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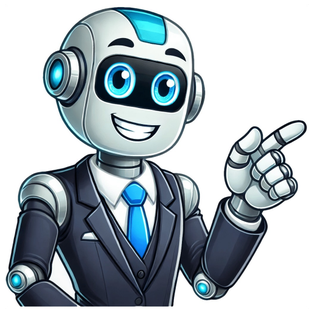

The average US engagement is 16 months long (or in my case 15 months). My husband and I got married August 15th, 2014 and we lived through many wedding planning hurdles. My goal is to help you with some of your own planning perils. Okay, I make it sound dramatic, but planning a wedding can be stressful, or it can be a lot of fun! It is inevitable that you and your partner will go through ups and downs and if I can pass along my knowledge of having planned my own wedding, then I have done my job.To get you started, be sure to bookmark Love & Lavender's Wedding Resource Section. As a wedding blogger, wedding planner, and previous bride myself, I have used a lot of planning-related tools. There a loads of them out there, some of which are amazing and others not so much.We've curated a list of companies, tools, links, and resources that we strongly recommend to couples planning their big day.On another note, here's a little FREEBIE to help you stay organized. Download and print my free Wedding Planning Checklist, then add it to your wedding binder or you can go digital.Free 12 Month Wedding Planning ChecklistAre you ready to get started? Here is the in-depth checklist of the good, the bad, the I don't want to but have to, and personal tidbits that will help smooth out the process and get you thinking of things you might not have otherwise thought about.Engagement Party (Optional): Usually hosted by the bride's parents. Keep in mind that whoever you invite to the engagement party should probably be invited to the wedding as well. We struggled with this one because the engagement party was shortly after the engagement, and long before any discussion of guest list planning for the wedding. You will get wrapped up in the moment and invite everyone – even the neighbors who you know full well won't be invited to the wedding. Just avoid having to use the awkward line 'we have decided to have an intimate wedding' and only invite those people who will truly be invited to your intimate affair.PinCreate a Wedding Binder: Right away! Keep all copies of every contract and L&L's handy dandy condensed printable master list in your binder and keep a running "to-do-list" on the front. Eliminate Assumptions and Unknowns: Sit down beforehand to create a list of 3 things you both must have at the wedding. For example, a photographer, type of food to be served, or perhaps one of you has your heart set on a particular venue. Not only will you both get a concrete understanding of each other's wishes, but your budget will become clearer once you know your must-haves.PinSet a Budget: This one in and of itself can be tricky. If you know exactly what you want for your wedding, and are not looking for unsolicited advice or opinions of what the day should look like, then you better start saving your pennies. Let everyone know up front that you are paying for the wedding yourselves, which means you will be planning the wedding the way you want. On the other hand, if you have received/accepted money from parents or loved ones who want to contribute then be ready to hand over the reins a little bit and accept input.Read More: 12 Best Ways to Cut Wedding CostsMake a Guest List: This one will change, and change again, and then probably change 5 more times! Making a guest list is probably the most difficult part of the whole wedding process. Knowing who makes the lists and who doesn't can be extremely frustrating. Just remember to invite the people who'll make your wedding day special. You don't have to invite everyone – especially Bobby your third cousin once removed! Research and Reserve a Venue: If you are fortunate enough to have a cabin, church, or parents' backyard that you both agree you will get married – more power to you. If you don't, then may I suggest that you both runoff and elope! Just kidding, this can be a tricky one though. When researching your venue make sure you know your budget, style, and start contacting venues sooner rather than later. Just keep in mind many venues have preferred catering lists and rules that you will need to follow. When I was looking for a wedding venue down in Napa Valley, a couple of venues felt as though I was being sold a timeshare. I knew right away "this isn't it!" Also, make sure to read over the contract. Don't sign before you understand the additional fees, insurance, and deposit/cancellation policies.Read More: Five Types of Outdoor Wedding Locations *Tip: Parking can be an issue, so make sure you ask if there is guest parking. If not, ask about additional parking options*Set a Date: Once you have chosen a venue, it is time to choose a date. Availability can be an issue, so make sure you give yourself plenty ofPin time. Waiting to book your venue will mean less openings to select from.*Budget tip: Venues can be more flexible with timing and fees can be much cheaper if you have a weekday wedding (& most of the time this will include Fridays)Choose your Wedding Party: Check this wedding out! 11 Bridesmaids and 10 groomsmen. Now that is a bridal party! It is really up to you how many you would like to have just remember the more you have the more money you will be shelling out for presents and any other expenses you are willing to pay for when it comes to the bridal party. At the end of the day don't forget what the ceremony is really about. Take engagement photos: (optional) And send them to L&L of course!Be Inspired: Our Huge Collection of Engagement ShootsPlan the Honeymoon: This one is self explanatory, but with everything else going on don't forget to arrange for necessary country visas and/or renew passports. If you need help planning check out our Ultimate Guide to Planning a Honeymoon.PinRead More: Guide to 10 Types of HoneymoonsHire a Wedding Coordinator (optional): If you have room in the budget for a wedding coordinator, then a professional hand is always helpful. They will know the local ins and outs and have insights into vendors. If you have a close group of family and friends that are willing to help, this option works too. Just be careful because this is where Bridezilla can surface. For my engagement party, I had a grand vision of what it should look like. By the end, my close friend said he felt like he was in a cult and I was the great almighty visionary.Tip: If you are not hiring a wedding