



THE PLANNER

All you need to design the day
of your dreams

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TICK TOCK

The big day is getting closer, and there's still so much to do! Pulling off your wedding (while saving your sanity) is totally doable when you have advice from the pros. Turn the page for our top tips—and a handy schedule to keep you on track.

BRYAN GARDNER

INSIDER TRICKS FOR WEDDING-DAY BLISS

This may be your first time down the aisle, but it's not ours. We polled our editors and other top industry pros for behind-the-scenes secrets that will help you make the most of your big day.

TEXT BY JAIME BUERGER



Clever Cost-Cutting

"If you're going with an expensive printing process, use it for the invite, and have the supporting pieces flat-printed." —*Elisabeth Engelhart, associate art director*

"Flowers cost a lot, so skip them on the bar and along the aisle. Nobody will miss them." —*Brooke Porter Katz, senior editor*

"Have a logo designed (seek out affordable design websites) and a stamp made. Use it on favors, bar signs, and menus for chic branding on the cheap." —*Cara Sullivan, contributing editor, and owner of Wild Floral Design, Chicago*

Trust Yourself

"Once you have a blueprint for your day, stop obsessive Pinterest-browsing! Seeing all the options out there will make you second-guess yourself." —*Brooke Porter Katz*



SIPPING SMARTS

"Overstaff the bar! You can't have too many bartenders. It's a surefire way to keep guests happy—no one wants to wait at a party." —*Kristin Newman, founder and owner, Kristin Newman Designs, Charleston, South Carolina*

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Rough percentage of guests likely to skip prepped Champagne at the cocktail hour. Ask servers not to overpour.

Tasty Takeaway

"Go for edible favors at a destination wedding, so guests don't have to squeeze them into a suitcase." —*Calder Clark, owner and creative director of event design firm Calder Clark, Charleston, South Carolina, and Raleigh, North Carolina*

DETAILS COUNT

"After the first cut, have your caterer slice and garnish the cake out of sight. There's nothing worse than watching a sous chef hack away at your beautiful, towering cake." —*Calder Clark*

"Number R.S.V.P. cards before mailing (on the back, in pencil) to keep track of anyone who doesn't respond or forgets to write his or her name." —*Jamie Moore, co-owner, Sinclair & Moore Events, Seattle*

"Write vows in pretty notebooks, or tape them into a vintage book. A folded piece of paper is not super-elegant." —*Cara Sullivan*



THE MUST-HAVE LIST

1. Ask the florist to bring a spare **boutonnieres** or two, in case one gets lost or damaged.
2. Pack an **emergency kit** with eye drops, mints, a stain-remover stick, nail polish, and fashion tape for wardrobe malfunctions.
3. Bring along a few pairs of **earplugs** for any guest who finds the music at the reception a bit too loud.
4. If there's rain in the forecast, stock up on **umbrellas** and arrange for friends to help guests get from their cars into the venue.
5. Maybe it's your something old, but be sure to have a **hanky** at the ready. You never know when tears will flow.
6. Tuck a **contact list** of all vendors in your handbag. Be sure to get the weekend on-call numbers!
7. Print a copy of the **shot list** for your photographer. You've likely already reviewed it together, but handing it to her day-of will ensure that no essential pics are missed.
8. The rings! Who's got 'em? Make sure they are in the right hands (traditionally, this is the job of the best man).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BRYAN GARDNER (2); PIA ULIN. OPPOSITE: RYAN RAY; STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON; BRYAN GARDNER; PIA ULIN

WORTH EVERY PENNY

“When in doubt, spring for the extra hour of reception time—people will always want to party more.”

—Michael McCormick, design director

Style Sense

“Since you’re probably going to take off your heels at the reception, ask your seamstress to make two bustle lengths. When you’re barefoot (or in flats), your dress won’t be too long.”

—Lauren Sozmen, owner, Loli Events, New York City and Paris

“Nude lipstick will wash you out in photos. Go for a true rose—it will translate as the perfect pinky-nude shade.”

—Melissa Milrad Goldstein, beauty director

“Consider a styling service to help the bride dress, steam bridesmaid dresses, and manage the groom and groomsmen.”

—Lyndsey Hamilton, creative director, Lyndsey Hamilton Events, New York City and Lenox, Massachusetts



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Approximately how many minutes it takes to set up a group portrait. (Plan accordingly.)



