The Countdown Begins... (Wedding Checklist)

Special Exclusive for www.costofwedding.com

By: Sharon Naylor, author of 35 wedding books www.sharonnaylor.net

ONE YEAR BEFORE THE WEDDING

_____ Announce your engagement

_____ Place engagement photo and announcement in local newspapers

_____ Attend engagement parties

_____ Discuss with your parents and other planners what your wishes are for the wedding

_____ Meet with any family members who will participate in planning (or paying for) the wedding - this could be a casual dinner at your place

_____ Begin looking through bridal magazines and wedding tips books for ideas

_____ Talk to your recently married friends to get their vendor and site recommendations

_____ Hire a wedding coordinator (optional)

_____ Choose the wedding date and backup dates for site-booking coordination

_____ Inform your family and friends of the wedding date

_____ Create your wedding budget

_____ Decide who will pay for which elements of the wedding

_____ Decide on your top budget priorities (i.e. which will get the most money - your gown, the caterer, flowers, photography, etc.)

_____ Request brochures for wedding vendor research, or visit experts' Web sites

_____ Decide on your desired level of formality

_____ Select the members of your bridal party and inform them of their roles

_____ Make up your own personal guest list

_____ Request guest lists from your parents and siblings

_____ Create your final guest list, and get your final headcount for wedding size parameters

_____ Tour possible ceremony sites

_____ Select and book your ceremony location
_____ Select and book your ceremony officiant
_____ Discuss your ceremony plans with your officiant
_____ Audition potential ceremony musicians
_____ Hire your ceremony musicians and give them your play list
_____ Tour possible reception sites
_____ Select and book your reception site
_____ Research and book rental item agency, if necessary
_____ Create rental item needs list
_____ Visit with rental agency planner to look at their supplies, choose linen colors, china patterns, chair styles, etc.
_____ Start shopping for your wedding gown
_____ Order your wedding gown and veil
_____ Start researching bridesmaid gown options
_____ Collect bridesmaids' size cards and ordering information
_____ Select and order bridesmaids' gowns
_____ Start researching florists
_____ Choose your florist and meet with the floral consultant to share your wishes
_____ Research caterers, attending tastings
_____ Select and book your caterer
_____ Research cake bakers, attending tastings
_____ Select and book your cake baker
_____ Choose and book a photographer
_____ Choose and book a videographer
_____ Choose and book your reception entertainment: DJ, band, or musical performers
_____ Choose and book a limousine or classic car company
_____ Start looking at invitation samples, and select desired designs and wording
_____ Notify your boss about your wedding date and arrange for time off for the wedding and honeymoon week(s)

_____ Create your personalized wedding Web site

**All the Legalities**

Don't forget to discuss the legal issues pertaining to your upcoming wedding, such as:

_____ Finding any previous-relationship divorce or annulment papers the town will need to see before granting you a marriage license, or that your house of worship needs to see

_____ Talking to an attorney about prenuptial agreements

_____ Talking to an attorney about creating wills and other important documents

_____ Talking to a financial advisor about your money goals

**NINE MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING**

_____ Find out your local marriage license requirements

_____ Schedule the date you'll go together to apply for your marriage license

_____ Schedule any medical tests necessary for your license to be granted

_____ Meet with your officiant about your ceremony plans and pre-wedding classes

_____ Meet with your caterer to discuss your menu, wedding setup, requirements, etc.

_____ Plan beverage requirements, bartenders needed and bar set-up

_____ Select packages with your photographer

_____ Select packages with your videographer

_____ Select packages with your entertainers

_____ Meet with your florist to design bouquets, boutonnieres and floral decor

_____ Meet with a travel agent to plan your honeymoon

_____ Book your honeymoon

_____ Apply for passports and travel visas, if you will be attending an international destination wedding or honeymoon

_____ Order your wedding invitations

_____ Order your wedding programs
_____ Order any additional printed items

_____ Shop for and order your wedding rings

_____ Have your wedding rings engraved (if applicable)

_____ Reserve all rental equipment (tents, chairs, etc.)

_____ Choose and reserve a block of rooms for your guests at the hotel

_____ Book your honeymoon suite for the wedding night

SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

_____ Choose and rent men's wedding wardrobe

_____ Begin writing vows

_____ Select ceremony music

_____ Select ceremony readings

_____ Register for wedding gifts

_____ Send for name-change information, if necessary

_____ Arrange for transportation for guests

_____ Order pre-printed napkins, matchbooks, coasters, etc.

_____ Create maps to ceremony and reception locations for enclosure in the invitations

_____ Start scouting for wedding photograph locations

_____ Start planning the rehearsal dinner

_____ Book rehearsal dinner site and caterer

_____ Plan 'wedding weekend' activities, such as brunches, sporting events, barbecues, children's events, tours, breakfasts, etc.

