already.
- Arrange for movers or truck rental if you're moving after the wedding.
- Send change-of-address form to post office, if necessary.
- Confirm all final payment amounts with your vendors (including officiant), as well as date, time, location and so on.

### 2 weeks

- Have final dress fitting.
- Plan reception seating arrangements (you should have a floor plan to work with; ask the banquet manager or site supervisor for one).
- Write seating cards and place cards for the reception.
- Plan rehearsal dinner seating, if necessary.
- Write out a schedule outlining the order of events (with specified times) for your wedding day. (If you have a consultant, wedding day organizer or delegated "supervisor," let her do this.) Give a copy to your fiancé and all involved parties.
- Call guests who have not yet responded to wedding and rehearsal dinner invitations.
- Pick up marriage license.
- Getting your hair cut for the big day? Do it now so it has time to "relax" (and not look so just-cut) before the big day.
- Make sure all drivers have directions to the ceremony and reception sites.
- Traditional brides will need to gather their something old, new, borrowed and blue.
- Compose reception toasts.

### 1 week

- Confirm everything with vendors again.
- Submit final guest count to caterer.
- Pick up wedding gown, veil and headpiece.
- Pick up men's formalwear (make sure all men try on their clothes before the wedding day).
- Pack for honeymoon and wedding night.
- Confirm honeymoon travel arrangements (flight, hotel, rental car and so on).
- Arrange for transportation from home or hotel to airport for honeymoon.
- Make a backup transportation plan for wedding day (for example, put your brother on standby as chauffeur).
- Host bridesmaid's "tea" and bachelor "dinner."
- Wrap attendants' gifts.
- Prepare wedding-day emergency kit.
- Clean engagement ring.
- Having an outdoor wedding? Check weather forecast (do you have a rain plan?), treat area for ants and other bugs if necessary.
- Remind wedding party and families what time they need to show up for the rehearsal.
- Delegate. Decide what each member of the wedding party is responsible for on the wedding day, and write it on a note card (such as "Please make sure that the knife is by the cake"). Hand out note cards at the rehearsal dinner -- and be sure to thank them.
- Touch base with the "supervisor" you asked to be "the person to see about problems" on your wedding day (if you don't have a wedding consultant).
- Designate someone to collect the wedding gifts (and any cash) brought to the reception.
- Leave a copy of your honeymoon itinerary with someone in case of emergency.
- Get cash ready for tipping and emergencies and give to designated "payment person" (usually the best man).
- Ask someone to be the guest book attendant -- or just leave it on a table by the entrance to the reception.
- Speak to ushers about special seating at the ceremony, if necessary.
- Get out-of-towner "welcome" packages to hotels; arrange for them to be delivered to the appropriate rooms before guests arrive.
- Ask neighbor or friend to water your plants, feed your cat or walk your dog while you're on your honeymoon.
- Arrange for mail to be held at post office while you're away.

### 1 day

- Confirm wedding-day transportation.
- Transport everything you need (decorations, guest book, programs, text for ceremony readings) to the ceremony site, if you have access to the site early.
- Finish honeymoon packing (get bags to wherever you need them to be -- your hotel room or the trunk of your car, for example).
- Make sure honeymoon airline tickets, itinerary, passports and so forth are all in one, won't-forget-'em place.

- Put out everything you need for tomorrow.
- Put your marriage license somewhere safe, where you will be sure to find it (for example, with your wedding shoes).
- Do your nails yourself or get a manicure.
- Remind wedding party and immediate families what time they need to show up for pictures, the rehearsal (if you're doing it on your wedding day) and the ceremony.
- Decide which witnesses will sign your marriage license and ketubah.
- Rehearse.
- Enjoy your rehearsal dinner.
- Give attendants their gifts at rehearsal dinner or in a private moment.
- Talk about tomorrow's "what to do when" list with your fiancé.
- Take a bath, drink some warm milk (or whatever works) to get ready for sleep.
- Get to bed at a reasonable hour (if possible).

### The Day

- Exercise, get a massage, meditate, pray or do something equally energizing yet relaxing.
- Eat a carbohydrate-plus-protein meal -- but don't overdo the caffeine.
- Put in contact lenses before getting makeup done (wait until after your hair appointment if possible, though -- all that hairspray may irritate your eyes).
- Show up on time for hair and makeup appointments.
- Get dressed (remember to use the bathroom first).
- Switch engagement ring to your right hand before the ceremony.
- Share a private moment with your fiancé.
- Give your parents hugs before everything gets too crazy.
- Take a look at yourself in the mirror -- and smile.
- Spend a moment alone to calm down before the ceremony.
- Have fun.

### After

- Arrange for a bridesmaid or your mom to pick up your wedding dress and other personal belongings at home or the hotel after you depart. Ask them whether they will take the gown and veil to be cleaned sure the vendor is experienced in cleaning and preserving wedding and the bridal bouquet and other wedding mementos to be preserved.
- Take any personal film to be developed. These will be the first photos available, since professional proofs can take weeks.
- Find out when you can expect your edited wedding video (if you used a videographer).
- Freeze the top layer of the wedding cake to be eaten at your first anniversary celebration (save some cocktail napkins, too).
- Within two months of your wedding, set aside some time to tackle that stack of thank-you notes (some couples get cracking on the flight to or from their honeymoon spot).
- Make sure all vendor bills have been paid in full (for exceptional service, you may want to send a small gift or send a thank-you letter, which vendors can use as a letter of recommendation for future clients).
- If you haven't already, give gifts to your parents to thank them for their help and support.
- Change name and address on credit cards, license, etc.
- Change insurance policies, if necessary.