

SoMD Weddings



2023

A Special Pullout Section

Your Wedding Timeline Guide



Wedding planning involves many movable pieces that ultimately need to come together on the big day. Planning is typically a months-long process, and adhering to certain monthly benchmarks can help couples stay the course.

Brides magazine offers that the perfect engagement period is 12 to 14 months, which affords ample time to get organized and work with vendors. With that in mind, here's a 12-month timeline for couples getting ready to say "I do."

12 Months Out

At the start of the planning process, establish your budget, hire a wedding planner (optional), choose the wedding party,

pick a date, and start to assemble a cursory guest list. This also is a great time to begin touring venues to get a feel for potential ceremony and reception locales.

11 Months Out

Now is the time to get a firm handle on the theme and scope of the wedding. Start picking wedding colors and overall design. Also, interview and hire vendors, such as photographers, bands and videographers. These vendors tend to book up quickly as wedding season draws near, so it's never too early to book them.

10 Months Out

This is a good time to start shopping for a

wedding gown because it might take some trial and error to find the perfect dress. You also can start shopping for wedding party attire at this time. Check with formalwear vendors to see how long it will take for the gowns to arrive in the shop for alterations. If you haven't already done so, be sure to book the wedding venue.

8 Months Out

Reception halls may have their own schedules, but you should think about setting your menu at this time, including deciding if you will host a seated dinner, a buffet or something else.

Eight months out also is a good time to finalize the guest list and send save-the-date cards.

This also is a good time to visit stores to create registry gift lists.

6 Months Out

Meet with potential florists and other vendors, like transportation companies and hotels, to secure these arrangements. Your place of worship also may require certain classes or preparatory meetings, so be sure to inquire about these.

Meet with a makeup and hair stylist and book a trial. Choose attire for groomsmen and give them a deadline for fittings and orders. If you will not be getting married in a place of worship, hire an officiant at this time.

4 Months Out

Grooms traditionally arrange the honeymoon, so this is a fine time to get those travel plans in order. If you need passports, you should secure them as early as possible, and no later than four months prior to the wedding to ensure processing times. Book cake tastings and order the cake if it is not part of the venue food and beverage package. If you haven't already done so, the bride should have an initial gown fitting, and wedding invitations should be ordered at this time.

2 Months Out

Secure your wedding license and buy wedding party gifts. Address and mail the wedding invitations. Undergo a second gown fitting and work with the seamstress for the final fitting date just before the wedding. Finalize any song selections with the DJ or band.

The final details will occur in the last weeks before the wedding. Buy all the small accessories and items, undergo final fittings and check in with all vendors for final payments and to ensure they are on schedule. Notify the reception hall of the final guest count.

Once the wedding day arrives, couples who have done their best to stay on schedule can relax and have a great time with family and friends.

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How to Build a Wedding Budget Without Breaking the Bank

Wedding planning is a unique experience unlike any endeavor most couples will ever encounter. Much effort goes into planning a wedding, and that includes building a budget that ensures the big day will be fun without breaking the bank.

Most couples planning a wedding have never tied the knot before, so it can be difficult to determine a reasonable amount to spend. It's easy to go overboard when planning a wedding, and couples may find their list of wants and, consequently, their expenses, growing as they get into the weeds of wedding planning. Though it might require some difficult decisions, couples can keep these tips in mind so they can build a wedding budget that won't land them in debt after saying, "I do."

- **Determine funding.** The days when a bride's parents would finance the wedding entirely on their own are largely a thing of the past. According to a recent WeddingWire Newlywed Report, parents now pay for 52 percent of wedding expenses. As couples begin establishing a wedding budget, it's imperative that they first determine who, if anyone, will be helping them finance the big day. Fifty-two percent of wedding expenses is a significant amount of money, but in that scenario, couples will

still need to come up with roughly half of the money needed to fund their weddings. Couples without substantial savings may be forced to cut back in order to avoid beginning their life as a married couple in debt.

- **Make a list of potential expenses.** Location will be a significant factor when determining potential expenses. For example, a 2022 ValuePenguin analysis of data from The Wedding Report found that the average wedding in Massachusetts cost roughly \$30,500 in 2020, while couples tying the knot in Arkansas spent around \$12,500 on their weddings. With such wild fluctuations, it's important that couples get an accurate estimate of how much it may cost them to get married in a given city. Couples who met in a city and still live in a city but grew up in a suburb might save a considerable sum by getting married in their hometowns. Compare and contrast prices in locales you're considering, and then build your budget accordingly. This can help you avoid sticker shock and going over budget. Notable expenses to budget include the venue, attire (i.e., wedding dress and tuxedo rental), hairstyle and makeup, entertainment, photography, and transportation, among others.



- **Make a list of what's most important.** Most couples will have to compromise in order to avoid taking on debt to finance their weddings. An earnest discussion about what's most important to each person can ensure you both get what you want. Each person can make a list of their priorities, ranking them from most important to least important. Once lists are shared, couples can see where their priorities converge and where they diverge. Any items that rank low on each person's list of priorities can be afforded less funding, while those that are high on each list can take up more of the budget, if necessary.

