

The Ultimate Wedding Planner

The ring is on your finger and you're ready to start planning your wedding day. But if you've never planned such an important event before, it's easy to become overwhelmed. Where do you begin?

We want to help you get wedding wise, so we've created this free wedding planning checklist. It tells you everything you need to do leading up to your wedding, in the order you need to do it.

And if something doesn't fit with your wedding plans, you can simply cross it off. There's no "wedding rulebook" that dictates what you must do to make your day perfect. All you need is two people in love and some friends and family to celebrate with!

View this checklist online to keep you on track, or print it out and add it to your wedding planning materials so you can refer to it.

18 Months

Before the Wedding

Throw an engagement party

You're engaged – congratulations! Celebrate with friends and family before the hard work of wedding planning begins.

Decide on a budget

Sit down with your partner and any family members who are contributing and decide on how much you're going to spend on the wedding.

✓ See our FREE [Wedding Budget Planner](#) to help you sort it all out.

Choose your wedding theme

Although a theme isn't necessary, it helps you figure out the type of wedding you want and brings all the details together. Is your wedding "elegant Hollywood glamour" or "a relaxing beach party" or "eco-friendly harvest festival"?

Decide on a date

Do you want a summer wedding or a winter wonderland? Will you get married on your anniversary or a date with some other significance? Or will availability of your favourite venue determine your date?

Start looking at venues

Popular venues in peak season can book out years in advance so contact them as early as possible. Create a shortlist and visit the 3-5 you like best.

✓ See our FREE [Choosing a Wedding Venue](#) checklist for tips on picking your perfect venue.

Create a wedding planning folder

Whether you keep this on your computer, iPad, or as a hard copy, you'll need a folder to store inspiration pictures, vendor contracts, contact details and organisation lists.

Choose your wedding party

Who do you want to stand beside you on your wedding day? Honour your closest friends, relatives, and siblings by asking them to be in your bridal party.

Hire a wedding planner

If you don't have the time or inclination to organize the wedding yourself, or you just want someone to make sure things run smoothly, then consider hiring a wedding planner.

Choose your caterer

When asked what they remember most about a wedding, most guests say "the food!" Make sure yours is a scrumptious memory by choosing a good caterer. Taste sampling mandatory – and so much fun!

Find a photographer

Browse the work of different photographers and choose someone whose style you like and who fits within your budget.

✓ See our FREE [Choosing a Wedding Photographer](#) checklist for tips on picking the best.

Choose a videographer

It's wonderful to be able to look back on your wedding in a few years time and relive it all over again – so choose a videographer who can capture your wedding day in style.

Start the guest list

You need a head count ASAP for venue and catering purposes, so start writing down who you're going to invite and their contact details.

12 Months

Before the Wedding

Book your venue

Have you made up your mind yet? Choose a venue that fits your theme and budget and has space to cater for the number of guests you want.

Attend a wedding show

There are several big wedding shows in New Zealand throughout the year and they're a great place to find vendors and enjoy a fun day out with your partner or a girlfriend.

✓ See our [Wedding Shows & Events Calendar](#) for a list of upcoming shows.

Start looking for that perfect wedding dress

The search can be long, but when you try on the dress, you just know it's the one for you.

Send out your save-the-date cards

These are cute little cards or emails to let your close friends and family know your wedding date. Some couples are even setting up Facebook events!

Start planning the honeymoon

Do you want a relaxing holiday by a pool, or a hiking adventure through South America? Don't leave this until the last minute.

Start saving photo & style inspiration

Use the [WeddingWise Lookbook](#) or sites like [Pinterest](#) to collate inspirational wedding images, so you can gather ideas, share with your friends and family for feedback, and decide on details.

✓ See the [WeddingWise Lookbook](#) for all kinds of visual wedding inspiration!

6 Months

Before the Wedding

Choose your celebrant

Who is going to pronounce you husband and wife or civil union partners?