_____ Begin pre-wedding beauty treatments: skin care, massage, tanning, etc.

_____ If holding an at-home wedding, hire a landscaper to do lawn, trim shrubs, add extra plants or flower beds, mulch, etc.

_____ Make additional changes to home, such as painting rooms, installing carpet, etc.

THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

_____ Apply for your marriage license, according to the state's requirements
_____ Go for your blood tests, according to the state's time requirements
_____ Attend any pre-marital classes or counseling as required by your chosen faith
_____ If summer, holiday or destination wedding, send invitations to guests now
_____ Assemble invitation packages with all inserts
_____ Buy 'Love' stamps at the post office
_____ Begin your wedding gown fittings
_____ Choose and purchase your shoes and accessories for wedding day
_____ Bridesmaids' and mothers' fittings begin
_____ Choose and purchase children's wedding day attire
_____ Consult with your wedding coordinator for any updates, confirmations, or changes
_____ Consult with caterer or banquet hall manager for updates
_____ Ask honored relatives and friends to perform readings at the ceremony
_____ Ask a relative or friend to serve as your emcee, and give him/her specific instructions
_____ Practice your wedding vows!
_____ Finalize your selections of ceremony readings and music
_____ Submit your song "wish list" to DJ or band, along with your list of spotlight dances
_____ Submit picture "wish list" to photographer
_____ Submit video "wish list" to videographer
_____ Arrange for babysitters to watch guests' kids on the wedding day
_____ Finalize and confirm plans for the rehearsal dinner

TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

_____ Wedding gown fittings continue
_____ Purchase your "going away" outfit and honeymoon clothes
_____ Address invitations to guests (for non-holiday, summer or destination weddings)
_____ Assemble invitation packages
_____ Buy 'Love' stamps at the post office
Mail invitations to guests six to eight weeks prior to the wedding
Order or make your wedding programs
Order or make your wedding favors
Meet with ceremony musician about song list
Have attendants' shoes dyed in one dye lot
Ask friends to participate in wedding, such as attending the guest book, transporting wedding gifts from reception to home, etc.
Send for all name-change documents, such as passport, credit cards, driver's license, etc.

ONE MONTH BEFORE THE WEDDING
Apply for marriage license
Meet with officiant to get the final information on ceremony elements, location rules, etc.
Invite officiant to rehearsal dinner.
Plan the rehearsal
Invite bridal party and involved guests to the rehearsal and rehearsal dinner
Confirm honeymoon plans
Confirm wedding-night hotel reservations
Make beauty appointment for wedding day
Visit your hairstylist to 'practice' with hairstyles for the big day
Visit your makeup artist for a 'practice run'
Get pre-wedding haircut, dye or highlights
Fittings for your dress continue
Pick up your wedding bands
Have your rings appraised and insured
Attend bridal showers
Send thank you's for bridal shower gifts
Call wedding guests who have not RSVP'd to get the final headcount
_____ Create your seating chart for reception
_____ Write up seating place cards and table numbers
_____ Pick up honeymoon travel tickets and information books
_____ Make up welcome gift baskets for guests
_____ Purchase gifts for family members and bridal party
_____ Wrap and label gifts
_____ Purchase unity candle
_____ Purchase garters (get two - one for keeping, one for tossing)
_____ Purchase toasting flutes
_____ Purchase cake knife
_____ Purchase guest book

_____ Purchase post-wedding toss-its (birdseed, flower petals, bubbles, bells, etc) and decorate or personalize small containers, if you so choose