- **Commit to a limit before spending a dime.** Committing to a limit before spending a dime can help couples keep wedding costs more manageable. Once that number is defined, couples can then work within its parameters, which can make potentially difficult decisions a little easier by narrowing options at a time when options can seem endless.

A well-planned budget can be just what couples need to begin married life on strong financial footing.

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Questions to Ask Prospective Officiants

Couples make many decisions when planning their weddings. Everything from the design of save-the-date cards to the color of the napkins at the reception tables requires couples' input. Choice of officiant is another decision that's worthy of significant consideration.

Many couples may have an officiant in mind before they begin planning their wedding. In such instances, couples may choose an officiant who's affiliated with their place of worship or even a friend or family member who's been ordained or certified to officiate weddings. Couples with no such option can ask the following questions as they look to hire an officiant for their wedding.

Can you legally officiate our wedding?

Each state has its own requirements regarding who can sign the paperwork necessary for couples to be considered legally married. An officiant should meet these requirements.

What services do you provide?

Some officiants will do more than officiate the wedding. Some will help couples obtain their marriage license and even submit the documentation after the wedding. Those services can be important, but many couples are more concerned with what officiants will do before and during the ceremony. Ask if the officiant will write his or her own remarks to be delivered during the ceremony. Some couples may want to write remarks for the officiant, while others may need help crafting the message they want to convey.

How flexible are you?

Ask how officiants handle feedback and how willing they are to deliver remarks they did not necessarily write themselves. Some officiants may have a template they customarily follow, but that doesn't necessarily mean they won't stray and personalize the ceremony based on couples' wishes. Couples should ask such officiants how far they're willing to stray from their routine if necessary.

Do you have a portfolio?

Written testimonials from past clients can be invaluable, but couples can get a true feel for an officiant's style by watching video of ceremonies they've officiated in the past. Ask prospective officiants if they can share video of weddings they've presided over. It's not a red flag if officiants have no such video, which couples may have forgotten to share. But video can help couples get an accurate idea of how offi-



cians may preside over their ceremony.

Will we work together prior to the ceremony?

Many officiants will ask to meet with a couple at least once before the wedding so they can get to know them as well as possible. Ask each officiant if this is their policy. Pre-wedding meetings can be conducted in person or via Zoom. When discussing meeting before the wedding, ask the officiant if he or she will attend the wedding rehearsal. It's not customary for officiants to do so, though some might be willing to attend the rehearsal, especially if the ceremony will feature any elaborate components that require their involvement.

Miscellaneous considerations

Couples also may want to broach some additional topics when questioning prospective officiants. Such topics may include:

- Officiant's attire
- Backups if the officiant falls ill prior to the ceremony
- Officiant fees, and if extra services like attending the rehearsal incurs additional charges
- Officiants' experience

Couples can ask prospective officiants various questions in an effort to find the right person to officiate their wedding.

How to Find the Right Reception Venue



Every decision engaged couples make in regard to their weddings is significant, but some may affect the day more than others. Perhaps no decision will help couples set the tone they hope to establish more than their choice of reception venue.

Reception venues are where couples and their guests will spend the vast majority of their time on the wedding day, which is why choice of venue bears such significance. With that in mind, couples can consider these tips as they look for the perfect place to host their receptions.

- **Decide what you want out of a venue.** Prospective brides and grooms may have vastly different ideas regarding how they want their weddings to go, and it's imperative that couples discuss their ideal weddings prior to looking for a venue. Do you want to get married in a place of worship? Or do you prefer a venue that can host both the ceremony and reception? Do you want an indoor, outdoor or hybrid ceremony and reception? Define what you both want before looking for a venue and make the nec-

essary concessions if you have different ideas in mind.

- **Consider picking a venue before setting a date.** It can be wise to pick a reception venue first and then choose your wedding date based on the availability of the venue. This is especially important for couples who already have an ideal venue in mind, and it also provides some flexibility as couples search for the venue. For example, couples working within a strict budget may not be able to afford a preferred venue during the height of wedding season, but that venue could be less costly during slower times of year. By waiting to pick a date until you've chosen a venue, you're increasing your options.

- **Consider your guests.** Though couples, particularly those footing the bill on their own, should prioritize their desires when choosing a reception, it's important they also consider their guests before making a final decision. A venue that's accessible and located near transit hubs like airports and train stations will increase the likelihood that more people can attend. In addition, if children will be invited, a venue that includes family restrooms, including at least one with a changing table, can make parents' nights much easier.

- **Consider your budget.** The Knot

2021 Real Weddings Study found that couples typically spend around 30 percent of their overall budget on the venue, which makes this decision the biggest one in terms of the financial commitments a couple will have to make. Couples may be tempted to choose an awe-inspiring, costly venue for their reception, but they should consider how devoting so much of their budget to the venue will affect the rest of their big day. The best reception venue might be one that won't eat up too much of your budget.