PUT A RING ON IT

“If you’re buying a diamond eternity band, size up by a quarter—you want room for your finger to expand and the flexibility to stack rings. It’s very hard to adjust it after the fact, and a little too big is better than too tight.”

—Gregory Jezarian, owner, G. Jezarian Purveyor of Fine Jewelry, New York City

DOS & DON'TS

Plan B: “If you’re getting married outdoors, have a rain plan that makes you genuinely happy. There’s no such thing as a weather magician!”

Petal Placement: “Epic floral installations are memorable, but have your designer scope out the HVAC situation before you commit. A heating vent aimed at flowers could toast them.”

—Sullivan Owen, owner and creative director, Sullivan Owen Floral & Event Design, Philadelphia

Shine On: “Put jewelry on last. Hair spray, perfume, and makeup can dull diamonds and ruin pearls.”

—Colleen Banks, associate style editor

Action Shots

“For great kid photos, give them a role: Maybe they lead guests in a parade to the reception, or sit on pillows at the ceremony spot.”

—Corbin Gurkin, owner of photography company, Corbin Gurkin, Charleston, South Carolina



SHIRA SAYS

In her seven years as our real weddings editor, Shira Savada has learned a few tricks to make a celebration successful.

Guys, take your phones out of your pants pocket—especially if you’re in a slim-fit suit. It’s not a good look.

Speaking of unfortunate moments in technology, I can’t endorse an unplugged ceremony enough. That way guests will stay actively engaged in what’s going on (and their phones will stay out of any professional shots).

Ladies, bustles aren’t part of your everyday wardrobe. Eliminate day-of confusion by taking a how-to video during a fitting.

Have a few bobby pins on hand, even if you don’t need them for your hair. They’ll be your secret weapon for getting out of a dress with a row of fabric-covered buttons.

Hire the videographer: It’s worth the money. My family has film footage from my grandparents’ 1946 wedding, and I treasure it.

Always, always send thank-you notes. And not just to your guests, but to your vendors, too. These people put their heart and soul into your big day, and a simple note can mean a lot.

TAME FLY-AWAYS

“Beach wedding? If you’re wearing a floaty headpiece, veil weights are a must for keeping it in place.”—Cara Sullivan

30-DAY COUNTDOWN

It's easy to feel overwhelmed the closer you get to your day. Keep calm and marry on with this common-sense checklist for the last month before "I do." **TEXT BY JAIME BUERGER**

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WEEKS OUT

Send rehearsal-dinner invites

You want to give your VIPs plenty of notice so they can clear their schedules.

Write vows

Allow yourself the time to write from the heart. Things will only get busier from here, and your ceremony isn't the moment to speak on the fly.

Deliver playlists

A band may need to learn your first-dance songs and any special requests. While you're at it, share any do-not-or must-play songs with your DJ.

Buy attendant and parent gifts

It's not a must, but giving your supporting cast a token of appreciation is always a good move.

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WEEKS OUT

Nail down ceremony

Discuss the details of the service with your officiant. Also, make sure the people doing readings have a copy of the text so they can practice.

Buy (or make) guest book

Don't forget to pick up pens, too. (We love the color options from Marvy Uchida LePen.)

Contact outstanding R.S.V.P.s

Phone or e-mail invitees who missed the deadline; you'll need this info to pass on to your caterer and to devise a seating chart for the reception.

Apply for marriage license

State laws differ, but typically a license is valid for at least 30 days; check usmarriagelaws.com to find the requirement for yours.

Prepare a day-of shot list

Be sure to ID who's who in your families and the wedding party so your photographer and videographer know whom to capture.

Finalize day-of printed pieces

Print ceremony programs, escort and place cards, menus, signature-drink signs, and the like (or commission someone else to do it).

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WEEKS OUT

Create seating chart

Make life easier by managing seating assignments online; try allseated.com.

Put together welcome bags

Care packages for out-of-town guests can be simple or elaborate. Be sure to include a schedule of events.

Make favors

Get them ready now unless you're giving edibles; those should wait until a day or two before the wedding.

Attend final dress fitting

Think of this as a dress rehearsal, and bring along your veil, accessories, shoes, and day-of undergarments.