Order your wedding dress

Depending on whether you've having a dress made, or are getting one from a store or from online, you'll need to order in plenty of time.

Book hair and makeup for the wedding party

Get everyone dolled up and looking their best. Take a few photos with you to show the look you want.

Choose your lingerie

Part of being a bride is choosing something sexy for under the dress. This is your wedding, after all, and details count!

Choose outfits for the bridal party

Whether you've got men or women in your bridal party, they'll need something to wear (unless you're having a nudist wedding, in which case, you can skip this item!)

Choose and order your wedding cake

You can attend tastings before deciding on your baker. This is our favourite part of wedding planning!

Arrange transportation

There are lots of fun options for getting to your wedding venue, including limos, minibuses, vintage cars, and horse and carriage.

Book party hire items

If your wedding requires party hire items, such as a marquee, tables and chairs, stage settings or fairy lights, book these well in advance. Check with your venue and caterer to find out exactly what they already supply.

Choose your reception entertainment

Will you have a live band, a DJ, fire dancers, or something a bit different?

Choose a florist

If you're having flowers at your wedding, you'll want to start thinking about the colours and types of blooms. A good florist will give you lots of ideas and advice and help you stick to your budget.

3 Months

Before the Wedding

Start writing your wedding ceremony

Your wedding ceremony is one of the most personal moments of your wedding, so work with your celebrant to ensure it fits with your own beliefs and personalities.

Design and send out invitations

Choose an invitation that reflects the overall style of your wedding day. Send these out 6-8 weeks before your wedding day and set the RSVP date for 3 weeks before the event. Confirm with your caterer when they need a final guest count.

Choose your wedding rings

Give yourselves time to look at several different designs, and if necessary, have rings engraved or resized.

Apply for your marriage licence

Ensure the legal stuff is taken care of by filling out the paperwork and applying for your marriage licence at the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. [More information on their website.](#)

Choose and organize wedding favours

Favours are a memento of your wedding that guests can take home. They can be traditional (bags of sugared almonds), or quirky (seed packets with labels that say "love grows together") to match your wedding's theme.

Touch base with your vendors

Make sure they have everything they need from you to do their jobs, and pay any outstanding deposits.

Reserve hotel rooms

You may need a room to get ready in before the wedding, a bridal suite for the wedding night, or a block of rooms for out-of-town guests.

Create a wedding registry

Many of your guests will be unsure what to get you for a gift. A registry simply provides a few ideas.

Schedule a trial run of your hair and makeup

Contact the specialist you've hired for your big day to arrange a hair and makeup practice run. Make sure the person you'll have on your wedding day is the same person performing the trial.

1 Month

Before the Wedding

Finalize your ceremony and readings

Choose friends or family members for readings or musical numbers during the ceremony.

Print menu cards and/or an order of service

You could have these designed by a local printer, or use the same designer who worked on your stationery. Or simply make them up at home.

Stock the bar

Unless your venue is providing bar service, choose your provider and order your alcohol, glasses, ice, and bar staff to ensure everyone is well hydrated.

Have your final dress fitting

Bring along your wedding-day shoes and try to be patient while the seamstress fusses with the pins. These little tweaks will make a huge difference.

Write your seating plan

Who's going to sit at the head table? Where can you put Aunt Mary and Uncle Al so they don't have to talk to each other?

Create a playlist for the wedding

You'll need to include your ceremony music, as well as songs to play while guests mingle or dinner is eaten, and – unless you've got a band or DJ – a playlist for dancing.

Create a timeline of the day

Decide how long each aspect of the day will take, and circulate a timeline to all bridal party members, vendors, MCs and other important people so everyone knows what they should be doing and when.

2 Weeks

Before the Wedding

Attend Your hen and stag parties

It's your last night of freedom, so go crazy!

Write your wedding speech

Keep it short and light-hearted, and make sure to thank everybody who helped make your day special.