coordinator for the day of your wedding, make sure you have a friend that knows what you both want. The bride and groom should not be bothered with every little question. This person can act as a go-between and decision maker for issues that may arise.Interview and Hire Key Vendors: To assess and find the perfect vendors, I would suggest bringing a friend/family member with you, especially for the catering interviews. After all, four ears are better than two! You want to get all the nitty-gritty details and not miss anything. Keep notes and keep contracts in your binder.Florist Photographer Videographer DJ/Band: Do you want a DJ, band, or both? Deciding on songs can be difficult due to the vast array of choices. You will need to think of songs that mean something to both of you at different stages: to play during the wedding ceremony, your grand entrance, signing of documents, and recessional. Wedding Cake Decorator: Don't forget to find the perfect cake stand. Caterer: Buffet or full service dinner? Make sure to ask if they offer tastings with part of the food package.*Tip: See if you can supply your own liquor at the venue, check to see if there is a corkage fee and if you are allowed to take what's left over home with you at the end of the night. This can help immensely with cost.Find and Secure an Officiant: This can be a challenge if you don't belong to a church or know any marriage commissioners. Your best bet is to pose the question to your Facebook friends – that is exactly how Andrew and I found our officiant. Somebody is bound to lead you down the right path to finding the perfect Officiant. Shop for and Order Dress: Keep in mind that dresses will need altering and you will probably have 3 fittings. Brides on a budget – check out our post on the Best Online Shops to Buy an Affordable Wedding Dress.Pin Shop for Accessories: Can't forget about the accessories, especially the bridal veil, which is the finishing touch to any bridal ensemble. If you are looking for that perfect veil still, be sure to check out our sister site Classic Veils. You can customize your own veil too! Read More: The Ultimate Guide to Wedding Veil Lengths Shop for and Select Attendees' Gowns: Are you into the mismatched look or going for more of the traditional bridal party uniform? When it comes to footwear you can either give them a color and let them wear their own shoes or ask that they buy a certain shoe so that they all match. Either way the whole experience can be stressful for everyone, so here is our Wedding Guide on Stress Free Bridesmaids Gown Shopping.Research and book hotels for out-of-town guests: Most hotels will have a group wedding rate. Make sure you call around and find out what they offer. Also, remind your guests to tell the hotel they are there for a wedding. Weddings are usually in the early afternoon and check-in times are usually at 3 pm. Your guests don't want to be getting ready in the hotel's lobby bathroom. If the hotel knows you are attending a wedding they will try their best to make sure that your room is cleaned first. Reserve all necessary party rentals: Linens, tents, etc.PinChoose Colors: Another choice you both have to make together! Although a lot of the wedding submissions I receive have pink themes, and I am starting to wonder if men do not have a say in this matter. Good Luck! A great way to acquire color inspiration is through Pinterest, our Real weddings section.Read More: Choosing the Right Color Scheme for you WeddingOrder Rings: Give yourself lots of time for rings to be ordered, sized, and engraved. One idea for the groom's ring: browse different rings at the jewelers together and then narrow it down to 2 or 3 rings. Andrew and I did this and I got to pick the final ring. It will be a nice surprise on the day of the wedding for him! Check out Blue Nile, one of our trusted partners for wedding rings. They are easy to use, and service-oriented diamond jewelry website that has been around since 1999. I love playing with the build-your-own ring and earring tools to see different cuts, colors, carats, and clarity of a diamond. My brother-in-law used Blue Nile to buy his wife an engagement ring with great success. A Pacific Northwest-based diamond jewelry company that I definitely recommend. Register for Gifts: This is my favorite part of the wedding process! Department store + scanning gun + no regard for price tags = Girl's biggest dream. Sign me up! Order Invitations, Save-The-Dates, and Stationary: This goes back to your theme and color schemes. The save-the-dates/invitations are the first encounter your guests will experience and really set the tone for your wedding. Wedding stationery can add up quite quickly when you start including postage costs. To cut down on costs check out our awesome and FREE Download Printable section. Although, sometimes it's easier to buy than DIY! If you think so too, then be sure to check out our favorite stationer Minted. Mail Save-the-Dates: With guests coming from far and wide to attend a wedding, it is important to send your save-the-date for out of townguests that need to book time off work, arrange flights and book hotel rooms. Don't forget to add the city and venue name to any save-the-date cards. Book Transportation: Nowadays there are all sorts of modes of transportation you and your newlywed partner can be whisked away on. I've seen the whole gamut from limos, vintage cars, horse and buggy, to a romantic bicycle for two and even a scooter. PinPinAssemble and address invitations Select the attire for the groom and groomsmen Purchase gifts for the wedding party Plan the rehearsal dinner: If you have a big wedding party you may be able to get a group rate for whichever restaurant you choose, especially if you plan to have brunch the morning after the wedding. Here is our guide Rehearsal Dinner Etiquette, Fashion & Fun Send the guest list to whoever will be hosting your shower/Bachelorette Party Finalize the menu and flowers: Often times your chef won't be able to give you an exact idea of your menu until closer to the date. This is due to the fact that food and flowers both depend on what is available during the season. Reception Toasts: Choose wisely who you want to make a toast during the wedding reception. Give them lots of notice and time to get prepared for all the lovely things they will have to say that day. Order favors Print out Menu Card as well