- **Consider the package.** Venues vary in terms of their reception packages. Some may offer catering, including beverages, with each of their packages, while food and beverage might not be part of other venues' offerings. If you find a venue you love but it doesn't offer catering services, seek estimates from area caterers to determine how much it will cost to feed and serve your guests. Many couples find it more convenient and less stressful to pick a venue that offers on-site catering, though plenty of others have had no trouble after choosing a venue and separate caterer.

The bulk of a couple's wedding day and night will be spent at the reception, making choice of venue one of the more fun and important decisions they'll have to make.



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Here are just a few of the vendors: Of Course The White Rose (Venue), Personalized Touch Catering, Dawn On The Chesapeake, LLC (Ceremony Location and Outdoor Venue), Jennifer Le Makeup (Hair and Makeup), Views/Sounds Media and Production, By The Sea Travel, LLC, Patuxent Transportation, The Inn at Leonardtown, Natalie Grace Photography, Elite Beatz Entertainment and many more!

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Please sign up to be eligible for the Door Prices. Go to www.whiterosehall.com under the **Event Tab** and registration form attached.

Why a Wedding Planner Can Be a Couple's Best Asset

The average cost of a wedding today is enough to make a sizable down payment on a home. According to The Knot's 2019 Real Weddings Study, the average wedding in the United States cost \$33,900 in 2019, though the price tag can vary widely from state to state. Though love may not cost a thing, weddings certainly do. One of the best ways to maximize wedding budgets and ensure that all that money is well spent is to enlist the services of a wedding planner. Wedding planners wear many hats, which underscores how valuable they can be.

Sounding board

An experienced wedding planner can help couples keep their worries at bay. Countless decisions must be made when planning a wedding, and some couples may feel as if they need to micromanage their nuptials. A wedding planner can take tasks off of couples' plates and serve as a sounding board as couples try to make the best decisions.

Financial guru

A wedding planner may help couples score insider deals and will know when a vendor's price is on target or inflated. That savvy saves couples money in the long run. Wedding planners also can advise on ways to save money and allocate funds so couples' biggest priorities get the financial

attention they deserve.

Problem solver

Wedding planners step in to save the day when hiccups threaten to derail plans. A planner will know what to do should a gown become torn or if a vendor fails to respond to calls on the day of the wedding. Removing some stressors allows couples to relax and more fully immerse themselves in their weddings.

Idea generator

Pulling together ideas from every corner requires a creative eye. Couples can rely on a professional wedding planner to help with brainstorming and putting different elements together. He or she likely has seen a vast array of celebrations and can make suggestions based on what's worked before.

Time saver

Wedding planners already have a bevy of industry contacts and can pull together wedding details in much less turnaround time than couples with no wedding planning experience.

Wedding planners are invaluable resources who wear multiple hats as they help couples plan the wedding of their dreams.

Stage Fright? Consider Private Vows

Weddings are very special occasions for two people who are in love. That's why many couples want close family and friends nearby when they tie the knot. But even the happiest couples may express some nervousness about one particular part of traditional wedding ceremonies.

Wedding vows are a way for couples to profess their love for each other. However, many couples who want to write their own vows are hesitant to say them aloud in front of an audience. If couples are intimidated by a heartfelt recital of their vows in front of a crowd, then exchanging vows in private may be for them.

Wedding planners and industry experts say that private vows have become very popular. While the vows do not replace the public exchange that seals the marriage from a legal standpoint, they can be words shared in a private moment before the actual ceremony itself. A quiet moment alone allows couples to shed private tears and share a special moment before they make haste for the altar.

The Knot, a premier wedding planning resource, notes that there are many reasons to share private vows.

- You do not like being in the spotlight or become shy in front of crowds.
- There are words you would like to share with your future spouse that are deeply private, and you don't want to express those feelings to every person at the wedding.
- You do not want to censor your thoughts or words.
- You desire an intimately private and personal moment together before all of the fanfare and rush of the wedding.
- You'd like to recite loving words in a native language that some guests may not understand.
- You desire the potential for some very great candid photos if you invite the photographer to be there at a distance.
- You want to create a lasting memory that is only yours as a couple to share.

The popularity of private vows exchanged before a wedding ceremony is growing. This growing trend provides yet another way for couples to personalize their weddings.

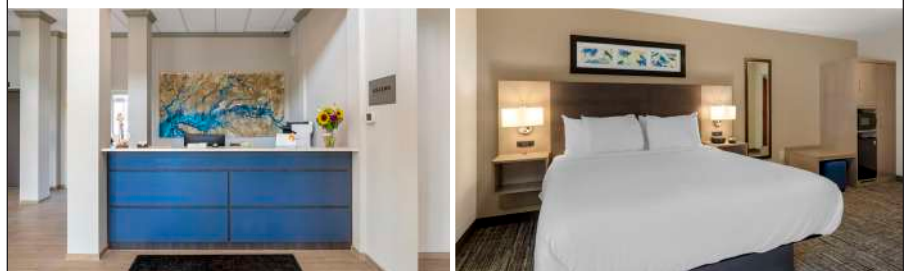
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