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How-to hints

Prepare without a hitch

The success of any wedding rests in the planning. With all the details that go into that special day, most brides find it necessary to keep months of planning perspective with tentative deadlines for certain tasks to be completed to help ensure that everything falls into place:

- Announce your engagement in the newspaper.
- Choose your attendants.
- Begin a guest list.
- Start looking for an apartment or house.
- Register with bridal registries.
- Begin shopping for men's attire and reserving correct sizes.
- Order your bridesmaids' attire or arrange to have dresses made.

- Plan bachelor party and bridesmaids' party.
- Make hotel reservations and lodging arrangements for out-of-town guests.
- Arrange transportation for the bridal party.
- Purchase going away outfit.
- Send wedding announcement and bridal portrait to your local paper.
- Look into new insurance coverage or make necessary policy changes.

Nine to twelve months before the wedding:

- Decide on a day, time, size and type of wedding.
- Reserve the church or ceremony location and reception hall.
- Set a tentative budget and decide how expenses will be shared.
- Talk to your clergyman or officiant.
- Purchase the rings.
- Reserve a photographer and/or videotaping company.
- Select the wedding gown.
- Begin planning the honeymoon.
- Select a caterer.
- Select a florist.
- Book the musicians and decide on the music.

Four to six months before the wedding:

- Finalize the guest list.
- Order wedding invitations, announcements and stationary.
- Check blood test and marriage license requirements.
- Begin shopping for your trousseau.
- Shop for the mothers' wedding attire.
- Arrange for attendants' fittings.
- Finalize all details of the reception.
- Make your honeymoon reservations.
- Sign a lease on your new residence.
- Order the wedding cake, groom's cake and mints.

Two weeks before the wedding:

- Address announcements to be mailed on your wedding day.
- Confirm the final guest list. Inform the caterer.
- Decide on seating arrangement for the reception. Write place cards.
- Try on your wedding gown and veil with wedding hairdo and makeup.
- Change woman's name and address on all credit cards, charge accounts, bank accounts and important documents.
- Notify the post office of your new address.
- Set your new home in order.
- Confirm honeymoon reservations.

Six to nine months before the wedding:

- Choose a color scheme for the wedding.

Two to three months before the wedding:

- Begin addressing invitations.
- Reserve rental equipment, if any.
- Arrange for the wedding portrait to be taken at your final fitting.
- Plan rehearsal, rehearsal dinner and attendant parties.
- Buy presents for each other and wedding participants.

One week before the wedding:

- Finalize all details with the caterer, musicians, florist, baker, photographer and limousine service.
- Tell your attendants the date and time of the rehearsal and dinner.
- Inform the best man and maid or matron of honor of any special responsibilities.
- Check to see that attendant's wedding attire is satisfactory.
- Prepare the wedding announcements for mailing on wedding day.
- Start packing for your honeymoon.
- Have the bachelor and bridesmaids' parties.

One month before the wedding:

- Apply for a marriage license.
- Finalize orders on flowers for the wedding and reception.
- Shop for shoes.
- Decide on jewelry.
- Finish addressing and mailing invitations four weeks before the wedding.
- Get blood tests and marriage license.
- Have final fittings for members of the wedding party.
- Go for final gown fitting and formal

On your wedding day:

- Give the best man the officiator's fee for delivery after the ceremony.
- Remember to bring the wedding rings and the marriage license to the ceremony with you.
- Relax and enjoy!

Planning no piece of cake; groom has responsibilities too

The groom traditionally has fewer responsibilities in preparation for the wedding than the bride, but his involvement and cooperation is important. This groom's checklist, suggested by Bride's magazine, shows vital wedding plans he must keep in mind:

Six months before the wedding:

- Pick up the bride's engagement ring from the jewelry store.
- Arrange a visit with clergy member, justice of the peace or judge to discuss the ceremony.
- Discuss with the bride how many ushers you'll need and select them.
- Discuss honeymoon plans with the bride. Consult a travel agent for ideas.
- If you will be traveling abroad, update your passport, arrange for visas and international driver's license, if needed, and check on inoculations.
- Visit wedding gift registry with the bride.

Three months before the wedding:

- Complete the guest list. Give it to the bride.
- Arrange transportation for the wedding party to the ceremony and reception.
- Complete honeymoon plans. Buy tickets.
- Arrange to pay for the bride's bouquet, boutonnières for the men in the wedding party and corsages for the mothers if desired.

One month before the wedding:

- Consult with the bride to arrange lodging for relatives and ushers from out of town.
- Select gifts for the bride and groomsmen.
- Make sure all necessary documents — legal, medical and religious — are in order.
- Check on arrangements for the bachelor party, if you are giving it.
- Pick up wedding ring. Check engraving.
- Help bride with wedding announcements and thank you notes.
- Arrange with the best man for transportation from the reception to the airport or wherever you plan to leave on your honeymoon.
- Double-check honeymoon reservations.

One week before the wedding:

- Explain any special seating arrangements for family or disabled guests to the head usher.
- Put the officiator's fee in a sealed envelope and give it to the best man, who will deliver it after the ceremony.
- Get your going-away clothes ready so you can change after the reception.
- Pack for your honeymoon.
- Remind the best man and ushers of the rehearsal and rehearsal dinner details.
- Present gifts to attendants.

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