as Ceremony Programs. (optional) Give the timeline to all your vendors Review your music playlist PinWrite vows: If you plan on exchanging personal written vows I would give yourself lots of time for edits and reviews so that you are not scurrying last minute. This is the biggest speech of your life, you want to make it meaningful and well thought out. Schedule pre-wedding beauty appointments: If you are having an outdoor wedding, make sure to tell your hairstylist so they can plan a style that can handle wind! If you are planning on wearing a veil and you are the one that will be putting it in, make sure you play with it and see what feels and works best in your hair. Do this long before the big day, because once the big day arrives you won't really have a chance to do so. Pick up ringsFinal Dress Fitting PinMail Invitations: Send out invitations and leave lots of room to receive the RSVP. You know there are going to be slow pokes that leave it to the last minute. Meet with officiant Purchase gift for the groom/bride: You would present these gifts during the rehearsal dinner. Obtain a marriage license and other legalities Day-of Timeline: Write up a timeline for the day of your wedding. This will be a loose guide because plans are fluid – especially at weddings! At least if there is a time slot for things like dinner, cake cutting, or the first dance, then your MC should be able to speed things up or slow things down to get everyone back on track.*Tip: Keep in mind, some guests will run fashionably late. A good idea is to state on your invitations, "the ceremony starts a X pm, please arrive 15 minutes early to allow time for parking/seating/etc."Enter all your RSVP into your guest list database: You know you are going to have to make some phone calls to last minute stragglers. Stock the bar fridge: If you are allowed to stock your own liquor make sure you arrange prior to the wedding date who will be responsible for taking it home at the end. Assigned seating chart (optional): Create a layout of the tables and use pink/blue sticky notes to write each guest name. This will be much easier and will leave you with a clean eraser-free mess. Print out directions for the transportation company: That way the driver can calculate all the routes and will know where you should be at appropriate times. Especially useful if you are going to take photos in a separate location.Get a hair cut Pack bags for wedding night and honeymoonPinGive the timeline to all those involved in the wedding Pick up wedding dress and prance around the house wearing it! Delegate wedding day tasks: All hands on deck! If you assign small tasks to different individuals then no one person will be over loaded. Confirm who will: bustle your dress, carry your things, be in charge of the gifts, and take home the leftover alcohol and the top tier of the cake!Tip: Make sure whoever is in charge of gifts has scotch tape on hand in order to tape envelopes to gifts. You will thank me later!Finalize the guest count with your caterer: Caterers will usually ask for the exact guest count prior to reception. Break in new shoes: Break those new shoes in. It is a must! The last thing you want on your wedding day is sore feet and blisters, we have all been there. Update gift registry Payment: Pay any remaining balances to whom you can up to this point. Arrange with a parent or friend to make final payment with cheques at the end of the reception. Layout wedding day clothing Buy a monogrammed wedding day shirt: To wear while getting your hair and makeup done. Time for pampering: Mani & pedis Vendors digits: Make sure that either one of your bridesmaids or your wedding professional has a list of all vendor contact numbers with them on the wedding day. Just in case! Pick the cake up: Make sure that somebody picks up the wedding cake and delivers it to the venue. Attend rehearsal dinner Get a good sleep! PinPinSomething that is easily over looked is the wedding morning itself. Plan ahead and read our Getting Ready on your Wedding Morning: Tips & AdviceBreakfast Give yourself ample time to get ready Give wedding rings and the officient fees to best man Remember to savor each moment as it comesReturn all rentals Wedding dress preservation kit or cleanerPin Send Thank-You Cards: The wedding is finished and you can finally put your feet up and relax. Suddenly, you are reminded that you have one more major task to do before you can officially hangup your bridal veil – write wedding thank you cards! Taking time to write thank you cards is an important final step in the wedding process. Each of your guests deserves recognition for the support they provided during this special time in your life. Unique wording for each thank you card allows you to express gratitude for the gifts you received. Don't forget to turn your vows into a beautiful piece of artwork!A close friend gave me a great tip – do not leave everything to the last minute. If you can book it, rent it, or pay for it, then do so now and don't wait until the last minute.What are your best wedding planning tips? Leave a comment below!Save Photo by: Elizabeth Jackson Photography see more of this wedding here Congratulations on your engagement! Now that you've shared the exciting news and embraced your 'newly engaged' status, you might be wondering what comes next. Planning your wedding is an exciting adventure, and while it involves a few details to consider, it is also a fun and rewarding experience.To guide you through this journey, we've created a 12-month wedding planning timeline. By breaking down tasks month by month, you can prioritize your plans and enjoy the process leading up to your big day.RELATED: A Complete Roadmap to Planning Your Destination Wedding Before starting to pick out all the details of your wedding, it is important for you and your partner to sit down and choose a realistic budget. Start by identifying who is paying for which portions of your wedding. Did family members offer to help? Are close friends willing to DIY the decor and food to help cut costs? Once costs have been allocated or there is an idea of what expenses can be removed from the total budget, make a list of your wants and needs. Important vendors should fall under the 'needs' list, while certain decor items belong on the 'wants' list. Prioritize researching your 'needs' list first to get an idea of your starting budget. Since