Get your hair cut and coloured

If you're trying a new style or colour, make sure to do it at least two weeks before the wedding to allow time to re-do if necessary.

Try on your dress

Make sure it fits perfectly, and that all your accessories fit. Smile at yourself in the mirror – you're a bride! Then put your dress away carefully for storage until the big day.

Choose gifts for your bridal party

Thank your bridal party for being part of your day by giving them a special gift. Brides often give their bridesmaids jewellery they can wear to the wedding and then keep, and the groom might give his blokes some craft beers.

Choose gifts for others

Acknowledge help from other family members or friends by giving them something special, such as a nice bottle of wine or a hamper of goodies.

Chase up late RSVPs

It doesn't matter if you create an online system or provide a handy card, there will still be people who forget to RSVP. Now's the time to get a definite yes or no!

1 Week

Before the Wedding

Check in with vendors

Call each vendor to confirm their duties, dates and times for delivery, and any other details. Pay final deposits.

Confirm the final guest list with the venue and caterer

Make sure the correct amount of guests is accounted for, and that everyone has a place in the table setting and a meal to look forward to.

Give the photographer a list of shots

Make sure the photographer knows the family groupings and any special shots you want. Having this list printed up in advance ensures no one is missed out on the day.

✓ See our [FREE Essential Wedding Shots](#) checklist for help choosing your must-have photographs.

Enjoy a spa treatment or facial

It's been a tough couple of months and the wedding day is coming up fast! Take some time to relax and pamper yourself!

Assemble and give out welcome baskets

If you have guests coming from out-of-town, help welcome them to your area with a welcome basket in their hotel room. Include things like local treats, a bottle of wine and a map of the sightseeing highlights in the area.

Break in your wedding shoes

If you purchased new shoes for the wedding, make sure you've broken them in. The last thing you want is to be walking around in bare feet all day because your feet are too sore!

Pack for your honeymoon

Get your suitcase packed, your passport ready, and book a house-sitter or pet-sitter. After the wedding all you're going to want to do is relax and enjoy being married!

Hold a rehearsal

Get your celebrant, wedding party, ushers and anyone else involved with the ceremony together at the venue to run through with the music.

Greet out-of-town guests

Many of your guests will travel a long way to see you, so take an hour or two to visit with them personally and make them feel welcome.

1 Day

Before the Wedding

Set up the venue

Get a team of helpers together to hang decorations, arrange tables, and set out place cards.

Gather your wedding kit

Make sure you have your dress, shoes, jewellery, makeup, and bridal emergency kit ready to go.

Make sure everybody knows what he or she is doing

Hand out checklists and answer any questions people have. Ensure everyone knows who to call – i.e. NOT you – if something goes wrong.

Have a warm bath and go to bed early

You've got a big day tomorrow!



Your Wedding Day!

Wear a buttoned shirt for your hair and makeup

This is easy to remove so you can get dressed without ruining all that hard work!

Eat a healthy breakfast

It may be a long time before you get to eat again!

Don't panic if something goes wrong

The most important thing to remember is that you're getting married, and that will happen even if the cake is the wrong colour or the bar staff forget to give out the toast wine.

Relax and enjoy yourself!

You're going to have a wonderful, magical day surrounded by those you love, and you'll go to bed as a husband or wife!

After

The Wedding

Enjoy being married!

You've done it – you've married your love. Take some time to enjoy each other's company (and the fact that you don't have to plan a wedding ever again!)

Preserve your wedding bouquet

If you chose a floral bouquet, have an expert dry and preserve your flowers so you can display them in your home.

Have your wedding dress professionally cleaned

Even the most careful bride will find a few grass stains or wine droplets on her dress. Your local dry cleaner will be able to get your dress looking perfect again.

Review your vendors on WeddingWise.co.nz

Whether you had a good experience or bad, your feedback can help other couples make the best decisions about their wedding vendors.