



The Ultimate Wedding Planning Timeline and Checklist

Your Comprehensive Guide
From “Yes!” to “I Do!”

Presented by Rye Venues

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Introduction:

Congratulations on your engagement! This exciting journey toward your wedding day should be filled with joy, not stress. That's why we've created this comprehensive timeline and checklist to guide you through every step of the planning process.

Whether you're newly engaged or already deep into planning, this resource will help you stay organized, on track, and confident that you're not missing any important details. We've included not only the standard planning milestones but also those often-forgotten tasks that can catch couples by surprise.

At RYE Venues, we believe that proper planning leads to perfect celebrations. Use this timeline as your roadmap to a stress-free wedding planning experience and a flawless wedding day.

12+ Months Before...

Essentials:

- ☐ Celebrate your engagement!
- ☐ Set a budget and determine who's contributing
- ☐ Create a preliminary guest list to estimate headcount
- ☐ Research and select a wedding date (or a few potential dates)
- ☐ Begin researching venues for ceremony and reception
- ☐ Tour potential venues and ask all the important questions
- ☐ Book your ceremony and reception venues
- ☐ Start researching wedding planners if you plan to hire one

Insider Tips:

- **Venue Selection:** Consider the season and local events when selecting your date. In Grand Rapids, October is peak wedding season, so book early if you're eyeing a fall wedding.
 - **Budget Planning:** Set aside 5-10% of your total budget as a contingency fund for unexpected expenses.
 - **Guest List Strategy:** Create A, B, and C lists to help prioritize invitations if you need to trim numbers.
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9-12 Months Before...

Essentials:

- ☐ Hire a wedding planner if you've decided to use one
- ☐ Research and book your photographer and videographer
- ☐ Begin looking at wedding attire inspiration
- ☐ Select and ask your wedding party members
- ☐ Research wedding insurance options

- ☐ Create a wedding website
- ☐ Send save-the-dates for destination weddings
- ☐ Start a wedding folder or binder to organize all materials

Insider Tips:

- **Photography:** Book your photographer early, especially if you want engagement photos for save-the-dates.
 - **Wedding Party:** When asking friends/family to be in your wedding party, be clear about expectations and potential costs.
 - **Wedding Website:** Include accommodation information for out-of-town guests early so they can plan accordingly.
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6-9 Months Before...

Essentials:

- ☐ Shop for wedding attire and schedule fittings
- ☐ Research and book caterer if not provided by venue
- ☐ Research and book entertainment (band, DJ)
- ☐ Meet with officiant to discuss ceremony details
- ☐ Research and book florist
- ☐ Order save-the-dates (if not already sent)
- ☐ Research honeymoon destinations
- ☐ Book hotel room blocks for out-of-town guests
- ☐ Register for gifts

Insider Tips:

- **Attire Timeline:** Allow 6-8 months for wedding dress ordering and alterations.
- **Entertainment:** Ask your DJ or band for a "do not play" list option to avoid songs you dislike.

- **Catering:** If you have guests with dietary restrictions, discuss accommodation options with your caterer early.
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4-6 Months Before...

Essentials:

- [] Select and order invitations and other stationery
- [] Book transportation for the wedding day
- [] Book accommodations for your wedding night
- [] Schedule cake tastings and book baker
- [] Purchase wedding rings
- [] Send save-the-dates (if not already sent)
- [] Begin planning rehearsal dinner
- [] Schedule hair and makeup trials
- [] Book honeymoon transportation and accommodations

Insider Tips:

- **Invitations:** Order 25% more invitations than you think you need to account for mistakes, last-minute additions, and keepsakes.
 - **Transportation:** Consider providing transportation between the ceremony, reception, and hotels if they're not within walking distance.
 - **Rings:** Allow time for sizing, engraving, and possible shipping delays when ordering rings.
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2-4 Months Before...

Essentials:

- [] Finalize menu and flowers
- [] Schedule final dress fitting

- ☐ Write your vows (if writing your own)
- ☐ Review and finalize ceremony details with officiant
- ☐ Send wedding invitations
- ☐ Create a seating chart system
- ☐ Purchase gifts for wedding party, parents, and each other
- ☐ Book a photo booth, if desired
- ☐ Arrange welcome baskets for out-of-town guests
- ☐ Plan and book honeymoon activities

Insider Tips:

- **Invitations:** Send invitations 8-10 weeks before the wedding, with an RSVP deadline 3-4 weeks before your date.
 - **Seating Chart:** Use a spreadsheet or online tool that allows for easy adjustments as RSVPs come in.
 - **Welcome Baskets:** Include local treats, a schedule of events, maps, and activity suggestions.
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1-2 Months Before...

Essentials:

- ☐ Follow up on missing RSVPs
- ☐ Create a detailed timeline for the wedding day
- ☐ Finalize seating chart
- ☐ Confirm all vendor arrangements and timelines
- ☐ Have final dress fitting
- ☐ Break in wedding shoes
- ☐ Finalize ceremony program
- ☐ Apply for marriage license
- ☐ Finalize wedding vows

- ☐ Create or review shot list with photographer
- ☐ Confirm honeymoon reservations

Insider Tips:

- **Marriage License:** In Michigan, marriage licenses are valid for 33 days from the date of application. Apply 2-4 weeks before your wedding.
 - **Vendor Confirmation:** Send final head counts, timelines, and special requests to all vendors one month before the wedding.
 - **Wedding Day Timeline:** Build in buffer time throughout the day—everything takes longer than you think!
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2-4 Weeks Before...