planning, booking, and purchasing items for the wedding will take place over the course of a year, the list initially started with can change. Maintaining a detailed budget list will help track all wedding-related expenses and avoid exceeding the budget.LEARN MORE: Wedding Cost Breakdown: Creating a Realistic BudgetBrainstorm Your Wedding VisionResearching wedding themes and styles helps envision what you want your wedding day to look like and, most importantly, who to hire to bring that vision to life. If the desired aesthetic aligns with a boho style, find a photographer whose work embodies soft, dreamy lighting and a relaxed vibe. This principle also applies to other vendors being considered. Discovering your wedding vision, style, or theme is a crucial step that takes time but ultimately leads to the dream wedding.Start Creating a Guest ListWhen creating a guest list, consider who to invite to share this special moment. Your wedding day is about celebrating the love between you and your partner, so feel free to invite anyone who supports that love. It's essential to factor in how many guests can be accommodated based on the budget and the venue's maximum occupancy. A great starting point is to list the people who matter most, like family and close friends, then decide on plus-ones or inviting less close acquaintances.Hire a Wedding Planner Wedding planners are experts in various aspects of wedding preparation, including budget creation, contract negotiations, and building connections with reputable vendors. They have the experience to help craft a realistic budget that aligns with your vision, ensuring that every dollar is well spent. Their industry knowledge also allows them to negotiate favorable terms with vendors, saving both time and money.Hiring a wedding planner not only helps bring your dream wedding to life but also alleviates the stress of managing the planning timeline. A detailed schedule of essential tasks and deadlines is created, allowing you to enjoy the process rather than feel overwhelmed. With a wedding planner's support, there's no need to sacrifice free time for wedding management; you can relax and savor the excitement while the logistics are handled professionally.Additionally, wedding planners offer creative insights and solutions you may not have considered, ensuring your wedding reflects your unique style and personality. From coordinating with vendors to addressing last-minute issues on the big day, a wedding planner is an invaluable asset in turning wedding dreams into reality.Interested in working with a planner to create your perfect wedding? Learn more about our wedding planning services and discover how we can help bring your vision to life.Confirm Venue AvailabilityWhile researching venues that align with your vision and needs, it's important to contact multiple locations to confirm their availability for the month or season you have in mind. If a specific venue is booked for the next two years, consider whether you're open to postponing your wedding or if you'd prefer to find another venue that is available sooner to accommodate your timeline. Before finalizing the reservation, review all terms and conditions carefully. Ask about any additional fees, such as for overtime, setup, or cleanup, and inquire about what's included in the package—like tables, chairs, linens, and other essential items. If possible, consider visiting the venue again to visualize the wedding layout and ensure it aligns with the overall vision. Once the ideal venue is found, fitting the budget, date, and accommodation needs, securing the booking is essential. This locks in the preferred date and sets the foundation for the entire wedding planning process.Set the Wedding DateWith your venue secured, it's time to start sharing your wedding date with close friends and family. This is also the perfect opportunity to begin researching vendors who align with your wedding vision and to check their availability.Hire Key Vendors The most sought-after vendors for the big day include the photographer, DJ, caterer, and videographer. Now that your date is set, begin researching these vendors to ensure they align with your wedding vision and confirm their availability. While consultations may seem unnecessary, these meetings help clarify each vendor's offerings, pricing, and whether their personalities are a good fit for you and your partner. After thorough research, it's time to make your selections and secure your vendors. Research Hotel Room Blocks If you're having a destination wedding or many guests are traveling for the event, they'll appreciate assistance with accommodations. Locate hotels near your venue to make it easier for guests to navigate, especially if they are unfamiliar with the area. Additionally, if alcohol will be served at the wedding, choosing nearby hotels ensures guests can safely return to their rooms and may also lead to more affordable taxi or ride-share options. Now that the key vendors and venue are secured, it's the perfect time to schedule engagement photos. These photos can be used for save-the-date cards, wedding websites, or even as decor at the wedding reception. Choose a location that holds special meaning, whether it's where the first date occurred, a favorite park, or a stunning backdrop that reflects both personalities. Consider using the wedding photographer for this session to ensure a cohesive aesthetic that aligns with the overall wedding vision. Many photographers offer engagement sessions as part of their wedding packages or at a discounted rate, so be sure to ask about available options.Create a Wedding WebsiteA wedding website is a personalized online hub that provides essential information about your wedding for your guests. Websites like Zola, The Knot, and WithJoy offer templates to help you create your wedding site easily. Be sure to include key details such as the wedding date, venue location, directions, accommodation options, and a schedule of events.You can also use your wedding website to track RSVPs, share your registries, and include a section for FAQs to answer common questions like dress code, parking, or gift preferences. It's an effective way to keep everything organized in one place, significantly reducing the amount of manual communication you need to manage.Order 'Save-the-Date' Cards Save-the-date cards are pre-invitation notifications sent to guests to inform them