Break-in shoes

Practice wearing your kicks around the house for a few hours at a time.

Get hair cut and colored

Book this early enough that your hair can settle into its new shape, but not so early that roots have time to grow out.

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WEEK OUT

Pick up your dress

Keep it on a padded hanger in a breathable muslin garment bag.

Pick up wedding bands

And then promptly hand them off to your best man for safekeeping.

Get a spray tan

If you need some extra color, do this 48 hours before donning your dress to avoid stains. (We also suggest a test run a month ahead.)

Confirm day-of timeline with vendors

And provide directions to any transportation you've booked.

Give final head count to caterer

Caterers have their own guidelines, but most will need the exact number about three days out.

Drop off welcome bags

Leave them with the hotel's concierge. There may be a fee (around \$7 per bag) to deliver them to guests' rooms; you might avoid the charge if desk clerks hand them out as guests check in.

Gather all extras for your venue

Give your coordinator any favors, place cards, cake servers, toasting glasses, and whatever else has been in your charge up to now.

THE DAY BEFORE!

Assign someone to collect gifts/cards

Designating a point person before your wedding means no present will be left behind.

Give itineraries to wedding party

This extra step is well worth it to ensure everyone is where they need to be at the right time.

Go for a mani-pedi

It's a smart idea to buy the polishes, too, for any last-minute fixes.

Pack wedding-night bag

And ask a friend or attendant to make sure it gets to the right place.

Prepare tips for vendors

Check contracts to see if gratuities are included; if not, place each tip in a marked envelope, and enlist your MOH or best man to deliver them. (For more on tipping, visit marthastewartweddings.com/tipping-wedding-vendors.)

Get your beauty sleep

A well-rested bride is a beautiful and happy bride.

QUICK AND EASY WEDDING-DAY DETAILS

You don't need a ton of time (or money) to make your big day truly memorable—not only for you but for your friends and loved ones, too. Here are some easy ways to bring the magic.

TEXT BY JAIME BUERGER



1. Every party host knows to offer drinks as people arrive. Do the same at your ceremony, and have your caterer set out lemonade, iced tea, and water for pre-vows sipping.

2. Paper fans or parasols will go a long way toward keeping everyone cool on a hot day. You can choose from hundreds of ready-made options at an online retailer like save-on-crafts.com.

3. Hiring transportation to shuttle guests to and fro? Deck out their ride with novelty party favors and a personalized Spotify soundtrack you've shared with the driver.



4. The welcome bag is a workhorse when it comes to making out-of-towners feel special. Fill yours with regional tokens—think barbecue sauce in Texas or maple candies in Vermont.

5. Ask your caterer or coordinator to put out a few high-top tables during the cocktail hour—it's hard to socialize when there's no place to set down your gin and tonic and bite-size grilled cheese.

6. Stock up on affordable photo frames. Use them to hold everything from table markers to descriptions of cocktails at the bar to the placard asking guests to sign your guest book.



7. No bathroom attendant? Add a pampering touch by setting out baskets or trays with hair spray, breath mints, bobby pins, lotions, and blotting papers in the restrooms.

8. Two words: group photo. If you have a manageable number of guests (say, 75 or fewer), have your photographer wrangle an overhead shot after the ceremony.

9. Speaking of photos, encourage snap-happy guests (before and after the ceremony) by creating a hashtag. Print it on signs or have your DJ announce it.

10. Give them something to talk about—and chuckle over. Include fun facts and trivia about you and your groom in programs or on the tables for dinner.

11. Flip-flops aren't just for beach nuptials. They also offer relief after hours of dancing. Buy a stack of cheapies and put them near the dance floor.



12. Cater to the kids in the crowd with puzzles, coloring books, or games at their seats. They (and their parents) will thank you.

13. If anyone else is celebrating a special day (a birthday or anniversary), give them a sweet shout-out with a note in your program or a song dedication from the DJ.



14. Mingle! You're the ones they came to see. Make sure you drop by every table at dinner as a couple, and speak to everyone at least once.

15. Sometime during the evening, grab the mic with your new spouse and say a few words to thank your parents and guests.

BRYAN GARDNER (1, 7); JOHNNY MILLER (4, 6, 12); CHRISTIAN OTH (8); RAYMOND HOY (11)