Essentials:

- ☐ Final venue walkthrough with vendors
- ☐ Create final timeline for wedding party and family
- ☐ Pick up wedding rings
- ☐ Final head count to venue and caterer
- ☐ Arrange seating chart and place cards
- ☐ Pick up wedding attire
- ☐ Confirm all transportation arrangements
- ☐ Prepare final payments and gratuities for vendors
- ☐ Pack for honeymoon
- ☐ Delegate wedding day tasks to wedding party or family

Insider Tips:

- **Vendor Payments:** Prepare final payments in labeled envelopes and assign someone trustworthy to distribute them.
- **Packing:** Create a separate "day-after" bag with comfortable clothes and essentials for the morning after your wedding.

- **Delegation:** Assign a point person (not you!) for each vendor to handle questions or issues on the wedding day.
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1 Week Before...

Essentials:

- ☐ Final confirmation with all vendors
- ☐ Give final guest count to caterer
- ☐ Break in wedding shoes (if not already done)
- ☐ Pack wedding day emergency kit
- ☐ Get beauty treatments (facial, manicure, etc.)
- ☐ Pick up welcome baskets/gift bags
- ☐ Prepare wedding day timeline for wedding party
- ☐ Confirm photo ID for marriage license
- ☐ Prepare payment envelopes for vendors
- ☐ Deliver welcome baskets to hotel

Insider Tips:

- **Emergency Kit:** Include safety pins, fashion tape, pain relievers, stain remover, breath mints, tissues, and a sewing kit.
 - **Vendor Tips:** Prepare gratuities in labeled envelopes to be distributed on the wedding day.
 - **Self-Care:** Schedule some downtime to relax and enjoy your final days as an engaged couple.
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The Day Before...

Essentials:

- ☐ Attend rehearsal and rehearsal dinner

- ☐ Give gifts to wedding party and parents
- ☐ Prepare wedding attire and accessories
- ☐ Confirm wake-up times and morning schedule
- ☐ Print final copies of vows and speeches
- ☐ Get to bed early!

Insider Tips:

- **Rehearsal:** Bring all ceremony items (readings, unity candle, etc.) to the rehearsal.
 - **Hydration:** Drink plenty of water and avoid excessive alcohol at the rehearsal dinner.
 - **Delegation:** Hand off your phone to a trusted friend or family member to handle any last-minute calls or texts.
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WEDDING DAY!!!

Essentials:

- ☐ Eat breakfast!
- ☐ Allow plenty of time for hair and makeup
- ☐ Give wedding rings to best man/maid of honor
- ☐ Take a moment alone to center yourself
- ☐ Remember to eat and drink water throughout the day
- ☐ Take your marriage license to the ceremony for signing
- ☐ ENJOY YOUR DAY!

Insider Tips:

- **Timeline:** Add 25% more time than you think you need for getting ready.
 - **Photos:** Consider a "first look" before the ceremony for intimate photos and to calm nerves.
 - **Mindfulness:** Take mental snapshots throughout the day—it goes by quickly!
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After The Wedding

Essentials:

- ☐ Return any rented items
- ☐ Begin thank-you notes (within 3 months)
- ☐ Preserve wedding dress and bouquet (if desired)
- ☐ Change name (if applicable)
- ☐ Update accounts with new name/address
- ☐ Submit wedding photos to venue and vendors (they love to see them!)

Insider Tips:

- **Thank-You Notes:** Keep a spreadsheet of gifts received and thank-you notes sent.
 - **Name Change:** Create a checklist of all accounts that need updating (social security, driver's license, passport, bank accounts, etc.).
 - **Reviews:** Leave reviews for your vendors—it helps their businesses and helps other couples.
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Frequently Forgotten Items:

- ☐ Arrange for cake cutting set and toasting flutes
- ☐ Plan for meals on the wedding day before the reception
- ☐ Designate someone to take gifts home after the reception
- ☐ Arrange for wedding dress steaming
- ☐ Plan for decor setup and teardown
- ☐ Create rain/weather contingency plans
- ☐ Prepare tip envelopes for vendors
- ☐ Assign someone to bustle the wedding dress
- ☐ Bring comfortable shoes for reception dancing
- ☐ Designate someone to return rentals after the wedding

- [] Create a plan for leftover food and cake
 - [] Assign someone to gather personal items at the end of the night
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Notes & Reminders:

About Rye Venues:

RYE Venues offers an exceptional collection of distinctive wedding venues in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Each of our venues shares its own rich story and unique character, providing the perfect backdrop for your love story.

From the historic charm of New Vintage Place to the rustic elegance of New Era Wedding Barn, the sophisticated ambiance of Ballroom at McKay to the artistic setting of The Grand Rapids Art Museum, we have the perfect venue to match your vision.

Our experienced team is dedicated to making your wedding planning journey as seamless as possible, from your first venue tour to your last dance.

Visit ryevenues.com to schedule a tour and find the perfect setting for your special day.

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