about the upcoming wedding date and location. These cards provide ample time for guests to mark their calendars and make any necessary travel arrangements. It's important to finalize the guest list before sending out these cards. Reach out to guests for their addresses and save this information in a spreadsheet to streamline the process when sending out the final wedding invitations closer to the big day.When considering the budget, decide whether to send physical cards or electronic ones posted on the wedding website. If choosing physical cards and planning to use engagement photos, be sure to ask the photographer about the timeline for receiving the photos. Additionally, include important information such as both partners' names, the wedding date, the city or venue, and a note indicating that a formal invitation will follow. After sending out save-the-date cards, research different invitation styles—especially if they need to match the save-the-date cards—and place the order to ensure they arrive in time to be sent out at least six weeks before the wedding date. If creating your own invitations, consider using Canva, as they offer a variety of templates and printing options. You can choose from different card types to find the perfect fit for your wedding theme.Book Hotel Room Blocks for GuestsIf your wedding falls during a peak season or holiday, it's wise to book your hotel blocks now to ensure availability. Many hotels allow you to reserve a block of rooms with a contract that includes a cut-off date for guests to book. This means you can secure the rooms early while still giving your guests a window of time to make arrangements.Start Shopping for a Wedding DressWhether you have a clear vision of your dream dress or are still exploring your options, consider visiting local retail stores, wedding boutiques, or dress designers in your area to find inspiration. Keep in mind that wedding dress alterations can take a minimum of six months, so it's important to start your search early. Research designers or stores that align with your style and budget, allowing you ample time for any last-minute details or final alterations as your wedding date approaches. Photo by: Sandrine Philie Photography see more of this wedding here Determine who you and your partner would like to have by your side on the big day. While some may feel pressured to stick to a maximum number of bridesmaids or groomsmen or maintain equal numbers for each side, the decision is entirely yours. It's perfectly acceptable to have an uneven number of attendants. Consider those who are most meaningful to you and your partner, as well as who you envision getting ready with you and standing by your side during the ceremony.Set Dates for the Engagement & Bach PartiesIf you want to include pre-wedding festivities, such as an engagement party to celebrate your new union or bachelorette/bachelor parties, it's important to book them this month. All pre-wedding celebrations should be factored into your main budget. You can choose to opt out of either event if you prefer to allocate more funds toward the wedding day itself. If a member of your wedding party is taking charge of the festivities, ensure they have the contact information for all attendees and are aware of your availability to attend.Send Out 'Save-the-Date' Cards Now is the time to share all the wedding details with guests! Including a QR code that links to the wedding website is a great idea, as it allows guests to access more information without making the cards too lengthy.Buy Your Wedding DressIf you haven't purchased your wedding dress yet, now is the perfect time to start shopping! Choosing your dress at this stage allows ample time for any necessary alterations, ensuring a perfect fit on your big day. When selecting your dress, consider the style that reflects your personality and complements your wedding theme. Remember to factor in additional time for fittings and adjustments, as this process can take several months. If your guests need accommodations for the wedding, consider researching local shuttle services in your area that can transport them to and from the venue. Providing this information can greatly enhance their experience and alleviate any transportation concerns. Additionally, it's helpful to include the average costs of rental cars for guests who may prefer to drive themselves.Send Out Your Gift RegistryYou and your partner should create a list of items you wish to have as you embark on your new journey together. This list can include essential items such as kitchen appliances, bedding, and other household necessities. Additionally, feel free to include items that cater to your hobbies and interests, making your new space truly reflective of both of your personalities. Dont forget to add the registry to your wedding website!Select the Bridesmaids' Dresses and Bridal Party Accessories In addition to your wedding theme, decide what you want your bridal party to wear. You can choose to have them wear your wedding colors, select different shades of the same color, or opt for the same color with varying dress styles—the options are endless. Once you've made your selections, inform your bridal party about your choices and encourage them to schedule their fittings within the month.Book Beauty VendorsIf you decide to have someone do your wedding hair and makeup, take the time to research beauty vendors and the packages they offer. Consider whether you want to include your entire bridal party in these services and how it fits into your budget. If applicable, schedule hair and makeup trials so your beauty vendors can purchase the necessary materials in advance for the big day.Book a FloristLike your other wedding vendors, hire a florist who can bring your vision and style to life. Seek potential floral candidates through recommendations from friends or by exploring social media. By reviewing their past arrangements and styles from other weddings, you can gain insight into their work. Additionally, your wedding planner can assist in finding a florist who aligns with both your budget and vision. Have you decided on the type of material for your wedding bands? Popular choices include gold, platinum, titanium, and other alternative metals. Take time to research which styles appeal to you and your partner, whether you'd prefer matching bands or something more individualized. If you're opting