_____ Purchase throwaway wedding cameras

_____ Work on any do-it-yourself crafts you'll make for the wedding

**ONE WEEK BEFORE THE WEDDING**

_____ Confirm all wedding plans with all wedding vendors

_____ Caterer (give final headcount now!)

_____ Florist (give delivery instructions now!)

_____ Cake baker

_____ Photographer

_____ Videographer

_____ Lighting technician

_____ Ceremony musicians

_____ Reception entertainers

_____ Officiant
_____ Ceremony site manager
_____ Reception site manager
_____ Wedding coordinator
_____ Limousine company (give directions now!)
_____ Rental company agent
_____ Pay final deposits for all services
_____ Place tips and fees in marked envelopes for such participants as the officiant, ceremony musicians, valets, etc.
_____ If supplying your own beverages, conduct a shopping trip to the local discount liquor and beverage supply house for stocking up
_____ Visit a warehouse superstore to stock up on any items you'll need for the wedding weekend (supplies to have at home, barbecue food, snacks, etc.)
_____ Drop off guest welcome baskets at hotel
_____ Groom picks up tux
_____ Groom and ushers pick up tux accessories, socks, shoes, etc.
_____ Arrange for house- and pet-sitters
_____ Notify the local police department of your upcoming absence, so that they can patrol your neighborhood
_____ Get travelers' checks (if you so choose)
_____ Plan wedding day brunch, and inform bridal party and guests about it
_____ Plan your special toasts
_____ Ready wedding announcements to be mailed the day after the wedding
_____ Attend bachelor's and bachelorette's parties

THE DAY BEFORE THE WEDDING

_____ Supervise delivery of rental items to wedding location
_____ Supervise setup of all items at wedding location
_____ Finish packing suitcases and carry-ons for wedding night and honeymoon
Stock your bag with your car keys, house keys, passports, ID's, marriage license, wedding night and honeymoon hotel confirmations, medications, ATM card, etc.

Arrange to have your car, with your honeymoon suitcases in the trunk, left securely in the wedding night hotel's parking lot for use the next day or suitcases brought to the suite ahead of time.

Lay out all wedding day wardrobe and accessories

Very important: plan your shower-time schedule for the next day!

Hand out printed directions to all family members and bridal party members

Confirm times for all attendants to show up on the wedding day, and where to go

Arrange for someone to be in charge of handing out payment envelopes

Hit the ATM to get cash on hand for emergencies, tips, valet, etc.

Assemble your emergency bag with extrastockings, lipstick, pressed powder, emery boards, etc.

Put a charged cell phone in the emergency bag

Gas up the cars, just in case

Go to the beauty salon to get waxed and tweezed

Stock up on supplies for the wedding-morning breakfast, or call in your catering order

Place last call to caterer or coordinator to finalize plans

Attend the rehearsal

Attend the rehearsal dinner

Get a good night's sleep!

ON THE WEDDING DAY

Set out favors and place cards at reception site, if manager will not be doing it [some sites ask you to drop off your items a week ahead of time]

Set out post-wedding toss-its where appropriate at ceremony site

Set out guest book and pen

Attend bridal breakfast

Have a wedding day breakfast sent to where the men are getting ready
_____ Have hair and nails done at beauty salon
_____ Have makeup done
_____ Be dressed early!
_____ Have photos taken at home

_____ Double-check that someone responsible has arranged for your honeymoon suitcases to get into your car or to your hotel room.

_____ Double-check that the appropriate people have the wedding rings for transport to the ceremony

_____ Make sure the bag with your car keys, house keys, ID's, passports, etc. comes with you to the wedding

_____ Relax as you leave for the wedding!

_____ Attend the wedding

_____ Have the time of your life!

_____ Attend the after-party

_____ Have a safe ride home!

THE DAY AFTER THE WEDDING - Chores to Assign

_____ Have someone supervise the return of rental company items

_____ Have someone supervise clean-up of the site, if necessary

_____ Get a signed receipt for the return of all rented items

_____ Have tuxes returned to rental store

_____ Hold day-after breakfast for guests

_____ Transport guests to airports, train stations etc. for their rides home

_____ Hire cleaning service if your home was the site of the wedding festivities

Additional planning checklists found in The Busy Bride's Essential Wedding Checklists, by Sharon Naylor www.sharonnaylor.net

Copyright © 2005 - 2010 The Wedding Report, Inc. All rights reserved. Designated trademarks and brands are the property of their respective owners.