for custom bands, be sure to allow sufficient time for creation and potential adjustments, as the process can take several weeks. Once your rings arrive, it's a good idea to try them on with your jeweler to ensure the fit is perfect and allow for any last-minute alterations before your wedding day. Be sure to allocate time to meet with your caterer for a tasting session to sample potential dishes for your wedding day menu. This allows you to experience the flavors, presentation, and portion sizes firsthand, ensuring they align with your vision. If you're choosing a multi-course meal or have specific dietary preferences, it's helpful to request a variety of options to compare. If you're uncertain or need adjustments after the initial tasting, don't hesitate to schedule a follow-up session with your caterer to fine-tune any dishes or explore alternatives to ensure everything is just right for your big day.Book a Dessert Vendor Select desserts that both you and your partner truly enjoy. In recent years, many couples have chosen a small cake just for themselves, while offering guests a variety of individual treats such as cake pops, rock candy, or a chocolate fountain with fruit. Keep in mind that you don't need to cater to everyone's preferences when it comes to dessert—focus on what you love and feel free to get creative! This personal touch will make the dessert experience more unique and memorable for you and your guests.Book Ceremony MusiciansWhether you're considering a DJ or a small string orchestra, schedule a consultation to review their packages and find an option that fits within your budget. If you decide to hire both a string orchestra for your ceremony and a DJ for the reception, ensure that their music styles match the atmosphere you're envisioning for your wedding. Begin curating playlists for the ceremony and reception to incorporate personal touches and set the perfect tone for your special day. Desserts by 24 Hour Flour see more of this wedding here If your venue doesn't provide tables, chairs, linens, or other décor essentials, request a room layout with measurements. This will help you plan the setup and determine exactly what rentals you'll need, ensuring the space is organized and equipped for your wedding.Put Rental Orders In Consider hiring local rental vendors for items not provided by your venue or to enhance the aesthetic of your wedding. These rental items can include specialty chairs, linens, draping, lounge furniture, or even a dance floor. Be sure to provide your rental company with the venue layout and exact guest count to ensure a seamless setup. Many venues can offer a list of recommended rental companies they've successfully partnered with, which can be a helpful starting point. This is also an ideal time to engage a wedding planner to handle the logistics, allowing you to focus on the details that matter most. After the ceremony and before the reception, the cocktail hour is a perfect time for couples to take photos while guests enjoy entertainment. To keep guests engaged, consider options like live music, lawn games (mini-golf, cornhole, Jenga), or an interactive art station where guests can contribute to a collaborative piece. You can also offer pre-dinner snacks, such as a signature cocktail bar, food tasting stations with oysters or charcuterie, and even wine or whiskey tastings. These activities create a fun and enjoyable atmosphere while you're capturing special moments with family and friends.Hire an OfficiantThe officiant's role is to legally marry you and your partner. If you're having a religious wedding, your venue will typically provide a designated religious figure as the officiant. If your venue does not have an officiant, you can research local officiants in your area or consider asking a close friend or family member. It's essential that your officiant holds the appropriate licensing for your location, as they need to sign the marriage license on the day of your wedding.Book the Rehearsal Dinner VenueWedding venues typically allow couples to access the grounds for a ceremony rehearsal walk-through during the week of the wedding. If you plan to have a rehearsal dinner, you will need to book a reservation with a restaurant in advance. Be sure to invite everyone involved in the ceremony, as well as any close family members. This will give everyone a chance to practice walking down the aisle and enjoy a pre-wedding dinner where they can ask questions and rehearse their speeches or ceremony readings. Now that your guests' accommodations are booked, don't forget to plan accommodations and transportation for you and your partner. You can either add yourselves to the hotel you booked for your guests, or opt for a boutique hotel that caters to couples, or a themed Airbnb to fully enjoy your dream wedding. Make sure you designate a guest to drive you after the wedding (if alcohol will be served, ensure they are comfortable not drinking), or consider pre-booking an Uber or Lyft for convenience.Make Honeymoon Travel ArrangementsBe sure to request vacation time for any days you'll need off for your wedding and honeymoon. If you plan to travel, now is the perfect time to check that your passports are up-to-date and valid. If they have expired, schedule an appointment to renew them as the process can take several months to complete. Planning ahead ensures there are no delays in receiving your new passport.Research Marriage License RequirmentsIn most U.S. states, you can obtain your marriage license up to 30 days before your wedding and sign it on the day of the ceremony. To complete the process, several key individuals need to be present during the time you sign: both you and your partner must sign the license, confirming your intent to marry; the officiant who performed the ceremony must also sign to validate the marriage; and most states require one or two adult witnesses (18 years or older) to sign as well. These witnesses are typically friends or family members. Be sure to check your state's specific requirements regarding the number of witnesses.If you're getting married abroad, familiarize yourself with the marriage laws of that country and how they apply to your legal status back home. Alternatively, you can sign your marriage license before traveling to avoid any potential legal complications or misunderstandings during your destination wedding.Begin Premarital CounselingPremarital counseling can establish a strong foundation for healthy communication in your marriage. By working with a professional, you can develop effective conflict resolution skills and address any issues—whether they've already surfaced or haven't yet—in your relationship. This guidance will help you and your partner build a deeper connection as you transition into this new stage of your relationship.Choose a Shower Date Coordinate with the person hosting your bridal shower to provide them with dates that fit your schedule. Be sure to also give them a guest list, along with addresses, so they can send out invitations in advance. Buy or Rent the Groom's TuxedoWhile finding a tuxedo may not take as long as selecting a wedding dress, it's still important to choose one that complements your wedding theme. If you plan to rent a tux, make sure to place your rental order five months out to allow time for accurate measurements and any necessary alterations.Hire a CalligrapherIf desired, a calligrapher can add a special touch to your wedding invitations, personalized reception menus, welcome signs, and guest book. Remember that the calligraphy should match your wedding theme. Ensure you order extra invitations to account for any mistakes and so your caligrapher can supply you with rough-draft examples. Since you booked your caterer months in advance, scheduling a final tasting will help you finalize your menu and provide the opportunity to add any last-minute food items or remove unnecessary dishes. Once you've finalized the menu with your caterer, you can create and order menu cards, and if applicable, send them to your calligrapher for personalization. Select the Groomsmen Attire You and your partner should decide on the suit colors for the groom's party. Communicate whether the groomsmen will wear ties or other accessories, and request that they schedule their fittings within the month.Attend a Final Hair and Makeup Trial If needed, schedule a time for you and your beauty vendors to do a final trial of your hair and makeup. Since your first trial, you may have changed your mind about certain beauty choices, so it's important that your vendors are informed before the big day. Along with the trial, begin your beauty regimen during the fourth month leading up to the wedding. If you plan to change your hair color or cut, give yourself enough time to adjust if you change your mind. Your wedding is just around the corner! You should now have your invitations, whether you hired a calligrapher or purchased them elsewhere. Determine the postage and send the invitations at least six weeks before your wedding date. Be sure to include a QR code or contact information where guests can confirm their attendance. This will help you gather accurate numbers for catering, hotel blocks, and other vendors that require this information.Purchase Small Details Some couples choose to purchase gifts for each other, parents, close family members, and those hosting their showers. Plan to buy these gifts now so they can be prepared and given the night before your wedding day. Additionally, choose and order or create your wedding favors, welcome baskets, escort cards, place cards, menus, and ceremony programs to distribute to guests during the wedding. Guest gifts don't need to be extravagant; they should be thoughtful items that guests can keep as a reminder of your special day. Avoid typical gifts like coasters with your engagement picture, as most items like these are likely to be discarded.Start Crafting DIY ItemsIf you haven't started making your DIY items yet, now is the time to begin. Some couples find that hosting a get-together with family and friends is a great way to share the excitement and tackle larger DIY projects together.Visit the Venue Visit your venue with your planner or day-of coordinator to review logistics and conduct a final walk-through (your caterer or florist might want to join as well). This is also a great opportunity to select ceremony readings and plan how and when they will be presented during your ceremony.Meet with Photographer and Videographer Schedule a phone call with your photographer and videographer to discuss expectations and logistics. This will help them understand the key moments you want captured, as well as any you prefer to skip. Be sure to prepare a photo list in advance to share with them for smoother coordination on the big day. Additional items to consider include table numbers, a cake knife, cake stand, cake topper, guest book, ring pillow, gift holder, and a card box. You may also want to purchase personal touches such as a non-plastic hanger for your wedding dress, a garter, and matching sets for you and your bridal party to wear while getting ready. Don't forget to buy signs for your wedding, such as a welcome sign, bar sign, guest book sign, or gift table sign.Attend Celebrations in Your HonorPre-wedding celebrations typically take place once the wedding planning has settled down. These events may include bridal showers and bachelorette parties. After each celebration, be sure to write and send out thank-you notes to express your appreciation.Send Out Wedding Invitations and Rehearsal-Dinner Invitations The six-week countdown begins! Your wedding invitations should be signed, stamped, and ready to send. Don't forget to include a return address and the RSVP QR code or information with the invitations. For those attending the rehearsal walkthrough and dinner, you can either include a rehearsal invite with the wedding invitations or send them as separate cards.Talk to Individuals Who You Want to Speak Ask friends and/or family members to give a toast at the reception or speak during the ceremony so they can begin preparing their speeches. Be sure to give them some guidance on timing and the tone you're hoping for—whether heartfelt, humorous, or a mix of both—so they have plenty of time to craft something meaningful for your special day.Meet With the Officiant Discuss the structure and content of your ceremony with the officiant so they match the overall tone desired for your ceremony. Be sure to invite them to the rehearsal dinner so they can practice timing cues with you and the participants and either you or a trusted friend can review their speech to make sure that it is meaningful to you and your partners relationship. First Wedding Dress FittingIf you've purchased your dress and sent it for alterations, you should now be ready for the final fitting. This "first final fitting" should take place 2-3 months after ordering the dress, with a second fitting scheduled six weeks before the wedding. During this final fitting, you'll learn how to bustle the dress and address any other configurations with the designer. After the fitting, make sure to purchase undergarments that will match your dress and fit comfortably underneath.Do a Floral Mock-Up With the FloristMeet with your florist to finalize the floral arrangements you discussed when you first hired them. Ask to see samples or mock-ups of your bouquets, boutonnieres, centerpieces, flower arch, and any other floral elements to ensure they match your vision. This is also a great time to review color schemes, flower types, and any seasonal blooms they plan to use. If possible, request that your florist provides recommendations for how to preserve your bouquet after the wedding or tips for reusing flowers throughout the event (such as repurposing ceremony arrangements for the reception).Give the Song Selections to the DJTogether with your partner, plan the music timeline for key moments such as the processional, recessional, and first dance. Be sure to choose songs for other special moments like your announcement as newlyweds, cake-cutting, and the last dance. Additionally, create a playlist for when everyone is on the dance floor. If you're struggling to come up with enough songs, you can consult your DJ for suggestions or add a section to your wedding website where guests can submit their favorite songs. If you decide to write your own vows to express your love for your partner, take some time to think about how you want them to sound and make sure to practice. Don't overthink your vows; they should come from the heart and reflect your love and commitment to your partner.Finalize Wedding Day Timeline Now that you know when each vendor is contracted to arrive on the day of the wedding, create a detailed timeline and share it with your planner or coordinator, DJ, and caterer. Include your seating chart for the ceremony, indicating which chairs are reserved for the mothers and fathers of the bride and groom. If you plan to have assigned seating during dinner, provide the seating arrangement so your planner can correctly place the name cards.Outstanding RSVPs If you are still waiting for some guests to RSVP, reach out to each one directly to confirm their attendance. Update your guest count spreadsheet (the one your created back in month 10) with their responses. Secure Vendor ConfirmationsContact each vendor to confirm their attendance and share your wedding day timeline with them. Ensure that you provide the final guest count to your planner, caterer, rental company, and any other vendors requiring it by their specified deadlines. Aim to pay each vendor their remaining balance one month before your wedding, unless a vendor specifies that final payment is due on the day of the event. If any vendor requires payment on the wedding day, designate a trusted friend or your Wedding Planner/Coordinator to handle and distribute the labeled envelopes accordingly.Make a Plan for the Transportation of Decor Items (and DIYs) Determine how you will transport your decor items, including any DIY projects, to and from the wedding venue. Assign a family member, friend, or your Planner/Coordinator to oversee this transportation. To ensure a smooth setup and takedown process, it is beneficial to have labeled boxes for the decor, preventing any items from getting lost.Assemble Gift BagsIn addition to your decor items, collect any gifts you plan to distribute during your wedding, and ensure each one is wrapped. Once all gifts are assembled, place them in a labeled box for the person designated to hand them out.Break in Your Wedding ShoesPractice walking in your wedding shoes and do everything you can to avoid blisters on your wedding day. It's also a good idea to have a spare set of shoes if you want to ditch the heels and join everyone on the dance floor.Book Week-of Beauty Appointments Hair, nails, waxing, and maybe a spray tan? Book any beauty-related appointments for the week before your wedding. Treat yourself and take the time to enjoy each appointment! Put tips in envelopes: Along with any day-of final payments, give your designated money distributor labeled envelopes for each vendor's tip.Attend beauty appointments: Manicure, shave, haircut, etc.Final dress fitting: Meet with someone in your bridal party to practice putting on your dress and show them how to bustle it if your dress requires it, as well as explain any other details your designer outlined.Pack for honeymoon: Don't forget your passport if you are leaving the country, and confirm travel arrangements if you're leaving right after the wedding.Pack a bag of essential items: Include items you plan to have during the wedding day. Don't forget hair styling tools, makeup, clothes to get ready in, medicine, and band-aids. Along with your personal items, assemble a day-of emergency kit (most planners and coordinators are equipped with one).Practice your vows out loud. Eat healthy meals and drink plenty of water!Get a good night's sleep—you want to feel well-rested for what's to come tomorrow.Place any boxes, suitcases, bags, and survival kits you need for the ceremony or reception in the car. This way, if you forget anything, you'll have a chance to grab it before heading off to get married!Pack a clutch or small bag with personal items such as medicine, makeup, snacks, and a change of clothes for when you return home as a newly married couple.Attend the rehearsal dinner.Distribute gifts to your parents, partner, and wedding party. Get readyAs soon as you arrive at the place where you will get ready, take your dress and veil out of the bag, and have someone steam them if needed.Eat breakfast and drink even more water.Get married! Photo by: Elizabeth Jackson Photography see more of this wedding here Now that you are home from your honeymoon, take the time to send thank-you cards to your guests and vendors for sharing your fairytale with you. Screen shot, Pin or Print out the Wedding Checklist to kick-start your wedding planning journey! Raine Events The ultimate wedding planning checklist & timeline. Create your personalized wedding plan. No hidden fees! No sign-up required!Create new wedding timelineOur service has assisted